



Focus on Curriculum

The role of the District Curriculum Department is to support students and staff in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and improvement on a K-12 basis. Our job is to make your job easier, and help students achieve to their full potential. The Curriculum Department Newsletter is designed to provide ongoing information across all three school levels, allowing staff to develop an awareness of the great things occurring in Trumbull Public Schools. The focus of the majority of our initial newsletter is on the elementary grades, with Program Leaders contributing noteworthy information. If you are a middle or high school teacher, don't hit the delete button just yet! Knowing what is happening in various grade levels of schooling across Trumbull allows you to see the big picture and be better able to connect the dots for parents and colleagues in your area of expertise. The newsletter will expand over the next few months with voluntary contributions from Instructional Chairs, Department Chairs, and K-12 Team Leaders.

Enjoy the fast approaching Holiday Break with your family!

Together we make a difference! **Gary Kunschaft**

Language Arts by Terry Buckingham

This year in K-2 we have filled the gap in our word study program with Foundations. Students are tapping out words, learning letters and their formation, learning the sounds of digraphs, blends, vowel diphthongs, vowel teams, and a host of other skills. Everyone seems to enjoy Echo the Owl and Baby Echo (Foundation teaching tools). So Floria and I want to share some amazing owl facts. An owl hears so well that it can detect the footsteps of a mouse as it scurries across a meadow. Owls have such good eyesight that if an owl could read (owls don't have the Foundations program, unfortunately, to teach them how to read), it could read the bottom line of an eye chart from a mile away. When students get to third grade and dissect owl pellets, they will know some great facts about owls. You are not only helping your students with reading and writing, but also with science. Check out the Foundations website. The address is: <http://www.foundations.com>. If you enter your email address and a password you can access everything available on the site.



We are in full swing with the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Systems for grades K-8. Reading records and leveled books abound through the halls. We know our students well as readers.

We are continuing to learn together about Foundations and Fountas & Pinnell throughout the year.

Making Meaning reading comprehension resource have also arrived at the schools for grades 1-5. Take a look when you can. The accompanying library of high quality literature is designed to be used during interactive read aloud.

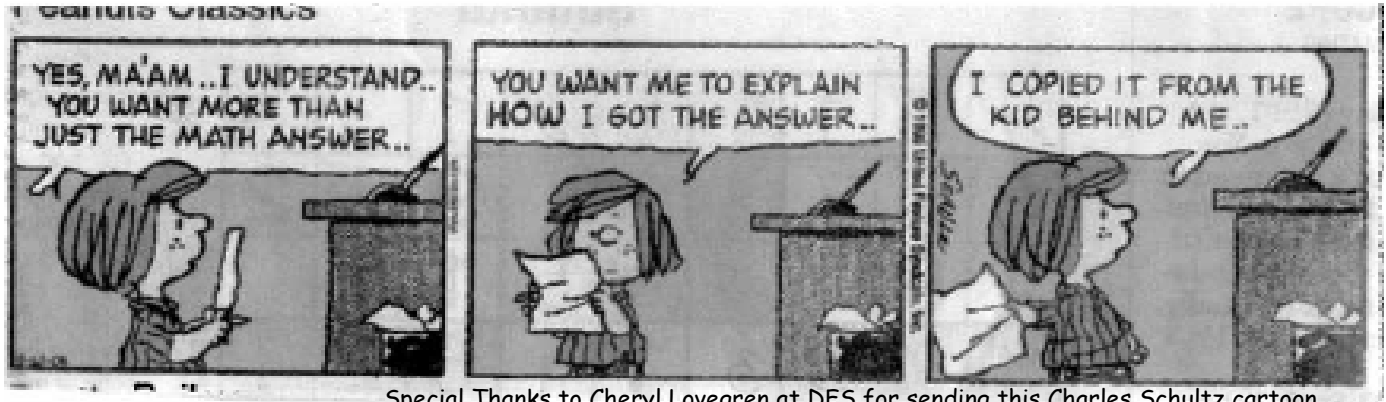
Reading Consultants and Resource Teachers will be using Leveled Literacy Intervention for first and second grade students. It has just arrived and we are anxious to get started.

Quote of the Month

"The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go" (Dr. Seuss, "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!").



MATH by Mary Santilli



Special Thanks to Cheryl Lovegren at DFS for sending this Charles Schultz cartoon.

Did you know that the brain gets a big boost when you engage it and challenge it with good critical thinking activities that require doing, experiencing, and communicating? The brain is always making connections—that's how it makes sense of the world. Discussion activities connect students so they can share their thinking. That is why professional development for elementary mathematics is focusing on the importance of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Process Standards. Two after-school workshops have been designed by the elementary Math Specialist Team to emphasize the importance of how students engage in and learn mathematics. The Process Standards: Problem Solving, Reasoning and Proof, Communication, Connections and Representation, highlight ways of acquiring and using math content knowledge. Part One of the math professional development series was designed to give teachers an awareness of the five process standards. In Part Two, teachers will apply their knowledge of the Process Standards to grade level appropriate lessons. Our goal is to have students communicate to learn mathematics, and to communicate mathematically.

