

2014-2015 Opening of School Update

Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment: Dr. Nancy DePalma

This report addresses the progress on the District Development and Performance Plan, professional development, summer curriculum writing, textbook purchases, curriculum review and renewal, SRBI, the status of our Transitional Language Program, Summer Programs, support for new teachers and administrators and the Convocation program.

Planning for District Continuous Improvement and Development

The District Development Plan is reviewed annually based on the district's progress toward achieving the Board of Education Goals for 2011-2015. The development of the plan begins with a summary analysis of key findings. This analysis leads to the articulation of district strategic actions that are aligned to the BoE goals. The district strategic actions define the areas of focus for our improvement efforts. The identified "efforts" that follow define what specifically we plan to do to realize those strategic actions. Then, using performance indicators, we are able to measure the degree to which we have achieved our strategic actions or made a difference. The Board of Education established those performance indicators as measures of progress. The plan is implemented and monitored throughout the year and portions of the plan are reported on to the Board of Education. The final yearly analysis is conducted by examining our results against these performance indicators. This assessment is then used to shape the next iteration of the development of the plan. A summary of the goals, district strategic actions and efforts are listed below.

Goal One: Advance achievement for all students and reduce disparity between and among groups.

District Strategic Action: Using the Model of Continuous Improvement, we will strengthen standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment to help all students achieve and realize their potential.

Efforts to Support District Strategic Action:

- 1.1 Design and implement instruction and assessments that incorporate the key instructional shifts necessary to achieve depth of understanding
- 1.2 Incorporate principles of universal design for learning, differentiation strategies, culturally relevant pedagogy, formative assessment practices, and intervention strategies
- 1.3 Incorporate developmentally appropriate performance measures and other authentic learning experiences to demonstrate relevance and gauge students' abilities to apply their learning
- 1.4 Increase opportunity for staff participation and engagement in monitoring and developing standards based curriculum, instruction and assessment

**Agenda Item:
VI.A.1.b.**

Goal Two: Nurture the intellectual, physical and emotional well-being of students and create a safe and respectful learning community where all students are held to high expectations.

District Strategic Action: Create an environment and community that fosters intellectually, physically and emotionally healthy learning and living.

Efforts to Support District Strategic Action:

- 2.1 Create conditions that foster and support intellectually, physically and emotionally healthy learning as a community
- 2.2 Create cultures that emphasize high expectations for student conduct, responsible behavior, and respect for others
- 2.3 Develop and cultivate school-family-community partnerships
- 2.4 Provide clear lines of communication with students and families and ensure timely and responsive feedback

Goal Three: Attract, retain and develop high quality staff by providing professional development, resources and appropriate learning environments.

District Strategic Action: Create the conditions that promote collaborative inquiry through shared and distributed leadership.

Efforts to Support District Strategic Action:

- 3.1 Create environments of collective inquiry, leveraging the necessary structures, supports, and resources
- 3.2 Align professional learning efforts to achieve a common understanding of effective, high quality teaching
- 3.3 Build the diversity of our teaching population to more closely match the diversity of our student population

Elements of the District Development and Performance Plan will be reported to the Board of Education throughout the year as performance indicator data become available. As we enter a new era with new state assessments our performance indicators will need to change.

Professional Development

Elementary

Through May and June, elementary teachers received professional development in either Mathematics or English Language Arts as they implemented end of year curriculum units aligned to the Common Core. Teachers provided feedback on curriculum units which informed summer curriculum writing as well as focus areas/needs for professional learning in 2014-2015. A highlight of the spring CSI series was a well-received “Ed Tech Camp” professional learning series in which teachers from all 11 elementary schools engaged in self-selected study of educational technology teaching and learning. This professional learning model, facilitated by volunteer teacher-leaders, informed our development of a self-directed Collaborative Inquiry Team model for district professional learning 2014-2015.

Secondary

Professional development in May and June focused around a range of topics to include effective teams and leader development, best practices in school counseling, reading strategies, best practices for student success, problem solving, interdisciplinary lesson design, and development of curricular materials. Administrators had opportunity to engage in a book study around teacher evaluation led by Nancy DePalma. Summer opportunities for professional learning included workshops for secondary mathematics and special education teachers on strategies and related resources to support students identified for intervention.

Connecticut Council for Inter-Religious Understanding Workshop

Ten teachers selected from five greater Hartford area high schools took part in a week long summer workshop facilitated by Social Studies Department Supervisor, Jessica Blitzer. Under the guidance of Dr. Diane Moore, Director of the Program in Religion and Secondary Education at the Harvard Divinity School, teachers endeavored to deepen the study of world religion in the Social Studies curriculum at the high school level.

