

## **2013-2014 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 and Performance Plan is reviewed annually based on the district's progress toward achieving the Board of Education Goals for 2011-2014. 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 Increase opportunity for staff participation and engagement in monitoring and developing standards based curriculum, instruction and assessment
- 1.2 Create environments of collective inquiry focused on improving instruction and strengthening our supervisory practices
- 1.3 Use all elements of the Model of Continuous Improvement for curriculum, instruction and assessment related issues
- 1.4 Use the Secondary School reform legislation as a catalyst for positive and productive curricular and instructional changes

**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

**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 Provide the necessary structures, supports and resources to faculty and administrators to engage in collective inquiry
- 3.2 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**

On May 1, all elementary classroom teachers and designated support staff received professional development in the complementary subject area, on either Mathematics or English Language Arts, to prepare them for the second phase of implementation of new curriculum aligned to the Common Core. Teachers were presented with the major shifts in the corresponding subject areas, received an overview of the standards and critical areas of focus, a review of scope and sequence, and an introduction to the first curricular unit. The structure of on-going professional development in the new curricular area as well as sustainment professional development in the complementary curricular area is scheduled throughout the 2013-14 school year.

### **Secondary**

Secondary mathematics and special education teachers received professional development on strategies and related resources to support students identified for intervention.

## **Hartford Foundation Grant Summer Inter-district Workshop**

In conjunction with the Connecticut Council for Inter-Religious Understanding, and funded through a Hartford Foundation for Public Giving grant, 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 3.5 days between late June and August to be trained on the new Teacher Evaluation and Development Program. The focus of training in June was around the instructional framework with activities designed to help evaluators develop an understanding of the framework and to support the work at the school level to introduce and dissect the framework with teachers. The focus of the August training was around calibration with activities that involved reviews of evidence collected on sample lessons, measures of inter-rater agreement and the identification of areas of specific need within the evaluation process. Administrators were also trained on the TalentEd management system, an electronic tool to manage the goal setting and evaluation processes for the district. Administrators will turn-key this training in the buildings in order to train their staff on the use of this platform.

## **Advanced Placement**

This summer, a total of seven secondary school teachers attended summer workshops to support their professional development relative to teaching within the Advanced Placement program. Participation included teachers from the Social Studies, Science and Math departments and supported the following courses: AP Biology, AP Chemistry, AP Modern European History, AP US History, AP US Government and AP Computer Science. Introductory and advanced programs supported both new and veteran AP teachers.

## **Science, Math, Engineering and Technology Programming**

This summer, 15 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 also marks the second summer for 10 of the participants in the 3 course series offered by the Connecticut Science Center, with the STEM Specialist and Science Teacher completing the 2nd and 3rd course this summer and beginning the process for becoming trainers for the Inquiry Learning professional development series.

## **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 CPDC and enacted by the PK-12 curriculum leadership. During the 2012-2013 school year, vertical teams in the disciplines of Mathematics, Technology Education, REACH and AIMS and among related services, the area of Occupational and Physical Therapy, presented during the course of the year. Feedback from the CPDC provided direction for curriculum renewal and improvement and Department Development and Performance Planning. During the 2013-2014 school year, the following areas are under review: World Language, Library Media and Educational Technology, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and among related services, the areas of Speech and Language Pathology and services for the Hearing Impaired.

## **Summer Curriculum Writing**

Priority for summer curriculum writing centered 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 Visual Arts, and World Language.

### **Elementary:**

- Elementary teacher and curriculum specialist teams completed work on two new curricular units (English Language Arts Grades 1, 3, 5 and Mathematics Grades K, 2, 4) and two revised units (English Language Arts Grades K, 2, 4 and Mathematics Grades 1, 3, 5). This work, based on the Rigorous Curriculum Design model, included the development of pre- and post-assessments, identification of key teaching points, big ideas, and essential questions, identification of and alignment to resources and the development of assured learning experiences.
- Two elementary Quest teachers joined the middle school math department as they designed Grade 7 Math Honors curriculum units. Through this work, the Math Quest teachers developed a revised Grade 5 Math Quest program, aligned the Common Core State Standards 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 on the development of common assessments and performance tasks. Grade 11, traditionally more of an elective year, was a new area of focus with work centered around the development of a common framework that establishes required skills and expectations aligned to the Common Core.
- Mathematics teachers revised the grades 6-8 curriculum based on the results of the year 1 transition to Common Core. Specific work centered around the review of the big ideas and essential questions for each unit through the lens of cognitive rigor, performance task development and continued review and refinement of the honors math curricula. High school teachers similarly focused on revision of unit frames and the development of

performance tasks for Algebra I and Geometry. Algebra II teachers conducted an initial framing of units across the CCSS standards in order to develop a scope and sequence from which teachers can plan lessons.

