



Ontario-Montclair School District Learning & Teaching Newsletter

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From the Desk of Karla Wells, Assistant Superintendent Learning & Teaching

Science Education Shines in OMSD! On December 3, 2011, the CaMSP (California Math Science Partnership) project received the prestigious Golden Bell Award from the California School Board Association. The award is in recognition of our efforts to build strong collaborative partnerships in support of science education for OMSD students and teachers. Approximately 80 teachers and hundreds of students have participated in the CaMSP project over the past three years with accolades for all aspects of the program from teacher training to student Science Super Saturdays.

So how do we continue to build momentum across the district for science education?

Here are some ideas:

- Grade level teams find time for science through integrating science across the curriculum. We all agree that students need time to learn science. Some of our schools integrate science into Language Arts. This strategy will support the Common Core State Standards that will be phased in over the next few years. In addition to helping students access science, integration of science with other subjects will enable students to see how science permeates everything in their everyday life. Integrating science into Language Arts will increase opportunities for students to read nonfiction text and develop their expository writing skills. English Learner expert and friend of OMSD, Dr. Kate Kinsella, has taught us that nonfiction reading and writing are instrumental in the development of English Learner students' language acquisition. Integration of science into other subject areas will pay huge dividends.
- One strategy schools use to address the complexity of teaching science is to take advantage of the specialized skills of teachers. At these schools, teachers have taken it upon themselves to create instructional "specialties" including science. Students rotate among teachers each day or a few times per week for an hour or so each time so that teachers can teach their specialty subject to each other's students. This process helps ensure their students receive science, social studies, art and perhaps other subjects from teachers who have had the time to be well prepared to teach it.
- Participating in professional development in science or attending science events hosted by the CaMSP project is another way to build momentum across the district. We are very lucky in OMSD to have partnerships with science-rich education institutions such as UCR, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, NASA and the Alliance for Education. Each of these partners will play an important role in increasing science education in OMSD.

To learn more strategies for building a stronger science program in your classroom, please contact Jarred Shell, Project Administrator. In addition, we still have plenty of hands-on science materials that are part of our elementary Houghton Mifflin Science Program. Please contact Ida Allen, Executive Assistant, district warehouse, for more information about the elementary science kits.

We wish you a very joyous and restful holiday season filled with family, friends and good cheer. HAPPY HOLIDAY!



Happy
Holidays

UPDATE ON COMMON ASSESSMENTS

"I am so excited about the results of the common assessment given today. I am so proud to shout that we had seven Advanced, eight Proficient, seven Basic, two BB, and one FBB! I really feel competitive with the other classes and so do the kids. I sought some of the kids out after I scanned and they were sooooo excited. They wanted to know when the next assessment was! Go figure! I just want to say that this is the direction we have needed! So many of my students who have felt defeated or ignored in the past are feeling validated and successful! Today I really, really feel like we are changing lives for those kids who haven't been given chances or time from a teacher. I feel so rewarded inside my heart!"

"Second grade uses common assessments to guide our instruction. We look at our ELA and Math Benchmark results and pick three to four standards per subject that we felt were weaknesses. We target one to two per week. We practice that standard for one week and then assess at the end of the week. We correct it right there with the students so the teachers and students get immediate feedback on what the students are struggling with and what mistakes we need to overcome. We feel this process has provided us with great data to help make the students more successful! "

Straight from two OMSD Teachers

"A wow in the classroom means something is happening."

-Frank McCourt



It's exciting to see the power of common assessments in action and we wanted to create a common understanding of the process. As with any initiative or new strategy collaborating and refining the initiative or strategy is always part of the process.

Here are a few things to remember as we go through the refinement process:

1. Focus of common assessments should be determined by the Grade Level Team using data to determine target standards that need more instructional focus and time.
2. One thing we have learned is that testing fewer standards is more effective. The common assessment should target no more than two to four standards with three questions per standard. The goal is to monitor the targeted standard with an efficient assessment.
3. The development of the assessment should be in the control of the Grade Level Team. (They determine the standards, number of questions, and the questions themselves).
4. Once the common assessment is administered time should be devoted to analyze results, share best practices, and plan next steps.