Extended Leadership

The Extended Leadership team met for a total of 2.5 days between late June and August with a focus on team building and continued training on the new Teacher Evaluation and Development Program. Team-building exercises were intended to provide orientation for new members of the administrative group; to re-focus the entire team on our new Superintendent's vision and district strategic initiatives; and to analyze and discuss our leadership practices. Training on the new Teacher Evaluation and Development Program included updates to the instructional framework and evaluation processes with activities designed to help evaluators provide critical feedback that targets specific actions teachers can take to enhance their development and support student learning. The district has renewed its partnership with ReVision Learning and calibration and critical feedback will be an area for ongoing work throughout the school year. Administrators also received refresher training on the TalentEd management system, and electronic tool to manage the goal setting and evaluation processed for the district. Administrators will turn-key this training in the buildings in order to train their staff on the updates to the Teacher Evaluation and Development Program.

Advanced Placement

Over the course of the 2013-2014 school year, a total of sixteen secondary school teachers attended workshops to support their professional development relative to teaching within the Advanced Placement program. Participation included teachers from the Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, English Language Arts, Career and Technology Education, World Language and Art departments and supported the following advanced placement (AP) courses: Capstone Seminar, Chinese, Computer Science, English Language & Composition, Environmental Science, Physics, Statistics, and Studio Art. Introductory and advanced programs supported both new and veteran AP teachers.

Science, Math, Engineering and Technology Programming

This summer, 13 staff members from Smith STEM School received training in Inquiry Learning from the Connecticut Science Center as part of 3-5 year professional development plan in inquiry-based teaching and learning that advances the implementation of STEM experiences throughout the school. This training marks the second summer for 6 of the participants and the third summer for 2 of the participants in the 3 course series offered by the Connecticut Science Center. This year, both the STEM Specialist and Science Teacher became trainers for the Inquiry Learning Professional development series and spent 4 weeks facilitating Professional Development.

Curriculum Review and Renewal

The Five-Year Plan for Curriculum Review and Renewal is a critically important function of the Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment overseen by the Curriculum Professional Learning & Evaluation Council, (CPLEC) and enacted by the PK-12 curriculum leadership. During the 2013-2014 school year, vertical teams in the disciplines of World Language, Library Media and Educational Technology, English for Speakers of Other Languages, and among related services, the areas of Speech and Language Therapy, presented during the course of the year. Feedback from the CPLEC provided direction for curriculum renewal and improvement and Department Development Planning. During the 2014-2015 school year, the following areas are under review: Physical Education and Health, Quest, Early Childhood and among related services, the areas of Psychologists and Social Workers.

Summer Curriculum Writing

Priority for summer curriculum writing continued to center on the development of units that support the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English Language Arts but also included efforts to advance the work of Science, Social Studies, Health Education, ESOL, Visual Arts, and World Language.

Elementary:

- This summer, our curriculum writing teams worked over several days to review and revise the Common Core units of study in both English Language Arts and Mathematics at grades K-5. As part of this process, teams reviewed and incorporated feedback teachers provided during collaborative CSIs, our end of the year survey, and the experiences of the writing team members who taught the units. This work, based on the Rigorous Curriculum Design model, included the refinement of pre and post assessments and assured learning experiences, modifications to key teaching points, and changes to year-long scope and sequence for both Mathematics and ELA units.
- Two elementary Quest teachers completed updated Scope and Sequence plans for grades 4 and 5 Math quest programs. Updated units of study incorporate concepts and skills from the Common Core Standards learning progressions for grades 4-6 as well as key focus areas from the grade 6 and grade 7 Math Honors curriculum.

