

**RIVER
FOREST
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

Administration Building
7776 Lake Street
River Forest, Illinois
60305
708 • 771 • 8282
Fax 708 • 771 • 8291

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
Roosevelt Middle School Library Learning Center
December 3, 2013
7:00 p.m.**

A G E N D A

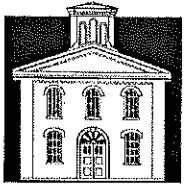
- I. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call**
- II. Recognize Visitors and Invite Comments from the Public¹**
- III. Approval of Agenda**
- IV. Board Action**
 - Personnel Report
- V. School Calendar 2014-2015**
- VI. Education Committee, Anne Gottlieb, Chair**
 - Instructional Specialist Presentation
 - Martha Ryan-Toye
 - Michael Czerniawski
 - Kathleen Fleming
 - Jolene Lorimer
- VII. Public Comments¹**
- VIII. Adjournment**

¹ Public comments on non-agenda items are subject to the following provisions: Each speaker should stand and provide his or her name and home address for the minutes. Each speaker will then be given three minutes to speak. The speaker will be notified when the time limit is reached. At this time, speakers should promptly finish the thought and be seated. Please note: The Board uses this time to listen to community questions and concerns, but will not respond immediately to individual requests and cannot take formal action on non-agenda items. Please include any specific request for action or response in the three minute talk and appropriate contact information for follow up, if applicable.

District 90 Calendar Proposal 2014-2015

The District 90 Calendar Committee, comprised of teachers, educational support personnel, River Forest Education Association, and a parent met to discuss a recommended school district calendar for the coming year. The committee had met last Spring, but tabled efforts in order to better understand the impact of the PARCC assessment (replacing ISAT in 2014-2015) and the decisions by District 200 and District 97.

The proposed calendar reflects a slight modification in the typically scheduled Spring Break due to the proposed PARCC assessment timelines. The proposed Spring Break is in line with the planned dates for OPRFHS District 200, however, the calendar also includes a day of attendance on Veterans' Day. Please note that the proposed calendar reflects the usual and ongoing requirements and agreements in terms of instructional days, parent teacher conferences, institute days, inservice days, breaks and holidays.

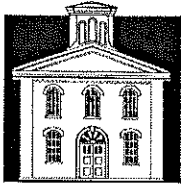


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Legal Holidays, 2014 - 2015

July 4, 2014	Independence Day
September 1, 2014	Labor Day
October 4, 2014	Yom Kippur - SATURDAY
October 13, 2014	Columbus Day
November 11, 2014	Veterans' Day
November 27, 2014	Thanksgiving Day
December 25, 2014	Christmas Day
January 1, 2015	New Year's Day
January 19, 2015	Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday
February 16, 2015	President's Day
March 2, 2015	Casimir Pulaski Day
May 25, 2015	Memorial Day



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***DRAFT*
SCHOOL CALENDAR
2014 - 2015**

