

## **Curriculum and Instruction: Grades 6-12**

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Board of Education Report – December 2014

The curriculum office continues to work on the initiatives of the district including those required by the state and those in the updated strategic plan -- all with a focus on enhancing student achievement. This report will update the Board on recent work, its purpose and its outcomes.

### **Next Generation Science Standards**

Three of our teachers, Ms. Kristin Gauthier, Mrs. Susan Berting and Mrs. Jamila Godin wrote new Curriculum Maps for the Junior High School to align to The Next Generation Science Standards. These standards create opportunities for students to actively engage in scientific and engineering practices and apply crosscutting concepts to deepen their understanding of the core ideas. The new curriculum encourages students to ask fundamental questions about the world and consider how scientists have investigated and found answers to those questions.

While aligned maps written this summer are complete, the state is now adopting the curriculum with units moved from one grade to another. Towards that end, the middle school science teachers are meeting to update the curricula and swap units so that students miss nothing in the transition. Further, we will be aligned to the new curriculum by September 2016, when it is actually mandated. As early adopters, teachers will need extra time during the school year and over the summer to continue to make adjustments to the curriculum map. The three teachers will meet during special Herd Hours to adjust and find curricular support pieces on-line, since there are no text books that align to these standards as of yet.

According to Mrs. Berting, seventh grade science teacher, “We are moving along and ahead of most districts. The challenges are arising from the lack of created materials that correspond with the new standards. Hours and hours are being spent on research and development of meaningful classroom activities and projects. It is disheartening that the state has made further adjustments to the “model curriculum” for middle school. I trust that my colleagues and I will work together to find the ways to best implement this philosophy. We are still ahead of the curve.”

### New Jersey Network Closing the Achievement Gap (NJNCAG)

This year the district has changed its approach to the New Jersey Network for Closing the Achievement Gap. Mrs. Cynthia Fatoso, Ms. Kathryn Bourquin and I attend regularly. Mrs. Fatoso and Ms. Bourquin intend to turn-key ideas from the meeting in Herd Hours so that more of the staff benefits from the presentations.

### Competency Based Learning (CBL) Launch

This fall, Woodbury offered a new competency-based-learning approach to students who are seeking a more student-driven approach to learning. The opportunity, sited in our new library, encourages students to use computers, books, and small conference areas to meet in small groups. We offer a science, math, English and economics/freshman seminar course equivalent at either the honors or college prep level during the time that students would ordinarily be in periods two through five. Students work under the guidance of our own highly-qualified teachers who assist and coach our students through their individual and group learning processes.

The cohort of teachers express that the program is adjusting based on their own assessment as well as the feedback of students and parents. Some students are easily accomplishing learning tasks that demonstrate mastery of content standards at a fine pace. As we learn to master coaching students in this type of program, we expect to be able to more appropriately identify students by being able to explain what a day in the life of a CBL student is like.

### Progress in the AVID Program

#### *AVID Summer Institute*

AVID planning this summer created a new set of priorities to strengthen the program's impact. First, we are seeking ways to place a greater emphasis on supporting and retaining boys in the program, a national and global problem is also problematic in Woodbury. We are consciously trying to have greater diligence in supporting daily effort to enhance each student's grades. Second, we are refocusing on Cornell Notes and the process of using, reviewing and embellishing notes known as focused note-taking. In addition, to enhance higher order thinking skills, our AVID site team is emphasizing inquiry in the classroom; both students and teachers are expected to increase the use of higher level thinking questions – questions that require problem solving and evaluation. We had two student presenters at AVID Summer Institute, Anjelai Hayes and Marcus McGruder.

### *Presentations*

On October 20, seven AVID Students along with Mrs. Maria Lario, Ms. Colleen Fitzgerald and I presented at the Delaware Valley Consortium for Excellence and Equity at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. We were joined by AVID's District and Northeast Directors. We planned activities, many of which were led by our impressive students. The presentation was quite successful.

Mr. Eder Joseph, Mr. Edward Murphy and I presented on July 29 at the Symposium on Educational Excellence through Equity held at Abington Senior High School in Abington, Pennsylvania. Our presentation entitled, "A Growth Mindset: Creating, Cultivating, and Sustaining a College-Going Culture" was well attended. Pedro Noguera, noted educator, writer and the keynote speaker, came to our presentation. He particularly appreciated our data. He asked to be invited to visit our district, and we are in the process of deciding when and how to contact him.

### *AVID Tours*

On October 27 of this year we hosted 2 schools: Unity Charter of Philadelphia which sent two staff members and Hyde Park Central School District of Hyde Park, New York, which sent four people. The day featured, among other high points, a "graduate-level," philosophical-chairs debate on solitary confinement in prison conducted by Mrs. Fehre's eighth grade AVID students.