Secondary

- English Language Arts teachers from grades 6 through 11 met to revise and refine the curriculum of grade level courses. Emphasis was placed on a formal review of the units to measure the rigor of the units and their alignment to Common Core, the identification of text sets to support instruction, and the development and refinement of assured learning experiences.
- Mathematics teachers revised the grades 6-11 curriculum based on the results of the ongoing transition to Common Core. Specific work centered on the development of assured learning experiences measuring students' communication and problem solving skills. Algebra II (grade 11) focused on development and refinement of unit frames in preparation for the initial implementation of new curriculum in this course.
- Science teachers developed curriculum resources for the newly revised AP Physics courses as well as Science Research Internship, a newly adopted 12th grade science elective. In addition to their curriculum work, a team of teachers met with Department Supervisors to discuss the implications of the Next Generation Science Standards relative to curriculum and instruction. Specific recommendations and revisions relating to crosscutting concepts and engineering practices were identified.
- Social Studies teachers working within a grade 7-12 vertical team progressed the work of the department relative to performance assessment and instruction focusing on inquiry and argument writing.
- World Language teachers at the elementary level created a reading sequence to support vocabulary and grammar instruction for both French and Spanish. Middle school refined the grade 6 curriculum and high school World Language teachers worked in vertical teams on courses within the grades 9-12 pathways for both French and Spanish
- Visual Arts teachers drafted concepts and skills for the PK arts curriculum. In addition, secondary arts teachers revised expectations for performance assessments for both middle and high school curricula
- Library Media convened a meeting of the PK-5 Technology Competency Team in order to draft a Foundational Technology skills Checklist which articulates grade level skills and competencies within educational technology. Continued work in this area will be ongoing throughout the school year.
- Career & Technical Education Department held summer curriculum workshops to support the development of assured learning experiences and performance assessments within Exploring Technology (grade 6), Manufacturing Technology (grade 7), Communication Technology (grade 8) and Computer Science (high school) curricula. Allied Health revised and refined its curriculum to further align to the College and Career Pathways program at Capital Community College.
- King Philip Middle School's Positive Expectation Team met to assemble faculty reference guides for the PBIS initiative. These materials include lesson plans for advisory, teaching videos to accompany lessons and a description of the new behavioral procedures and the school-wide recognition system.

Textbook Purchases

Elementary

- Kindergarten nonfiction texts purchased to support instructional unit in information reading and writing
- Grade 5 purchased trade books for English Language Arts units
- Reading Intervention purchased Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program (blue system) to support small group intervention for primary grade students
- Math manipulatives and StoryTown core English Language Arts resources purchased for new class sections in grades 3 and 5

Middle School

- English Language Arts purchased fiction and nonfiction books for grade levels 6-8 for all three middle schools
- Reading intervention program purchased *Language Live!*, which includes core instructional materials, teacher & student licenses for web-based resources and practice (Tier 3); and student replacement resources for *Soar to Success* and *Rewards* (Tier 2)

High School

- Science purchased textbooks for AP Environmental Science, Physics, AP Physics, AP Biology and AP Chemistry; Consumer Science – Foods;
- Social Studies purchased textbooks for AP Modern European History; US History through the African American Experience; and AP Psychology
- English Language Arts purchased fiction and nonfiction books for various courses in grades 9-12

Scientifically Research Based Interventions (SRBI)

Elementary:

- AIMSweb universal screening and progress monitoring assessment tools for literacy and mathematics were implemented across all elementary schools in Grades K-5. AIMSweb universal screening assessments, which have nationally normed benchmarks, are given in fall, winter, and spring. Teachers used the results of the screenings in conjunction with other observations and assessment data to target intervention and to monitor student progress throughout the year. This year, AIMSweb national median growth percentile rankings were used to measure student growth from fall to spring. We achieved expected median growth rates (40-60th national percentile rank) or higher for most literacy measures in grades 2-5. Spring DRA2 scores are another indicator of the success of our SRBI efforts. Across the district, 86% of students in grades K-3 scored at or above grade level benchmark expectations on the spring DRA2.

- All schools implemented a Student Success Team (SST) model comprised of the classroom teacher and specialized staff acting in decision-making roles. SSTs met weekly or on regular rotation cycles to collaborate on assessment of student referral and progress monitoring data in order to develop Individualized Performance Plans (IPPs).

Secondary:

- All schools continued to implement a Student Success Team (SST) model comprised of representation from classroom teachers, school counselors, special educators, administrators, and other specialized personnel. Transitions are managed at the building level for grade 5-6 and 8-9 with SST chairpersons ensuring the file transfer from sending to receiving school, generally in an electronic format.
- Last year, middle and high school reading teachers piloted use of the Gates-MacGinitie reading assessment for students receiving reading intervention. Given its promise as a standardized, on-line screening tool, we will utilize the Gates-MacGinitie for universal screening this fall in grades 6-8 (all students) as well as grades 9-11 (students receiving reading intervention support). The Gates-MacGinitie is a research-based reading assessment that provides all teachers with student reading Lexile levels. This Lexile data will inform use of differentiated texts and instructional strategies in all subject areas. The MAZE assessment remains in place as an additional universal screening tool for secondary literacy as needed.
- The universal screen for mathematics in grades 6-8 is a grade-level mathematics test associated with TransMath, a secondary mathematics intervention program. Screenings are computer based and deliver grade level equivalence information as well as diagnostic information that informs intervention programming. High school mathematics will continue to utilize a locally developed assessment for screening specific to the course in which the student is enrolled. Teachers use the results of screenings in conjunction with classroom-based measures and other assessment data to make decisions regarding referrals and interventions.
- Middle school reading teachers will continue to implement and refine our new approach to middle school reading intervention. Middle school reading teachers provide needs-based, focused, small group reading instruction. Reading intervention is scheduled on a rotational, short-term basis (Tier II) or in lieu of an academic course for the school year (Tier III) as determined by the school Student Support Team (SST). Based on achievement toward grade level reading expectations, students may exit or enter reading intervention support throughout the school year. For Tier III intervention, we have purchased a new research-based intervention program which incorporates daily instruction and practice with core reading strategies and, as needed, on-line practice with foundational word work/phonemic awareness skills.
- The high school reading intervention program continues as a Tier III program and utilizes a research based literacy intervention program. Reading Specialists provide pull-out services for Tier III and push in for Tier I and II based on scheduling and availability.
- Middle and high school mathematics use the TransMath program as the core resource to support Tier III intervention. Program materials include diagnostic and placement tests and core resources to support instruction aligned to targeted learning outcomes.

