

Initiatives Update

Dear Teachers and Staff,

I hope that you were able to rest during your holiday vacation. It is hard to believe that the first half of this school year is already coming to a close. As we head into 2016, I am reminded of the importance of our work as a school community and the impact that we all have on children. Our work together through partnerships, committees, and collaborative opportunities is building a stronger educational system. I thank you for your continued participation and support. Great things are in store for North Smithfield Schools in 2016!

-Clare

Important Dates:

January 6th- Science Curriculum HS Chemistry

January 7th- HS Community of Practice – Grade 9 English

January 8th- HS Community of Practice- Grade 10 English

January 13th- Science Curriculum HS Chemistry

January 20th- Science Curriculum HS Chemistry

January 25th- Professional Development Advisory Committee

January 27th- Science Curriculum HS Chemistry

February 3rd- Science Curriculum Grades 3&4

February 3rd- Math Textbook Committee meeting (grades 3-5)

February 10th- Science Curriculum Grades 3&4

CIA Night

Our first CIA Night – Secrets Revealed took place this past fall. All NSES and Halliwell parents were invited to the NSES library at 6pm to learn about the common core standards, curriculum development, parent resources, PARCC assessment and much more. The night was broken into four presentations: 1) Curriculum and Initiatives, 2) English Language Arts, 3) Mathematics, and 4) Technology in the classroom. I am so very appreciative of all who volunteered to present: Tracey Lafreniere, Kelley Hubacz, Jennifer Daigneault, Kristin Murphy, Diane Kohler, Diane Jolin, Sarah Glover and Andrea McKay. We will be planning to implement a similar night for North Smithfield Middle School and High School.



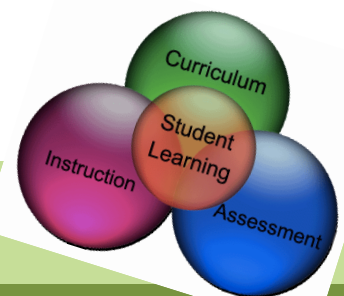


Blended Learning

The world our children face is rapidly changing, requiring new skills and preparation to be ready for college, career and citizenship. A blended approach enables educators to integrate technology with face-to-face instruction to differentiate and personalize learning for all students. Through engaging and rigorous standards-based instruction, blended learning allows all students to reach their potential. All teachers have participated in a series of professional development sessions supported by the NS Technology Resident Expert team. This team of teachers and administrators pursue

additional professional development opportunities and then share knowledge gained with colleagues during professional development days. This past fall the team participated in the MassCue technology professional development conference. Many of our offerings for the November PD day stemmed from the MassCue conference. Our November PD day had a variety of technology offerings for all skill levels. North Smithfield Schools has also partnered with the Highlander Institute, funded by The Learning Accelerator, to implement the Fuse RI initiative. This initiative strives

to share, implement, evaluate, and scale blended learning (integrating technology into instruction) by working with educators and districts across the state. As part of the FUSE initiative, North Smithfield Schools will be supported through the creation of tailored resource playlists, statewide professional learning communities around identified topics, collaboration opportunities with other LEAs, workshops, events, and consulting support.



Book Clubs & Discussion Groups

Two book clubs were established this year. Both groups have met to discuss and reflect on the themes and instructional strategies learned. The first book, Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol Dweck focused on the core belief that intelligence and abilities can be developed. The second book club book was The Gift of Dyslexia by Ron Davis. This book gives the reader a unique perspective of dyslexia, as well as, strategies for the classroom. It is always great to meet with groups of teachers after school hours to discuss the art and craft of teaching. Thank you to all who participated.



Community of Practice – Shared Classroom Initiative

All K-12 ELA and Math teachers are participating in our Community of Practice – Shared Classroom Initiative. The premise of the initiative is simple; by visiting other classrooms we can gain exposure to varied teaching practices, reflect on our own practices and encourage conversation about the art and craft of teaching. In addition, this initiative will serve as another vehicle to ensure that our curriculum is articulated and aligned K-12. Most recently, our high school English visited two third grade classrooms. The discussions that stemmed from the observations were excellent. Thank you to Ms. Carla Giarusso Ms. Tracy Nangle, Mr. Thomas Yeaw and Ms. Sarah Glover for volunteering to be host teachers. If you would like to be a host teacher, please let me know.

NGSS

Rhode Island has adopted new science standards called the “Next Generation Science Standards.” The standards have been internationally benchmarked, are organized across disciplines and grades and emphasize scientific practice. There is a significant difference between developing or revising curriculum and units of study based on previous standards and developing curriculum and units of study based on new standards. When new standards are adopted, teams of teachers first have to study the new standards prior to grouping them into units. This year North Smithfield Schools is in the process of developing Science curricula to align with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS.) We are creating curriculum guides that 'unpack' each standard, a curriculum map that shows which standards we are teaching by quarter and units of study based on the Understanding by Design (Ubd) format. After the curriculum is written we will be making live binders of the work and embedding into curriculum website. Thus far we have completed HS Biology and Grades 5-8. North Smithfield High School has teamed up with Burrillville High School Science teachers to study the standards and develop the new curriculum. The participation of the science curriculum committee members is much appreciated.

High School Science

The Rhode Island Department of Education has released the 2015 NECAP Science results. North Smithfield Schools saw significant increases in student achievement in science at the high school level. North Smithfield High School increased proficiency levels by 18% in one year. The RI Department of Education reported that the North Smithfield School District (tied with Chariho) has the honor and distinction to have the highest amount of growth (25.9%.) Bravo to our teachers and students!



