



Elementary Curriculum News

Keeping You Informed

In an effort to provide information about elementary curriculum issues, we will be publishing a newsletter several times over the course of the year. We will include

reminders, background information, answers to frequently-asked questions and information about upcoming events.

Schedule of Events August/September

**No need to register for these:
Just Come!**

MEAP Prep
Grade 5
Tuesday, August 30,
4:00 – 6:00,
St. Clare/Temple Beth
Emeth, Social Hall

MEAP Prep
Grade 3
Thursday, Sept. 1,
4:00 – 6:00,
St. Clare/Temple Beth
Emeth, Social Hall

MEAP Practice
Grade 4
Tuesday, September 6,
4:00 – 6:00,
St. Clare/Temple Beth
Emeth, Social Hall

MEAP

There are many MEAP changes this fall. To summarize:

1. All tests will be administered within a test window between October 3 – October 21.
2. There can be no explicit MEAP practice after September 16.
3. Third graders will be tested for the first time. They will take math and English Language Arts (reading and writing) tests.
4. Fourth graders will also be taking math and English Language Arts tests.
5. Fifth graders will take a science test *in addition to* math and English Language Arts tests.
6. The social studies MEAP has been moved to sixth grade.
7. There will be 3 after-school voluntary workshops to provide additional information (see box).

Language Arts

We actually got the year off to a great start this summer with a series of workshops that took place in July.

- 65 teachers participated in *My Access* training, an assessment and instructional tool for teaching writing.
- 12 new K-5 teachers began balanced literacy training.
- 23 teachers participated in a workshop to learn how to do computer animation related to student writing.
- 25 teachers learned how to use Apple Works to make a variety of classroom tools.

The week before school started two year-long writing series began.

- 150 K-2 teachers are involved in a study of Lucy Calkins' Units of Study, facilitated by our K-2 Demonstration Teachers.
- 90 teachers in grades 3-5 are involved in a series of genre studies. The individual units were written by our 3-5 Demonstration Teachers who are also facilitating the workshops.

Our overall focus in language arts this year will be on

- refining our guided reading practices to assure success for all students and
- creating a quality writing program in every classroom.

Reading Intervention

This year we are replacing the one-on-one Reading Recovery program that was in some buildings with a Reading Intervention program that will be in every building. Every school will have a half-time teacher whose charge it is to work

with groups of 3 students in kindergarten, first and second grades who are not reaching achievement goals in reading. This fall they will be working with first and second graders. They will begin working with kindergarten children in January.

Phonics Lessons Series

To register, email
madden@aaps.k12.mi.us

Kindergarten teachers
1st Grade teachers
2nd Grade teachers
Interested support staff

Thursday, Sept. 8
Thursday October 20
Thursday, Nov. 17
Thursday, Jan. 19
TUESDAY, Feb. 14
Thursday, April 6
Thursday, May 4

4:15 – 5:45
St. Clare/Temple Beth
Emeth
2309 Packard Road

Balanced Literacy Training Series

All sessions
8:30-2:30
St. Clare/Temple Beth
Emeth, Room 7/8

Grades K-2
Wednesday, Oct. 19
Thursday, Jan. 5
Thursday, March 9
Thursday, May 4

Grades 3-5
Thursday, Nov. 10
Thursday, Jan. 12
Thursday, March 16
Thursday, May 11

Phonics Lessons

Again this year, we will provide a separate Phonics Lessons series for teachers in grades kindergarten, first and second grades. A very critical part of the balanced literacy framework, teachers last year found this series very helpful for preparing material, discussing management issues and sustaining the implementation of the program over the

course of the school year.

A set of perforated picture/word cards will be provided to those who participate in one of these series.

To register for this series, email
madden@aaps.k12.mi.us

“ALL Children Means ALL”

The number and percentage of children reaching grade level targets continues to improve. However, there are sub-groups who continue to make unsatisfactory progress. Once children fall behind, they need to make more than one year of progress in order to catch up. One of the variables we can alter is time. By starting guided reading with our underachieving children the first week of school and

assuring them at least one guided reading lesson a day (more if they are seen by support staff), we are giving them additional opportunities to learn. There is still time during the day to establish those important routines with the class.

It is also critical that we instruct students at their instructional, not their independent, level.

Handwriting

The district Handwriting Committee is ready to recommend the adoption of a district-wide program and implementation timeline. We look forward to sharing the recommendation with Central Administration and the Board’s performance committee.

Meanwhile, teachers are encouraged to use the material in the Kindergarten and 1st Grade *Phonics Lessons* to teach letter formation.

It is unlikely that there will be funding for a district adoption this year.

