



ARLINGTON HEIGHTS SCHOOL DISTRICT 25

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**Asst. Superintendent
of Student Learning**
Dale Truding

August 27, 2009

**Director of
Student Services**
Betty Womack Ed.D.

Dear Staff,

**Director of Technology
and Assessment**
Christopher Fahnoe

The Department of Student Learning welcomes you to the 2009-2010 school year. We hope you have had a very enjoyable and restful summer. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to our restructured department. The new federal stimulus money has allowed us to make some departmental changes that we believe will further support you and our students as we continue to implement the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan and the District 25 initiatives. During the first few weeks of school, you will be able to log on to the district website and listen to personal podcasts prepared by members of the Department of Student Learning.

Curriculum Coordinator
Eleanor Chin

Please join us in welcoming the following staff members to their new positions:

**Learning Enhancement
Coordinator**
Jennifer Graham Ed.D.

- Dr. Betty Womack, Director of Student Services: Betty will be responsible for the special education program and district-wide health services.
- Ellie Chin, Curriculum Coordinator: Ellie will be responsible for the coordination of all general education curriculum initiatives.
- Dr. Jennifer Graham, Learning Enhancement Coordinator (.8 position): Jennifer will oversee the ELL program, the Literacy by Design program, the GATE program, and RtI. She will also be responsible for the grants related to these initiatives.
- Suzy Rabbat, Teacher on Assignment (TOA): Suzy will be working in the Department of Student Learning on Thursdays. She will be responsible for supporting LMC teachers and classroom teachers in the implementation of Understanding By Design as a framework for 21st Century teaching and learning. She will be at Olive-Mary Stitt as the LMC teacher the other four days of the week.
- Kelly Vignocchi, Teacher on Assignment (TOA): Kelly will serve as a part-time TOA and will be working with Ellie Chin to support our general education initiatives. She will be available on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
- Kelley Johnson, Teacher on Assignment (TOA): Kelley will serve as a full-time TOA and will be supporting our middle school and elementary school curriculum initiatives.
- Christine Trendel, Teacher on Assignment (TOA): Christine will serve as a full-time TOA and will be working with the elementary staff on the curriculum initiatives.

**Special Education
Coordinator**
Lisa Kramp

**Early Childhood
Coordinator**
Diane Burnett

Teachers on Assignment:
DeEtte Hayenga
Deanne Howard
Kelley Johnson
Suzy Rabbat
Christine Trendel
Kelly Vignocchi

Assistive Tech Facilitator
Africa Anderson

We also welcome back;

Technology Support Team
Dawn Andrews
Hank Chiuppi

Sherry Ziolkowski

- Chris Fahnoe, who will continue to serve in his role as Director of Technology and Assessment.
- Lisa Kramp, who will continue to serve in her role as Special Education Coordinator.
- Diane Burnett, who will continue to serve in her role as Early Childhood Coordinator.
- Africa Anderson, who will continue to serve in her role as Assistive Technology Facilitator.
- Dee Hayenga, who will continue to serve in her role as a part-time TOA and will support new teachers and special district-wide programs.
- Deanne Howard, who will continue to serve in her role as a TOA and will support our cable channel, professional development programming for our district website and act as our liaison to ABC/25.

Administrative Support
Marilyn Allina
Diana Donovan

Susan Leverenz
Ann Rady
Lorie Raupp

In the Spring of 2009, we introduced our new **WIRED** logo and during the 2009-2010 school year, we will integrate our **WIRED** focus through the following initiatives:

World Focus: It is important for our students to understand what it means to be a member of the global community.

Chinese will be taught to all fourth graders at the elementary schools. We were very fortunate to have received grant funds to support this initiative. We have hired two experienced teachers from China who attended Michigan State University this summer where they were enrolled in the Masters of Arts in Teaching program. They have also been teaching Chinese summer classes to students in East Lansing, Michigan. You will have an opportunity to meet Siming Hu and Yixuan Wang on the August 27 Institute Day.

Integration: There are numerous ways to integrate 21st century tools, skills, habits, and attitudes into all aspects of the curriculum.

