

Initiatives Update

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to the 14-15 school year!

This year we will develop foreign Language curriculum, develop k-12 music curriculum, implement ELA and math curriculum/instruction refinement days, begin to study the Next Generation Science Standards, implement the “Community of Practice – Shared Classroom Initiative” and begin to develop a project based learning initiative. We have re-worked the structure of PD days with the help of the PD advisory committee. The curriculum website is updated with dates and information. I am looking forward to a wonderful year of learning and laughter.

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

-Clare



ELA/Math Instruction Refinement Days

This grant-funded initiative is a multifaceted project supporting the launch of ELA and Mathematics Curriculum implementation aligned to the Common Core Standards. The North Smithfield School Department has completed the development of ELA and Mathematics curricula. The curriculum includes a curriculum guide, which ‘unpacks’ each standard, a curriculum map displaying the standards in order of instruction, units of study based on the Understanding by Design (UbD) format. To propel and support the implementation, all K-12 Mathematics/ELA teachers (by grade/department) will work in professional learning communities to refine and support instruction. Each grade level/department will meet for three full days. Teachers will share experiences with the new curriculum, identify successful strategies as well as barriers to implementation. I look forward to meeting with these awesome teacher teams! All dates are posted on the NS Curriculum website.

PD Advisory Committee

The Professional Development Advisory Committee worked last year to refine the structure of PD days. This year, each of the four PD days (there will be a few exceptions) will be broken into three sessions. One session will focus on technology, one session will focus on instruction and one session will be reserved for grade level/department meetings. The first PD day on September 9th followed this format. The technology session focused on Google Apps. The instruction session focused on questioning techniques. This session was planned based on the recommendation from the District Evaluation Committee. During the third session, teachers worked in department/grade level meetings.

K-12 Mathematics Task Force – Bring on the New Year!

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. The first K-12 Math Common Core Task Force meeting is scheduled for October 27th @ 3:00pm at KD. Go Math!

Foreign Language Curriculum

This year North Smithfield Schools will develop Foreign Language curricula. We are excited to do this work in collaboration with Burrillville Foreign Language teachers. We will create 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. During the curriculum development we will establish a "Task Force" which will meet after school to review research, and ensure the curriculum is articulated and aligned across and between grade levels.

Mathematics Parent Communication Project

The “Mathematics Core Implementation and Parent Communication Project” was a project we launched last year to support the implementation of the curriculum aligned to the common core standards. This project consisted 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 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.

All guides have been embedded into livebinders on the curriculum website. We will continue to extend and refine this project throughout the 14-15 school year.

Formative Assessment – Resident Expert Team

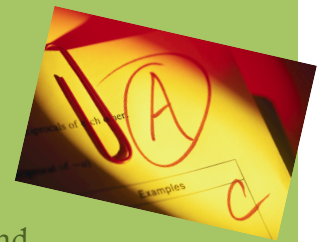
We have developed a “Formative Assessment -

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.



Important Dates:

- September 17th** – Foreign Language I (French and Spanish)
- September 17th-** Foreign Language Task Force meeting @ 2:45 NSMS room 348
- September 24th-** Foreign Language I (French and Spanish)
- September 25th-** Curriculum and Instruction Refinement- HS English 9/10 (3)
- September 26th-** Curriculum and Instruction Refinement- HS English 11/12 (3)
- October 1st-** Foreign Language I (French and Spanish)
- October 2nd-** Curriculum and Instruction Refinement- HS Math/ALg (4)
- October 3rd-** Curriculum and Instruction Refinement- Grade 3
- October 3rd-** Curriculum and Instruction Refinement- HS Math/Geo (2)
- October 8th-** Foreign Language I (French and Spanish)
- October 9th-** Curriculum and Instruction Refinement- Grade 1
- October 10th-** Curriculum and Instruction Refinement- Grade 4
- October 15th-** Foreign Language II (French and Spanish)
- October 15th-** Foreign Language Task Force meeting @ 2:45 NSMS room 348
- October 16th-** Curriculum and Instruction Refinement- Grade K
- October 17th-** Curriculum and Instruction Refinement- Grade 5
- October 6th-** K-12 Literacy Meeting/Formative assessment
- October 6th-** Professional Development Advisory Committee Meeting 3:00 @ KD
- October 22nd-** Foreign Language II (French and Spanish)
- October 23rd-** Curriculum and Instruction Refinement- Grade 2
- October 27th-** K-12 Math Task Force meeting 3:00 @ KD
- October 29th-** Foreign Language II (French and Spanish)
- November 3rd-** Title I meeting/planning session 12:00-3:30

Resident Experts- Wanted!