Literacy Training

2 series of Balanced Literacy training will begin in October for teachers working with K-2 students and in November for teachers working with students in grades 3-5. These series are open to classroom teachers, special education, Title 1 and ESL staff, and principals.

Participants will learn the elements of a balanced literacy program and how to implement, schedule and manage the components. They will receive material, observe videos of effective classroom practices and be part of an ongoing learning community.

Mathematics

This year we will begin to incorporate changes reflected in the Michigan Department of Education Grade Level Content Expectations. During the 2005/2006 school year the focus will be on kindergarten and grade 1. Committees of teachers have worked on incorporating changes into our curriculum and creating rubrics that clearly define targets. Adjustments have been made to the kindergarten and first grade report forms

Everyday Mathematics training

In early August 35 people participated in Everyday Math workshops for new and experienced users of the program. Additional

Science

Last week a committee representing every elementary school and 4 middle schools began an elementary science program review. The committee will be working very hard this year to examine and analyze instructional materials on the market and to apply carefully defined and thoroughly

Field Trips and Animal Visits

After teachers have signed up for animal visits (kindergarten, first, third and fourth grades) and environmental field trips, the schedules will be posted on our web site. You may also consult the web site for tips on handling live material in the classroom.

Orientation to Science Units

We continue the practice of offering an orientation to each of our science units for teachers who are new to the district or new to their grade level. District teachers who are very experienced with the units provide the training. Principals have a copy of the entire schedule to post on a school bulletin board. It is recommended that teachers

that reflect any change in targets. Grade level meetings are scheduled for October to discuss these changes and to distribute the new rubrics. Report forms will be available by September 6th for sharing with families at Curriculum Night.

Grade level meetings are planned for later in the year to introduce the changes that will be forthcoming during the next two years in the grades 2-5.

workshop opportunities will be offered during the course of the year to support new users.

discussed rubrics to selecting appropriate material. The charge is to create an aligned science program that meets state expectations. The committee expects to pilot promising materials and make a recommendation by spring of 2006.

Teachers are reminded to call ECA (the company that provides the animals – 1-900-437-0008) within 24 hours if any animals appear to arrive distressed.

attend the workshop before teaching the unit.

PLEASE BRING YOUR TEACHER'S GUIDE WITH YOU TO THE WORKSHOP.

September Orientation to Science Units

Animals
Grade 1
Thursday, Sept. 8
4:15 – 5:45
King School

Matter,
Grade 5
Thursday, Sept. 15
4:15 – 5:45
King School

Animal Behavior,
Grade 4
Monday, Sept. 26
4:15 – 5:45
Lawton School

Environments
Grade 3
Tuesday, Sept. 27
4:15 – 5:45
Angell School

Who We Are

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Social Studies

This year 5th grade teachers will implement *History Alive!* All teachers will be involved in a 1-day workshop this fall to become oriented to the program. Those who did not attend the August workshop will attend one of two options in November: either a full-day session on November 2nd or two after-school sessions on November 7th and November 14th. The 5th grade report form has been changed to reflect this new program and state expectations.

2nd grade teachers who did not attend the workshop last year to receive the new Ann Arbor unit to replace the San Francisco unit

will attend a workshop of choice in December. At that time they will also receive replacement pages for the Interactive Student Notebooks. Meanwhile, they should use the commercial notebooks that were sent to the buildings last spring.

3rd grade teachers will meet in January to receive replacement pages for the Interactive Student Notebooks at that grade level. Meanwhile, they, too, should use the commercial notebooks that were ordered again this year.

Constitution Day – September 16

By law, every school and college that receives federal money must teach about the Constitution on September 17, the day the document was adopted in 1787. Since September 17 falls on a Saturday this year, the occasion is to be observed on Friday, September 16.

Senator Robert Byrd from West Virginia inserted this lesson mandate into a

spending bill in 2004. Schools are free to determine how they will comply with the mandate.

The following web sites provide a variety of resources:

- <http://www.justicelearning.org/>
- <http://www.constitutionday.com/>
- <http://www.constitutionfacts.com/>

Finding Us

Now that our offices have all been moved to Balas 1, we are challenged to find workshop space. Make no assumptions this year: be sure to check workshop sites before setting out. We have been able to find a site that is centrally located and has a variety of meeting rooms. Many workshops that occur during the day will be at the St. Clare/Temple Beth Emeth at zzzz Road (just

down the street from Frazier’s Pub). Many after-school workshops will be in various elementary schools.

On a related topic, in our need to be good stewards of the district’s limited resources, you will find that workshop snacks will be less generous this year.