Elementary Differentiation

As educators, we are always challenged to find new ways to meet the needs of our diverse population of learners in the general education classroom. One of the most effective ways to meet their needs is through the implementation of effective differentiation strategies in the classroom. Differentiation is more than just a list of strategies; it is a philosophy that integrates best practices to meet the needs of the very diverse learners we have in our schools. One of the major district initiatives for the next three years will be differentiation of instruction. Coaching from a consultant, Jessica Hockett, will be provided to various grade levels each year. Jessica is a doctoral candidate at the University of Virginia and is a nationally recognized speaker and author in the area of differentiation. We are proud of the fact that Jessica did her student teaching at Thomas Middle School, and we welcome her back to District 25.

Year I: Elementary Differentiation Implementation

During the first year of implementation, all of our fourth grade teachers will be trained in differentiation and will be working throughout the year with Jessica Hockett. She will be providing in-service training and coaching for our fourth grade teachers as they plan and deliver differentiated lessons during the year. This is a wonderful opportunity for the development of building-wide and district-wide fourth grade professional learning communities. We are confident this model will foster true collaboration between all of the fourth grade teachers in our district.

Middle School Differentiation

Differentiation training will also take place in our middle schools over the next three years. Teachers will work with Dr. Holly Hertberg Davis who is a professor from the University of Virginia. She is a well-recognized author in the area of gifted education and has co-authored a number of articles with Dr. Carol Ann Tomlinson, one of the national experts in the area of differentiation and gifted education. Dr. Hertberg-Davis will implement a teaching and coaching model of professional development and we are excited that she has agreed to work with us.

Year I: Middle School Differentiation

During the first year of implementation, Dr. Hertberg-Davis will coach all of our social science teachers in grades 6-8 as the teachers plan and deliver differentiated lessons. Other content area teams will receive coaching in years two and three. The social science teachers in both middle schools will have an opportunity to plan lessons together and learn from one another. Like the elementary differentiation implementation plan, the middle school model is also a wonderful opportunity for the development of building-wide and district-wide professional learning communities.

Middle School Health Curriculum

The middle school health teachers will be reviewing the health curriculum to insure that it meets and exceeds state standards and helps children integrate what they learn about their bodies, abuse awareness, and nutrition into a healthy lifestyle and a lifetime of wellness. It is important that students also have numerous opportunities to reflect on the how to use a decision-making process when faced with choices that will impact their lives.



FOR SUCCESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Reflection: It is essential to reflect on our daily practices and to model for students the importance of reflecting on some aspect of their learning each day.

As we reflected on the adoption of new literacy materials during the first year of implementation, we realized that we needed additional resources that would better meet the needs of our students in the area of writing. The art of writing is truly a reflective process. During the writing process, the author is either reflecting upon a topic, an idea, style elements, or someone else's writing. Writing is also one of the most challenging skills to teach. This year, the district will implement two writing frameworks that will help provide consistency for our students and contribute to an articulated writing curriculum in grades K-8.

Teachers in Grades K-2

Teachers in K-2 will be introduced to Lucy Calkins's *Units of Study for Primary Writing*. All of the K-2 teachers will receive training in the units of study and will receive all of the materials needed to implement the program. This writing framework will replace the entire *Treasures* writing program. Throughout the year, we will ask for feedback from the K-2 teachers about professional development opportunities in the area of writing that they would like to participate in during the 2010-2011 school year.

Teachers in Grades 3-5

Teachers in grades 3-5 will be introduced to the WEX, Writers' Express, which is a writing framework based upon the work of Lucy Calkins and Donald Graves. It is a complement to the type of writing our students will experience in grades K-2. All of the teachers in grades 3-5 will receive training on this model and teachers in grades 3 and 5 will receive coaching sessions throughout the year from one of the consultants from the WEX group. This writing framework will also replace the entire *Treasures* writing program.

Grades 6-8 Language Arts Teachers

The language arts curriculum will be delivered over two 40-minute blocks of time and taught by one teacher this year. We believe the integration of reading and writing will allow students to be able to clearly understand the multiple ways that the processes of reading and writing are interconnected. The middle school language arts teachers received an introductory training in the WEX, Writers' Express, during the 2008-2009 school year. This year, follow-up training will be offered to all language arts teachers, and middle school special services teachers will be introduced to the WEX model. The sixth grade teachers will also be a part of a coaching model of professional development. The teachers will be working with Patricia Scully, the consultant they worked with last year. Patricia Scully is a senior trainer for WEX and former English Department Chairperson in Wayland Public Schools, one of the top-ranked districts in Massachusetts. The Department of Student Learning will meet with language arts teachers in grades 7 and 8 throughout the year to determine if they will participate in a writing coaching model during year two of the implementation of the WEX.