"Thank you for a wonderful visit to Woodbury on October 27th! Four people from Haviland Middle School would love to come see your 6th-8th grade program. Your school was very impressive. I'm still thinking and talking about it!" Aviva Kafka, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services, Hyde Park Central School District.

Two more visits including one from Gloucester City are planned. They are interested in our English 100 program, our Freshman Seminar and AVID.

### *AVID School of Distinction*

Schools which have achieved a high level of excellence are designated as Demonstration Schools where others may come to observe and study how change occurs within schools. AVID has now created the highest level of distinction, **School of Distinction**. These schools demonstrate that most students have attempted rigorous college-level work during their high school enrollment. We are in the process of making application to be considered a School of Distinction.

### Common Core Academy

Woodbury is continuing its work with a team of trainers from Rowan University to explore the way to plan and create history lessons that align to the common core. Teachers receive training in applying the Common Core Standards to the Social Studies/History content. They plan rich lessons that two teachers use in their classrooms. Between the two lessons, teachers comment on how they can improve delivery and instruction. The rest of the department is able to observe, learn and even refine new practices. According to Mr. Steve Gallatig, "It is creating conversation among history teachers about what is working and what is not. We are reflecting, making modifications and re-teaching lessons that focus on the common core standards."

### Reader's and Writer's Workshop in the Junior High School

The elementary schools have now fully implemented the Readers' Workshop model and are piloting the Writers' Workshop model. Many of our sixth grade students experienced Readers' Workshop last year. As a result, there is a recognition that the sixth grade teachers need to become prepared to have entering students learn through that methodology. The sixth grade literacy teachers require support to move to a Readers' Workshop model and this is planned for upcoming professional development sessions and/or during summer training weeks.

The Junior High teachers have begun the easier-to-implement Writer's Workshop model through the purchase of materials and attendance at a brief introduction to the model offered in New York City at Columbia University this summer.

### AP Program

Last year, due to a smaller enrollment in the senior class and the wonderful opportunity of attendance at Rowan College at Gloucester County (RCGC), our AP enrollment was smaller and we administered fewer AP exams. Notwithstanding, according to the outcome we measure, the percentage of students who graduated having passed one or more AP tests, our success was greater. Thirty percent of our seniors graduated having received a score of a 3, 4 or 5 on at least one test.

We did not have sufficient enrollment to offer Chinese again this year. Chemistry is being offered again. We are offering Physics 2 this year and next year we will offer Physics 1 again (It should be noted that these two courses are not sequential). However, our program continues to strengthen -- 62% of our juniors and 54% of our seniors are taking one or more AP classes and tests. Of our 24 RCGC students, 79% are taking one or more AP classes.

### AP Teacher Training

This summer, several of our teachers attended AP training. Mr. Kevin Carolan, who attended last year for Physics 1, received a grant to attend the AP Physics 1 and 2 training. This year he is teaching Physics 2 with the intention of offering each one every other year, since they are not sequential. Mrs. Michele Sokolovic and Mrs. Maria Lario attended the AP Language and Composition Course so that they could begin to emphasize the needed skills for AP success in their English 10 classes. Mrs. Jen Lee, our new hire, attended the AP Chemistry training where she was gifted an entire set of new AP Chemistry textbooks! Al Kilpatrick attended the AP US History training so he could appropriately teach the first half of the AP History two year sequence. Mr. Matthew West attended the AP Studio Art training. He is hoping to re-ignite interest in our fine arts program in order to have a feeder program for his AP course.

### Learner-Active, Technology-Infused

Innovative Designs for Education or IDE is a leader in designing, and implementing instructional and organizational models that empower all learners. Last year's eight remaining members of the Learner-Active Technology-Infused (LATI) cohort were joined by four additional staff members. Ms. Corey Uray, their trainer, continues to return regularly to encourage and support the shift in instructional strategies to transform the learning process. According to Ms. Uray, the model has had great impact on the students in Mrs. Thilana Chandler and Mrs. Teresa Stebich's class. Year two teachers are filling in the pieces of the model that were less natural for each of them. They are having greater fidelity to the system. The first-year staff has tried at least one unit and is building class responsibility.

### Shmoop

The website Shmoop was offered to Woodbury on a free trial basis. Shmoop offers test preparation for all AP courses and the SAT. Teachers can monitor and encourage usage. Shmoop analyzes student data to identify areas of deficiency that may need review in class. Many teachers and students reported that the website was helpful, so we decided to adopt it for use by AP teachers and students and for SAT prep.