Wednesday	August 20, 2014.....	Professional Development – NO SCHOOL
Thursday	August 21, 2014.....	Professional Development – NO SCHOOL
Friday	August 22, 2014.....	Professional Development – NO SCHOOL
*Monday	August 25, 2014.....	First Day of Classes
Monday	September 1, 2014.....	Labor Day – NO SCHOOL
Friday	October 10, 2014.....	Professional Development – NO SCHOOL
Monday	October 13, 2014.....	Columbus Day – NO SCHOOL
Friday	October 31, 2014.....	AM Attendance (Dismissal 11:25 a.m.)/PM School Improvement
Monday	November 24, 2014.....	Evening Parent/Teacher Conferences
Tuesday	November 25, 2014.....	Parent/Teacher Conferences – NO SCHOOL
Wednesday	November 26, 2014.....	Non-Attendance Day – NO SCHOOL
Thurs/Friday	November 27 and 28, 2014.....	Thanksgiving Recess – NO SCHOOL
Friday	December 19, 2014.....	Last Day of Classes Before Winter Recess (Dismissal 2:30 p.m.)
December 22, 2014 – January 2, 2015.....		Winter Recess
Monday	January 5, 2015.....	Classes Resume
Monday	January 19, 2015.....	Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday – NO SCHOOL
Friday	February 13, 2015.....	AM Attendance (Dismissal 11:25 a.m.)/PM School Improvement
Monday	February 16, 2015.....	Presidents’ Day – NO SCHOOL
Monday	March 2, 2015.....	Casimir Pulaski Day – NO SCHOOL
Thursday	March 26, 2015.....	Evening Parent/Teacher Conferences
Friday	March 27, 2015.....	Parent/Teacher Conferences – NO SCHOOL
March 30 – April 3, 2015.....		Spring Recess
Monday	April 6, 2015.....	Classes Resume
Friday	May 22, 2015.....	AM Attendance (Dismissal 11:25 a.m.)/PM School Improvement
Monday	May 25, 2015.....	Memorial Day – NO SCHOOL
Wednesday	June 3, 2015.....	8 th Grade Graduation
*Thursday	June 11, 2015.....	Last Day of School Year

*Unused emergency days (maximum of 5) will be used to advance the closing date of the school year. The earliest closing date could be June 4, 2015. Please note that the first and last days of school are full days.

2014-2015 Proposed Public School Calendar for River Forest SD 90, Draft, as of 11/26/2013

Codes: X = attendance day; XHI, XHPT, XID, XDS, XHS, XHSW, XHIH, XHPH, XHSH = half attendance day; XH = holiday attendance waiver; FPT, FPTH, WFPT = full day parent teacher conference; FI, WFI, FIH = teacher inservice; PI, TI, TIH = parent/teacher institute; ED = emergency day; XED = proposed emergency day; HOL = holiday; NIA = not in attendance

Total Days of Attendance: 182 Regular Day: 8:20AM - 3:10PM Instruct. Day Lgth: 5 Hrs. 50 Mins.

July 2014							August 2014							September 2014						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
30	1	2	3	4 HOL	5	6	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1 HOL	2 X	3 X	4 X	5 X	6	7
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	8 X	9 X	10 X	11 X	12 X	13	14
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20 TI	21 TI	22 TI	23	24	15 X	16 X	17 X	18 X	19 X	20	21
28	29	30	31	1	2	3	25 X	26 X	27 X	28 X	29 X	30	31	22 X	23 X	24 X	25 X	26 X	27	28
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	29 X	30 X	1	2	3	4	5

July Atnd: 0 Accum: 0 Aug Atnd: 5 Accum: 5 Sept Atnd: 21 Accum: 26

October 2014							November 2014							December 2014						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
29	30	1 X	2 X	3 X	4	5	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
6 X	7 X	8 X	9 X	10 TI	11	12	3 X	4 X	5 X	6 X	7 X	8	9	1 X	2 X	3 X	4 X	5 X	6	7
13 HOL	14 X	15 X	16 X	17 X	18	19	10 X	11 X	12 X	13 X	14 X	15	16	8 X	9 X	10 X	11 X	12 X	13	14
20 X	21 X	22 X	23 X	24 X	25	26	17 X	18 X	19 X	20 X	21 X	22	23	15 X	16 X	17 X	18 X	19 X	20	21
27 X	28 X	29 X	30 X	31 XHS	1	2	24 X	25 FPT	26 NIA	27 HOL	28 NIA	29	30	22 NIA	23 NIA	24 NIA	25 HOL	26 NIA	27	28
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	29 NIA	30 NIA	31 NIA	1	2	3	4