Assessment of our Gifted Program

This year our GATE program will be assessed by one of the foremost experts and authors in the field of Gifted Education, Dr. Carolyn Callahan. Dr. Callahan is a professor at the University of Virginia and a colleague of and co-author with Dr. Carol Ann Tomlinson. Dr. Callahan is also the author of the book entitled, *Program Evaluation in Gifted Education*, which is used throughout the country as a framework for assessing gifted programs. District 25 has many students who are gifted and talented in multiple areas and the program review will assist us in determining how to best meet the needs of all of these students. Dr. Callahan will be conducting focus groups in late fall comprised of staff, parents, students, and administrators. We anticipate the results of this review process will be completed by May, 2010.

Response to Intervention

We will continue to reflect on our practices and to seamlessly integrate the RtI initiative into the general education program. We will refine our methodologies to meet the needs of all children. Literacy teachers will implement the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Interventions Program that will support the instructional needs of many of the students who receive literacy services. The program encompasses all the essential elements of an effective research-based literacy program.



FOR SUCCESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Engagement and Discovery: Engagement involves active processes such as creating, problem-solving, reasoning, decision-making, and evaluating. Students are intrinsically motivated to learn when they are involved in meaningful learning tasks. Discovery should be a daily activity. Each one of our students and each one of us should be able to articulate something new we discovered each and every day.

Science Curriculum Review

The 2009-2010 school year will be the second year of our science curriculum review process. Throughout the year, the committee will be defining the scope and sequence of the curriculum, determining how best to develop authentic assessments, and selecting the K-5 materials that will provide an inquiry-based approach to science. Throughout the process, there will be an emphasis on the integration of the 21st century tools, skills, habits, and attitudes our students will need to be competitive and collaborative in this global community in which we live.

Grades 6-8 Industrial Technology Curriculum Review

Our industrial technology teachers will continue their curriculum review process during the 2009-2010 school year. Many manufacturing and engineering jobs in our nation are being outsourced. It is imperative that our children develop design, engineering, and technological skills that cannot be outsourced easily. This past year, the committee started to examine some STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) initiatives and the 21st century definitions of design, innovation, and collaboration. The committee will also continue to explore other effective classroom models that emphasize design, problem solving, process skills, and collaboration.

Technology

Tech 25 will work to support **WIRED** by offering professional development for staff, a variety of equipment to engage students, and tools to connect with parents and the community. Implementing the second year of the technology plan will involve providing training sessions to connect globally, integrate resources into the classroom, and encourage discovery. The ThunderMac program will continue to provide training and laptops for staff. Equipment and software will be acquired to increase student access, create engaging environments, support a world focus, and improve communication. For 2009-2010, Tech 25 will strive to promote greater student achievement by increasing student engagement, providing more access to technology in every class every day, and assessing student performance on an ongoing basis. Tech 25 will also help to facilitate communication and collaboration, maximize administrative effectiveness and staff productivity, and build student and staff proficiencies in 21st century skills through these projects.

This is certainly a lofty list of initiatives. We know that each building will also be establishing school improvement goals that will support the district's initiatives and will continue to **WIRED** our students for success and understanding.

The Department of Student Learning has set a goal for the 2009-2010 school year. It is one that ensures that you are supported in all of these initiatives and that the professional development opportunities we are providing are meaningful and sustainable over time. We believe that providing you with opportunities to have ongoing coaching and modeling sessions by reputable experts in the field will move the district closer to accomplishing its VISION 2020 Strategic Plan and our **WIRED** initiatives.

The students and parents in District 25 are so lucky to have such dedicated teachers, administrators, and support personnel who truly want what is best for each and every child, each and every day. The Department of Student Learning is here to support you and your students and to ensure that the 2009-2010 school year is the best year ever!

Always,



Dale Truding
Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning



FOR SUCCESS AND UNDERSTANDING