

**YORK SUBURBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**2013-2014 Quality Assessment Report**

Submitted By:  
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The building goals for the 2013-2014 school year focused on improving student achievement. Reading Apprenticeship (RA) and writing were a primary focus in all curricular areas. In addition to the building goal, each faculty member developed one Professional Development Target (PDT) reflecting his/her own professional need.

**CURRICULAR INITIATIVES**

**Science**

During the 2013-2014 school year, the middle school science department conducted an audit of the curricula and focused on several goals which aimed to improve the instructional practices and embed Common Core Standards for ELA in science.

The curriculum audit was conducted in accordance with the District Curriculum Review Cycle in December 2013. The audit revealed that the science concepts at each grade level were developmentally appropriate, relevant, and rigorous. Furthermore, it was determined that science concepts were effectively spiraled throughout the 6-8 curriculum. The audit revealed that there was a need to revise and revisit the implementation of soil, light, sound, heat, waves, and magnetism concepts in grades 6-8. The department determined that it is essential to include the Health and Technology departments during the science curriculum rewrite.

Throughout the year, the science department worked diligently to increase the amount of writing responses for non-fiction text in accordance with the Common Core Standards for ELA in Science. For example, seventh grade increased the number of non-fiction texts used for the concept(s) taught and then synthesize the information by responding to a writing prompt. In sixth grade, teachers collaborated with their language arts colleagues to reinforce non-fiction ELA skills. In eighth grade, students improved their research skills as they used the district provided Chromebooks to learn new content.

During department meetings, common summative assessments were reviewed to increase the depth of knowledge questioning. As a result, lessons were created or adjusted to scaffold the students learning to be successful on these higher order summative assessments. The department will continue to monitor and adjust the instructional practices use to increase the depth of knowledge and better align to the Common Core ELA standards.

The current eighth grade class showed steady growth on the quarterly benchmark assessments. The proficiency level for the fourth benchmark was 84%. The department credits this success to the continued use of the Study Island benchmark and assignment data and using the data to drive instruction and instructional practices.

There were twenty-nine eighth grade students who participated in the York County Science and

Engineering Fair this year. YSMS was the only school in the county to have eighth grade students participating in the competition. Four students received a grade of 90% or better on their projects and qualified for the Broadcom Masters Award. Several students also received specialty awards from Engineering Society of York, Pennsylvania Society of Professional Engineers, United States Public Health Services, Stockholm Junior Water Prize, Society of Manufacturing Engineers, and James R. Holley & Associates Inc. Science, technology, math, and engineering skills were developed through the implementation of this project.

### **Social Science**

The social science department addressed two large tasks during the 2013-14 school year and enhanced the current curriculum and practices in two other areas. Two assignments the department focused upon were to write/update the curriculum maps for the district and to continue to implement the Common Core States Standards for the social sciences in the area of ELA. The department continued to work on increasing the Depth of Knowledge in the social studies curriculum and the refinement of the research process at each grade level.

Through the course of the year, the department has taken on the writing of curriculum maps for each of the grade level courses offered at the middle school. Each grade level focused on aligning the curriculum map to current instruction and adding the CCSS for ELA in the social sciences as a domain on the curriculum map. The maps reflect the enhancement of the CCSS for ELA in the social studies' curriculum and instruction. In addition, the curriculum maps show the focus on global regions and civics/economics in the sixth grade. The seventh grade curriculum will continue to focus largely on world history, but has an additional unit on civics during the final quarter.

This addition was based on the evaluation of where the Common Core Standards for Civics are currently being addressed. The department further identified the content/standards which would be incorporated into the seventh grade social science curriculum. Eighth grade will continue to focus on American history. An additional unit will be added during the fourth quarter to address the events of the 1920's.

A primary focus for the department this year was the continued and increased implementation of the CCSS for ELA in the social sciences. The department has worked increasingly with the standards and how to address these standards within the social studies curriculum. Across all grade levels, the department is increasing the use of nonfiction/informational text and primary sources within the curriculum. The use of these texts allows the department to address such concepts as point of view, bias, and the use of multiple sources. In the area of writing, the department continues to use the Jane Shaffer format for writing. The department also will continue to reinforce the expectations for writing established by the ELA department.

As the department addressed several new initiatives, we continued to refine previous areas of focus. The department continued to evaluate and improve the levels of Depth of Knowledge expected within the social studies curriculum. To help foster this expectation, the eighth grade history teachers received training on the Socratic Seminar and have implemented this format into the classroom. The trained teachers will be providing instruction on this process to the remaining

department members in the 2014-15 school year. The department continues to evaluate current common assessments to increase the Depth of Knowledge.

