

CURRICULUM NEWS



Mark Your Calendars

PSSA Dates

February 11-22: 5th, 8th & 11th Grade Writing Assessment.

March 31-April 11: 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th & 11th Grade Math and Reading Assessment.

April 28-May 9: 4th, 8th & 11th Grade Science Assessment.

Family Read Nights

Wednesday, Feb. 20: "A Visit from General George Washington."

Wednesday, March 21: "Pennsylvania's Native Animals" with Jack Hubley of WGAL-TV.

Family Read Night is held at Nottingham School from 6:30—8 p.m.

EAP TUTORING BUILDS CONFIDENCE

The Oxford Area School District is participating in the Pennsylvania Educational Assistance Program funded by a grant from the PA Department of Education. The program was established to assist students at the secondary level (grades 7-12) to achieve proficiency in meeting state academic standards for math and reading.

Dr. Elizabeth Logan, PDE regional director, and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Raymond A. Fischer have teamed to provide technical assistance and oversight for the program. All students who have not yet achieved a proficient level on the last administered PSSA are offered the opportunity to receive after-school tutoring. The grant also funds transportation for students enrolled in the program.

Currently over 130 students in the district are receiving tutoring in groups of up to eight. Progress is monitored through use of 4Sight benchmark assessments.

(Continued on Page 2)



Penn's Grove seventh grade math teacher Johanna Kalinowski works with students Patrick Altizer, left, and Mike Harkins.

New District Strategic Plan Progresses

Work on the Oxford Area School District's Strategic Plan for 2008-2014 began this past summer when a Strategic Plan Steering Committee made up of parents, students, school board members, teachers, education specialists, administrators, and business and community representatives met to gather and analyze data in order to

address the plan's overriding goal of improving student achievement.

"We looked at student achievement data such as PSSA and SAT scores, standardized test scores, and district assessments in order to formulate an internal and external needs analysis," said Assistant Superintendent Dr. Raymond Fischer.

(Continued on Page 2)



Laura James and her first graders during a FOSS science unit.

FOSS Science Expands to Jordan Bank

The Oxford Area School District is continuing its participation in the Johns Hopkins Talent Development Model Schools (TDMS) program, which is funded through a federal Title II grant.

As in the past four school years, TDMS educators continue to train teachers in implementing curriculum that meets Pennsylvania State Science Standards.

The TDMS curriculum is centered on the Full Option Science System (FOSS), which features self-contained kits containing objects, materials, and living organisms necessary for students to conduct hands-on science activities that help them to better understand the natural world.

Working with these learning kits, teams of students perform

(Continued on Page 2)

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORK PROGRESSES

(Continued from Page 1)

The committee also studied data on various school programs and how many students participate, fiscal information, societal trends, and demographic data, including enrollment, attendance, ethnicity, gender, mobility and language proficiency.

"We also conducted online surveys of students, parents, and community members to get an idea of how the district is perceived," said Dr. Fischer.

The steering committee met in September to review this data in order to establish a Mission Statement and planning goals.

EAP Tutoring

(Continued from Page 1)

Penn's Grove School seventh grade math teacher Johanna Kalinowski said the program allows teachers to work with students on a different level, with less pressure and time to address individual areas in need of improvement.

Each tutoring session includes a visit to the computer lab, where students are able to develop their skills through online games aligned to academic standards. "We try to make it fun, but the fun mostly comes when the students realize they have the ability to succeed in areas where they may have been frustrated," said Ms. Kalinowski. "I can see improvement each time the group meets."

"These goals dovetail with the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation," said Dr. Fischer. "As required by NCLB, our goal is 100 percent student proficiency in math, reading, writing and science by 2014."

Other goals address student attendance, with a target of 96 percent or higher average daily attendance through the 2014 school year; student participation in mandatory federal, state and local as-

essments, with a goal of 99 percent annual participation by eligible students through 2014; and graduation rate, with the goal of maintaining a graduation rate of 93 percent or greater through the 2014 school year.

Action teams have been formed to address means of achieving each planning goal. Throughout the strategic planning process, steering committee and action team members have used eStrategic Planning.

This is a systemic, ongoing, web-facilitated framework that aligns goals and strategies to research and continuously monitors planning progress.

The plan will be presented to the school board in June. In August, the plan will be made available to the community for review. In September, the plan will go before the board for final approval and will then be submitted to the PA Department of Education.

FOSS Science System Expands to Jordan Bank

(Continued from Page 1)

investigations and analyses using laboratory equipment, reading materials, and interactive technology, a process that enables them to exercise logical thinking and decision-making skills.

FOSS was first implemented in the fifth and sixth grades at Elk Ridge School. Subsequent school years saw the program expand to second through fourth grades. This year the FOSS program was introduced to the kindergarten and first grade classes at Jordan Bank School.

FOSS is based on research that shows children learn science best by doing. Studies show that schools implementing TDMS curriculum substantially and consistently improve

achievement levels, and since implementation of the program, the district's middle and high school science teachers have found that students are much better prepared for secondary level courses.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Raymond Fischer noted that the district's partnership with TDMS is particularly essential now that a science PSSA will be administered this year for the first time, to be taken by students in grades 4, 8 and 11 this spring. "We wanted to align all the science standards into the curriculum so we were not caught off guard this year," he said.

Students enhance FOSS experiments through journal writing, independent projects, and the use of mathematics in order to

communicate the results of their investigations and experiments. Progress in meeting standards is measured through teacher observations, student self-assessments, and tests.



Chris Hamilton's kindergartners hatched chicks as part of the FOSS unit on animals.

Tracking performance made easier through new software package

This year the Oxford Area School District has implemented Performance Tracker, a software package that serves as an online data warehouse for information on district, school and individual progress toward meeting the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. Performance Tracker is part of the Performance Pathways system, which includes TechPaths software utilized by teachers to map curriculum.

Performance Tracker is currently being used by administrators, counselors, instructional support teams and psychologists to determine performance trends, and will soon be available to all instructional staff. "The system enables us to filter down to very specific areas of assessment to help the district better determine where we need to focus in meeting state standards," said Literacy Teacher on Assignment Dave Pugliese, in photo.



Oxford Area
School District
Curriculum News
Winter 2008

Dr. Mary Jane Gales
Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Raymond Fischer
Assistant Superintendent