Collaboration

Resident Experts...

Are you interested in becoming a “Resident Expert?” Our “Resident Expert” program is a system and structure that we have designed to do a deep study of a topic and provide professional development to faculty. Possible topics to be studied include: student engagement strategies, parcc assessment, Next Generation Science Standards, and questioning techniques. If you are interested shoot me an email. I will be bringing ideas to the Professional Development Advisory Committee. We will develop committees based on interest. Thanks for any consideration.

Policy Committee

The newly formed NS Policy committee worked this past fall developing the K-12 Homework policy. The completed policy was recommended to the Superintendent and adopted by the school committee. I am appreciative of the work of the committee members: William Pepin, E. Claire McWilliams, Keri Blais, Corinne Ferri, Diane Kohler and Jen Daigneault. Thank you for your time and support. If you are interested in joining the policy committee, all are welcome.



Professional Development Advisory Committee

The last professional development day was a huge success. The Professional Development Advisory Committee worked last year to help to extend and refine professional development sessions and offerings. The day was broken up into three blocks of time. Teachers were able to choose from a menu of sessions. The variety of offerings made it a rich learning experience for all involved. The third block of time was dedicated to Professional Learning Communities. We could not have offered such a dynamic menu without our teacher leaders and administrators:

Google Classroom- Tracey Nangle
ADHD Resources and Strategies-

Mary Ellen Tillotson
Math Data Analysis – PARCC-
Clare Arnold, John Lahar
Helping Students with Loss and Grief- Bill Pepin, Michelle Halloran
Preschool Initiatives and Standards Based Reporting-
Andrea Carey
Chromebooks and Google Apps Basics- Melissa Mathurin
Google Forms/Flubaroo- James Williamson
Remind 101/Twitter PLN- Angela Crossman
Game Based Apps for Instruction- Sarah Glover
Google Drawing/Formatting- Andrea McKay
Google Time- Steve Boss
Extensions, Apps and Add-Ons- Deana Cook
Integrating Technology into Instruction- Diane Jolin

IXL Math Overview- John Lahar
PARCC Writing Samples (Woot...woot!)- Clare Arnold
Big Ideas Math- Thomas Yeaw
Digital Citizenship/Online Safety- Lt. Stephen Riccitelli
Movement in the Elementary Classroom- Jen Daigneault
Google Sketch Up- 3D Modeling- Tim McGee

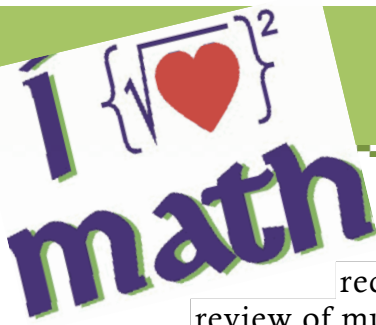
All teachers fill out an online PD feedback form at the close of the PD day. The feedback couldn't have been better! The time, energy and efforts of our PDAC, teacher leaders and administrators are truly appreciated.

A Walk in the PARCC!!!

The PARCC consortium released some of the test items from last spring with supporting materials including: rubrics, item sets and sample student responses. Click the following link to access the MATH/ELA released assessments and supporting materials:

https://prc.parcconline.org/assessments/parcc-released-items/8th-grade-math-pba-sample-student-responses-item-13-1419-m21875?title=&field_subject_tid=&field_grade_level_unlimited_tid=10





Math Updates and Information

The “Big Ideas” Math Program - textbooks and materials are in full use in Grades 6 through Algebra II. The program had been unanimously recommended by our Math Program Selection Committee after a thorough review of multiple programs. The new math materials are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and include the textbook, an online text subscription, student consumable journals, online tutorials and assessment software. The program was developed in a way that will help students master content through inductive reasoning opportunities, engaging activities that provide deeper understanding, rich thought-provoking exercises, and a continual building on what has been previously taught.

We are continuing to implement our K-12 comprehensive assessment system in math. All teachers (K through Algebra II) administer curriculum embedded unit assessments based on the major content standards taught within each unit. During our Community of Practice – Shared Classroom Initiative days we will analyze results and discuss strengths and areas in need of improvement.

This year we have established grades 3-5 Math Program Recommendation Committee. The goal of this committee is to review, evaluate and recommend a new math program that will enhance our current curriculum. Committee members will have an opportunity to utilize materials, review and share thoughts, as well as, participate in program presentations. Ms. Deana Cook is leading this committee and we are appreciative of her time, energy and effort.

The two elementary schools are in the process of implementing the IXL online learning platform. IXL is a platform for K–12 math practice and skills. All questions are algorithmically generated, meaning that every question is unique, and students never see repeats no matter how long they practice. For teachers, IXL provides insight into student performance through reports and data analysis tools. The students who have begun to use it have found it engaging and fun.

We are thrilled to have been able to once again implement our Math Intervention program at the elementary level. Through the use of early intervening service grant funding we are able to support two part time teachers. Ms. Cook and Ms. St. Pere are welcome additions to our faculties.

Google Summit

NS is sending a team to the New England Google Summit featuring Google for Education. It will be held in Burlington, Massachusetts on March 12th and 13th. If you are interested in participating, send an email to carnold@nsp.us

We will be creating the team that will participate in the summit and then be willing to lead PD sessions for the district.

