

Tewksbury Public Schools, (978) 640 - 7810

Special Interest Articles

Harcourt Anthology Series
Update: K - 2

SARC Happenings

Tips and Techniques to
Improve Student
Achievement

School-based Data
Analysis Teams

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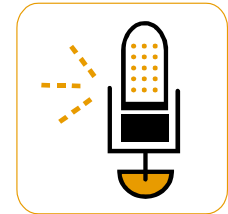
Why a newsletter?

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide each member of our school community with information regarding the efforts and developments of the Curriculum Office. My intention is to help bridge the gap between my office and all the school communities, as well as providing you with the most *current, accurate* information. Eventually, all newspaper communications will be delivered to you

electronically via our website.

My travels around the district have enabled me to speak with many staff members. Often they will stop me to ask a specific curriculum question, when a specific training may be offered, or the progress of a particular SARC.

For those members that cannot attend a "chat", or cannot participate on a monthly SARC, this newsletter now serves as



another way for my office to inform staff members about curricula issues within and across our district.

As always, if you should have a curriculum question and/or concerns or need information about the course reimbursement process, please do not hesitate to contact my office (7810).

I hope you enjoy this first addition !

SARC/Departmental News ...

Math SARC: Grades 1 – 4

Our Grade 1 – 4 Math SARC members met on Monday, September 17 and October 22. Our September 17 meeting focused on the finalization of our district-wide math assessments for Grades 1 - 4. We accomplished our goal at this meeting!

All students in Grades 1 – 6 participated in the district-wide Math assessment during the week of October 1. All completed materials were submitted to the Curriculum Office on or before Friday, October 12.

It is now the task of the Curriculum Office personnel to enter all data and return the assessments to each building. We are hoping to return all materials by Friday, November 16.

During our October meeting, Math SARC members tackled the process of separating the summative assessment into short, quarterly formative/interim assessments.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 19 @ 3:30 pm in

the Center School Conference Room. New members are welcome!

Math SARC: Grades 5 & 6

Our Grade 5 & 6 Math SARC members met on Wednesday, September 19. The focus of our meeting was to prepare and finalize Grade 5 & 6 math assessments. We, too, accomplished our goal!

All students in Grades 5 & 6 participated in these assessments. Again, we are hoping to return all materials by Friday, November 16.



"We must teach our children to dream with their eyes open!"

- HARRY EDWARDS

Departmental News / Training Activities

On Thursday, September 27th, a meeting with the TMHS Humanities Department was held. Agenda items included: class sizes, the Grade 10 World Studies Program, and results of the Summer Reading survey. Members had the opportunity to voice their concerns and share pertinent information regarding the vision for their department. All parties agreed that additional work needs to be done

before any changes take place.

SMARTBoard Training – Grades K – 12

Two of our Technology Professional Development trainers, Brenda Regan and Kathy Sanfilli, recently hosted four-hour SMARTBoard training sessions for all interested staff members.

The purpose of the training was to introduce staff members to the benefits

and techniques of the SMARTBoard. The SMARTBoard has the power to transform a classroom into a dynamic learning environment. The training also provided staff with a foundation of knowledge, as well as knowledge to use the SMARTBoard Notebook software.

Additional trainings will be offered during our scheduled Professional Development days in January and March.

Harcourt – “Storytown”

Four separate meetings were held over the last two months to discuss the new Storytown series. To recap the topics and concerns discussed at these meetings:

K – 2:

The members of the ELA SARC reviewed the reasons and justifications for moving to this new series. Reasons for change:

1. Materials were outdated and many of the components were out-of-print.

2. Teachers had been requesting, and strongly urging, us to bring a more systemically aligned program to our district. In the past, 4 different literacy components were in use:

a. Treasury of Literature – basal series

b. Won Way Phonics Program

c. Guided Reading

d. Great Source/District-produced Spelling Program

Four independent programs – very labor intensive and disjointed!

The new Storytown Anthology Series umbrellas all four of these components in this one series.

