

Curriculum Update - Fall 2015



OFFICE OF CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION, SOUTH WINDSOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Message from Daniel S. Hansen, Assistant Superintendent

The Fall 2015 *Curriculum Update* provides another opportunity for our curriculum leaders to share exciting developments in each of our curriculum areas. We welcome two new curriculum specialists to our team this year. Steven Albrecht is our new K-12 Curriculum Specialist for Educational Technology, which is a new position that will support teachers in maximizing the use of technology as a tool to enhance instruction and engage students. Arnica Sullivan will assume the role of K-12 Science Curriculum Specialist effective December 1 when Sheryl Mortensen becomes the new Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. We also welcome Ed Duclos, former English teacher at SWHS, to his new role as a technology content coach.

This fall we had the opportunity to present three curriculum reviews to the Board of Education. Each curriculum area is reviewed and presented to the Board every five years. Hayley Zinn Rowthorn presented the English/Language Arts/Literacy review on October 27. On November 10, Dave Sytulek and Travis Edwards presented the K-12 Health curriculum, and Donna Shea presented the 6-12 School Counseling curriculum. Each of these presentations offered the opportunity for our Board to learn about the many enhancements made to these content areas over the past five years. The work that has been accomplished by teachers, literacy leaders, school counselors and curriculum leaders over the years is impressive! Be sure to read on in this newsletter to learn about other new initiatives and accomplishments throughout the curriculum areas.

This edition of the newsletter also provides me an opportunity to reflect on my career as an educator in South Windsor. In more ways than I can express, I am both humbled by and grateful for everything that has transpired over the past 25+ years. The quality of educators in South Windsor was immediately apparent when I became principal of Pleasant Valley School in July 1990, and when I committed myself to becoming a part of the South Windsor Public Schools culture. My admiration for our teachers, support staff, and administrators has only grown since I took on the role of assistant superintendent where I have had the privilege of working with staff in all of our fine schools. I am proud of the accomplishments we have made together and I can only imagine what is yet to be realized in the future for the students of South Windsor. Be forever mindful of the gifts each of you bring to this profession and the impact those gifts have on each student's future. Best wishes to you all!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel S. Hansen".

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Sheryl Mortensen, Director

STEM

Science • Technology • Engineering • Math

On November 4, 2015, the State Board of Education approved the adoption of the Connecticut Next Generation Science Standards. This long awaited news means the coming year should be an exciting one as alignment with the NGSS begins.

The state has promised many opportunities for STEM and engineering integration training over the next two years as we transition to the new NGSS. Meanwhile, opportunities to integrate STEM into Science, Technology, Engineering and Math classes continue to expand. On October 1, 18 South Windsor High School students traveled to Goodwin College to attend a "Celebrating Manufacturing" program. The students had the opportunity to ex-

plore college and careers in manufacturing. They were able to see a pneumatic potato canon and an automated laser engraver/cutter, and also visited the Quality Assurance room. Norm Smith and Julie Wlodarczyk coordinated this informative opportunity for our students.

On October 26, Jamie Lang took ten girls from SWHS to Amherst College to participate in a "Women in Engineering" seminar. The focus was for girls interested in engineering and computer science, and was mainly funded through a SWPEF grant.

Over the summer, 17 students from Timothy Edwards participated in "Summer Catalyst," a two week program sponsored by the CCAT (Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology). Students

learned about energy and aerospace fields through hands-on science and engineering projects, and heard about career and educational pathways. This was an exciting opportunity for our students, and will be offered again in Summer 2016.

As of right now, the Science CMT will continue to be administered in March in grades 5 and 8, and the Science CAPT in grade 10. Our scores remain fairly constant if you look at graphs over time. Since there are year gaps between tests, it is difficult to chart individual growth; however, it does provide us with affirmation that our science curriculum and programs are aligned with the Connecticut State Science Standards on which the tests are based.

Physical Education/Health

Travis Edwards, K-8 Curriculum Program Coordinator



Over 300 eight grade students from Timothy Edwards Middle School participated in the Hartford Marathon Final Mile program on October 6. This event represented the culmination of students running or jogging two miles a week for six weeks with the final mile of this half-marathon run at

Rentschler Field in East Hartford. With the help of the TEMS Physical Education staff, students trained and kept a log that parents monitored at home. This program has served as an excellent pre-cursor to the Connecticut Physical Fitness Testing that 8th grade students will be taking part in this fall.