Finally, the middle school social studies department continued its collaborative efforts by joining forces with the middle school librarian. York Suburban Middle School utilizes the Big6 research method to assist students with becoming efficient and successful learners through research. In the previous school year, the department developed a research matrix to establish a continuity and consistency in the research skills that every middle school student should be utilizing throughout his/her educational experience here at the middle school. The matrix tracks the identified skill and at which grade level each skill should be introduced, reinforced, and/or mastered. Through the course of this school year, each grade level reevaluated the research expectations at his/her grade level based on this matrix. In addition, through this collaboration, the research opportunities at each grade level increased the level of Depth of Knowledge required.

The social science department goals for the 2014-15 school year will include the following:

- to continue to implement strategies which address the Common Core Standards in the area of ELA.
- to continue to increase the Depth of Knowledge within the social science curriculum. This will include the use of the Socratic Seminar at all levels.
- to continue to define the expectations for writing across the 6-8 social science curriculum.
- to continue to create common assessments as defined by the district and to increase the Depth of Knowledge on the assessments.
- to update Student Learning Maps to reflect changes to the curriculum.

## **English/Language Arts**

### **Common Core Standards**

With the new Common Core Standards (CCS) being instituted in the fall of 2014, time was spent throughout the year rewriting the Language Arts Curriculum to meet the new CCS. With the new standards, the reading and writing demands have increased creating a need for greater stamina for students across all curricular areas. In order to achieve the deeper thinking and application, the type of questions and tasks required of students will need to be more complex. Depth of Knowledge levels have been a resource to help with the analysis of the current curriculum. Teachers are focused on Level 2 and 3 types of thinking according to Depth of Knowledge which require students to extend beyond one or more texts. Teachers used the Depth of Knowledge Levels of Thinking as they revamped curriculum to match CCS. Not only are the types of questions being continually analyzed to improve the rigor within the program, the texts being utilized are also a vital component to the new curriculum. Teachers are analyzing the text currently available within the book room seeing how the lexile levels compare to the increase in the state expectations. A variety of sources of texts are being utilized to increase the demands of reading. The students will encounter informational and fictional texts from the Literature book, online sources, novels, etc... The writing and grammar expectations are being revamped at the middle school level to be sure students are prepared for high school as well as to be career and college ready.

### **Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum**

Common Core Standards moved reading and writing beyond the Language Arts classrooms and into the content areas. The Language Arts teachers utilized online resources such as SIRS Discoverer, Newsela,

Teen Tribune, New York Times Online, Junior Scholastic, and others sources to find non-fiction articles that coincide with topics covered in the literature used within the curriculum as well as topics within the content areas. These same resources were shared with content area teachers, so they can increase the amount of reading taking place within curricular areas. The content area teachers are also being made aware of how to incorporate more writing within the content area to support the updated state expectations. The Language Arts teachers are providing resources and formulas to improve written responses as well as guidelines on how to create rubrics to not only evaluate writing, but also grammar. A guidelines sheet has been created to share with all teachers in the middle school to assist in planning and implementing quality reading and writing instruction in all areas. Two Language Arts teachers offered two CPE courses which will provide the teachers within York Suburban School District access to multiple reading and writing strategies that can be utilized across all disciplines. This includes strategies from the Reading Apprenticeship Framework as well as the Jane Schaffer writing program. Strategies to infuse technology into the classroom while supporting Language Arts Curriculum is also an integral part of the state approved courses.

### **Jane Schaffer Writing**

In an effort to produce stronger writers as well as prepare the students for the demands of writing at the high school level and beyond, the Jane Schaffer Writing program has been introduced to all teachers within the middle school. The Jane Schaffer Writing program provides a framework for organizing writing whether it is argumentative, informational, narrative, text dependent analysis, or response to literature. The content areas are expected to use this same language when completing writing assignments, so that students are given multiple opportunities to practice the skills of writing with a variety of prompts and tasks. The goal is that all students will become familiar with how to organize a strong piece of writing and move away from the stringent formula by adding more style to their writing. The new writing rubrics released by the state were used to create expectations for writing at each level. There was an addition of a narrative rubric as well as a text dependent analysis. The addition of several types of writing is evident on the revised curriculum at each grade level.

### **Grammar**

Language Arts Department Chairs from elementary through high school worked on creating a scope and sequence of grammar skills from Kindergarten through high school. The middle school and high school Language Arts Chairs created a revised Grammar Matrix that addresses the updated stated expectations. A dictionary of grammar terms based on the state standards and eligible content was created to provide consistency in language from elementary through high school. Each grade level at the middle school is working on how to incorporate the Grammar instruction into the newly revised curriculum.

