

SPRING 2006

Vol 1 issue 2

MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM NEWS

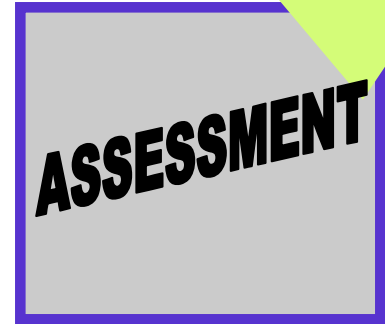
ANN ARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS- Middle School Curriculum 994-1682

Special Interest Articles:

- The news about each content area,
- Assessment
- Thinking about grades

The future is not some place we are going to but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination.

John Schaar, Political Scientist, University of Santa Clara, Author of



STANDARDS FOR ASSESSMENT

Michigan Curriculum Framework outlines very clear standards for assessment for Michigan teachers.

The assessment standards complement the Standards of Authentic Learning, higher-order thinking, deep knowledge, substantive conversation and connections to the world beyond. These standards were discussed in the last issue that can be found on page 2 of the newsletter at.

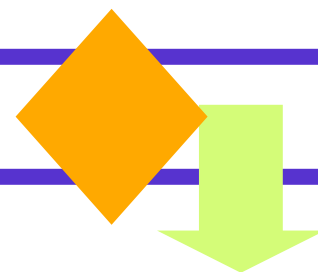
http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/aaps.forstaff/files/msfall05_v1no1.pdf

The Standards for Assessment are

- ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION
- CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES
- DISCIPLINARY PROCESS
- ELABORATED WRITTEN COMMUNICATION
- PROBLEMS CONNECTED TO THE WORLD BEYOND
- AUDIENCE BEYOND THE SCHOOL



This issue will examine each of the standards for assessment, as well as grading, questioning and empowering students. You will also find updated middle school curriculum news.



The formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution, which may be merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from new angles, requires creative imagination and marks real advances...
Albert Einstein

ASKING QUESTIONS

Skillful questioning by teachers empowers students to have mastery of their own learning. Failure to follow good questions with an adequate wait time and answer questions for students can be detrimental to student learning.

Good questioning can provide the most immediate feed back of student learning.

Arthur Costa's model for questioning with just three levels is more efficient.

If you imagine a house the lowest level of questions is the basement. Questions that ask students to define, describe, list,

name, observe or recite characterize this level.

The main floor questions use the stems analyze, compare, contrast, group infer, sequence and synthesize.

The top floor questions ask students to apply a principle, evaluate, hypothesize, imagine, judge, predict and speculate.

Try a game with your students and have them rate the questions that they ask each other. Have them try to write three review questions, one for each level, and then write the answers.

THINKING ABOUT GRADES

In the recent issue of MiddleGround, Rick Wormeli's article, *Turning Zeroes to 60s* challenges teachers to think about the impact of zeros in a grade book.

If we fail a student with a 0/100 for an assignment we are impacting the future grades and the students chance of recovery for the marking period.

Students who feel there is no chance of passing will stop performing.

What is the purpose of failing a student with a 0 when a 60 represents an F and allows room for recovery?

We should consider whether our intent is to support student learning with grades or punish students who do not meet our expectations. A final grade of 75% should mean the student has mastered ¾ of the content taught.

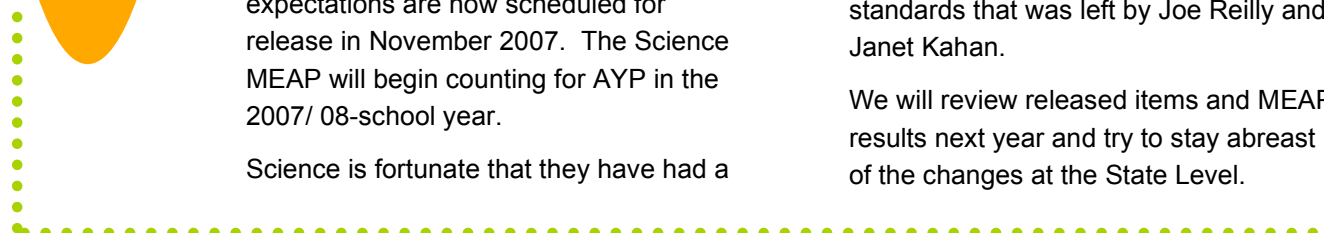
SCIENCE

The science grade level content expectations are now scheduled for release in November 2007. The Science MEAP will begin counting for AYP in the 2007/ 08-school year.

Science is fortunate that they have had a

legacy of strong alignment to the old standards that was left by Joe Reilly and Janet Kahan.

We will review released items and MEAP results next year and try to stay abreast of the changes at the State Level.



MATHEMATICS

Math teachers have had a busy year of training, adjusting and modifying. The CMP 2 adoption has been filled with delays by the publishers, but the good news is we will be ready and teaching the new Math GLCE's in entirety in the fall.