Are you interested in becoming a “Resident Expert?” Our “Resident Expert” program in 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.



Community of Practice – Shared Classroom Initiative

I am excited to invite all K-12 ELA and Math teachers to participate in our **Community of Practice – Shared Classroom Initiative**. The purpose is to generate meaningful conversations about pedagogy by organizing opportunities for teachers to ‘share’ our classrooms as way of exchanging ideas.

The premise of the initiative is simple; by visiting other classrooms within our district 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.

The development of this initiative stemmed from last year’s “K-12 Math Tours.” Groups of teachers “toured” each other’s classrooms, this project received positive feedback from all teachers involved: host teachers and invited guests.

Who: All K-12 ELA and Math Teachers

What: Community of Practice – Shared Classroom Initiative

Where: Groups of teachers will visit a classroom (not within your own building) during each of the three “Curriculum and Instruction Refinement Days”

When: Dates for the ELA/Math “Curriculum and Instruction Refinement Days” are posted on Curriculum website. Each grade level/department will meet for three full days throughout the 14-15 school year.

Why: To generate meaningful conversations about pedagogy by organizing opportunities for teachers to ‘share’ our classrooms as way of exchanging ideas.

How: To sign up to be a ‘host’ teacher, simply add your name to the shared Google Doc. A representative from each grade level/dept. will email a host teacher to set up a visit. Once a visit is scheduled, please note it in the shared Google Doc.



Standards, Practices & Relationships

When it comes to any academic initiatives - I believe and have believed for quite a long time that there are three main ingredients. They are standards, practices and relationships. Standards- we have to know what we should be teaching and what product we ultimately want the kids to produce. Practices- this is the art and craft of teaching, how we engage our learners. Relationships- relationships with students, parents, colleagues and administrators. Each is equally important. Although we regularly work on and discuss standards and practices, developing relationships is sometimes overlooked. I am going ask you to reflect at some point this year about how you build strong relationships. No protocol, no forced care and share, no rubrics.... just reflect. And if you have the chance please, when the time is right, share your reflections with a colleague in a genuine way, simply because strengthening relationships is worthy of conversation.

Curriculum and PD Systems and Structure

There are many guiding documents, programs and committees that work in tandem for the purpose of improving instruction, professional development and student achievement. Programs and initiatives that we support are informed by many moving pieces. A couple examples of this is:

- Our math curriculum teams and task force built an assessment system aligned to ccss standards. Teachers implemented curriculum/assessments and scored unit assessments by standard. The results were uploaded into shared Google docs. The District Data Team analyzed data and made recommendations to the Professional Development Advisory Committee (PDAC.) The PDAC then built time into each PD day for grade levels/depts. to meet to review recommendations and inform instruction.
- Another example includes work from our District Evaluation Committee (DEC.) The DEC recommended that questioning techniques be an area of focus for the coming year based on evaluation data. On the September 9th PD day, all classroom teachers will participate in a Questioning Techniques session. This PD also supports the work we have done with McRel "Classroom Instruction that Works" and our Formative Assessment initiative.

Guiding Structures-

- RI Basic Education Program (BEP)
District Strategic Plan
Curriculum Cycle
Survey Results
Professional Development Advisory Committee
Curriculum Task Force Teams by Content Area

Sub-committees:

- Formative Assessment Resident Expert Team
Argument Writing Resident Expert team
District Data Use Team

The Curriculum/PD Components:

- Study of the Standards, Curriculum and Units
Professional Development (teaching practices/implementation)
Assessments (formative and summative)
Materials for Implementation



Common Core Standards App

There's an App for that!!! Check out the Common Core Standards App! This free App allows you to view the CCSS quickly by subject, grade and subject category (domain/cluster.) It includes Math K-12 and Language Arts K-12. To find it, simply search "Common Core Standards" ...it was developed by MasteryConnect.

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.