Based on Learning by Doing, by Rick DuFour:

"One of the most powerful, high-leverage strategies for improving student learning available to schools is the creation of frequent, common, high-quality formative assessments by teachers who are working collaboratively to help a group of students develop agreed upon knowledge and skills.

Common assessments build a team's capacity to improve its program. When collaborative teams of teachers have the opportunity to examine indicators of the achievement of all students in a grade level and track those indicators over time, they are able to identify and address problem areas in their program.

Common assessments facilitate a systematic, collective response to students who are experiencing difficulty. Common assessments help identify a group of students who need additional time and support to ensure their learning. Because the students are identified at the same time and because they need help with the same specific skills that have been addressed on the common assessment, the team and school are in a position to create a timely, systematic program of intervention."

---Ellen Lugo, Director I, East Learning Region and Veronica Castaneda, Director I, West Learning Region

AVID - Question of the Month

“I’m not an AVID teacher, what can I do to help my students become aware of college?”

We have a goal at Ontario-Montclair School District to bring college awareness to ALL our students. Here are some easy things you can do right away to help your students:

- Display your own college diploma(s) in your room and talk to your students about your college experience
- Display college pennants, posters, etc. around your room
- Bring in pictures of you at college (in your cap and gown, in front of college sign, etc.)
- “TALK” college with your students (explain differences between colleges, if appropriate, talk about how everyone can go to college if they are really “determined” - the “D” in AVID)
- Play college “fight songs” in background as kids are coming/leaving the classroom
- Need an art project? How about researching college mascots and having students “draw” mascots from various colleges
- Bring in a cap and gown and take a picture of each of your students and display on a bulletin board titled “We’re Going to College”

Together we can bring college awareness to all our students!! Please let me know if I can help!

~Patti Harris, TOA AVID

MAKING MONEY WITH MATHEMATICS

Students sometimes struggle seeing the value in learning math and how it can apply to their lives. One way to combat this is to show them the power of *compound interest*. When teaching students the concept of simple and compound interest, be sure to give examples of how compound interest can help or hurt their wallets.

Here are a couple examples of how interest can take their money:

- If you buy a new car for \$20,000 and you make payments over 5 years at 8% interest, you end up paying an additional \$4,271 for the car
- If you have \$3,000 on a credit card that charges 29% interest and you only pay the \$25.00 minimum per month, it will take you 24 years to pay the balance off and you will have paid \$9,857 in interest plus your original \$3,000 for a total of \$12,857

Here are a couple examples of how interest can make them money:

- Let’s say a 10-year-old fifth grader invested \$12 per week at 8% interest compounded quarterly (not difficult to do over the long term in the stock market), in 12 years, or about the time he or she is graduating from college, they would have \$999,903.77 -- just \$96.23 short of one million dollars!
- If that same fifth grader invested a onetime sum of \$10,000 in stocks that paid 12%, in 50 years, he would have close to 3 million dollars from that one time investment of \$10,000.

Making our students aware of the power of compounding interest can help them with their future finances and hopefully encourage them to delay gratification by making decisions that are best for them in the long run.

--Chris Catuara, TOA, ACES



SAFE AND HEALTHY CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS!

As the winter holiday season comes upon OMSD, class parties and gift giving will be the norm! Let's make certain that the season is a safe one for our students and staff.

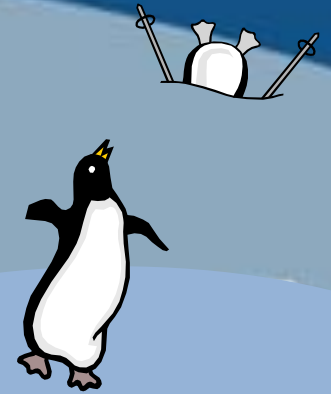
Decorations: Please follow district guidelines when decorating your classroom, especially if you are considering the usage of electric lights/decorations. Be sure you have adequate voltage to avoid a fire hazard, and keep cords hidden to avoid any tripping hazards.

