

Oak Hill Middle School
School Council Meeting: May 27, 2010

School Council attendees: Chip DiMarco, Elaine Whalen, Eva Thompson, Risa Shames, Maureen McCann, Elizabeth Matera, Susan Kane

Parents/The Public: Josh Cohen

Notetaker: Elaine Whalen

Public Comment:

Josh Cohen spoke at length about updates from the Dept of Education panel on common core standards for math which will eventually come to MA. The main idea is that we are building toward something that weights importance by strand and grade within each school year and contains a statement of purpose with explanations including a well developed hierarchy. Teachers would construct their lessons accordingly. Discussion ensued about how this could impact curriculum and if such a curriculum would be supported by the Federal government. Josh provided a follow-up outline, see addendum. The Common Core draft can be found at <http://www.corestandards.org/Standards/K12/>

Approval of Minutes: minutes for April were approved.

School Improvement Plan:

The content facilitators have met once and a process has been planned to encourage teacher participation across the board.

Big ideas were collected from all staff, then sorted and grouped into five areas:

- I. Instruction: Best Practices (collaborative practices, differentiation...)
- II. Intervention/Supports/RTI
- III. Student Connections with adults and peers
- IV. School-Wide Behavior Expectations and Anti-Bullying practices
- V. Fun Vibrant group re: school spirit for adults and students (also will cover developing themes for community service projects)

These goals are reflected in the school improvement plan with specific outcomes and measurements with should help to ensure that teachers feel a connection with the plan. Groups have met once and were asked to establish current evidence-based reality. This is a large task and faculty meeting times will be used to achieve this. We are looking for small successes at first with initiatives being met in the middle of next year.

Election for School Council: Discussion surrounded how to get the best turnout for Council elections next year. All agreed that having ballot collection at curriculum night would be ideal. Curriculum night will be held 9/21/10 and the plan will be to hold the election then.

Meeting adjourned.

Addendum

Outline provided by Josh Cohen:

I. Common Core Standards are probably coming to MA

The news stories last week about the state doing away with MCAS were about our joining Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC), a consortium that will apply for Race to the Top Funding to develop standardized tests. The underlying standards are the Common Core.

II. Math standard

A. More focused

1. Aimed at addressing the criticism that the NCTM 1989/2000 standards that form the basis of state framework, are a mile wide and an inch deep.
2. Will not attempt to cover all topics in every grade.
3. Some content going away altogether – in particular, it looks like patterns are being dumped

B. More coherent

1. Current standards –

- (a) Five math strands play a central role: (i) number sense and operations, (ii) patterns, relations, and algebra, (iii) geometry, (iv) measurement, and (v) data analysis, statistics, and probability.

Primary presentation is grade within strand.

- (b) No statement of purpose for each grade

- (c) Flat hierarchy – Example in Grade 6 – page 114 in 2000 framework. The following standards are listed at the same level of detail:

Demonstrate an understanding of place value to billions and thousandths

Solve linear equations using concrete models, tables, graphs, and paper-pencil methods.

See Page 114 in 2000 MA Framework

2. New standards

- (a) Still has strands, but the primary presentation is by school year.
- (b) Each school year has a detailed statement of purpose
 - i. States critical areas for that year
 - ii. Provides a detailed paragraph explaining what students should be able to do in each critical area.

FIGURE – Page 30 in Common Core

- (c) Well-developed hierarchy – with domains, clusters, and individual standards. Helps to differentiate between overarching areas understanding and individual components of those areas.

See – Pages 31-33 in Common Core and Page 114 in MA Framework 2000

- i. Common Core – Expressions is an entire cluster in Grade 6
- ii. In the 2000 framework, the corresponding material is scattered over 2 (or maybe 3) short bullet point standards with very little depth:

Select and use an appropriate operation(s) to solve problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and positive integer exponents with whole numbers, and with positive fractions, mixed numbers, decimals, and percents.

Apply the Order of Operations for expressions involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with grouping symbols.

C. Implications

1. Success will depend on understanding the purpose of each standard and in particular what how that standard contributes to preparing students for the next step in their education (and ultimately, how the standards taken together prepare students for college and careers).
2. The main purpose of the standards in middle school is preparing students for an authentic algebra course.

See – Page 31 in Common Core –

Note prominence of ratios because understanding ratios is crucial to algebra readiness. Same with expressions, discussed earlier.

3. Speculative, but probably more rigorous. PARCC includes the following goals:
 - (a) Tight alignment with the internationally-benchmarked Common Core State Standards;
 - (b) Benchmarking the actual assessments against assessments from high performing countries; and
 - (c) Pursuing empirically-based international comparisons at target grade levels.

Refer to Singapore placement tests

Thirty percent of all the apples a grocer had were sold. If he had 49 apples left, how many apples did he have at first? (Grade 4)

An empty rectangular tank, 60 cm long by 50 cm wide, contains 3 metal cubes of edge 10 cm. The tank is being filled with water flowing from a tap at a rate of 10 liters per minute. If it takes 6 minutes to fill up the tank, find the height of the tank. (Grade 6)

III. English Language Arts

1. English is not just about fiction

“ELA-specific standards for grade 5 and above include fiction, poetry, and drama but also literary nonfiction (e.g., speeches, essays, and historical documents with significant cultural importance and literary merit.”

“Fulfilling the standards for 6-12 ELA requires much greater attention to literary nonfiction than has been traditional”

2. Not just English

“Literary standards specific to history / social studies and science for grade 6 and above are predicated on teachers in these areas using their unique disciplinary expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective fields.”