



INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING MONTHLY

Wachusett Regional School District, 1745 North Main Street, Jefferson, MA 01522

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Common Questions about The Common Core Standards

By Catherine Schofield, Curriculum Supervisor

Teachers across the Wachusett Regional School District (WRSD) recently received either the new *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* or *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Mathematics*. These new documents signify an exciting new chapter for education in Massachusetts, and will help guide educators as they prepare students to live and work in the 21st century. As with any curricular change, there are many questions about these new standards and how they will impact instruction in Wachusett classrooms. Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions follow.

Fall Assessment Dates

AIMSweb (Grades K-4) - September 21 to October 14

DRA (Grades 1-5) - complete by November 4

WRSD Math Assessment (Grades 3-5) - November 1 to November 18

What is the difference between the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for English Language Arts and Literacy or Math and the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), developed by a consortium of states, were adopted by Massachusetts in 2010. Massachusetts is one of 44 U.S. states, several

Please see *Common Core Standards* on page 6.

Coming Soon...WRSD's Healthy Nutrition Program!

By Bradley Clark, Instructional Coach for Physical Education, Health, and Wellness

The Wachusett Regional School District (WRSD) will be implementing a healthy nutrition program this year as part of the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) Grant. The goal of this initiative is to encourage WRSD students to learn healthy eating habits and improve their nutrition in order to prevent obesity.

Starting October 1st, all twelve K-12 schools will offer a "healthy lunch" once a week.

This lunch will meet all 2013 federal-mandated food and nutrition (Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act) and USDA MyPlate.gov guidelines. This healthy lunch will offer whole grains, low-fat dairy, and double the portion sizes for fruits and vegetables.

All WRSD schools will now offer fruit smoothies as a lunch choice. Smoothie ingredients will include: yogurt, fruit, and juice. K-8 schools will include smoothies

Please see *Healthy Nutrition Program* on page 4.

Building Reading Stamina: Tips for Strengthening Independent Reading Time

By Rachel Kodra, Instructional Coach for Literacy and Limelight

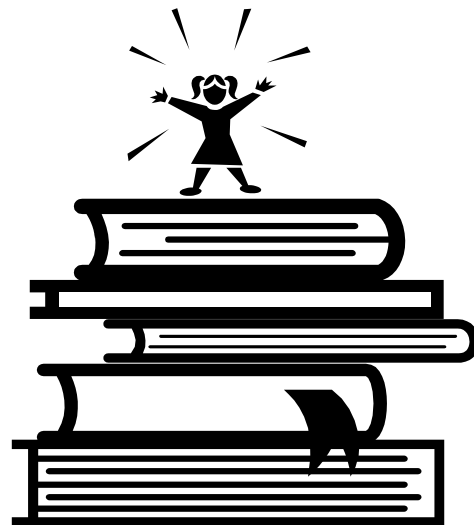
Now that we're into our second month of school it's a great time to talk with your students about building their reading stamina. Reading stamina is defined as the ability to read well for prolonged periods without interrupting yourself or others around you. Educational researchers for years have proven that the more time children spend reading the more proficient they become. According to research reported by Education World, a child's reading ability is directly linked to the amount of time they spend engaged in recreational reading. During this time, children should be able to choose what they want to read. The following are some suggestions to help your students increase their reading stamina:

- Set a class goal and celebrate reading milestones along the way. Start small and be realistic. For example, begin independent reading in ten-minute sessions. Then slowly build these up until students are able to sustain for 30 minutes at the middle level and 30-45 minutes at the elementary level.
- Practice, practice, practice! The more often we do anything, the better we become. There is no miracle solution to improving your reading stamina. Research shows that reading stamina will gradually increase with the amount of time spent reading. Just like athletes spend months and months preparing for the Olympics, reading stamina will only increase with quality

reading practice.

- Make sure the students' reading environment is comfortable and free from distractions. Talk with your students about making wise choices when selecting individual reading spots.
- Experiment with partner reading on occasion. While the benefits of reading to someone else are enormous, providing opportunities for partner reading is also a great way to build a community of readers and helps support students sustain for longer periods of time.

Remember, the best way to become a better reader is to practice each day with just-right books. By providing this opportunity for your students they will be able to practice their strategies while being engaged in authentic text.



The Importance of Student Talk in the Science Classroom

By Deborah LaBombard, Instructional Coach for Science and CPS

Student talk is important in the areas of literacy and math, as we have all witnessed through our implementation of Readers' Workshop, Writers' Workshop, and math. Whether through whole class discussion, small group conversation, or student-to-student turn and talk techniques, student talk has become a centerpiece of our curriculum in both literacy and math in the Wachusett Regional School District.