## New Courses

With a shift from home economics into business and computer science, we are offering several new courses. We also continue our shift from Integrated Math to the more traditional Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II sequence. Video production has shifted from a pure technology emphasis to an art and technology blend. We have added courses in coding and game design as a focus for related arts.

### *Carnegie Learning Geometry*

This year, students began to study Geometry using the Carnegie Learning program. Carnegie Learning offers computer assisted exploration and a constructivist approach to learning math. Most of the students in this class had Carnegie Learning Algebra I as ninth grade students. Next September the math department will offer Algebra II in addition.

### *Coding*

This course is filled with students at many different levels. It turns out while many students could engage in some basic coding others brought no background knowledge. Furthermore, for some students the work is difficult while other students are apparently “naturals” at coding. As a result, the course is evolving. The classes are highly differentiated. With the materials we have ordered, we have options for three levels of students. Mr. Ari Ford is already contemplating enrichment projects for advanced students. We expect that this pattern will only become more evident, as students enroll for a second year to enhance their experience with coding.

### *Video Art Design*

Mr. Vince Doud is receiving very positive feedback for his Video Art Design classes. The new editing equipment that has been installed has upgraded our students' capabilities. A few additional cameras are still expected. The students are responsive and active in classroom discussion and participate fully in learning activities. In addition, the 7th grade Computer Graphics class has also been successful, with its emphasis on projects.

### *Accounting*

Students are currently working on learning the basics of accounting. Once they finish the general ledger and posing chapters, students will complete a mini-simulation as an assessment to ensure they understand all the concepts. Mrs. Christine Dare has plans to have a Certified Public Accountant come in and talk with our students once they have the basics under their belt. Students are using electronic textbooks.

### *Entrepreneur Education*

The focus of Mrs. Dare's class is to have students create retail stores for downtown Woodbury. On November 23, Ms. Randi Woerner, Economic Development Director for Woodbury, addressed Mrs. Dare's 29 students and then took them on a walking tour of retail spaces in town. The end result of the course will be a physical floor plan of the students' retail stores and a shortened business plan. Students will also take their layout and other information to the student body (during lunches) to complete surveys and see if their plan is workable. Students in this class use an electronic textbook.

### *Marketing*

This course will be offered during the second semester. Mrs. Dare plans to have the same students from her Entrepreneur class continue with their retail stores and complete a marketing plan.

### *Web Design and Electronic Publishing*

Students are in the process of interviewing some of the new teachers. When they do, they will go through their notes, figure out what other questions they have (if any), go back to the teacher, and finally write an article. Once the articles are written, we will be putting them out on a White and Gold web site (using Google Sites), hoping to have students become interested in starting up the school newspaper again. While students are taking the time to get the interviews, we are currently learning how to create a web page/site. Students will be using Google Sites to create their own site by the end of the year.

## Proposed new courses

### *AP Computer Science Principles (2016-2017)*

Whether it's 3-D animation, engineering, music, app development, medicine, visual design, robotics, or political analysis, computer science is the engine that powers the technology, productivity, and innovation that drive the world. Computer science experience has become an imperative for today's students and the workforce of tomorrow. The goal of AP Computer Science Principles is to create leaders in computer science fields and attract and engage those who are traditionally underrepresented in AP classes with essential computing tools and multidisciplinary opportunities. The course will engage all students in constructing their own understanding of computer science concepts through equitable teaching practices and inquiry-based instructional strategies.

### *AP Spanish Literature and Composition (2017-2018)*

We expect the Juntos Honors students to be ready to take Spanish Language and Composition by their junior year. For these students, a second course in The AP Spanish Literature and Culture would be an optimal opportunity to take their proficiency and turn it into a concentration for college. Furthermore, with students arriving from the elementary schools with knowledge of Spanish, this course will be available for non-native speaking students who become fluent earlier in their high school career.

The course is designed to provide the student, with a learning experience equivalent to that of an introductory college course in literature written in Spanish:

- Introduces students to the formal study of a representative body of texts from Peninsular Spanish, Latin American, and U.S. Hispanic literature.
- Provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in Spanish across the three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) and the five goal areas (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities).
- Provide students with ongoing and varied opportunities to further develop proficiencies across the full range of language skills — with special attention to critical reading and analytical writing — and to encourage reflection on the many voices and cultures included a rich and diverse body of literature written in Spanish.

### *Math and Literacy Appeal Process for Graduation*

In a similar way as to how we offered AHSA (Alternative High School Assessment) classes, the new appeal process requires any students who have not demonstrated a proficient score on any of the exit tests, to submit a portfolio. For math, the appeal includes five demonstrations and for literacy it requires three.