Students in grades 1-3 have begun their nutrition education. Physical education teachers at the five elementary schools have taken over the nutrition education curriculum delivery this school year. Students will be learning about healthy food choices as well as learning about the government food guidelines covered in their My Plate program.

World Languages/English Learners

Karen Stoj, K-12 Curriculum Specialist



This year, world language offerings at SWHS were expanded to include Italian 4 and American Sign Language (ASL). The inclusion of ASL as a world language is fairly new in the state of Connecticut and we are one of several high schools who are offering it. The ASL classroom is similar to a spoken language classroom except instead of hearing Italian or French, you would see a flurry of words being signed. The Spanish 4 textbook has been updated to Avancemos 4. This resource follows the previous texts used in the courses that build up to Spanish 4. The teachers are now working together to update the curriculum and create assessments that incorporate the new text features.

After its initial installation four years ago, the language lab at South Windsor High School was upgraded to Virtuoso Minor. The upgrade opens up more features to teachers in terms of audio recording, video activities and text authoring tools. With Virtuoso Minor, teachers now have screen share abilities and can push content to all computers as well as view all screens. The language lab is a vital part of every language class as students are able to work on speaking and supports teachers ability to hone student skills in fluency and pronunciation.

The English Learner (EL) program hosted its first annual Open House on Tuesday, October 6. The evening was created in response to parent questions regarding

screening procedures, the identification process, and the overall EL program. EL teachers and tutors met with parents and all aspects of the program were highlighted at various tables in the media center at Timothy Edwards. Parents also had the opportunity to see the annual English assessment that is administered to our EL students and learned how student progress will be reported to them. This year, we have over 30 different languages represented in our EL program. Arabic and Spanish are tied at number one, with 15% of our population; however, when all provincial Indian languages are combined, they outnumber all other languages with 29%.

Mathematics

Sharon Keegan, K-12 Curriculum Specialist



This summer SWHS math teachers Matt Eppler and Larry Bojarski attended Mobile CSP training

at Trinity College. We are excited to offer this new course at SWHS where students learn computer science by building socially useful mobile apps. In addition to programming and computer science principles, the course is project-based and emphasizes writing, communication, collaboration, and creativity. The College Board will be offering an AP test for this course next year.

Math competition is alive and well in our district. The SWHS Math team is off to an excellent start as they were moved into

the top division and came away from the first meet in third place out of twenty-two schools! Beth Goldman and Bill Denker, MathCounts coaches at TEMS, are looking forward to working with students again this year.

Joanna Pantages, JuliaBeth Leveille and Stefan Klein are in the process of planning their repeat performance of the Grade 6 Math Night. Several of the elementary schools are also hosting math nights.

The elementary math interventionists/coaches have been actively working with the elementary staff and students in mathematics. In addition they have been delivering PD during the Early Release

Wednesdays. Sharon Keegan also presented a workshop to elementary special education teachers on using data to inform goals and selection of teaching materials.

SBAC scores in mathematics placed South Windsor in strong positions for grades 3-8 within our DRG (District Reference Group). This is a testament to the hard work of our teachers in preparing students for this new computer adaptive test. In particular, our students demonstrated strong ability in communicating their mathematical reasoning and persevering through a performance task.

Educational Technology

Steve Albrecht, K-12 Curriculum Specialist



The educational technology team kicked off the school year with several exciting initiatives. Steve Albrecht has been busy

introducing teachers to new online professional resources. PD In Focus and the Gale Virtual Reference Library provide teachers access to cutting-edge scholarship on educational practices. Together, these libraries will supplement teachers' professional learning.

Mr. Albrecht has also launched a digital storytelling initiative in our elementary

schools. Digital storytelling invites students to build literacy and technology skills by combining pictures with recorded narration and music. Teachers K – 5 have been learning to use a variety of digital tools, such as Storybird, Photo Story 3, and WeVideo in order to bring digital storytelling to their classroom.

Technology content coaches Debbie Matchett and Ed Duclos have been working to expand teachers' use of Google Apps for Education, which includes cloud-based tools for word processing, data analysis, and more. For instance, using Google

Forms and Flubaroo, teachers can create self-correcting quizzes that quickly provide data to inform instruction. Mrs. Matchett and Mr. Duclos have also led several afternoon workshops that have helped elementary school teachers to use Google Sites to develop or revise a classroom website.

