

List of Our District's 2013-14 Professional Development Needs/Priorities

Based upon input derived from each of our district's eleven school-level professional development plans, student learning goals, and feedback from other constituencies, including Board of Education Members, students, community groups, e.g., Drug Task Force, and parents (Principal's Parent Advisory Committees), the district has identified potential areas of professional development needs. A detailed listing of the district's professional needs and priorities are listed by school in the district's Professional Development Needs Assessment Questionnaire, which can be found in the Appendix section of this document. Based on the 2013-14 Professional Development Needs Assessment Questionnaire, a list of the district's priorities is as follows:

- Provide a second year continuum of professional development for all administrators, supervisors, and instructional staff relating to the specific indicators, rubrics, and artifacts inherent in the district's newly adopted teaching framework and the specific classroom observation and teacher evaluation tool/system, including as appropriate walkthrough processes and formal observations, so as to ensure that all staff members possess a solid, common language and understanding of the expectations for classroom instruction as measured on a particular rubric, and to ensure that all observers/evaluators develop an appropriate level of comfort, skill, and inter-rater reliability with the new teacher evaluation framework, tool, and processes. As part of this second year, staff members will require specific training with follow-up sessions relating to the Marzano observation model's Domains 2, 3, and 4, development and implementation of unit-based learning goals and scales aligned with the CCSS and NJCCCS, Marzano's annual professional growth module, development of approvable student growth objectives (SGOs), a deeper understanding of student growth percentiles (SGPs) and how to improve them, and an understanding of the formula and weights associated with the tabulation of an annual summative teacher-performance rating;
- Develop among staff members and administrators a deep understanding of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and their application at each grade level across all content areas as they relate to the need to ensure the inclusion of grade level, content-area specific, rigorous learning activities and assessments that result in student acquisition of reading and writing (literacy) skill development so as to ensure that all students progress along the continuum essential for college and career readiness. In terms of reading skill acquisition, this includes the ability for all students to read, comprehend, and interact analytically with rigorous, grade level or higher text including not only narrative text, but more specifically, informational and technical reading selections and to conduct effective, on-line research by identifying and utilizing reliable and relevant sources. In terms of writing skill acquisition, this includes the ability for all students to write effectively on grade level or higher in response to prompts and/or reading selections representing a variety of genres by which they will demonstrate their ability to write cohesively and compellingly by synthesizing information garnered from the text, their schema, and their relevant research;
- Develop among all middle and high school teachers of English Language Arts (English, Reading, and Writing) a recognition of the implications which the Common Core State ELA Standards pose relative to the potential need to revise the scope and sequence of the district's middle school and high school English curricula in terms of the fullness of the demand for college-level literacy, which the Common Core Standards and PARCC testing framework and test specifications will require;
- There exists the ongoing need for the district to develop a cohesive K-12 meaningful sequence of reading, writing, and grammar instruction aligned with the Common Core State Standards along with additional vertical articulation to address this need;
- Research-based reading and writing strategies and resources including emphasis on guided reading, vocabulary development, comprehension, conferring, and effective classroom organization and management that support learning centers and small-group, differentiated instruction;

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- Research-based instructional strategies which promote among students higher levels of critical thinking and self expression as measured through open-ended written responses to reading and writing prompts and reflecting a variety of writing genres with particular emphasis on narrative, persuasive, and speculative essays;
- The need for high performance in mathematics requires professional development for teachers in pedagogy including differentiated teaching with flexible, small group guided math instruction; the use of math centers with leveled activity that can provide opportunities both as challenge and practice for students; the development of multi-step problems as well as constructed responses; intervention strategies to promote achievement among our struggling learners; as well as opportunities for high level mathematics' attainment among our advanced students;
- Meeting the needs of economically disadvantaged and at-risk students, as well as students who are at-risk as a result of societal concerns, (e.g., divorce, mood disorders, anxiety, and depression);
- Inclusion, co-teaching collaboration, and exploration of best practice models including those relating to autism, Aspergers, ADHD, multiply disabled students, and other specific special education needs;
- Alignment and revision of curriculum, sample lessons, and benchmark assessments as well as the adoption and implementation of additional benchmark assessments to reflect new NJCCCS and Common Core State Standards with particular emphasis on English Language Arts, Mathematics, World Languages, Social Studies, Technology, and 21st Century Life and Career Skills including Financial Literacy;
- Ensure that middle school and high school teachers are familiar with the level of content rigor and the question types and formats which are represented on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the subject-specific Advanced Placement (AP) tests as the basis upon which staff members can analyze prior year test results; determine areas of relative strength and need for curriculum refinement; develop and incorporate question types which reflect appropriate rigor; adjust instructional methodologies to promote essential knowledge and critical thinking skills; and guide vertical articulation among teachers to ensure a continuum of increasing focus and rigor within each curriculum;
- Ensure that high school staff in the areas of language arts and math become increasingly familiar with the content, question formats, and level of rigor of the college Accuplacer test and are familiar with results from recent district graduates (to the extent possible) to enhance curriculum and bolster student achievement for the purpose of ensuring that future graduating students are ready to enter college without the need for remedial coursework;
- Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying intervention and prevention training for students, staff, and parents;
- Crisis response training;
- Effective classroom management strategies, behavior support initiatives, and character education programming;
- Response to intervention strategies addressing academic, motivational, emotional, psychological, and behavioral issues;
- Use of data including state testing results, benchmark assessments, STAR, DSA, DRA, etc. to close achievement gap and guide the instructional program;
- Ongoing technology training to optimize staff proficiency with and use of technology hardware, software, and web 2.0 applications with particular emphasis on the effective use and integration of technology to infuse 21st Century Skills as relevant to specific content areas;