Harcourt Representative Visits District

A Harcourt representative visited our district to address teacher concerns and answer questions regarding proper implementation.

Hope Wallace, the Harcourt representative, visited with us on

Wednesday, October 17 and Thursday, October 18.

During her visits, she addressed benchmark assessments, lesson planning, and time management. Her suggestions were well

received and appreciated.

Teachers will be offered building-based professional development time to discuss and bring uniformity to each grade level's implementation.

Additional news from the Curriculum Office ...

Technology Committee

Our district-wide Technology Committee held its first meeting on Wednesday, October 10. Our assignment for this school year will be to develop a new five-year Technology Plan for our district. The committee is off to a solid start with the hopes of completing our assignment before the close of this school year.

If you would like to view our present Technology Plan, please visit our website: www.tewksbury.mec.edu.

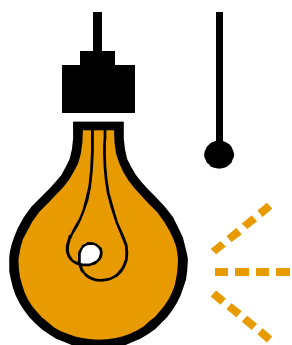
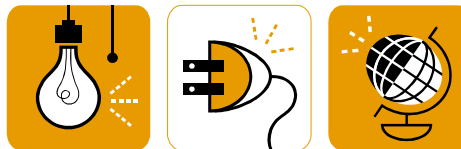
Section 504 Meeting

On Friday, October 12, Attorney Catherine Lyons visited the district to conduct our annual Section 504 training for all school coordinators. Attorney Lyons reviewed all of the district's materials and offered coordinators an

opportunity to ask questions. Thanks to Catherine for conducting a well designed program and informational session.

TestWiz Training

An in-house TestWiz training session was held for all TestWiz users on Thursday, October 18 at the John W. Wynn Middle School. Each participant was asked to share particular data reports they find to be useful and informative. Each participant left the session with a variety of ideas on how to access the multiple types of reports offered by this software: district-based, school-based, and/or student-based.



School-based Data Analysis Teams ...

This year, as part of our new five-year Strategic Plan, each building administrator has formed a school-based data analysis team. Each team's task will be to analyze a specific assessment over the span of multiple meetings.

Building administrators, along with their team members, will collaboratively decide which type of data to

study. Agenda minutes will be maintained for record-keeping purposes. Data team progress will be shared with all staff members via faculty meeting time, email distribution, building-based notices, and/or departmental/grade-level meetings.

Mr. Rob Traver, a Teachers' 21 consultant, was brought to the district to assist us in this new initiative. Mr. Traver visited our district on September 18 and October 16. During these interactive sessions, Rob spoke with us about such topics as: the creation of action plans, building a common vocabulary, and the collection and

dissemination of data. All teams are now operational and we are anxious to view the finalized products generated by each building-based team.

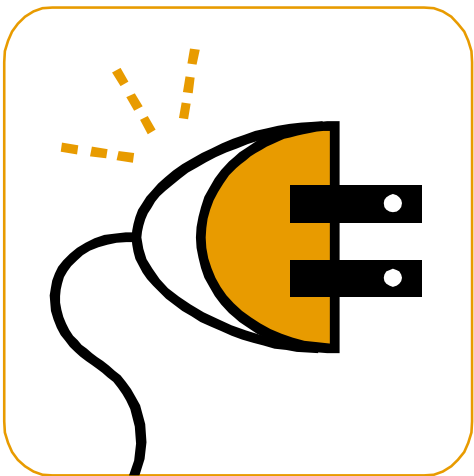
Why School-based Data Analysis Teams?

Research clearly states schools that have improved student achievement, engage in holistic accountability, frequent common assessments, decisive and immediate interventions, and constructive use of data.

This year, we begin Phase 1 in this process – we're excited to see the results of our work!

Teaching Ideas

Tips & Techniques to Improve Student Achievement



Looking for a specific type of MCAS question in a specific content area? Try using the MCAS Question Search offered by Merrimack Education Center. Note: You must have a Tewksbury email address to access this resource!