## **Supplemental Programs**

### **Co-Taught English Language Arts**

In an effort to more effectively meet the needs of the Learning Support students, as well as the lower achieving population a co-taught English Language Arts section was created. The class was taught by the Learning Support Teacher and the Reading Specialist. The two worked in collaboration to provide a curriculum that would help these students make growth throughout the eighth grade year. The curriculum was carefully constructed by using the CCS eligible content while also keeping it in line with each individual student's needs based on information provided in the IEP. The students spend approximately 45 minutes in class instruction for English and then remained in a small group setting for an additional 45 minutes to reinforce both reading and math skills.

### **Study Island/Reading Workshop/LA Prep**

Study Island is an internet based program where students have the opportunity to practice multiple choice questions related to reading and writing. The Pennsylvania standards are used when creating the questions, so the program is much like a PSSA. Study Island has recently updated their program to include questions aligned with the Common Core Standards. All students in grades 6-8 completed three benchmark assessments on Study Island throughout the year. Learning Support students were also administered a MAP assessment three times throughout the year. The data was then analyzed by the Language Arts teachers to assist in making instructional decisions. This allowed teachers to form small groups to help better meet the needs of the middle school population. It gave the Learning Support teachers an opportunity to more closely monitor the progress of students with IEPs. In addition to the three Study Island benchmarks students took a benchmark aligned with the new Common Core Standards. The findings in doing this benchmark are that the type of questioning and the content are more difficult for students. This created a need to reevaluate the programs being offered as we move forward into the new state expectations.

Currently, students in all three grade levels that are on the bubble whether it is low proficient, high proficient or low advanced in Reading are placed in an LA Prep class where they utilize the Study Island program as well as receive direct instruction in order to help the students make progress on the PSSA. This class meets four days out of a six day cycle for 45 minutes. Students within each section vary from one cycle day to the next depending on each individual schedule. The LA Prep teacher is able to generate reports, and create small groups to address individual needs. This program begins in the fall and concludes after the PSSA testing is completed. As a result of new benchmarks administered and the projection that there will be an increase in the number of students in this program, other options are being explored on how best to meet the needs of the students to help them show growth over the course of the year.

Reading Workshop is a supplemental class that is required for students who are Basic and Below Basic in Reading PSSA. These students have an additional reading class for 45 minutes every day for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and 45 minutes three times in a six day cycle for seventh grade students. Within the Reading Workshop class skills and strategies worked on in the regular Language Arts classes are reinforced. This course also provides front loading or reinforcing information covered in Science (7<sup>th</sup>) and Social Studies (8<sup>th</sup>) classes. This provides students with background knowledge, which in turn leads to better achievement in the content area courses. Collaboration between the workshop teacher and the Content Area teachers helps to provide a stronger reading program to be able to move this group from Basic/Below Basic to Proficient/Advanced.

### **Math**

The York Suburban Middle School mathematics department addressed a new common assessment initiative during the 2013-2014 school year and continued the task of aligning the current curriculum to the Pennsylvania Core Standards. Several members of the department also worked to better develop the co-teaching model to best meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body.

Common unit assessments were developed for Mathematics Courses 1, 2, and 3. Each assessment included a section of multiple choice review items, designed to assess prior knowledge and previously taught skills, as well as open-ended and short response items that tested content learned in the current unit. Following each assessment, grade level teams analyzed item specific data to gauge student mastery and understanding. When necessary, content was

revisited to ensure mastery was reached by all students. Additionally, common assessments were developed, in collaboration with the High School Mathematics Department, for the Algebra 1 courses. Analysis of these assessments also guided teaching and learning for the Algebra 1 courses. These use of these common assessments is an expectation and ensures that all students enrolled in a given course are receiving a consistent education and are being assessed in a uniform manner.

The mathematics department continued working on the realignment of curriculum to meet the new Pennsylvania Core Standards. Instruction this year focused on standards that were present in the current Eligible Content and also in the Core Standards, referred to as the “crosswalk standards”. The department discussed in great detail the depth of knowledge demanded by the Core Standards and the need to challenge students with deeper levels of thinking and application. Grade level teams worked to develop strategies to engage higher levels of Depth of Knowledge appropriate for each grade’s “crosswalk standards”. The department utilized Study Island resources as a means of assessing students’ current ability to apply the mathematics standards as defined by the PA Core.

