

MIDDLETOWN STANDARD



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BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

From the SUPERINTENDENT...

Dear Colleagues & Parents,

One of the key elements of the Middletown Public Schools' Strategic Plan (see http://www.ri.net/middletown/strategicplan/strategic_plan_middletown_2011.pdf) focuses on **Curriculum and Instruction**. Much research has been done on factors that affect student achievement. Robert Marzano, a well known researcher in his book **"What Works In Schools"** cites three general factors that influence student learning: school, teacher and student.

The **school-level** factors that Marzano refers to include 1) a guaranteed and viable curriculum, 2) challenging goals and effective feedback, 3) parent and community involvement, 4) a safe and orderly environment and 5) collegiality and professionalism. The **teacher factors** include 1) instructional strategies, 2) classroom management and 3) classroom curriculum design. The **student factors** include 1) home atmosphere, 1) learned intelligence and background knowledge and 3) motivation.

Although all these factors are important and interrelated, this year our teachers in Middletown are focused on organizing and sequencing a **guaranteed and viable curriculum** to enable effective student learning.

What is a guaranteed and viable curriculum? A **guaranteed curriculum** is what we decide is imperative to teach---a curriculum that we communicate and assure to ALL our students. A **viable curriculum** is a curriculum that we can realistically **TEACH** during the time we have available during the course of a school year. This means we need to focus on what is essential versus what is supplemental in a school year.

In order to meet federal mandates in *No Child Left Behind* and new state requirements, Middletown teachers are meeting monthly to review the state Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and Grade Span Expectations (GSEs). They are using the GLEs and GSEs to create curriculum maps which ensure that what they teach matches what the state expects students to know and be able to do. This is an ongoing process which involves language arts, math, social studies and science. Once completed, we expect that all our curricula will be available online for parents and community members as well as teachers. (For more information about the state GLEs and GSEs see <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/gle.aspx>).

Middletown teachers have also been creating common assessments, at each grade level and in high school courses, which match the GLEs and GSEs and are using the assessment results to improve curricula and instruction. In addition, they have examined textbooks currently being used to determine how well the information is aligned with the state's content expectations. In the high school, some teachers have been involved in creating new curricula for courses in order to assure that they are aligned with GSEs and selecting textbooks that support the new curricula.

Because of technology improvements, our teachers are now also able to use data more efficiently to find evidence of improved student achievement. The programs in place in the district allow teachers to track student progress in areas of the curriculum and improve instruction. All of the teachers in the district have been trained in the use of the technology and data programs.

Our Strategic Plan provides the district with a guide to make all these changes happen. Clearly, as a district we are making an effort to impact the school level factors that affect student learning.

Sincerely,

Rosemarie K. Kraeger

WELCOME SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS!

A warm welcome is extended to the new members of the Middletown School Committee, Kellie DiPalma and William O'Connell, as well as returning members Michael Crowley, Liana Ferreira-Fenton, and Theresa Spengler.

The School Committee members participated in an orientation process that involved reviewing the roles and responsibilities of Committee members as well as choosing Mr. Crowley as Chair & Mrs. Spengler as Vice-Chair. The Committee will also begin working on setting new goals during their upcoming retreat in early spring.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

DISTRICT USES NEW ONLINE ASSESSMENT TOOLS



Imagine a process that would allow you to track how much each student learns within a school year and from year to year. Middletown Public Schools have recently begun using assessments through the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) which provide an in-depth, personalized look at what each student has learned as well as areas that the student has not yet mastered.

The NWEA provides school districts with computerized adaptive tests in Reading, Language Usage and Mathematics that are aligned with the state's curriculum and that measure student achievement and growth. Students take the self-paced online tests and then teachers are given reports on each student that pinpoint strengths and weaknesses.

"This is an extremely useful tool that will help us to gauge the effectiveness of our teaching methods as well as help us provide each student with the learning tools he or she needs to achieve academic success," said Rosemarie Kraeger, Superintendent.