Directions:

1. Go to www.portal.mecnet.net
2. Sign in as usual
3. On the left-hand side of the screen, click on MCAS Test Creator
4. Click on the information requested:
 - A. year
 - B. grade
 - c. framework subject
 - d. question type
5. Select Question order and number of questions
6. Enter teacher name and class title

7. Click "generate PDF"

8. Click on the printer icon- a ready-to-use test will print along with an answer key!

It's fast, convenient and it's free! Remember, you must have a Tewksbury email account to access this resource.

The Department of Education also offers this same resource; however, this site does not have test creation capability. To access this resource:

1. Go to www.doe.mass.edu
2. Use drop-down menu to access MCAS option
3. On the left-hand side of the page, click on *Test Items*
4. Click on *MCAS Question Search*
5. Follow the prompts

Easy-to-follow directions will be provided. This site also provides printing capability!

Course Reimbursement?

All teachers seeking course reimbursement must request written approval from the Assistant Superintendent *prior* to the start of the course. Courses must be in the teacher's area of certification, SPED,

Technology-related or otherwise approved by the Superintendent as relevant to the teacher's assignment. Reimbursement will not be made for a course unless a grade of B or better is

attained. Request for reimbursement shall be accompanied by a copy of the grade report or transcript along with receipt of tuition payment. A teacher is entitled to a maximum of \$300.00 per fiscal year (07-08) per course reimbursement

provided; however, the Committee's liability for such payments is limited to a total appropriation for such reimbursements not to exceed \$30,000.

Reimbursement will be made on a first-come, first-serve basis.

More SARC News ...

ELA SARC: Grades 5 & 6

Our Ryan School ELA SARC met for the first time on Thursday, October 25. With the new 70-minute ELA block, the team decided to tackle two major tasks:

- a. review and realign the grade-level standard responsibilities, and
- b. revise the monthly skills calendar.

We are seeking two teachers from each grade level to pilot the new Harcourt Anthology Series. This year we implemented Phase 1 (K – 2), Phase II will take place in SY08-09 (Grades 3 & 4), and Phase III in SY09-10 (Grades 5 & 6). If interested, please see Mr. McArdle or Mrs. Conway. More information will be forthcoming.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 19 @ 2:40 pm in the Ryan School Library Media Center.

ELA SARC: Grades K – 4 BENCHMARK ASSESSMENTS

It has been determined that all **mid-year benchmark assessments** be administered to all students between January 14 – 31. Test administration should not exceed five (5) days. Teachers may determine the test administration dates; however, all completed individual student cover sheets must be submitted to the Curriculum Office on or before Friday, February 1.

More K – 2 ELA SARC News ...

ELA SARC members have identified the following tasks to be completed during this school year: (1) develop OEQ's for all stories found in the new anthology series, (2) revise, if necessary, the TPS Scope and Sequence document, (3) edit the Curriculum Guide CLASP document (adding each story's identified skills, along

standard numbers), and (4) update the Writing Portfolio expectations.

Grade 5 Social Studies

We are seeking two Grade 5 Social Studies teachers to pilot the latest version of our Social Studies series in SY08 – 09. If interested, please see Mr. McArdle or Mrs. Conway.

Wynn Middle School – MCAS Analysis

Middle School Curriculum Chairs are spearheading MCAS data analysis sessions with their department members. Teams have been asked to identify three areas of strength in each content area, as well as three areas of concern. Department reports will be shared with building administration, the Assistant Superintendent and with colleagues at a faculty meeting.

Curriculum Chairs will be meeting with the Assistant Superintendent to make recommendations for future SARC work. This work will be driven by the results of their MCAS findings. All MCAS reports are due on or before Friday, November 16!



" Just when you think you've graduated from the school of experience, someone thinks up a new course! "

Website Resource:

www.thinkfinity.org

This online portal accesses over 50,000 educational resources, including standards-based, grade-specific, K – 12 lesson plans and other interactive activities.