- Science teachers developed curriculum for a new course, Science Research Internship, a 12<sup>th</sup> grade science elective. In addition to their curriculum work, a small team conducted the mandatory annual chemical inventory.
- Social Studies teachers from grades 7-10 framed new curricular units through the creation of essential questions, enduring understandings, assessments and activities for grade level middle school courses, Modern World History and US History.
- World Language teachers were trained on the rigorous curriculum design model, adapting processes and structures to fit their subject area, and then created new units and evaluated resources for elementary, middle and high school courses.
- Visual Arts teachers drafted curriculum for two new courses, Design in Everyday Life and Visual Concepts. In addition, the curriculum team spent time reviewing the recently released PK-12 National Core Arts Standards to provide feedback, align expectations and conduct a needs assessment based on any major changes to standards.
- Career & Technical Education Department held summer curriculum workshops to support new units of instruction for Technology and Engineering within the middle school curriculum. High School efforts for curricular review and revision targeted three additional areas: Business & Finance - Computer Applications/Office and Intro to Business/Entrepreneurship, Family & Consumer Science - Interior Design, and Technology & Engineering - Electronics/Robotics.

## **Textbook Purchases**

### **Elementary**

- Purchased trade books and non-fiction titles for classroom libraries in grades 1, 3, and 5 in support of instructional units in opinion, information and narrative writing
- Purchased Lucy Calkins' Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing for Grades K-5 to incorporate into new and revised units in English/Language Arts
- Common Core Mathematics professional text/resource, *Teaching Student-Centered Mathematics* (Van DeWalle et.al.) purchased for all PreK-5 teachers as well as elementary special services resource teachers, curriculum specialists, and principals

### **Middle School**

- English Language Arts: trade books in support of new curricular units with a focus on non-fiction and more complex texts
- Mathematics: Transmath resources for Developmental Mathematics (Tier III)
- World Language: textbooks for 8<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish

### **High School**

- English Language Arts: trade books in support of new curricular units with a focus on non-fiction and more complex texts

- Mathematics: Transmath resources for Pre-Algebra and Fundamentals of Mathematics (Tier III and Special Education)
- Science: textbook replacing current AP Biology and AP Chemistry in accordance with curricular changes and textbook lifecycle
- World Language: textbooks to support Spanish I, II, V, VI and AP Spanish

## **Scientifically Research Based Interventions (SRBI) Work**

### **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 to 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.
- 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 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. **Performance Plus**, our new student data management platform should simplify this process moving forward. The only significant change to the structure of SSTs for the coming year is the increased focus on academics to balance the historical focus on behavior.
- The MAZE assessment remains in place as the universal screening tool for secondary literacy. The universal screen for mathematics in grades 6-8 will be AIMSweb, extending this nationally normed tool's use to K-8. 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.
- Our middle school reading intervention model has been revised to align with State of CT SRBI guidelines through a research-based, tiered approach to reading instruction. Rather than teaching comprehension through social studies content, middle school reading teachers will provide needs-based, focused reading instruction necessary for students to meet grade level standards. Students identified for reading intervention will receive small group reading instruction with a middle school reading specialist. These small groups will be organized based on student needs (e.g., comprehension, fluency, decoding). Reading intervention will be 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 at established points throughout the school year.

- 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 will have a new core resource to support Tier III intervention programs to include diagnostic and placement testing materials 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 two schools: Webster Hill Elementary and Smith STEM School.

## **Summer Programs**

### **Summer Connections – Charter Oak and Smith Elementary**

In its fifth year, 106 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. This year, the primary objective of the program was updated to reflect a focus on the Common Core Standards in English-Language Arts as well as foundational phonics and fluency skills critical to reading success. The Common Core Anchor Standards and related new instructional materials provided a cohesive focus for instruction throughout the four weeks of the program. 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 155 students in Grades 1 through 8 attending at Smith STEM School. 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 Smith. Students are provided a snack each day. This year, students had the opportunity to borrow library books during the four weeks of this extended school year program. Parents/guardians, the 2013-2014 classroom teacher, and the 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.

## **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:

<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
PowerTeacher	21
Intro to WHPS Network and Google Apps	37

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

## **Convocation**

Mr. Julio Duarte, Interim Principal of Conard High School, and students from the Conard string, woodwind, brass, and percussion instrumental groups, along with the Solo Choir performers, welcomed the assembly and treated them to inspiring musical interludes. Mr. Bruce Puttermann, Chairperson of the Board of Education, greeted the faculty and staff and Molly Matalon, Conard senior, presented a video and shared reflections on her experiences as a student in West Hartford. Mr. John Mastroianni, our 2013-2014 Teacher of the Year, performed a jazz composition accompanied by four of his Hall High School jazz students and his son, Nick. Dr. Karen List addressed the district complementing them on their collaborative efforts in their commitment to the Common Core State Standards achieved during this past year and the numerous challenges ahead. This year, the award-winning acting ensemble, Wavelength, inspired the audience with humorous vignettes titled “UnCommon Core Comedy.”