Visual Arts

Nick Canova, K-12 Curriculum Program Coordinator



The Art Department continues to focus on curriculum writing and development in anticipation of the adoption of new national and state

standards. This year, the elementary and middle school art teachers will be paying particular focus on addressing the responding to art process of aesthetic awareness. Put simply, the ability to describe, analyze, interpret and form informed opinion about the art work of self and others.

To support this work, part of this year's professional development will be to have access to Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). VTS is a discussion-based teaching and learning strategy used in schools, museums, libraries and universities. Through VTS methods and experience teachers enable students to think for themselves, form their own ideas, support their interpretations with evidence, all while learning from their peers by collaboratively constructing and considering new ideas and perspectives. VTS uses visual arts

prompts to help teachers facilitate student centered discussions regarding what they see, and how they describe and interpret what they see.

This work will dovetail and support the responding to art process that all art teachers K-12 will be incorporating into their classrooms. Work will continue this year on creating additional strategies for these concepts.

Social Studies

Gregory Frank, K-12 Curriculum Specialist



Social Studies

Many exciting developments happened over the summer in the field of Social Studies.

The new Connecticut Social Studies frameworks were explored in four day workshops offered at Central Connecticut State University. Teachers from Timothy Edwards Middle School and South Windsor High School attended these workshops in the core content areas of history, economics, civics, and geography. The professional training and inquiry-based approach has been incorporated into existing units as well as into new units in Social Studies courses.

At the high school level, new units for 9th grade Modern World History have been written which allow students to focus intensively on the period from the Enlightenment to modern times. This course has also taken a more global look at units tied to Latin American, Sub-Saharan African, Middle Eastern, and Asian history. Aligning closer to the new state frameworks while still maintaining the established curriculum wherever possible has

taken effort, creativity, and extensive work by teachers. The new SAT will also have a History/Social Studies non-fiction reading section. SWHS teachers attended a seminar to understand these changes and begin creating similar activities to prepare students for the challenge of this test.

Middle school teachers have sought to embed the four domains of inquiry into student activities: from generating questions by using the QFT (Question Formulation Technique) strategy, to using primary and secondary sources to investigate content, to taking informed action both in and outside of the classroom. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have worked hard to engage students through this approach to content and learning.

At the elementary level, changes in Social Studies curriculum have also been started. Early release Wednesdays have allowed for the Elementary Social Studies Committee to train grade levels to focus on changes recommended by the frameworks. While many units will remain intact, the inquiry arc will play a role in the

approach taken by teachers to content. Members of the Elementary Social Studies Committee have been training other grade-level colleagues in a collaborative style.

Meaningful experiences for student participation is a big part of Fall in South Windsor. Third grade classes visit Wood Memorial Library and take part in their Native American Program. Model United Nations at the high school boasts the largest delegation participating in the World Affairs Council simulation in Connecticut (over 135 students)! Many in this group travelled to the United Nations to meet with missions in late October. AP Government and Politics students worked with the South Windsor registrars of voters on Election Day at polling places. Mock Trial has started where students act as prosecution and defense in a trial scenario. Finally, Veterans Day was observed with ceremonies and visits from veterans at all schools; a continued partnership with the South Windsor Patriotic Commission has made this a memorable day for students.

Literacy

Hayley Zinn Rowthorn, Director



Several of our elementary schools have been engaged in a variety of reading incentive programs this year.

After exceeding their fundraising goal for Tiger Tracks Jog-a-thon (students raised over \$15,000!), all PRS students celebrated their success with "Read In" day on Friday, October 23. Students wore their pajamas and enjoyed a relaxing day of reading, writing and popcorn eating thanks to the PRS PTO.

Students at Pleasant Valley and Philip R Smith Elementary Schools are working their way through 26 books as part of year-long "triathlon." Other events include completing 26 Random Acts of Kindness beginning in November and logging 26 miles run or walked beginning in the spring.

Orchard Hill School participated in Jumpstart's 10th anniversary *Read for the Record* on Thursday, October 22. This year's book was *Not Norman: A Goldfish Story*, written by Kelly Bennett and illus-

trated by Noah Z. Jones. According to Jumpstart, *Read for the Record* is a global campaign that generates public support for high-quality early learning by mobilizing millions of children and adults to take part in the world's largest shared reading experience. Orchard Hill has participated in *Read for the Record* for six years. This year, students from the student mentor program also performed a reader's theater during an all-school assembly.