Oct Atnd: 21 Accum: 47 Nov Atnd: 16 Accum: 63 Dec Atnd: 15 Accum: 78

January 2015							February 2015							March 2015						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
29	30	31	1 HOL	2 NIA	3	4	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	23	24	25	26	27	28	1
5 X	6 X	7 X	8 X	9 X	10	11	2 X	3 X	4 X	5 X	6 X	7	8	2 HOL	3 X	4 X	5 X	6 X	7	8
12 X	13 X	14 X	15 X	16 X	17	18	9 X	10 X	11 X	12 X	13 XHS	14	15	9 X	10 X	11 X	12 X	13 X	14	15
19 HOL	20 X	21 X	22 X	23 X	24	25	16 HOL	17 X	18 X	19 X	20 X	21	22	16 X	17 X	18 X	19 X	20 X	21	22
26 X	27 X	28 X	29 X	30 X	31	1	23 X	24 X	25 X	26 X	27 X	28	1	23 X	24 X	25 X	26 X	27 FPT	28	29
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	30 NIA	31 NIA	1	2	3	4	5

Jan Atnd: 19 Accum: 97 Feb Atnd: 19 Accum: 116 Mar Atnd: 18 Accum: 134

April 2015							May 2015							June 2015						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
30	31	1 NIA	2 NIA	3 NIA	4	5	27	28	29	30	1 X	2	3	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
6 X	7 X	8 X	9 X	10 X	11	12	4 X	5 X	6 X	7 X	8 X	9	10	1 X	2 X	3 X	4 X	5 XED	6	7
13 X	14 X	15 X	16 X	17 X	18	19	11 X	12 X	13 X	14 X	15 X	16	17	8 XED	9 XED	10 XED	11 XED	12	13	14
20 X	21 X	22 X	23 X	24 X	25	26	18 X	19 X	20 X	21 X	22 XHS	23	24	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
27 X	28 X	29 X	30 X	1	2	3	25 HOL	26 X	27 X	28 X	29 X	30	31	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	29	30	1	2	3	4	5

Apr Atnd: 19 Accum: 153 May Atnd: 20 Accum: 173 June Atnd: 9 Accum: 182

2014-2015 River Forest SD 90 as of 11/26/2013**Calendar Legend - Totals for the Year**

Calendar Code	Code Description	No. of Days	Totals
X	Pupil Attendance Day	174	
XHS	Half-Day School Improvement Program	3	
XED	Emergency Day-Proposed	5	
			Total Attendance Days: 182
FPT	Full-Day Parent/Teacher Conference	2	
TI	Teacher Institute/Workshop	4	
			Total Calendar Days: 188
HOL	Holiday	10	
NIA	Not in Attendance	15	

PT /In-Service/School Improv./Act of God/Interrupted Days/Delayed Start-Explanations

School Begin Date: 08/20/2014 School End Date: 06/11/2015

Regular Day: 8:20AM - 3:10PM Instruct. Day Lgth: 5 Hrs. 50 Mins.

Cal. Date	Cal. Code	Code Descr.	Student Attend.	Activity Time	Brief Explanation for Activity or School Closing
10/31/2014	XHS	Half-Day School Improvement Program	8:10AM 11:10AM	12:10PM 3:10PM	Focus on curriculum implementation and student achievement.
11/25/2014	FPT	Full-Day Parent/Teacher Conference		8:20AM 3:10PM	Evening conferences conducted 3:30 to 8:00 on 11/24.
02/13/2015	XHS	Half-Day School Improvement Program	8:20AM 11:20AM	12:20PM 3:20PM	Focus on student achievement and curriculum implementation
03/27/2015	FPT	Full-Day Parent/Teacher Conference		8:20AM 3:10PM	student regular day of attendance on 03/26, followed by parent teacher conferences from 3:30 to 7:00 pm
05/22/2015	XHS	Half-Day School Improvement Program	8:20AM 11:20AM	12:20PM 3:20PM	School improvement, focus on student data and student achievement

