

Initiatives Update

Dear Teachers,

It has been quite a year for the curriculum department- changing standards, developing curriculum and implementing new/comprehensive programs is an enormous undertaking. It involves studying standards, identifying best practices for instruction, compiling resources for instruction, developing assessments, creating rubrics, analyzing data, organizing systems and structures to inform community and much more. I say this all because I want to acknowledge your work, effort and commitment. I feel so very blessed to be able to work with the teachers and administrators of North Smithfield.

This newsletter communication is simply to keep you all in the loop.

-Clare



PE Curriculum and Task Force

The K-12 Physical Education curriculum is complete. Each team of teachers met for four days to develop a curriculum guide, curriculum map, units of study and scoring rubrics. The curriculum is thorough, thoughtful and clear. I sincerely appreciate our teachers' tremendous effort and time. Once the documents are finalized, they will be uploaded into a 'live binder' and will be available on the North Smithfield curriculum website. The Physical education Task Force team met regularly throughout the curriculum writing process. The team developed a mission statement and guiding beliefs, which is the cornerstone of the curriculum work. The task force participated in engaging conversations about instruction, teaching and learning strategies, and grading practices. The task force ensured through their participation and communication that our curriculum is articulated and truly aligned K-12. With much appreciation, I would like recognize Pam Authier, Jeff Crins, Nancy Crowell, Mary DiSpirito, Kathleen Fagnant, James Fitzgerald, Amy Gravel, Mark LaBossiere, Christina Lima, Alisha Pirri, Ariana Stranton and Matthew Tek for their commitment and energy to this work!!!

District Data Team

This year we have developed and implemented a District Data Use Team. This team is participating in a Data Use Professional Development series to learn and implement a culture of collaborative data use. These educators will be critical in implementing and maintaining data-driven instructional practices at the district and school level. We truly appreciate the time and effort of the team members: Jilian Bitee, Cheryl Sachs, Mark Salisbury, Renee Guertin, Angela DaCosta, Michelle Halloran, Mary Ellen Tillotson, Amy Gibbins, William Pepin, Carolyn Frayne, Diane Jolin, John Lahar and Robert Mezzanotte. The District Data Use team is in the process of analyzing mathematics data across the district and will ultimately make recommendations about strengths, areas in need of improvement, as well as, recommendations for future professional development sessions.

K-12 Mathematics Task Force

The math task force has been a really powerful group of educators that come together to discuss 'where we are' and 'where we are going' with regards to the mathematics curriculum implementation. Through honest conversations, we have been able to make timely decisions that impact our implementation process. For example, the grant funded "Mathematics Curriculum and Assessment Refinement Project" was the 'brainchild' of this group. The next Mathematics Task Force meeting will be held on April 9th at 3:00pm in the KD conference room.

Social Studies Curriculum Development Update

This year, we are writing social studies curriculum for grades 7-12. The reason we decided to put K-6 social studies curriculum writing 'on-hold' for now is simply because K-6 classroom teachers instruct in all subjects and are in the process of implementing new curriculum in ELA and Math. The 7-12 teachers began the curriculum process by meeting for a full day during a PD day to determine the content, courses, and framework - including a 7-12 scope and sequence of topics. Each grade level/course team will meet for four days to unpack each standard, develop a curriculum guide, group standards into units of study, identify 'best-practice' teaching strategies, develop units and create rubrics. Our Social Studies task force is in the process of creating a mission and guiding beliefs as the foundation of our curriculum work. The NS social studies teachers have been amazingly committed to this important project.

ELA Task Force

I'd like to get the band back together! All teachers are welcome to join. We will look back on the work that we have completed, discuss implementation strengths and areas of need, as well as, make plans for future professional development and initiatives. Our meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 19th at 3:00. We will meet in room 348 of the middle school. I am looking forward to it!!!

Standards Based Report Cards

Our new K-5 standards based report card is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The new report card allows a teacher to communicate accurately a student's progress towards meeting standards at critical junctures through the school year, providing parents with better understanding of their child's strengths and weaknesses. The report card is organized by trimesters to allow teachers to conduct in-depth assessments and give students the appropriate amount of time to demonstrate proficiency. The new report card has been uploaded into the North Smithfield Student Information System, Infinite Campus. K-5 teachers have been able to input grades electronically, scoring students by standard using a four-point scale. There are numerous resources and information (parent guides, frequently asked questions, and samples) about the report card on the elementary schools websites. We have had a few 'bumps in the road' mainly, not having a comments section because our SIS system doesn't support it, but hopefully in time we will find a 'user friendly' alternative. I appreciate all the time and effort of our SBRC committee!