In the area of co-teaching, pairs of teachers in both the sixth and eighth grade collaborated to develop and implement instruction to continue York Suburban’s commitment to educational excellence for all students. These teachers worked as a team to instruct and assist students without focusing on defining their roles as content teacher versus special education teacher. Student feedback on the co-teaching experience was positive.

The middle school mathematics department continued to strive to challenge students with advanced courses. Over 75 seventh and eighth grade students took the Algebra 1 Keystone exam in the spring, more than twice the number of students who took the exam the previous spring. The mathematics department remains committed to ensuring that the needs of each student are met, whether those needs include remediation or advanced placement.

The middle school department goals for the 2014-2015 school year will include the following:

- to implement strategies which address the PA Core Content and Mathematical Practice Standards.
- to continue to evaluate common assessment data and revise assessments as needed to meet the level of rigor demanded by the PA Core Standards.
- to increase Depth of Knowledge within the mathematics curriculum.
- to shift instructional strategies to inquiry- and problem-based learning and student-led discussion models
- to promote critical thinking, peer and self analysis and critiquing discussion strategies within classrooms.
- to continue to review and improve Essential Questions used to drive instruction.
- to continue to use and to become more familiar with the various components of SAS and its value as a resource for instruction.

## **Special Education Learning Support**

The York Suburban Middle School special education program focused on the following areas throughout the 2013-2014 school year:

- **LETRS training** – Learning Support teachers received training on the five components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and syntax.
- **DOK** – the learning support teachers worked cooperatively with the regular education teachers to create and develop depth of knowledge questioning in order to expand the students' understanding beyond level one questioning
- **Technology** – increased the use of technology specifically in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes by implementing the use of the Chromebook, using and organizing the student's Google drive, and using other internet based websites for instructional purposes
  - the special ed. department received a cart of 20 chrome books for LS students
- **Co-Teaching** - developed a co-teaching model for all subject areas in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, co-teaching model implemented in 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies, and a co-teaching model in 6<sup>th</sup> grade math
- **Writing** – through the use of the Jane Shaffer writing model learning support students improved their writing, specifically with content development and focus
- **IEP form development** – created a calculation sheet to use when writing IEPs to determine the Penn Data percentages for each student
- **Communication** – learning support teachers communicated expectations on how to service students with IEPs to paraprofessionals and worked cooperatively with paraprofessionals on problem-solving on how to meet the needs of the students

**Goals for 2014-2015:**

1. To develop a consistent co-teaching model in all academic areas in grades 6, 7 and 8
2. To improve the transition between building levels for all learning support students
3. To increase teacher knowledge of common core in all academic areas

**Emotional Support and Alternative Education (EP2 & T.I.P. )**

The York Suburban Middle School Emotional Power Program (EP2) and the Trojan Intervention Program (T.I.P.) both addressed the following focus areas during the 2013-2014 school-year:

- Emphasis on strengthening student-teacher relationships building-wide to foster improved student motivation and promote positive classroom culture.
- Emphasis on the encouragement of trusting and respectful teacher-teacher relationships building-wide to support colleagues and enhance target population academic performance.
- Continued review and reflection of program procedures to ensure effectiveness in identifying concerns, problem-solving, and reaching program goals.
- Celebration and recognition of student accomplishments-
  - High percentage of students included in general education classes
  - Increased number of students achieving honor roll status and improved academic performance
  - Student participation and qualification for extra-curricular activities

In addition, our Movement Grant was highlighted at the York Suburban Education Foundation Impact Speaker event which provided opportunities to make and maintain valuable community connections. It also reinforced understanding and support of movement activities in the

classroom for improved student academic achievement.

**Program Goals for the 2015-2016 school year include the following:**

- Implement and monitor necessary middle school program procedures
- Continue support for teachers, parents, and students of program participants
- Begin to problem-solve “consistency throughout transitions” to and from middle school in an attempt to grow and enrich each program district-wide

**Unified Arts**

During the 2013-2014 school year, the unified arts team has been focusing on:

- Collaboration with core teachers - cross curricular activities.
- Integration of common core problem solving strategies. (STEM based)
- Utilizing STEM concepts to promote problem solving and critical thinking skills.
- Utilizing backwards by design/ understanding by design to develop learning objectives and activities to drive instruction.
- Incorporating history concepts and diversification of cultures in activities
- Developing social and cooperation skills
- Integrating new technology into classroom
- Focus on student awareness and responsibility by using self monitoring techniques

**Foreign Language**

With several of Foreign Language teachers teaching at the high school and the middle school during the 2013-14 school year, the world language department really worked together as one high school/middle school group. The department mainly focused on two needed tasks this year. The first, and most important for us this year, was the combining of Spanish 1A and Spanish 1B into one year for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The department set forth plans developed during the 2013-2014 school year and put it into action this year. Overall, the department feels the amount of material covered was manageable for most students.