But what about science? Is student talk as relevant when it comes to science learning? After all, when many of us think about science, our first thoughts include not talk but engaging, hands on activities; children planting seeds, watching caterpillars, creating simple machines, and exploring bulbs and wires. In a world where teachers have important demands

on their instructional time, should talk really hold a vital role in our science teaching? When time is short and other things run long, student talk is often shortchanged or eliminated.

Engaging, targeted talk in science is just as important as hands-on activities. Undoubtedly, children at all levels need to "see and hold" the science to develop an understanding of the concepts that we teach. Talk, however, must be connected to each activity and stage of the inquiry process. Skills of discussion, asking questions, planning investigations, reporting results, debating evidence, and synthesizing data are important skills which need to be practiced by students in all curricular areas. Science gives us an authentic venue for teaching

Please see *Student Talk* on page 4.

Resources for Math Lessons

By Charlene Griffin, Instructional Coach for Mathematics and iPads

As I have traveled around elementary schools over the past couple of weeks beginning to talk to teachers individually and in groups about their discussing Math Pacing Guides, I have been impressed by the hard work and effort teachers are putting in to refining math instruction. Teachers have studied the trajectories developed by colleagues from around the district over the past few years. They have worked together to align the standards found in these trajectories to the Massachusetts Mathematics Curriculum Framework. They have mapped out the standards for their grade levels into units of study considering a logical and well-paced development of concepts and skills for their

students. Finally, they have begun to populate these units of study with lessons and activities designed to grow understanding of the concepts.

It is this search for high-quality lessons and activities that many teachers have chosen to speak to me about as I have made my way around the schools. Teachers recognize the importance of making good choices regarding the lessons to include in their Pacing Guides. Indeed, current research underscores the need for teachers to carefully consider which lessons and activities they will use to teach their students mathematical concepts. The

Please see *Math Lessons* on page 5.

Healthy Nutrition Program from page 1

each Tuesday during lunch as the main entree. WRHS will offer smoothies as a daily breakfast option. Additional fresh fruit (changing monthly) will be available as smoothie toppings at all schools.

In addition, all schools will now offer local farm-grown vegetables (changing monthly). K-8 schools will offer a Vegetable-of-the-Month program each Friday during lunch. Cafeteria staff will provide homemade dips for each specific vegetable. WRHS now offers a vegetable-based soup station as a

daily lunch option

Finally, all WRSD Cafeteria staff will be attending 2 ½ days of workshop training. Their trainings will focus on healthy eating habits and healthy food preparation. Two cafeteria staff managers have already attended a 3-day summer seminar entitled "Healthy Cuisine."

Fruits and Vegetables of the Month

Month	Featured Fruit	Featured Vegetable
September	Grapes	Tomatoes
October	Apples	Winter Squash
November	Cranberries	Cauliflower
December	Bananas	Garlic (Hummus)
January	Papaya	Broccoli
February	Tangerine	Spinach
March	Pineapple	Cabbage
April	Mango	Asparagus
May	Cherries	Snow Peas
June	Watermelon	Celery

Science Resources for Teachers

Did you know that any certified teacher who works in a public school is eligible to be a part of the teacher partner program with the Museum of Science in Boston? Benefits of becoming a teacher partner include free admission to exhibit halls during every visit, discounts on museum memberships, 10% discount on purchases at the Museum Store, and borrowing privileges at the Educator Resource Center and Lyman Library. For more information, check out their website at

http://www.mos.org/educators/classroom_resources/teacher_partner_program.

Importance of Student Talk from page 3

these important skills which need to be mastered for both school and life.

As our district and profession begin to talk more about 21st century skills, we will continue to ask ourselves how we can best meet the educational needs of students in a new world of continual change. Science teaching and learning remains a unique and natural area of the curriculum to authentically prepare our students for successful, productive lives in the twenty first century, and targeted student talk continues to be a valuable resource for getting there.

Math Lessons from page 3

proponents of best practice instructional reform posit that “Conceptual understanding does not come from a teacher *telling* students what a concept is. Concepts are *built* by each person; understanding is created.” They further state that “Teachers must provide experiences for students in which they *actively* engage in the key processes of: making connections, using reasoning and developing proofs, problem solving, creating representations, and communicating ideas” (Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, and Arthur Hyde, *Best Practice: Today’s Standards of Teaching & Learning in America’s Schools*, 2005, p. 114 and 115). Many teachers with whom I have spoken realize that such lessons and activities go far beyond worksheets, and so they purposely seek out lessons and activities from a variety of resources to build their students’ understanding.

