

Curriculum and Instruction: Grades PreK-5

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Literacy Language Arts Update:

The Writers Workshop pilot is progressing nicely. The smaller cohort of participating teachers has enabled richer conversation with the grade-level Literacy Specialist. Units of Study have been adapted to incorporate robust feedback from teachers. The writing curriculum is poised to have a strong implementation in the fall.

In fact, the 2016-17 school year will constitute the first point that all aspects of the new literacy curriculum – Foundations, Word Study, Guided Reading, Readers Workshop, and Writers Workshop will be implemented in totality. Preparation for this eventuality has been ongoing. Time allocations for each of the components by grade level have been examined by the curriculum department. Recommendations have been forwarded to each of the building principals. Over the coming weeks and months, they will meet with grade-level teacher teams to craft building-specific schedules which reflect these new time allocations.

Using benchmark testing data, the curriculum department has also been developing a standardized approach to Guided Reading for the 2016-17 school year. This approach will enable teachers to take a more holistic view of student reading levels. Focusing on common characteristics at each level of performance rather than book-specific content, teachers will be able to push students to ever higher levels of text complexity. Grade level meetings over the final months of the 2015-16 school year will introduce this approach and provide teachers with time to practice and discuss. Resource and Academic Support Teachers will place Guided Reading at the top of their pyramid of intervention next year crafting a schedule that will enable them to support teachers in this critical work.

Common collaborative assessments have been another curricular aspect that has been discussed during literacy grade level meetings. Grade level teacher teams collectively developed an exit ticket designed to assess one anchor standard. Teachers taught that standard and then used the same exit ticket to garner information about student performance. Completed exit tickets were then brought back to grade level meetings and distributed amongst all teachers. Blind grading using the predetermined scale occurred and teachers discussed the results. This type of collaboration helps teachers develop a common understanding of the nuances of a standard and the practices of using a rubric for assessment.

Mathematics Update:

Teachers are continuing to utilize the new mathematics curriculum in ever greater numbers. As colleagues espouse the benefits of particular units as early adopters, the willingness of other teachers to try the new curriculum grows. Next year, a formal pilot with teachers at each grade level and each school will be implemented. Working closely with the Academic Coach for Mathematics, these piloting teachers will provide essential feedback on the efficacy of particular units. This purposely slow roll-out is designed to simultaneously give teachers the breathing room to fully understand the new expectations and to improve the curriculum for Woodbury students.

STMath is proving to be a fantastic addition to Woodbury's mathematics menu. Almost to a person, teachers are reporting high student engagement and willingness to participate in the program. It is not an exaggeration to state that children are requesting to use STMath during indoor recess time and at home. The gamification of the learning and the cognitive challenge that STMath represents is truly pushing students toward deeper understanding of mathematical constructs. The building principals have also agreed to a friendly competition as their students complete the STMath course syllabus; the principal of the school with the least progress on STMath will have to don a life-size penguin costume in honor of Jiji, the STMath heroine. Which principal will transform into a giant flightless bird for a day?

Woodbury is also working with members of the Mathematics Department at Rowan University to apply for a federal grant to provide additional professional development in the area of math for elementary teachers. If awarded the grant, up to six teachers next year will have the benefit of sustained professional development and on-site coaching by Rowan professors.

Some vertical articulation has occurred over the past few months with teachers in the Junior High coming down to observe and discuss mathematics instruction with elementary teachers. These meetings were reciprocated afterwards as elementary teachers visited their colleagues in the Junior High. This type of collaboration is important work to help teachers better understand expectations and the curriculum at different grade levels.

Technology Update:

Evergreen Avenue School and Walnut Street School have been designated as Common Sense Digital Citizenship Certified Schools! A Digital Citizenship Certified School is dedicated to teaching digital citizenship to young people and engaging parents using Common Sense Education materials. By earning recognition as a Digital Citizenship Certified School, administrators and educators are taking the necessary steps to equip students with the skills they need to be responsible online. Congratulations!

The success of the Genius Hour pilot continues to grow. A small cohort of three teachers has grown to double its size and now boasts six members! The positive buzz surrounding student projects – passion-based and of their own choosing – has been the driver of the additional members. Students are blogging their experiences, sharing these passions with the wider world.

Similarly, the blended learning pilot is also finding success. Just recently, a game-based literacy program called Imagine Learning has been introduced to the piloting teachers. These teachers had the opportunity to visit a school in Atlantic County that has been using the program for the past four years talking with teachers and administrators. Once some technological glitches are worked through, these teachers will utilize the program with their students for the remainder of the year. Their feedback will provide critical information in the decision whether to continue with the program in 2016-17.

Preschool Update:

The District continued its mission to expand learning opportunities for the youngest of children with the annual submission of the Preschool Plan to the NJDOE. The addition of another full-time preschool class at West End Memorial School was a major component. Woodbury would like to service as many three and four year-olds in their neighborhood schools as possible.

Another important aspect of the plan was the creation of a new position of Family Liaison. A Family Liaison will connect with the preschool community helping families support language growth and development. Outreach and identifying non-traditional, but eligible preschool families will be a large component of this job. Moreover, a parent training piece such as the 3T's (take notice, talk more, take turns) will be an added focus of this position.

Detailed nine-step criteria for the placement of preschool students for 2016-17 was recently developed. This criterion will help Woodbury equitably place students into our preschool program since we still do not have enough classes to accommodate all three and four year olds.