The Process Standards discussion continues at the middle school level. On November 4th, the middle school Instructional Chairs led a workshop designed to emphasize the significance of the process standards embedded in daily lessons. Utilization of these standards helps students make meaningful connections between number, algebra, geometry, and data analysis. Making explicit connections becomes an increasingly important skill as students proceed through middle school and into high school.

A relevant real world application combining the NCTM Process and Content Standards for students in Grades 4-6 can be found at: <http://twens.feedthepig.org/twens/download>. Feed the Pigs is a timely and practical series lessons that focus on financial literacy. Good for school and home use.

Quote of the Month

“Small minds discuss persons. Average minds discuss events. Great minds discuss ideas. Really great minds discuss mathematics” (Anonymous).



SCIENCE by Floria Mallozzi

Mark Twain stated, "...the most interesting information comes from children, for they tell all they know and then stop". Taking the time to listen to a child's theory on why something works or acts the way it does is priceless. Giving students the time and opportunity to reflect in their science journals or notebooks on what they have experienced or investigated is also priceless.

During the months of November and December Grade Five students were administered the Connecticut Academy of Science Assessment Process (CASAP), both performance and written parts. This year the performance assessment was administered as a teaching tool instead of an assessment tool. The students, teamed with a partner, were administered four experiments over a two-day period. They collaborated with each other while carrying out the investigations. They discussed what happened and then recorded their observations and predictions in the lab packets. Afterwards, as a group we discussed the experiment and outcomes, provided them immediate feedback on their responses, and clarified any questions or misconceptions. Feedback from the students and teachers on the learning focus instead of an assessment focus has been more than positive. Listening to the responses of the students during the debriefing at the end was priceless!

CASAP was once administered to students in grades 3, 5, and 8. The third grade assessment is now given in fourth grade due to content alignment, and while the fifth grade assessment is still in use, the 8th grade test is no longer used. CASAP results provide the district with a program analysis. Much information is reamed from the data analysis and from proctoring observations of student knowledge and use of lab equipment such as measurement tools. The written assessment of CASAP, administered the first week of December for 5th grade, will be scored through the Science Academy. Results will be available the end of December. The 4th grade CASAP will be administered in the spring.

Quote of the Month

"You can listen to thunder after lightening and tell how close you came to getting hit. If you don't hear it, you got hit, so never mind" (An anonymous child author).



Important to Know

***Sun., Dec. 21, 2008, 7:04 AM EST, marks the solstice—the beginning of winter in the Northern Hemisphere and summer in the Southern Hemisphere. This day is also known as the shortest day of the year.**

Professional Development by Judy Klein

We have had a relatively smooth transition to Protraxx online. Many of our teachers have been discovering the great features in Protraxx – like being able to check your own records and certification. However, there are still many outstanding evaluations that need to be completed. Individual CEUs cannot be issued until your evaluations are complete. Everyone needs to fill out online evaluations at Protraxx.com after participating in a district workshop, even if you do not need CEUs. We really need feedback from everyone to plan successfully for future PD!

Teachers need time to learn complex knowledge and skills they may have never experienced as a student. The National Education Commission on Time and Learning cited a study in which teachers were found to need at least 50 hours of instruction, practice, and follow up technical assistance before they were comfortable with a new teaching strategy.

Trumbull Hosts Multi-District PE/Health Conference

Under the direction of Jane Kluspes, K-12 Team Leader for PE and Health, Trumbull hosted a multi-district PE/Health Conference on November 4. This full-day conference was geared for PE/Health teachers in grades K-12 and was attended by over 100 teachers from Trumbull, Darien, Newtown, Bethel, Brookfield, Danbury, Fairfield, Milford, North Branford, Monroe, Norwich, Plainfield, Plainville, Ridgefield, Wilton, Torrington, and CES. Distinguished presenters were John Smith, Peter Rattigan and Michele DiCorcia. The conference was so successful that plans are already underway for next year! Way to go Jane!



DAC Suggested Classroom Visits

K-12 District Articulation Committee meetings occur monthly or bi-monthly in the areas of Mathematics, English/Reading/Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and World Languages. Minutes from each meeting are emailed to all participants for sharing back at home schools. The focus of these meetings is on alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in our transition grades (5th to 6th, 8th to 9th). This makes for interesting conversation as some staff have never had the opportunity to teach at another school level aside from their current assignment. To develop common understanding, DAC members decided to visit other school levels to observe student learning first hand. Department Chairs, Instructional Chairs, and Program Leaders set up the visits in classrooms of volunteering teachers. The objective of the visits is to observe students' learning in specific content areas at a school level other than the one the visiting teacher currently teaches. This provides a first-hand look at the variety of learners in each of the classes visited, along with the various learning formats students are engaged in to address their different needs. This endeavor supports our ongoing curriculum mapping efforts. The first visits will be in the area of English/Reading/Language Arts with more to follow.