Transitional Language Program (TLP)

Bilingual programs (TLP) are mandated by the Connecticut State Department of Education whenever a public school has 20 or more students classified as dominant in the same language other than English. This year, we will have Spanish Transitional Language Programs at three schools: Charter Oak International Academy, Webster Hill Elementary, and Smith STEM School.

Summer Programs

Summer Connections – Charter Oak and Smith Elementary

In its sixth year, 94 selected students in grades 1 through 5 from Charter Oak International Academy and Smith STEM School attended the Summer Connections Program, held this summer at Charter Oak International Academy. There is no fee to participate in this four week extended school year program, and transportation is provided to students who live further than one mile from Charter Oak. A free, daily nutritious snack was provided to all students through a grant procured by Nutritional Services. Last year, the program was updated to reflect a cohesive instructional focus on the Common Core Standards in English Language Arts as well as foundational phonics and fluency skills critical to reading success. This year, the 14 teachers, special educators, and instructional support staff involved in the program also provided learning opportunities related to mathematics foundational skills. Parents/guardians, as well as each student's classroom teacher for the 2013-2014 school year, receive a progress report detailing student progress during the Summer Connections Program.

Summer ESOL Program

The Summer ESOL Program had 152 students in Grades 1 through 8 attending at Charter Oak International Academy. The curriculum focuses on West Hartford ESOL objectives and integrates reading, writing, and mathematics instruction. Students are divided into small, grade-level classes based on their English language fluency (beginner, intermediate, advanced). The continued support for this program ensures that students maintain and enhance their literacy skills during the summer months. There is no fee for participating, and transportation is provided to students who live further than one mile from the school. Students are provided a nutritious snack each day which is paid for through a grant procured by Nutrition Services. Parents/guardians, the 2014-2015 classroom teacher, and the building ESOL teacher receive a copy of their student's progress report which details language arts and math progress as well as personal and social development during the program's four weeks of instruction.

AP Boot Camp

Conard's AP Boot Camp program celebrated its third year providing students with an orientation to advanced placement course work and the opportunity to collaborate with their peers while exploring content and study skills necessary to be successful. Over 100 students engaged in workshops led by teachers and counselors with the majority of students being first-time enrollees in an AP class.

Supporting New Teachers and Administrators

The Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment and the Office of Human Resources partnered this summer in offering three days of voluntary new teacher induction workshops. Technology workshops included Intro to WHPS Network and Google Apps and PowerTeacher. Enrollment was as follows:

Course Title	Number of Participants
PowerTeacher	18
Intro to WHPS Network and Google Apps	43

In addition, throughout the summer, both online and class trainings were offered through the Information Technology Department.

Convocation

Mr. Steve Woznicki, principal of Braeburn School, and students from the Braeburn choir and instrumental ensembles (along with a talented group of Braeburn thespians!) welcomed the assembly and treated them to an original musical production titled “Learning is Growing.” Dr. Mark Overmeyer-Velasquez, Vice Chairperson of the Board of Education, greeted the faculty and staff with an energizing message of support and Emma Gibson, recent Braeburn graduate, captivated the audience with her insights on her experiences as an elementary student in West Hartford. Ms. Brittney Zeller, our 2014-2015 Teacher of the Year, shared her reflections as a teacher who came through the ranks in West Hartford and charmed the audience with a video adaptation of Dr. Seuss’ “Oh, The Places You’ll Go.” Superintendent Tom Moore provided an inspirational, motivating, and compelling address detailing his vision for the children of West Hartford, the “miracles” our teachers are privileged to have in their charge every day. He powerfully detailed his philosophy and expectations of each district teacher to provide “*Clear Paths. Bright Futures. No Limits.*” for every student in the West Hartford Public Schools.