But where can teachers find the resources that will build students’ conceptual understandings of critical mathematics concepts? One resource is the Everyday Math (EDM) materials which are still present in all the schools. Teachers have reported feeling liberated from following the EDM curriculum in a lockstep manner and yet they have recognized that there are many worthwhile, conceptually-rich activities contained within the program. Teachers have scoured their EDM materials to locate such lessons and activities, often eschewing many of the Math Boxes pages while utilizing the lessons with a more investigatory, hands-on approach.

Another fantastic resource full of this type of investigatory, experiential lessons is the *Illuminations* website developed by the

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and found at <http://illuminations.nctm.org>. This website houses hundreds of lessons and activities searchable by strand of mathematics and grade level band, all of which provide excellent opportunities for building conceptual understanding as highlighted above.

As you continue to develop and refine your Pacing Guide, I would be happy to discuss any of the resources mentioned in this article, the lessons and activities you are choosing to include your units of study, and/or any other topic regarding Pacing Guides or mathematics instruction in general. Contact me via email and we can meet next time I am in your school.

Looking for lessons and activities to your students’ understanding of mathematical concepts?

Check out
www.illuminations.nctm.org.

This website houses hundreds of lessons and activities searchable by strand of mathematics and grade level band.

Common Core Standards from page 1

U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia that has adopted the CCSS. The CCSS are the foundation of the 2011 *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*. Massachusetts also opted to include some additional standards that are unique to our state. Standards specific to Massachusetts are preceded with the code MA.

What are some of the differences between the previous ELA standards and the new literacy standards?

Some differences include: grade-specific standards for grades PreK-8, requirements for literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects, an emphasis on reading and writing informational texts, greater attention to research and media skills, and the addition of College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards.

What are the College and Career Readiness Standards?

The College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards anchor the document and outline the cross-disciplinary literacy skills that students must possess in order to be successful in college or a career. These standards are the same for grades PreK-12, and help to articulate what it means to be a

literate person in the 21st century.

When will the WRSD start teaching the new standards?

As a district, we have begun the process of reviewing our curriculum to identify areas of strong alignment with the new standards and areas where curriculum revision and development will be necessary. The results of this curriculum review process will enable us to begin to modify our curriculum and transition to the new standards over the next several years. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) has set the goal of “full implementation” of the new standards by the 2013-2014 school year.

When will the new standards be assessed by the MCAS?

The MA DESE has outlined an MCAS Assessment Transition Plan. In the spring of 2012, standards from the former frameworks will continue to be assessed. Beginning in the spring of 2013, standards from the 2011 *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks* will begin to be assessed. More specific details about the MCAS transition plan can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/transition/?section=ela>.

Afterschool Professional Development Opportunities

Literacy Assessments in the Wachusett Regional School District
October 3, 17, 24

Math Learning Community: Analyzing and Discussing Student Work Samples
October 4, 11, November 1, 15

HOPSports Training and Fitness Class
October 5, 12, 19, 26, November 2, 9, 16

Please visit www.wrsd.net/literacy to register or learn more about these professional development offerings.

Focus on Technology

Student Response Systems: CPS (Classroom Performance System)

By Deborah LaBombard, Instructional Coach for Science and CPS

In the spring of last year, a large group of WRSD teachers in grades two through 12, known in our district as SuperUsers, began integrating a powerful educational tool known as CPS (Classroom Performance System). CPS, sometimes referred to as "clickers", are small, handheld devices that allow students to answer questions and teachers to instantly assess the level of understanding from each and every one of their students in real time. This new technology, which can be integrated into any curriculum area, allows teachers to engage in formative assessment at its very best, with immediate feedback so that from student assessments to modify their teaching on the whole group, small group, or individual basis. Scores can also be saved and tracked with dozens of various reporting options.

As the instructional coach for CPS, I am working with WRSD SuperUsers who are interested in ramping-up use or planning to



support other colleagues who will soon come onboard. Whether you are a beginner in need of assistance in inputting class lists, or a seasoned user interested in embedding graphics and video or exploring reporting options, I can assist you with many of your CPS needs. In need of immediate CPS assistance? eInstruction, the maker of CPS, offers 2-5 minute online tutorials on most CPS topics including getting started, using ExamView, and Mobi directions as well as many, many others. In addition, eInstruction has a useful customer support number available to all WRSD users. Contact me via email to set up a meeting time to learn more about CPS and its classroom uses.

Thank you for reading this edition of *Instructional Coaching Monthly*. If you have questions about this newsletter or the district's instructional coaching program, please contact Catherine Schofield at catherine_schofield@wrsd.net.