Finally, the plan calls for a conversion for our full-day student classes which are currently taught by two part-time teachers, to be taught by one full-time teacher next year. This change will provide stability to the position from the adult and child perspective and allow for improved professional development.

The entirety of the preschool program – including both this expansion of another classroom and the Family Liaison position – are funded with dollars from the NJDOE.

Professional Development:

1. February 12, 2016 – In-Service

PreK - Sensational Science and Literature at the Garden State Discovery Museum

Grades K-3, Special Ed, Academic Support, LDTs, Speech, ELLs - Dyslexia Training and Other Reading Disabilities

K-5, Academic Support, Resource – Components of Balanced Literacy

K-5, Academic Support, Resource – Creating Patient Problem-Solvers

Spanish Teachers – Curriculum alignment with Junior-Senior High School Teachers

Grades 4-5 – KidBlog

Special Area - DIY

2. AVID Site Visits - February 25, 2016 at West End and February 26, 2016 at Evergreen

Pam Leibring, the AVID Elementary Program Manager for the Northeast, visited West End Memorial School and Evergreen Avenue School for site visits in February. She observed students writing and leveling their own questions based on Costa's Levels of Questioning. She observed the collaborative structures of AVID in practice. Multiple classrooms were visited and teachers had an opportunity to sit down with her to discuss those observations. Ms. Leibring's written report was overwhelmingly positive; she even discussed the possibility of utilizing the district as demonstration site for other elementary schools in the Northeast looking to implement AVID.

3. Herd Hours

A large piece of our professional development pie is the concept of Herd Hours. These differentiated opportunities for staff allow them to pick and choose topics that most interest them. Staff design the workshops, present the information, and decide where and when to watch/present them. Since topics are developed from the ground up, they are more focused and timely. This approach is widely appreciated and valued. The following trainings in 2016 have already occurred or are slated to do so:

1/7/2016	Becoming a Google Master – Part 2
1/7/2016	I & RS Team Herd Hour
1/7/2016	Create-innOvaTe – Craft!
1/11/2016	Using Games across the Curriculum to Increase Student Achievement
1/25/2016	Stages of Emergent Literacy and Their Application in the Early Childhood Literacy Environment (Part 1)
1/25/2016	AVID Herd Hour: Introduction of AVID Critical Thinking and Engagement Curriculum
2/1/2016	Preparing for PARCC: Math
2/4/2016	The Changing Role of the Speech/Language Pathologist in the School & Using the Common Core Standards to Help in the Areas of Language /Literacy in the Classroom
2/4/2016	Google Add-Ons and Extensions
2/4/2016	Special Education FYI
2/4/2016	Preparing for PARCC: Math
2/8/2016	DonorsChoose
2/11/2016	New Strategies for Interactive Read-Alouds
2/18/2016	The Power of Mistakes
2/18/2016	<u>Cultural Awareness Series</u> : Explore the Center!
2/25/2016	Chatterpix App and Classroom Applications
2/29/2016	Stages of Emergent Literacy and Their Application in the Early Childhood Literacy Environment (Part 2)
3/3/2016	Video Modeling
3/3/2016	<u>Cultural Awareness Series</u> : Let Google Help You Be Bilingual!
3/14/2016	Developing and Cultivating Skills through Sensory Play
3/21/2016	PARCC - Language Arts
4/4/2016	<u>Cultural Awareness Series</u> : Circle of Influence
4/7/2016	<u>Cultural Awareness Series</u> : Childhood in Mexico
4/7/2016	Creativity Connects Schools and Families: Increase Parental Engagement
4/11/2016	Sensory Room Basics
4/20/2016	Minecraft in Education
4/21/2016	Effective Collaboration between Teachers and Paraprofessionals/Classroom Support Staff
4/28/2016	Teaching Students with Emotional/ Behavioral Disturbances
5/2/2016	<u>Cultural Awareness Series</u> : My Husband is White!
5/5/2016	Handle With Care (Restraint Training)

*Peer to Peer observations are also being utilized as Herd Hour opportunities

Other Curricular Items of Note:

1. Family Night Programs

Family Night Programs give each elementary school an opportunity to engage in fun and meaningful ways with their school community. This year each school chose to center their event on reading and literacy.

January 21, 2016

Walnut: “Reading is Fun” school-wide literacy themed program held for all students in PreK-5.

March 2, 2016

Evergreen: "Evergreen According to Humphrey!" school-wide reading themed program for students in PreK-5.

March 15, 2016

West End: "Dr. Seuss Theme Family Night" school-wide reading themed program for all students in PreK-5.

2. Summer Safari Reading Camp

Woodbury's Summer Safari Reading Camp has been tweaked for 2016. Developed to help combat 'summer slide' in young students, this free program being held at Evergreen Avenue School for all district students entering grades 1-3 will run Monday through Thursday from July 18 to August 18 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The morning will be focused on reading and the afternoon will now focus on exploring interests. In addition to reading, students will get to choose between participating in theater, art, instrumental music, 'mad scientist', STEM/Robotics, sports, cooking, Legos, games (unplugged), creative design, and exploring nature. Brochures advertising the program will go home this month to alert parents of the program changes. Hopefully, these alterations will encourage more of our students to attend for the length of the program.