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- Promote grade level, content area, and vertical and horizontal collaboration and articulation; including relevant data analysis, reflection, program enhancement, best practices, and appropriate intervention designs;
- Retooling veteran teachers who may be displaced into new positions due to budget constraints.
- Furthermore, the district plans to continue to emphasize the importance of professional learning communities and to expand and refine their implementation and related protocols. Professional development time has been included in the annual school calendar to allow more time for staff to meet in collaborative groups and to provide sufficient opportunity for training relating to the adoption and implementation of the Marzano Causal Teaching Framework and teacher evaluation tool/system. A review of the school professional development committee plans for the 2013-14 school year indicates that the following common priorities have been identified as targeted topics for professional learning communities (PLCs) in the needs assessment:
 - *Teacher articulation, particularly between transition-year grade levels, (e.g. K-1, 5-6, 8-9)*
 - *Writing instructional strategies/best practices*
 - *Literacy (reading, writing) across the curriculum*
 - *Analysis of state testing results and SGPs, benchmark assessments, STAR, DRA, DSA, and other data to close achievement gap and facilitate instructional grouping, particularly in mathematics and English Language Arts. Some PLCs may focus on the creation of an intervention period during which that PLC driven interventions will be implemented, monitored, and assessed as they are used with targeted students to determine their effectiveness and as a vehicle to promote the development of additional strategies/interventions*
 - *Implementation of effective ICS/collaborative teaching strategies to optimize staff utilization, instructional practices, and student progress/achievement*
 - *Analysis of various sources of student achievement data to guide instruction, identify best practices, and facilitate PLC work*
 - *Developing and piloting intervention strategies based on data analysis to enhance I&RS, to augment district resources in order to promote high achievement and meet the unique needs of struggling learners and special population students especially in the areas of ELA, mathematics, and science*
 - *Investigation of strategies and activities to meet the social and emotional needs of students*
 - *Investigation of strategies to ensure the success of special education and other at-risk students/populations in meeting the rigors of the CCSS in ELA, mathematics, and science*
 - *Development of 21st century skills (e.g. web 2.0); use and integration of technology tools and applications in various content areas*
 - *Use of technology in the classroom*
 - *Administrators and teachers by grade level and /or subject content areas will need time to familiarize themselves with the new and emerging NJCCCS and online resources so as to align and revise (as necessary) all courses of study with the new NJCCCS, and to make measurable progress in creating and/or refining benchmark assessments.*
 - *Vertical and horizontal articulation to optimize pedagogy as well as alignment and preparation for CCSS implementation and PARCC readiness especially in the areas of ESL, mathematics, and science*
 - *Lesson study and peer observation to optimize instruction relating to the nature and quality of pedagogy required to prepare students with skills and stamina to comprehend, integrate, respond to, and apply rigorous grade-level text*

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- *Grade level fine-tuning, alignment, and implementation of Everyday Math with the CCSS and PARCC assessment specifications*
- *Investigation, identification, and implementation of content-area specific methodologies and learning activities which optimize student acquisition of the skills and knowledge specified in the CCSS*
- *Improving student engagement, motivation, and achievement through the identification of and implementation of curriculum-aligned activities that connect to their out-of-school lives*
- *Investigate alternative middle level scheduling models to provide more structured opportunities in the school day for collaborative professional learning activities and for providing instructional interventions for at-risk, struggling learners*
- *Meeting the needs of extraordinary learners including special education and gifted learners*
- *Book clubs on Marzano's Causal Teaching Framework and related staff observation and evaluation model*
- *Development and implementation of SGOs and SLOs*
- More specifically, the district has identified several short-term and long-term student learning and consequent staff professional development needs, which arise from a careful review of the needs assessment in consideration of the district's vision and goals. These student learning and professional development needs are categorized according to the following broad inclusive topics that span grade levels and content areas: