

Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District

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To: Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School Committee
From: Donna Scanlon, Assistant Superintendent
Date: December 5, 2006
Re: System-wide Curriculum Review and Technology Update
Cc: Administrative Council, Curriculum Planning Council, Citizens Curriculum Advisory Council

This semi-annual report summarizes the status of major issues and initiatives related to HWRSD curriculum and technology development and planning. The report begins by highlighting critical issues and plans in curriculum and instruction that have been identified through the Coordinated Program Review, Curriculum Planning Council, Administrative Council, Citizens Curriculum Advisory Council, and district-wide grade and subject level meetings that have been held this fall. Following this is a technology update, with major contributions from Bart Gilley and principals.

COORDINATED PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

The Coordinated Program Review process was a positive experience and that the Final Report is a helpful planning document for the continued development and improvement of programs and services. I am pleased to say that there were no criteria that were rated as “not implemented.” A number of indicators were found partially implemented, and require a district response. Many of the findings have already been addressed as part of our self assessment process. I am also happy to report that many of the criteria that were problematic in the review done in 2000, were noted as substantially met in 2006. Appendix A provides an Introduction and the Executive Summary. The report in its entirety is available from my office and is also on the Department of Education website at this link: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/cpr/reports/2006/0680.doc>.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

District-wide grade level curriculum meetings for grades K-5, and subject based meetings for grades 6-8 have resulted in valuable dialogue, identification of task forces, and other refinements. Grade level curriculum guides, with all core subjects included, have been distributed at these meetings, which are still in the process of taking place.

Below you will find highlights from the minutes of these meetings:

1. Grade one report card

- a. A number of questions have come up about timelines and consistency so a committee has been established to make recommendations. The committee members in addition to myself are: Janet Libby, Leslie Barone, Marsha Dilk, Rosemary Brosnan, Deb Thompson.
- b. Committee met November 30 and will share with teachers proposed minor changes related to specific indicators and distribution dates for next year prior to the holiday break.

2. Mathematics

- a. Supplemental regular education math intervention services are not generally available, except through Title 1 services. We are considering some technology solutions that may assist, particularly with assessment and practice of math facts, an area that we would like to improve.
- b. HeyMath!, the web-based mathematics enrichment program piloted for a short time last year, is once again available for all children in grades five and six.
- c. Carnegie Bridge to Algebra is being piloted in grades 7 and 8 for students who need an alternative approach to learning mathematics successfully. The Algebra 1, 2, and Geometry versions of this program have had great success at MRHS. The program supports our interest in providing the least restrictive environment for all students, and at the same time ensuring adequate yearly progress.
- d. Grade 6, 7, and 8 teachers are in need of a textbook to offset the Connected Math units that they are doing. A complete package that can be the core, with the option to select from CMP to build conceptual understanding, seems to be the evolving vision of the ideal program. The eighth grade teachers have the most pressing and immediate need. We will be reviewing materials in the near future, and due to the many transition related conversations that have been taking place, there is a good deal of interest in Algebra 1 Part 1 for all students in grade 8. On Wednesday, December 6, all 8th grade math teachers are spending a day visiting math classes at MRHS.

3. English Language Arts

- a. The MCAS Long Composition scores for Topic Development continue to challenge us. I have distributed samples of student writing with high scores for Topic Development to principals so that they may be used for instructional purposes. Students must be able to see examples of high quality writing in order to understand the quality of writing that they must achieve to receive scores of 5 or 6. Currently, most of our students are scoring at level 4.
- b. New materials are needed. The Houghton-Mifflin Invitations to Literacy program is now 10 years old, and requires a good deal of supplemental enhancing to meet the high standards now required by State frameworks. A new program will ensure consistency across the district as well as provide a complete program for effective use by new staff. This need does have budget implications. A new core program for grades 2-6 would cost approximately \$60,000. My recommendation would be to purchase for grade 6 in FY07 with an investment of \$10,000, and allocate \$50,000 for grades 2-5 in FY08. This need has been identified for the last two years, and has already been postponed due to budget restraints.
- c. The grade 6 program should be based upon that which was adopted for use in grades 7 and 8 in 2005. This would provide the best ELA transition from grades 6 to 7.

4. Sheltered English Immersion

- a. Training in Sheltered English Immersion is one of the compliance issues identified through the Coordinated Program Review by the Department of Education. The required training for all teachers with whom our English language learners are placed is equivalent to approximately 48 hours in three different categories. This is an overwhelming unfunded mandate for us, but we are responding to the best of our ability. Compliance is further complicated by the fact that only teachers who have advanced degrees in English as a Second Language or bilingual education are qualified to become trainers. Currently, two of our teachers are applying to become trainers, so that we may establish an internal capacity to provide the necessary training.

5. Inclusion and Least Restrictive Environment

- a. This topic was discussed at many of the meetings. Everyone was in agreement that this approach has a lot of promise, and that they were definitely seeing a good deal of positive effect for many children. The main issue is the need for refinement of scheduling and allocation of time, and Sped teachers being stretched in many directions due to scheduling challenges. The message that keeps being reiterated is that the schools are well on their way to embracing the idea of becoming inclusive learning settings.
- b. The Differentiated Instruction 36 hour course being taken by 36 teachers will conclude on February 7. The feedback from the course is excellent. We will repeat this basic in-depth training, and additionally offer an advanced level course next year.

6. Student/Teacher Assistance Team Training

- a. A refined and improved vision for a comprehensive approach to early intervention is emerging from the Student/Teacher Assistance Team Training that is being provided through the Elementary Counseling grant. Developed by the Connecticut Governor's Prevention Partnership, this model is based on incorporating research, best practices and resources to build on students' strengths and intervene quickly to address concerns that can interfere with academic success. The series of four day-long trainings provided to each building-based Team include emphasis on system and procedural development, referral and action planning, expansion of assistance activities and strategies and evaluation. Implementation of the model will formalize an easily accessible, visible helping system within each school that promotes success for all students.

7. Health Education

- a. I have received a recommendation from the MRHS PE/Health Department to adopt the Prentice Hall (2007) Health textbook and related materials for Health classes. This recommendation was made after the review of at least two other programs. It is especially helpful to have a complete package so that we may effectively comply with the State regulation that requires us to make these instructional materials available for parental review so that they may opt out of the sexuality education portion of the curriculum. The curriculum focuses on topics including but not limited to: abstinence, dating, relationships and interpersonal skills, pregnancy and birth control options, and the prevention of HIV/AIDS along with other sexually transmitted infections.
- b. Middle school teachers have also been involved with reviewing their program, and will continue to do so over the next few months.

8. DARE 2

- a. Research and planning related to drug, alcohol, and violence prevention education in light of officer LaPlante's retirement is nearing completion. Dan Menard, Dennis Laplante, Gina Kahn, Pam Pearson, and I have met a number of times will update principals on what we have learned on December 15. A proposal will be presented to the Wilbraham Select Board in January.

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

As Summarized by Bart Gilley with Input from Principals

District Update

Highlights of progress made to meet technology goals as stated in the long term technology plan include:

- ☆ The primary focus with new equipment this year was the purchase of 85 new computers for the high school and two middle schools. This gave us the opportunity to reuse some of the older equipment for reorganization and parts inventory.
- ☆ The Districts Web Page is constantly being updated. Be sure to check out the new Listserv recently setup for communication with parents (www.hwrsd.org). The purpose of the Listserv is to post special announcements and school news directly to parents' home or work computer.
- ☆ We have moved to a web based solution for SPED Departments (SEMS) software, with good results.
- ☆ We have purchased a discipline module for our student database software for the five elementary schools and have scheduled to install.
- ☆ Upgrading security is constant and involves technology more and more. Technology Support has built an additional server for network\Internet tracking.
- ☆ The high school and both middle schools payphones are being replaced with VOIP (voice over IP) phones and will be free of charge within surrounding area codes. This will reduce the cost pay phone service to the district.
- ☆ Additional network switches have been purchased to continue upgrading the internal network.
- ☆ Internet access for the elementary schools has been upgraded by removing the highest bandwidth usage building (WMS) from the Inet-Cable access.
- ☆ Memory and Microsoft XP upgrades continue to be needed and scheduled for schools.
- ☆ PTOs and fund raising continue to support and enhance technology plans and purchases at many schools. Extra thanks and kudos for the attention and efforts in this area.
- ☆ Our ability to fulfill DOE reporting demands is increasing as our infrastructure improves.

Green Meadows School

A range of needed instructional software has been purchased for student use. One additional office computer was added for a part time secretary. The school continues to enjoy updated hardware and an active Information Center. Teachers continue to increase their expertise and take advantage of time with the Information Specialist.

Mile Tree School

The school PTO purchased 10 digital cameras to be shared among staff members and DVD players which have been installed in every classroom. The school computers are now seven years old, lack sufficient memory and speed, and are in need of upgrading. Another need is Smartboard presentation capability.

Memorial School

After a banner year for technology as an instructional tool as noted in the School Improvement Plan report provided by Principal Myers-Killeen last summer, Accelerated Reader programs were updated to the web based version as a pilot test with excellent results. Additional memory has been ordered and is scheduled to be installed in all teachers' computers throughout the building. The plan is also to reuse additional memory from upgrades and retired computers to upgrade the memory on the student units.

Soule Road School

The Accelerated Reader program is the second installation of the web based software in the district. Additional network switches have been ordered. A new computer was set up in the library for computer support use. All of our staff completed training on the Smart Board. The new teacher's presentation lab has been completed.

Wilbraham Middle School

The schools Internet access has been upgraded by removing it from the Inet-Cable access and setting up a 2MbVPN with Charter Communications. Thirty-five new computers have been purchased and installed for the teachers use. This has had a great influence on encouraging and integrating technology into the every day use. We continue to expand on the capabilities of the Grade Quick software. A second computer lab was created with donated computers (Big Y) and the newly purchased (25) Flat Panel LCD monitors. We hope to setup a Smartboard and projector in the new lab. The PTO purchased a Network Color Laser printer and it has been installed for teachers use. The teacher's computers have all been connected to the copier for high volume printing. We continue to use United Streaming video and other multimedia software to enhance instruction. The school would like to have 5 multimedia presentation carts setup.

Stony Hill School

Additional computer tables were purchased and installed in the library for the information center. The information centers computers were hard wired instead of using the wireless connections, with much better reliability and performance. We have installed a Smartboard with projector in the information center. Additional memory has been ordered and is scheduled to be installed in all computers through out the building.

Thornton W. Burgess School

The schools Internet access has been upgraded from 1MB to 2Mb using the VPN with Charter Communications. Twenty-five new computers have been purchased and installed for the teachers' use. The number of computers in the second computer lab was expanded from 16 to 25 and new computer desks purchased. That lab also has a new Smartboard installed. A new mini-lab has been completed for Assistive Technologies training. The teacher's computers are all being connected to the copier for high volume printing.

Minnechaug Regional High School

We have installed the Rediker's Edline module for teacher's communication with students and parents using the internet. One feature of this web based system will enable teachers to work from anywhere on their grading software. It is being piloted by a group of teachers, with hope to expand to the middle schools in the near future. Over the summer all the computer labs were ghosted with new installations of all software. New computers purchased include: 26 teachers, 2 administrative and 2 academic. New printers purchased include: 4 color network laser printers and 1 additional network black and white laser printer. We have 2 newly installed Smartboards with projectors. All math labs and teachers computers have updated software. Adobe Indesign and Quickbooks software has also been purchased and installed.

APPENDIX A

COORDINATED PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

INTRODUCTION

&

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COORDINATED PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

REPORT INTRODUCTION

A five-member Massachusetts Department of Education team visited Hampden Wilbraham Regional School District during the week of April 10, 2006 to evaluate the implementation of selected criteria in the program areas of Special Education, Civil Rights Methods of Administration, Title I, English Learner Education and Safe and Drug Free Schools. The team appreciated the opportunity to interview staff and parents, to observe classroom facilities and to review the programs underway in the district. The onsite team would like to commend the following areas that were brought to its attention and that it believes have a significant and positive impact on the delivery of educational services for students enrolled in the Hampden Wilbraham Regional School District. These areas are as follows:

- *The Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District clearly has very caring and committed staff and parents who are very involved in the education of their children.*
- *The district has incorporated handwriting into their elementary curriculum and provides the Alternative Learning Program (ALP) on the secondary level for those students who exhibit behavioral issues and are in need of assistance that is more intensive.*
- *The district has a centralized assessment center to evaluate students, and has a very extensive District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) to support students.*
- *The district's schools have very active and committed student/teacher assistance teams (S/TAT) teams in place to provide support for all students.*
- *The Assistive Technology Program provides a dedicated classroom space for staff to review hardware, software and receive professional development.*
- *The annual Title I Program evaluation process with input from administrators, instructional staff and parents, resulted in a commendable program change that replaced Title I funded paraprofessionals with Title I funded highly qualified certified instructors district wide.*
- *The district does an exceptional job collaborating with school and community members in the development of the Safe and Drug Free Schools program application and activities. The program coordinator has established and facilitates active school-based groups which involve both school and community members which meet on a regular basis. Additionally, the district utilizes this broad base of support in the development of a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan and implementation of preparedness activities.*

Some of the commendations noted above are repeated within the body of the Department's report under the appropriate compliance criteria.

The Department is submitting the following Coordinated Program Review Report containing findings made pursuant to this onsite visit. In preparing this report, the team reviewed extensive written documentation regarding the operation of the district's programs, together with information gathered by means of following Department program review methods:

- 19 interviews of administrative staff.
- Interviews of 57 teaching and support services staff across all levels.
- Interviews of three parent advisory council (PAC) representatives.
- Interviews of 7 parents, 16 students and 6 community representatives.
- Student record reviews: A sample of 58 student records was selected by the Department. Student records were first examined by local staff, whose findings were then verified by the onsite team using standard Department of Education student record review procedures to make determinations regarding the implementation of procedural and programmatic requirements.
- Parent surveys: Eighty-one parents of students with disabilities were sent surveys that solicited information regarding their experiences with the district's implementation of special education

programs, related services and procedural requirements. Twenty-four of these parent surveys were returned to the Department of Education for review by the onsite team.

- Observation of classrooms and other facilities. A sample of 20 instructional classrooms and other school facilities used in the delivery of programs and services was visited to determine general levels of compliance with program requirements.

The report includes findings in the program areas reviewed organized under nine components . These components are listed in the executive summary on the following pages. The findings in each program area explain the “ratings, ”determinations by the team about the implementation status of the criteria reviewed. The ratings indicate those criteria that were found by the team to be substantially “Implemented” or implemented in a “Commendable” manner. (Refer to the “Definition of Terms” section of the report.) Where criteria were found to be either "Partially Implemented" or "Not Implemented," the district or charter school must propose to the Department corrective actions to bring those areas into compliance with the controlling statute or regulation. In some instances the team may have rated a requirement as “Implemented” but made a specific comment on the district’s implementation methods that also may require response from the district or charter school.

Districts are expected to incorporate the corrective action into their district and school improvement plans, including their professional development plans.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hampden Wilbraham Regional School District

The following summary organized under each of the nine overarching Coordinated Program Review components synthesizes the findings for criteria included in the Coordinated Program Review as they respond to essential questions that the Department has formulated for each of the components of the report. Note that a more detailed discussion of the onsite team's findings, together with the specific legal standards for each program area included in this review, follows this summary.

Component I: Assessment of Students

Has the district implemented an assessment system that uses appropriate instruments, is conducted according to the specified timelines, and covers the appropriate content areas to determine instructional needs of students?

The district has an assessment system in place to evaluate students from preschool through high school. The assessment instruments are current and valid, and personnel who conduct the evaluations are credentialed and certified. The district has created a centralized assessment center to provide consistent assessment services to all district students. All students participate in MCAS or the Alternate MCAS. The district does not consistently implement and document the process of parental rights transfer for students. The district does not always provide parents with proposed IEP and placement within mandated timelines. For students who are found not eligible for special education services, adequate support services are not always provided through the general curriculum. Some staff have difficulty determining the need for special education services, the services of a 504 Plan and the district's curriculum accommodation plan. Students' IEP progress reports do not always contain all required and accurate information.

The district annually assesses the English proficiency of all identified limited English proficient (LEP) students and all LEP students participate in MCAS as required and in accordance with Department guidelines.

Component II: Student Identification and Program Placement

Has the district followed procedures for student identification and placement into the program according to the criteria specified in law and/or regulations?

The district does provide annual outreach to students who may be in need of special education services; however, the district does not include outreach for students in elementary and secondary grades. Some students are not placed in a least restrictive environment consistent with the needs of the students. Not all IEPs contain measurable goals and specially designed instruction. There is also a concern that IEP teams are reconvened because of lack of confidence to make some decisions regarding the provision of services, and some IEP services are provided to some students before receiving written consent after a re-evaluation team meeting.

The district provides some support services to LEP students who need language assistance but has not developed adequate support services to effectively serve PK-12 LEP students. The district has one staff person dedicated to serve all LEP students in all the district's schools.

The district has not yet developed waiver procedures for parents of LEP students. The district does not have staff trained to provide sheltered English instruction (SEI) and does not have documentation indicating that English language development is based on the Massachusetts English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes.

For Title I, student identification and placement procedures are incomplete. The rank order list used to determine student priority for Title I services does not include the individual student

point totals entered on the multiple, educationally related objective criteria form.

Component III: Parental Involvement

Has the district ensured that parents are notified in the appropriate language and are involved in decisions regarding their children's programs and services? Where appropriate, does the district involve community representatives in shaping programs?

The district makes every effort to ensure that parents are able to take part in Team meetings. They take the appropriate steps to communicate with parents including providing information to parents whose primary language is not English; however, the district needs to develop formal procedures for addressing the provision of information in languages other than English in order for parents/guardians to access and participate in the IEP process. The district needs to update its Notice of Proposed School Action (N1) form so that it contains the required elements and need to provide the Notice of School District Refusal to Act (N2) form when appropriate. The district needs to document its multiple attempts to contact parents/guardians when trying to get consent. The district has a parent advisory council on special education and has elected officers; however, the council members have not established by-laws regarding officers and operational procedures and duties.

The district inconsistently translates student report cards and progress reports and does not translate handbooks, general announcements, and notices of extracurricular activities.

The district's Safe and Drug Free Schools program application development and activities are very effectively coordinated with school and community resources. Parents are well informed about program activities and are active participants in programming development and implementation.

Parent involvement activities generally meet the Title I criterion at the district level. Parents are not always involved in the planning of parent involvement activities within individual Title I school buildings.

Component IV: Curriculum and Instruction

Does the district hold all students to high expectations and standards? Are programs designed to maximize student performance and students' participation in the general curriculum? Is curriculum throughout the district's programs based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks? Has the district provided for coordination across program areas?

Students are held to high expectations, and all receive instruction based on Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The district does not provide an array of options within regular and special education to meet the needs of all students with disabilities. The district does offer a continuum of in-district services for students; however many students receive language-based services in out-of-district settings. There is also a need to provide ongoing administrative oversight and monitoring of in-district IEP's and out-of-district student placements and IEP's. The district maintains appropriate in-district instructional groupings, but the district did not submit to the Department an age span waiver request for a five-year old student attending the preschool program.

The district does not have a mechanism in place to ensure that employers recruiting at schools sign a statement that the employer complies with applicable federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination.

The district does not have a mechanism to ensure that LEP students have the opportunity to receive academic support services, such as guidance and counseling, in the student's primary language.

The district integrates Safe and Drug Free Schools activities with other Titles under No Child Left Behind.

The district provides Title I services that are coordinated across program areas. Title I support enhances student achievement by meeting the objectives, high expectations and standards of

the district's general curriculum and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

Component V: Student Support Services

Has the district ensured that all students have equal access to programs and services? Does the district provide support to students who need it?

The needs of students whose behavior affects their learning are addressed, and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with the requirements when disciplining students with disabilities and those not yet found eligible for special education. The district provides transportation and a wide range of related services to allow students with special needs to benefit from special education and access the general curriculum.

The district does not have a procedure/policy in place that informs LEP students of the opportunity to receive counseling in their primary language and does not make available a translated version of the student handbook/code of conduct to a student or parent whose primary language is not English. Additionally, some district's handbook/code of conduct policies contain outdated references to state and federal regulations and do not contain all procedural requirements and the nondiscrimination notification statement. Not all district staff are aware of the designated coordinators for grievance procedures. The district does provide the required notice to students 16 or over who leave school without a diploma; however, the letter does not contain all the required elements.

The district meets the Title I criterion by ensuring that students have equal access to Title I programs and services. The district provides Title I supplemental support to students requiring them.

Component VI: Faculty, Staff and Administration

Does the district maintain certified staff in the specific program areas, provide supervision of aides and tutors, and provide ongoing professional development? Are program leadership and oversight effective? Are the district's personnel procedures non-discriminatory and does it seek to recruit employees from all groups?

Not all staff members providing special education or related services are licensed as required. Paraprofessional staff members work in close supervision of licensed staff members, and they have access to in-service and professional development opportunities. The district offers a wide range of professional development opportunities for all staff members; however, teachers would benefit from gaining a greater understanding of diverse learning styles to achieve an objective of inclusion in the regular classroom and with methods of collaboration among teachers, paraprofessionals and teacher assistants to accommodate diverse learning styles of all students. The director of special education communicates openly with parents and teachers.

Not all district staff, including translators, have received training on the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the importance of information privacy and confidentiality and civil rights responsibilities.

The district does not have a plan to address SEI training for teachers of LEP students and for on-going training to increase the district's capacity of trained sheltered-content instructors.

The district hires certified and highly qualified Title I instructors, provides ongoing professional development and maintains effective program leadership and oversight.

Component VII: School Facilities

Does the district maintain accessible facilities that are conducive to learning, facilitate integration, and provide equal opportunity for students to achieve?

Classrooms for students with disabilities are accessible and maximize the inclusion of

students with disabilities into the life of the schools. At the Mile Tree Elementary School, the instructional classroom for LEP students is located in a closet. Not all district stages are accessible.

There is no Title I criterion for this area.

Component VIII: Program Plan and Evaluation

Does the district evaluate its programs in accordance with statutory and regulatory requirements? Does it use the results of its evaluations to improve programs? Do parents have opportunities for input on program needs, program implementation, and program evaluation and improvement?

Special education and English language learner programs, services and administrative areas are not regularly evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the programs and services and to identify areas of need.

The district has completed a thorough assessment of objective data as it pertains to substance and violence related behaviors. Safe and Drug Free Schools programming is evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that it meets the needs of district students, although these results are not made available to the public.

The Title I Program has demonstrated the use of the evaluation process to enhance program improvement in a commendable manner. Recommendations from staff and parents have resulted in the replacing of paraprofessionals with highly qualified Massachusetts certified teachers for all Title I program instruction.

Component IX: Record keeping

Does the district maintain required records and documentation for each program area? Are entitlement grants appropriately designed, amended, and locally monitored? Does the district use federal grant funds in accordance with statutory fund-use rules, including "supplement not supplant" provisions where applicable? Does the district meet applicable maintenance of effort requirements?

The district maintains records and documentation for the special education program as required.

The district implements appropriate accounting and budget procedures of the Safe and Drug Free Schools Funds. The district has supplied the department with the mandated program assurances and does an exemplary job in the development and implementation of the districts' emergency preparedness policies and procedures.

The Title I Program maintains records and documentation in accordance with the requirements of this criterion. A review of the time and effort records of Title I staff, however, indicates not all time and effort records were signed by supervisory staff.