### PARCC Testing

This year's PARCC testing will be accomplished in much fewer hours as the test has been shortened. It will still be aligned to the Common Core Standards. While as of this writing, we have not received our results, the state's results deem less than 50% of all students are proficient in mathematics or literacy in any tested grade. State Commissioner David Hespe cautions everyone involved in schools to spend time working to align curriculum and instructions to the common core and improve rather than assign blame to anyone.



### State Assessment Graduation requirements:

In place of the HSPA, the state is accepting the following tests with the following cut scores:

#### For Math

PARCC Algebra I  $\geq$  750 Level 4

PARCC Geometry  $\geq$  725 Level 3

PARCC Algebra II  $\geq$  725 Level 3

ACT Math 16

SAT Math 400

PSAT Math 40

Accuplacer Elementary Algebra 76

ASVAB – 31

#### For Literacy

PARCC ELA Grade 9  $\geq$  750 Level 4

PARCC ELA Grade 10  $\geq$  750 Level 4

PARCC ELA Grade 11  $\geq$  725 Level 3

ACT Reading 16

SAT Reading 400

PSAT Reading 40

Writeplacer - 6

ASVAB – 31

We have decided to offer the Accuplacer and Writeplacer at our school so that we can offer this less expensive test at no charge to students. All seniors who have not yet received a passing score on one of these assessments were tested in the October administration of the PSAT and encouraged to work diligently. We are hoping that many more will achieve passing scores on one of these tests before we move to a portfolio creation for an alternative approval from the state.

### Educational Proficiency Plan

The State has announced the parameters for a new appeals process for students that have not met their assessment graduation requirement. The new EPP portfolio will include transcripts; performance on the PARCC and/or substitute competency assessments; and interventions provided to the student to ensure that he/she met the graduation requirement. The appeal must also include constructed response tasks (CRT), similar to samples that are on the PARCC

website in the subject area(s) in which the student is deficient. The CRT's will ensure that the student can demonstrate core mathematical and English language arts competencies that are equivalent to the expectations of the substitute competency assessments.

As of this writing, there are 26 students in need of this process. We are still administering the Accuplacer and the ASVAB and are hopeful that with the return of these scores the number of necessary appeals will drop. The Counseling department, English and math staff will all be involved in creating appeal documentation.

## Grants

### *BASF Grant*

Last year, the high school applied for and received funding to update our Physics labs. We were able to purchase from Vernier Lab Quest Minis and a full range of sensors with needed software to furnish six complete lab stations. To complete the project, late spring, Mr. Carolan's classes designed and performed experiments dealing with collisions and sports safety. They concluded that helmets were indeed effective in lessening impact and should be considered as required sports equipment in other sports such as field hockey and soccer.

This fall, the high school again applied for and won a grant from BASF – this time for the chemistry lab. The \$5,000 award will be used for Vernier chemistry equipment. The students will use the equipment all year in all of their varied experiments; however, they will eventually research and test tap water, bottled water and sports drinks to decide which one is the most salubrious sideline beverage.

### *QAD Grant*

Mr. Brian Di Carlo, a recent graduate, is employed by QAD, a company located in Mount Laurel that has an active Community Involvement Committee (CIC) committed to supporting communities in the area. The committee is focused on funding non-profit organizations that provide technical education for children including schools and community based educational programs. Mr. Ari Ford and I applied \$1,500 from QAD's CIC for additional technology supplies for our new coding class. According to Mr. Di Carlo, we have an excellent chance of receiving the award.

### *Exxon-Mobil Grant*

We applied for and received a grant from Exxon-Mobil to help fund our new coding class with necessary programs. While we hoped for greater assistance, we received \$1,000.

### *Twenty-first Century Grant*

Once again the grant we submitted received enough points to qualify, but not enough to win the grant.

### Inter District School Choice

We began the year with 18 funded and now two unfunded Choice students. Four of our Choice students will graduate this year. We expect to fill the openings with our unfunded students and with two siblings who have applied and will receive preference.

### Realtor Open House/Community Walkthrough

In October, we held an open house and solicited the attendance of realtors. Although we reached out multiple times in many ways, three realtors attended the event, all of whom came from Duffield Realty. Notwithstanding, the reactions were wonderful. Everyone was, as usual, very impressed with the building and the quality of work they observed in the classroom.

### Library Renovation

The renovations in the library are complete. The main room is quite attractive with the new furniture in place. It is an inviting and lovely space. The last of the old furniture was sold this summer through the govdeals.com website.

### The Woodbury City Public Library Board of Directors

I continue to represent the District on the City Library's Board of Directors and serve as the recording secretary. We have accomplished much to benefit our students. As a result of the District's collaboration with the library, increased partnership will be available this summer as we launch our elementary school summer reading program.