The department also worked on creating more common assessments at all levels to ensure that students were evaluated more evenly throughout the year no matter which teacher they had. This also gave teachers the opportunity to make sure that they were giving close to equal time to the topics taught and that what they assessed was equal to what they taught.

All that said, there are still things to work on in the upcoming years. Should our assessments, homework, projects be graded the same and have the same weight? Even though we are giving similar assessments, are they being graded the same? How do Spanish II students perform next year based on this year’s altered Spanish I curriculum?” These are topics to be discussed during the 2014-2015 school year.

**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

**CHIPS (Caring Helpers Igniting Peer Success)**

- Eighth grade students expressing a desire to participate in a peer-mentoring program spent one day in August 2013 in a training workshop.

- Following the workshop training, the CHIPS were prepared to: serve as tour guides for new students, to act as section mentors for new students, and to assist with the REACH program and the fifth grade orientation.

### **REACH (Reaching Expectations and Climbing Higher) Program**

- The AM REACH program continued during the 2012-2013 school year. The AM REACH program was designed as a proactive measure intended to assist students with organizational and study skills concerns. Each student in the AM program was assigned to a CHIPS mentor. As students met with success, they exited the program and were placed on a monitor status.
- In addition to the services of AM REACH, students met with their guidance counselors in a weekly luncheon club. During this luncheon, the counselors reviewed the student's academic progress and offered encouragement to motivate the student's academic performance.
- The PM REACH program began the first quarter of the 2013-2014 school year and included students from grades 6, 7, and 8 who were at-risk of failing their current grade placement. PM REACH was available two afternoons a week from 3:00- 4:00. Middle School staff assisted students by helping them complete outstanding assignments and homework, organize notebooks, and study for quizzes and tests.

### **After School Homework Club**

- The homework club met 3 times a week from 3:00- 4:00 pm. This program is open to all students who wanted to complete their homework before going home or who needed assistance with content material. The club was organized and supervised by teachers.

### **Clubs**

- Teachers volunteered to host a variety of club options for students throughout the school year. Students selected a club of their choice and participated in the club activity one day of the six day cycle. The club topics were varied and met the social needs of the students.

## **BUILDING LEVEL COMMITTEES**

### **All Hazard School Safety Program**

- The safety committee continues to oversee the student and staff safety needs. The committee continues to revise and update the emergency evacuation plan, hurricane and tornado plans and the shelter in-place plan for students and staff.

### **Olweus Anti-bullying Program or P.R.I.D.E.**

- While academic achievement was the primary focus of the middle school staff, social skills needs were not neglected. To address the social pressures and challenges middle school students faced, all students participated in the PRIDE, anti-bullying program.
- Three year spiraling curriculum is implemented one day a cycle for the entire school year. Students attended two assemblies and were assigned to an Alliance group. Each Alliance group was composed of 10-12 students in grades six, seven, and eight. The Alliance group met once a cycle and was facilitated by a teacher trained in class meetings. Social skills topics were discussed in the class meeting format.

## **STUDENT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

### **PSO**

The Parent Support Organization continued to be an important part of our total school program. The subcommittees of the PSO provided assistance and support for many areas of the middle school programs. The organization hosted a sixth grade ice cream social and the end of the year carnival (Fun Day). In addition to sponsoring activities for students, the PSO assisted with the band, library, fund raising, and hosting of school events.

### **Student Council**

Student Council continued to be a service-oriented organization.

- Under the advising of Mrs. Peggy Zirkle and Mrs. Molly McAuliffe, student council organized activities such as: school dances, the magazine fund raiser, charitable drives, and the eighth grade dinner dance.
- Student council also undertook painting the student lounge.
- Student council also contributed funds for the student lounge and to the American Red Cross, Dollars for Scholars, York Wildlife, and Animal Rescue.

### **PRESIDENTIAL ACADEMIC AWARD**

Seventy- three eighth grade students received the Presidential Academic Award. This award requires a 3.5 grade point average over a three-year period and a standardized test score in the 85<sup>th</sup> national percentile or higher.

In summary, quality assessment at the middle school level goes beyond providing an excellent core academic program. The Middle School staff has developed diverse programs that are developmentally responsive to early adolescent needs. The team concept and teacher committee structures continue to be an excellent avenue to address both issues. This school year was filled with numerous successes and accomplishments.