The assessments are currently being used in grades 2 to high school. Most students take the tests in the fall and spring, although testing can take place up to five times a year, and shorter survey tests can be set up as many times as needed. Teachers have been trained how to access the myriad forms of student data generated through the process and how to use the data to inform instruction. Individual student results have been provided for parents during parent conferences for elementary and middle school students.

CURRICULUM CORNER

2008-9 DISTRICT CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

As usual, Middletown will be having another very active year for curriculum and professional development. Here are some of the district level activities that are planned for 2008-9:

The teachers at all grade levels are creating English Language Arts Curriculum Maps aligned with the state's Grade Level Expectations (GLEs). They are also learning how to use the new technology tool, TIENet, to create the maps online. Several full day sessions by grade level will be necessary in order to complete this work. The teachers will also be using the new maps and TIENet to create units based on Understanding by Design (UbD). Some of this work will continue during the summer.

High school English Language Arts teachers met early in September to integrate the new Capstone design into their curriculums. They will continue to meet as necessary to complete the integration.

High school social studies teachers are meeting to complete curriculum maps and units for the new Comparative Government and Contemporary World Issues senior classes. They are being assisted by a representative from Roger Williams University's Political Science Department.

Middle and high school math teachers will be meeting several times

during the year to analyze the state NECAP assessments with a math specialist from East Bay Educational Collaborative. They are designing math problems by content and grade level that reflect the types of items on the assessments and will be including them in the curriculum for each math course.

Elementary and middle school representatives will meet in the second semester to revise the current standards-based report cards to align them more closely with the state's Grade Level Expectations.

The district's leaders are meeting each semester with a representative from The Renewal Group, Inc., an organization that promotes growth and peak performance with individuals, businesses, educational organizations, government and community agencies. The Leadership Team will be receiving training, consulting and coaching in three areas key to peak performance: stress, resiliency and emotional intelligence (EQ).

Teachers in grades 2-11 were trained in how to use the new assessment system from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). Sessions addressed how to analyze and use the results from the reading, writing and math assessments that were recently given to students in those grade levels.

New i-Parent Portal Program Tracks Student Progress



Advances in technology have provided us with a whole new way for parents to track their children's school performance. Using a new tool called the i-Parent Portal Program, parents will have instant, online access to their child's schedule, attendance and discipline records. Depending on teacher participation, it may also provide parents with access to grading data and homework assignments for each class. A letter and brochure was sent to parents earlier this year explaining the program and the

guidelines for using the program.

To participate in this program, parents need to enroll by signing the Acceptable Use Guidelines and Participation Form and returning the form to the main office of any school in the district. The district will then assign an Access Code which will allow parents to view their own child's records, anywhere, anytime.

Please take advantage of this valuable user-friendly tool. It is amazing how much progress can be made when your child knows you have the ability to check on them and that you know what they are accomplishing daily. If you need additional information or experience any problems, please email iparent@mpsri.net.



RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL REGULATIONS ~ AMENDED

The Board of Regents for Elementary and Middle School Education voted in September to amend the 2003 High School Regulations to clarify the process districts must go through to implement the regulations and to bolster supports for students.

Elements of the Diploma System established in the 2003 regulations include:

- In order to graduate from a Rhode Island high school, students must demonstrate that they have achieved proficiency in six “core academic areas”: English, mathematics, science, social studies, technology, and the arts.
- Students must demonstrate this proficiency “through multiple sources of evidence gathered over time,” including coursework, state assessments, and “performance-based assessments,” such as portfolios, exhibitions (senior projects), or end-of-course exams. (3.1) Under the previous regulations, state assessments could count for no more than 10 percent of the graduation requirements.
- The Commissioner “shall review all [district] high-school diploma systems” and grant approval only to those that comply with the regulations.

Among the changes put in place by the amended regulations:

- **Districts may continue to issue diplomas based on “local criteria” through 2012**, as the Commissioner continues his review of the diploma systems in all districts. In 2010, districts whose systems have been approved may begin offering Regents’ approved diplomas. By 2012, districts without full approval “will no longer be authorized to grant diplomas.” (3.4)
- **Students must complete 20 academic credits** (courses), including four years each of English and mathematics (the fourth course may be a mathematics-related course), three years of science, and three years of history or social studies. (3.1)
- **NECAP, the state assessments, will count as one-third of the proficiency measure in English and mathematics**, though “state assessments shall not be the sole grounds to prohibit graduation from high school.” The Regents shall determine the “minimum achievement level” on the assessments to measure proficiency for graduation, and the Commissioner shall prescribe “additional evidence of proficiency” that can be presented for students who fall below the minimum achievement level, or passing score, on the NECAP tests. (3.3)

The Regents also set the minimum achievement level, or cut score, on the NECAP tests as “partially proficient.”

The amended regulations provide additional specificity about the required supports to students, notably:

- **All districts must provide “specialized assistance” to all students reading below grade level**, including “Personal Literacy Plans” for all elementary-school students reading below grade level. (2.2)
- **All districts must develop “strategies and programs”** to assist students who are not making progress in **mathematics**. (2.3)
- Upon entry into middle school, **each student “shall have an individual learning plan”** that will be developed over time to document the student’s “interests, needs, supports, course selections, and opportunities” (3.6a)
- **Students and families “have the right to appeal graduation decisions,”** and districts must allow for “alternate methods of measuring the student’s overall proficiency.” (3.4.c)

For more information about the Board of Regents High School Regulations, go to; <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/news/pressrels/2008%20Press%20Release/Secondary%20Regulations%20Release%209-3-08.pdf> .

LEARNING LEADERSHIP TEAM ATTENDS CLASS

Middletown Public Schools has created a Learning Leadership Team (LLT) consisting of central office staff, principals, assistant principals, grade leaders and high school Directors. With the help of Tom Wojick of “*The Renewal Group*”, The Leadership Team members are learning skills that can result in increased effectiveness, success and health.

The Renewal Group, Inc., promotes growth and peak performance in three areas that are key to peak performance: stress, resiliency, and emotional intelligence (EQ). The LLT has been meeting quarterly to address these areas.

From the Director of Facilities Management. . .Ed Collins

What's Going On . . .

Ensuring the health and safety of the students and staff in all the school buildings is an ongoing task. In order to make certain that we stay on top of the condition of the buildings, we conduct numerous tests every year. The indoor air quality testing is the last component of testing we perform on a scheduled basis and takes place in November and December because it is best done when we have the heat on and the windows closed. We test different areas of the schools and also address the areas that we feel may be subject to poor air quality. Rooms are checked for humidity, mold, and carbon. After the tests are complete, the results are in a report that is posted on our web site at <http://www.ri.net/middletown/facilities/index.html>.

It seems like each year goes by so quickly and we normally have very little time to look back at what we have accomplished. Here is a list of projects that were completed during the summer and fall period:

- √ Installed new goal post on football field at Gaudet
- √ Installed new infield mix on baseball field at Gaudet
- √ Installed new infield mix on softball field at high school
- √ Built dug outs and back stop for softball field at high school field
- √ Installed new soccer nets at Gaudet
- √ Replaced the old portable bleachers
- √ Resurfaced gym floor at high school
- √ Refurbished tennis and basket ball courts at Gaudet
- √ Replaced two split system HVAC units at Gaudet
- √ Installed ADA door entrance at high school
- √ Replaced all door hardware with ADA hardware and locks on all doors at elementary schools
- √ Installed new security system at elementary schools
- √ Replaced lights in cafeteria and gym at high and middle school
- √ Built new time out room at Kennedy
- √ Built office areas to support new music room at Gaudet
- √ Renovated multiage wing of Forest
- √ Completed new fire alarm system at Gaudet
- √ Replaced original dishwasher at high school

As you can see, we continue to be busy in upgrading and maintaining our facilities and fields. All the funding from these projects comes for either Town or School CIP money which is set aside every year for the facilities and is not part of the general budget. In addition, the tennis courts were funded by the town; the storage barn was funded and built by Pop Warner; and the new press box was paid for and built by the Boosters.

On behalf of the entire Middletown School Facilities Department, have a safe and happy **Holiday Season!**

Middletown Public Schools
 Middletown RI 02842
 Telephone: 401-849-2122
 www.ri.net/middletown