Middle School math scores continued to show improvement.
You are making a difference.

One of the big concerns for all math teachers district wide is how to successfully remediate struggling students. Research shows that pull-out programs do not improve learning. Learning time must be increased for at risk students. They need a period of remediation in addition to an hour of instruction at their grade level.

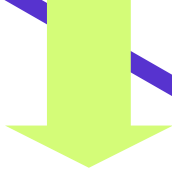
If we are to reach the district goal of all students completing geometry by the end of 10th grade and the State goal of four years of math to graduate we must provide more support for

struggling students at the middle school level.

Elementary literacy has been exploring a 3-tier intervention system that provides intense remediation for students who are not at grade level. Following their lead we are looking at Math Class Tools as math intervention for all students.

Four teachers in the district are working with seventh grade students using Math Class Tools as the curriculum for their math support class.

Scarlett has had Math Class Tools available for all their students on their laptops. They used the program successfully in summer school and are helping to explore ways that this could become an intervention tool without removing students from grade level instruction in the curriculum.



We are deliberately designed to learn by trial and error. We've been brought up, unfortunately to think that nobody should make mistakes. Most children are degeniused by love and fear of their parents – that they might make a mistake.

BUCKMINSTER FULLER

ENGLISH – LANGUAGE ARTS

The focus this year has been on mapping the curriculum to the new GLCE's and integrating literacy at all the grade levels.

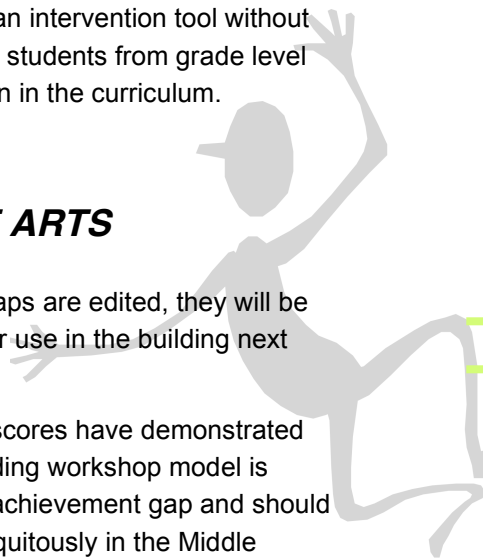
Curriculum leaders from each building, Pam Reagle of Compass Learning, Maggie Jewett, Joyce Hunter and Linda Prieskorn have used the materials developed at each of the first week meetings to create the curriculum maps that align to the state standards. Focus questions have been developed for each genre.

Teachers will review these maps in April.

After the maps are edited, they will be published for use in the building next year.

Our MEAP scores have demonstrated that the reading workshop model is closing the achievement gap and should be used ubiquitously in the Middle School Language Arts Classes.

The MEAP scores also reflect a need for more writing. Writing topics will be reflected in the curriculum maps.



SOCIAL STUDIES

I've failed over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed."

--Michael Jordan, Basketball legend

A stumble may prevent a fall.

English Proverb.

If you never change your mind, why have one?
Edward deBono

The great danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it but too low and we reach it.

Michelangelo

The curriculum leaders, Pam Reagle of Compass Learning, Doug McIntyre and Linda Prieskorn have forged ahead with the aligning of the Social Studies curriculum. The social studies GLCE's will not be published until August but the placement of the MEAP test in the ninth grade allows us to continue to teach all the middle school outcomes in grades 6,7 and 8. The maps reflect the Michigan Curriculum Framework and the History Themes.

We will be reviewing the maps at the April first week meeting.

MEAP scores for the test administered in the fall at the sixth grade level showed a considerable leap. This was in a large part due to the renorming of the scores. The scores have also shown considerable growth over the last few years.

Next year's test will reflect a change in format. Students will not see a prompt and 5 questions. This format is expensive and will disappear in favor of more stand-alone questions.

The Inquiry and Extended Response will remain the same.

SIXTH GRADE WRITING CURRICULUM

Last year sixth grade teachers struggled with the new WRITING IN THE CONTENT AREA class that replaced the reading in the content area class.

Each sixth grade teacher is expected to teach writing for his or her "fifth" assignment.

A group of teachers worked over the summer to create writing lessons in each of the content areas. These lessons meet the standards for writing, the standards for the Content area and provide rubric based on the SIX TRAITS RUBRIC.

Across the district different teams of teachers chose to deliver this content in different ways with the understanding that each sixth grader in the district would be presented each of the lessons by the end of the year.

By this time teachers that are teaching all four writing units should be $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the lessons.

Teams that are rotating the students through each content area should have taught each lesson three times.

With this concentrated effort in writing we should see a great improvement in the writing scores for the seventh grade MEAP next year as well as improvement in the math scores and the social studies extended response in 2007.

Sixth grade teachers will be meeting to evaluate all the lessons May 8, 2006 at WISD. Based on your comments we will modify the lessons for next year.