Parties: Please follow district guidelines with regards to any food brought in for parties to avoid any illness or disease outbreak. Keep in mind that excessive sugar can lead to difficulties in classroom management, so monitor carefully the food and drink choices made for parties. Monitor carefully any beverages brought in and dispose of them properly, to avoid a slipping hazard. Also, make sure that all food items are disposed outside the classroom in designated containers to avoid unwanted holiday guests (ants and other critters).

Entertainment: Please consider age appropriate games, movies or activities for your classroom to insure a safe, comfortable environment for the students. G or PG rated movies only should be viewed after approval by your administrator.

Thanks to all of you for your commitment to student learning and achievement, and for maintaining a safe and healthy classroom during the holiday season!

-Milissa Checchi, Classified Training Specialist



VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

I clearly recall a sense of pride in seeing my mother volunteer at my school. She would participate in organizing classroom family potlucks, help sew our outfits for Folklorico dances and plays honoring African, American and Hispanic cultures, serve as a chaperone on fieldtrips, and worked as a noon-aide during recess time. What kind of impact did this have on my siblings and me? Are volunteers of value, and how is this justified?

We need to improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve families as volunteers at the school or other locations to support students and programs. At the optimal level, volunteers become partners. A multitude of research studies in the United States and other nations have examined how family environments influence parental involvement, how school environments influence family involvement, and the effects of school-family-community partnerships on parents, students, and teachers. The studies deliver a clear message: *families are important for children's learning, development, and school success from preschool through high school.*

Recent studies have better identified the specific effects of different types of involvement and volunteering. For example, several studies show that parental assistance and interaction at home have important consequences for children's achievement, attendance, school adaptability, and classroom behavior. Other studies report that students in grades three and five improve their reading achievement when teachers frequently involve parents in reading activities at home and that students in the middle grades improve their writing skills with interactive writing homework. Still other studies show that the number of parent volunteers increases when schools organize programs that welcome, prepare, and recognize volunteers (National Network Partnership Schools, April 1998).

OMSD will be promoting a Volunteer Campaign to ensure that our invaluable families and community partners can continue to collaborate with our teachers, classified and administrative teams. The educational goals for improved student performance will be enhanced with a stronger school-home-community partnership.

--Hector Macias, Executive Director, Student & Family Services



Illuminate Has Made Grade-Level Access a Reality!

The screenshot shows the Illuminate Data and Assessment interface. At the top, the user is logged in as Elizabeth Turnbull. A red box labeled '1' highlights the 'Viewing: Roster Students' text. Below this, a 'Change Student Visibility' section shows a success message. A table lists two student sets: 'Roster Students' and 'Schoolwide: All Kdg Grade Students'. A red box labeled '2' highlights the 'Schoolwide: All Kdg Grade Students' link. Below the table, another 'Change Student Visibility' section shows the 'Viewing: Roster Students' text again, with a red box labeled '3' highlighting it.

Illuminate Student Groups – An Important Tool for Teacher PLCs

We have heard some version of the following request for the past couple of years:

“My grade level or department PLC uses flexible grouping to level students and provide targeted instruction. Therefore, I need to be able to access the data for all the students at the grade level I teach, not just the students who are on my roster.”

The powerful part about this request is that we know that successful PLCs take responsibility for all students, not just those assigned to their roster.

In the past, unfortunately, our data warehouse has not had an option for grade-level access; it was either roster-level access or school-wide access and nothing in between.

Illuminate has made grade-level access a reality for us now via a few simple steps as demonstrated in the graphic above this article:

1. Place your mouse just to the right of the word “Viewing” and click on the words, “Roster Students.”
2. Click on the School-wide group for your grade level.
3. You should now see that group showing next to the word “Viewing” instead of “Roster Students.”

Now, any reports you run will pull data for your entire grade level. You can also search for any student profile at your grade level.

--Scott Turnbull, Director II, Research & Assessments