Formative Assessment – Resident Expert Team

We have developed a "Formative Assessment - Resident Expert Team" of teachers to study, research and compile resources about formative assessment practices and strategies to enhance instruction and student learning. We are grateful for the work and commitment of our teachers: Jessica Phaneuf, Lindsay Brooks, Jaclyn Cunningham, Kelly Hubacz, Bernadette Hawkins and Tracy Lafreniere. The team will share knowledge and resources during faculty meetings, via the NS Formative Assessment blog and will also create a "formative assessment" library of resources located in a faculty lunchroom within each building.



The Formative Assessment Professional Development course is currently available to all Rhode Island educators through RIDemap. To access the modules, please log into RIDemap and select the blue Formative Assessment PD link on the right side of the page.

I look forward to working with this talented group of teachers and will certainly keep you all posted with updates and information.

Mathematics Parent Communication

The “Mathematics Core Implementation and Parent Communication Project” is a project supporting the launch of mathematics curriculum implementation aligned to the common core standards. To propel and support the implementation, this project consists of developing *communication tools for parents*. The parent communication tool is a guide for each mathematics unit of study (all grade levels have a total of five units of study for the year) and will be available online and in hard copy. The guides (currently in development) clearly explain the standards taught in the unit, has suggestions for parents as to how to support their child, links to online videos and practice sites by standard and examples of problems to solve for practice by standard. The guide is driven by these parent questions... What is my child learning in math? How can I support my child? Where can I find online resources for tutorials and practice? What types of math problems will my child have to solve? When will my child be assessed on these standards? Are there practice problems I can do with my child? This initiative is on-going, thus far I have received positive feedback from teachers and parents.

Professional Development Advisory Committee

I would like to expand our Professional Development Advisory team. Currently we have four educators (one from each building) that meet with me to discuss professional development plans and initiatives. Ideally, I would like to have two building administrators and eight teachers participate. This team will look at the system and structure of our current PD days and make some recommendations to extend and refine our system. It is a voluntary group that would meet after school. If you are interested in serving, please shoot me an email.

K-5 Writing Assessments

The fabulous K-5 curriculum writers and grade level teams organized the writing genres into three trimester focus areas. For example, during trimester two for second grade, the focus area of instruction is ‘opinion writing’ which constitutes approximately 60% of instructional time. This leaves 20% of the time for Narrative writing and 20% for Informational writing. It is a great framework that gives the educator clear path to follow. For each focus area, our literacy department developed/modified on-demand prompts that align with the focus area. I can’t tell you all enough how impressed I have been with the student products that you all have been sharing with me. Seriously, it is almost breathtaking to see what our littlest ones are able to produce. In the future, I would love to do some collaborative scoring and discussion.... But one thing at a time, we can table that idea for now.

Google Docs Initiative

Google Docs is a free web-based office suite offered by Google within its Google Drive service. It allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating with other users live. This year, we are working to simply create accounts for teachers. As we move forward, I am confident that it will be a worthwhile initiative that will create a system of collaboration.

ELA Curriculum Update

In April of 2012, North Smithfield Schools began the development of a K-12 English Language Arts Curriculum aligned with the Common Core State standards. Our teachers worked tirelessly in grade level/department teams, as well as, across and between grade levels to pinpoint instructional standards, expectations and instructional shifts from Grade Level Expectations to the Common Core State Standards. It was an enormous initiative and demonstrates the dedication of our teachers.

Our curriculum is designed based on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Model Content Framework for ELA, organizing the standards into modules that include the knowledge and skills students will learn and apply throughout the year.

To access our ELA curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards, visit the NS curriculum website, hover over the 'Curriculum' tab (top left) then hover over 'NS K-12 ELA Curriculum' and select the grade level. The curriculum documents were organized using live binders. Each tab holds critical documents essential to our programming. We will continue to refine and update the binders.



