

SECTION I

CURRICULUM INSTRUCTION UPDATE

Literacy

Over the past four years, the District continually expanded and refined its implementation of balanced literacy across eleven school sites. Inherent in our approach to literacy is an extended block of time to address comprehension-level skills and strategies for all students, as well as basic literacy skills such as fluency. Our Response to Intervention (RTI) component allowed us to institute school-based problem-solving teams to develop intervention plans for students failing to meet benchmark. Implementation and refinement of balanced literacy continues to be supported through instructional coaching during each school year.

During this past year (2010-2011), the District focused on two important goals in the ongoing literacy initiative:

- Refine Writers' Workshop at the K-5 level
- Implement Readers' and Writers' Workshop in grades 6-8
- Develop a school-wide bookroom at each middle school

Work around these, and other literacy goals, will expand in the coming years as Common Core Standards are integrated and support for differentiated learning broadens.

Mathematics

During this past year, we launched the development of "math pacing guides" throughout the District. Pacing guides are grade specific planning tools developed by teacher teams. Rather than continuing to be reliant on a "packaged" mathematics program, teachers will now craft curriculum resources by combining elements from multiple commercial and District-made materials. This will facilitate instructional decisionmaking based on data rather than a prescribed "teacher's guide" for mathematics. Mirroring the workshop model for literacy, teachers will now use a District-wide year long trajectory to map monthly units. From there, grade level teams and individual teachers will customize unit plans to reflect data and student needs. Additionally, teachers will provide brief whole-class lessons, followed by expanded time for small-group work, independent work, and conferring to assess and plan for individual students.

Math pacing guides will continue to take shape in grades K-8 over the coming years. As with the literacy initiative, this will provide ample time for collaboration, analysis of resources, and enhancement of teacher content knowledge.

Science

During this past year, the District-wide Science Administrative Curriculum Team developed a draft align-



Paxton Center School's New Book Room



Instructional Coach explores use of the iPad at the New Literacies Institute

SECTION I

CURRICULUM INSTRUCTION UPDATE (CONTINUED)

ment guide for science and technology/engineering in grades K-5. This guide was examined and refined through feedback provided by the Science Curriculum Community and a cohort of teachers participating in the Museum of Science Gateway Partnership Program. In the spring, 50 District-wide elementary teachers volunteered to be Science Early Adopters and will implement this new curriculum structure beginning in September. Their efforts will be supported by our Teaching and Learning Alliance partners through professional development and a dedicated District-wide instructional coach who will specialize in science. A main focus of the Early Adopter efforts will be to integrate science instruction with existing balanced literacy structures in grades K-5.

Instructional Technology

During this past year, the District deployed small-group collections of Apple iPads in all elementary schools. These iPad Labs are utilized specifically with Title I and special education populations. In each building, five devices are used for Title I and five for special education instruction. Teachers use the iPads to facilitate independent practice, reading, writing, and other differentiated learning experiences. In addition to custom applications for individual students, iPads provide an incredibly engaging vehicle for learning.

Professional development for iPad classroom use was provided through instructional coaching. Instructional coaches have had their own professional development on this cutting-edge technology through DESE New Literacies Institute, MESPA, and in-house training.

Physical Education, Health and Wellness

The District was one of just 77 nation-wide recipients of a federal Carol M. White Physical Education Program grant during this past year. This award, totaling nearly \$2 million dollars, enabled us to implement media-rich physical education technology, including HOPSports and iDance. These technologies engage students, provide expert models in non-traditional physical activities (e.g., Pilates), and enhance levels of moderate to vigorous physical activity levels. Additionally, award funds allowed deployment of a comprehensive physical fitness assessment system, including data management and individual student reports. Fitness data reporting will allow us to communicate assessment results, including BMI, and healthy fitness strategies to families. In the coming year, grant funding will help us impact nutritional choices by introducing enhanced fruit and vegetable options in school cafeterias, along with nutrition instruction.



Students at Houghton follow along during HOPSports instruction using sandbells