I have heard both positive and negative comments on this lesson and am looking forward to full participations and a rousing discussion.

All we lack now are the political will and the professional development resources needed to place these very powerful assessment tools into the hands of teachers and administrators. We have the ability to implement an exciting new vision of excellence in assessment that maintains four new beliefs.

Our job is to set students up for high-stakes success by helping them believe in themselves as learners.

We must acknowledge that students are assessment users and use assessment to discover gifts they didn't know they had

Crucial instruction decisions are made in the classroom everyday, not just once a year, and must be based on accurate evidence for the sake of student success.

All educators absolutely must understand and use sound assessment practices.

LOOKING AT ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

“GOOD ASSESSMENT IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF GOOD INSTRUCTION”

MICHIGAN CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Excellent assessment should stretch a student to demonstrate true learning; it should go beyond the traditional selecting a response to demonstration of understanding. Assessment should allow students to demonstrate knowledge by creating a product or performance not parroting back a list of facts.

The Michigan Curriculum Framework has identified standards for assessment and we have many examples of these in our local curriculum.

ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION: The task asks students to organize, synthesize, interpret, explain, or evaluate complex information in addressing a concept, problem or issue. The MEAP has several examples where data is provided to the students and they must create a graph. In other questions students must read and interpret graphs and maps.

CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES: The task asks students to consider alternative solutions, strategies, perspectives, or points of view in addressing a concept, problem issue. The summarize portion of a CMP lesson, a mini lesson on characters in ELA and comparing primary sources in social studies are all examples of these assessments in our classrooms.

DISCIPLINARY CONTENT: The task asks students to show understanding and or use ideas, theories, or perspectives considered central to an academic or professional discipline.

DISCIPLINARY PROCESS: The task asks students to use methods of inquiry, research, or communication characteristic of an academic or professional discipline. Students should use the tools of the trade, maps in social studies, observations and hands on labs in science; writing and reading in the content all support these standards.

ELABORATED WRITTEN COMMUNICATION: The task asks students to elaborate on their understanding, explanations or conclusions through extended writing. Students who are able to explain a process or their thinking demonstrate a high level of understanding. CMP reflections, reading response journals and interactive notebooks are all tools in use in our classes that measure this standard.

PROBLEM CONNECTED TO THE WORLD BEYOND THE CLASSROOM. The task asks students to address a concept, problem or issue that is similar to one that they have encountered or are likely to encounter in life beyond the classroom. CMP problems based on real world situations, writing in response to current events, testing the local source of water and creating a garden to feed the school exists in this district.

AUDIENCE BEYOND THE SCHOOL: The task asks students to communicate their knowledge, present a product or performance, or take some action for an audience beyond the teacher, classroom, and school building. Submitting writing to local contests, writing to the editor of the newspaper, addressing the school board, displaying art in stores downtown and working with a business partner to clean a stream are local examples of tasks that address an audience beyond the school.

We have examples of all of these, now we need to make them common practice in every classroom.

We also need to master a variety of these to address the needs of all students.



EDITORIAL THOUGHTS THE IDEAL STUDENT

MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

2555 S. STATE ST.

994- 1682
ext 52247

prieskor@aaps.k12.mi.us

If I could create the ideal student he/she would laugh at all my jokes, stay after school and work until they could solve the math problem that was impossible in class, suggest a solution to a classroom problem that no one else had thought of, take risks in learning, strive to accuracy and neatness in every assignment.. Need I say more?

Willard Daggett, our speaker for the district PD day suggests that we need to teach these qualities just like we teach academic skills.

Elementary schools have done this for years, but we are too content focused at the secondary level to have successfully addressed this.

WISD specifically cites HABITS OF MIND in the goals for learning for Washtenaw County.

My ideal student would be trained in these as Daggett suggests.

- **Persisting**
- **Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision**
- **Managing impulsivity**
- **Gathering data through all senses**
- **Listening with understanding and empathy**
- **Creating, imagining, innovating**
- **Thinking flexibly**
- **Responding with wonderment and awe**
- **Thinking about thinking (metacognition)**
- **Taking responsible risks**
- **Striving for accuracy**
- **Finding humor**
- **Questioning and posing problems**
- **Thinking interdependently**
- **Applying past knowledge to new situations**
- **Remaining open to continuous learning**

Read more at
<http://www.habits-of-mind.net/whatare.htm>

**END OF THE YEAR LEARNING
REGISTER AT prieskor@aaps.k12.mi.us**

April 10 - Technology Night 3: Video Streaming and Discussion Boards - 3:30 – 7:00pm WISD

April 27 - Creating and Using Interactive Notebooks 3:30 – 5:00pm WISD

May 1 - Technology Night 4 – iMovie – 3:30 – 7:00pm WISD

May 4 - GEMS – The Reason For the Seasons – 3:30 – 7:00pm Scarlett

May 8 - 6th Grade Writing - 3:30 – 5:00 WISD