This year (really it was just last week) we have begun to modify and update our ELA curriculum guides. There have been many resources and documents that have been created since we originally developed the ELA curriculum. This past Wednesday our 9th and 10th grade English teachers met for a full day to refine our work. Curriculum refinement is an ongoing process that we will continue this spring and into next year.

Mathematics Curriculum and Assessment Refinement Project

Grant funds were secured to implement the “Mathematics Curriculum and Assessment Refinement Project.” This project is a multifaceted project supporting the launch of Mathematics Curriculum implementation aligned to the Common Core Standards. To support the curriculum implementation, all K-12 Mathematics teachers (by grade/department) continue to work in *professional learning communities* to refine work completed in the Spring 2013. Teachers work together and review the newly released PARCC sample items, make adjustments and modifications to curriculum maps now that teachers have had a chance to begin implementing. Each grade level/department will meet for four full days. During this time teachers make necessary changes to the unit assessments (based on an analysis of the parcc sample items), as well as, the parent/student study guides that accompany each unit of study. Teachers share experiences with the new curriculum, identify successful strategies as well as barriers to implementation. Each team continues to brainstorm solutions to the barriers identified. The unit assessment (five units per grade level) data will also be analyzed by major content standard. All student data is available to teachers through a shared Google doc, which illustrates the percentage of points attained by each student focusing on the major content standards within the unit. Of all the projects this year, I have enjoyed this one the most. Observing teachers work in grade level teams has been like watching an artisan create. Really, it is a privilege to work



Argument Writing

Our teachers, Jen Daigneault, Corinne Ferri, Tracey Nangle and Hannah Cevoli volunteered to study the common core standards, compile resources to support us as we transition to the CCSS. The team created a blog that all teachers could access to share instructional strategies, tips, and ideas.

<http://nsargumentwritingblog.wordpress.com>

All NS teachers are welcome to participate! You may participate by: (A) Visiting and reading the blog (B) by commenting on posts and information or (C) by posting your own blog posts sharing your experiences with implementing argument writing.

Mathematics Unit Assessment Project

This Mathematics Assessment Project utilized grant funds to convene a group of K-12 teacher leaders to study assessment best practices, research on-line resources and develop mathematics unit assessments aligned to the common core standards. The unit assessments were formatted to align with newly developed curriculum based on the PARCC model Content Frameworks and Common Core Standards as well as the development of rubrics to assess mathematical practices. Developing unit assessments aligned to the developed curriculum based on the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC content frameworks was critical piece. The unit assessments help clarify the level of rigor expected from the standards and allow for measuring student proficiency of those target skills as the year of instruction progresses. Each assessment has a variety of DOK questions in a multiple choice, short answer and constructed response format. Teachers utilized resources available (Illustrative Mathematics Project funded through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, IMS system, RIDE test construction tool, Khan Academy and many more vetted resources) and compiled assessment questions/problems by grade level and standard. This initiative has proven to be challenging in so many ways, but equally it has been powerful as we flipped the switch to the common core. I am not exactly sure how to thank folks for thousands of hours of work. So, I say ‘thank you’ knowing that it is not enough.



PARCC Field Test

In spring of 2015, the PARCC assessment will replace NECAP. The PARCC assessment is aligned to the Common Core Standards and is part of a multi-state consortium.

In spring of **2014**, the PARCC Field Test will be administered to more than one million students across the 18 PARCC states and the District of Columbia. This Field Test represents a critical milestone in PARCC's work toward building assessments for the 2014-15 school year and will give students and local educators the opportunity to experience the administration of PARCC assessments. The Field Test will be conducted in a random selection of schools across the PARCC consortium, and the sample of students in the selected schools will represent the demographics of each state and of PARCC as a whole.

The Field Test will be divided into two separate “testing windows” in spring 2014. The Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) will be administered during the *March 24th to April 11th* test window. The End-of-Year (EOY) assessments will be administered during the *May 5th to June 6th* test window.

Common Core Transition Plan

The North Smithfield School Community has dedicated a tremendous amount of time, energy, and effort to transition to the Common Core State Standards. These comprehensive changes will make a positive difference in the learning and growth of our students. For more information, see our transition plan by clicking on the 'Common Core' tab at the top of the NS Curriculum Website.