District 90 Instructional Specialists Committee of the Whole – December 3, 2013

District 90 hired three Instructional Specialists at the start of the 2013-2014 school year. One of the positions was piloted previously as a part time specialist working in all three of the District's schools. The 2012-2013 work of the Superintendent's Leadership Council included an analysis of Advanced Differentiated Learners with an emphasis on differentiation. One outcome of this analysis was a recommendation to provide one Instructional Specialist in each of the three schools. The District 90 Board of Education generously approved these positions last spring. Thanks to the work of our teachers and Instructional Specialists, River Forest School District 90 has begun to renew its commitment to the important goal of improved instructional differentiation. This decision has been particularly important in light of significant curriculum shifts, changes, and emphasis on a consistent and coherent program based on high standards for all students.

The District 90 mission and commitment to meet the needs of all learners is strengthened through the addition of these three positions and the individuals in these positions. District 90 continues its emphasis on providing high quality support and services to meet the needs of all children. This important commitment requires a daily focus on what students need to know and to be able to do in order to be successful members of our schools and our community.

The work of the Common Core implementation has provided District 90 teachers with more clarity and agreement on the progression of skills students need to acquire from one year to the next. The work of the Common Core has also introduced new resources and new practices for teachers in River Forest. The work of meeting the needs of all children in the District requires in-depth knowledge of the Common Core State Standards; both in what they mean and what children require. The ongoing implementation of Response to Intervention mandates that teachers be able to understand and use data in a meaningful and fluent manner that translates directly to student support and services. At the same time, D90 teachers are remaining focused on the social and emotional needs of our students. Teachers continue to hone their craft through collegial collaboration, working together to understand and use the best resources to prepare students in an effective and engaging manner.

The Instructional Specialists provide daily embedded professional support and development to teachers in addressing this complex and critical work. These individuals provide support to classroom teachers, teacher specialists and school administrators. The Instructional Specialists work with teams of teachers and administrators to facilitate the District's priorities in a manner that provides the greatest impact on students. A recent analysis of "high achieving school districts" completed in a comparable suburban district suggested that a commonly shared asset of high achieving school districts is that of an Instructional Coach or Specialist. Our School District is fortunate to be able to provide this level of high quality support, guidance, and collaboration to our instructional team for the success of all children in District 90.

Instructional Specialist Progress

Differentiation

1. Built teachers' capacity to increase enrichment for ADLs and interventions for struggling students
 2. Worked directly with students through tier 2 interventions and assessments
 3. Bolstered the use of assessment to determine needs and strengths
-

Common Core Literacy

1. Helped teachers and teams understand how to best make use of Journeys
 2. Provided direct support for students through centers, reading conferences, and assessment
 3. Fully planned the trimester assessments, from development of items to scheduling testing to analyzing results
-

Common Core Math

1. Co-planned (individually and in teams) units and lessons, coached teachers in using available materials and resources, and gathered and created tools such as websites and sprints
 2. Provided support for parents through open house presentations and parent letters
 3. Assisted with development and implementation of trimester assessments
-

Social Emotional Learning

1. Worked with individual teachers on developing behavior and classroom management plans
 2. Gathered data on classrooms related to social emotional learning
 3. Supported implementation of Second Step
-

Response to Intervention

1. Provided analysis of the Group Problem Solving process district-wide
 2. Managed tier 2 reading interventions
 3. Supported logistical aspects of interventionists' work with students
-

Collaboration

1. Strengthened team meetings within and across school sites
 2. Met weekly, building bridges between administrators and teachers and across schools
 3. Helped the district set and focus on key priorities
-

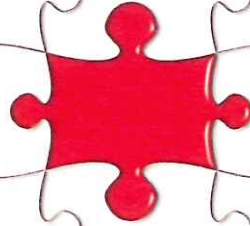


Kids at the Core

The Work of
Instructional
Specialists

Presented to the
Committee of the Whole
December 3, 2013

Differentiation & Advanced Differentiated Learners



Common
Core



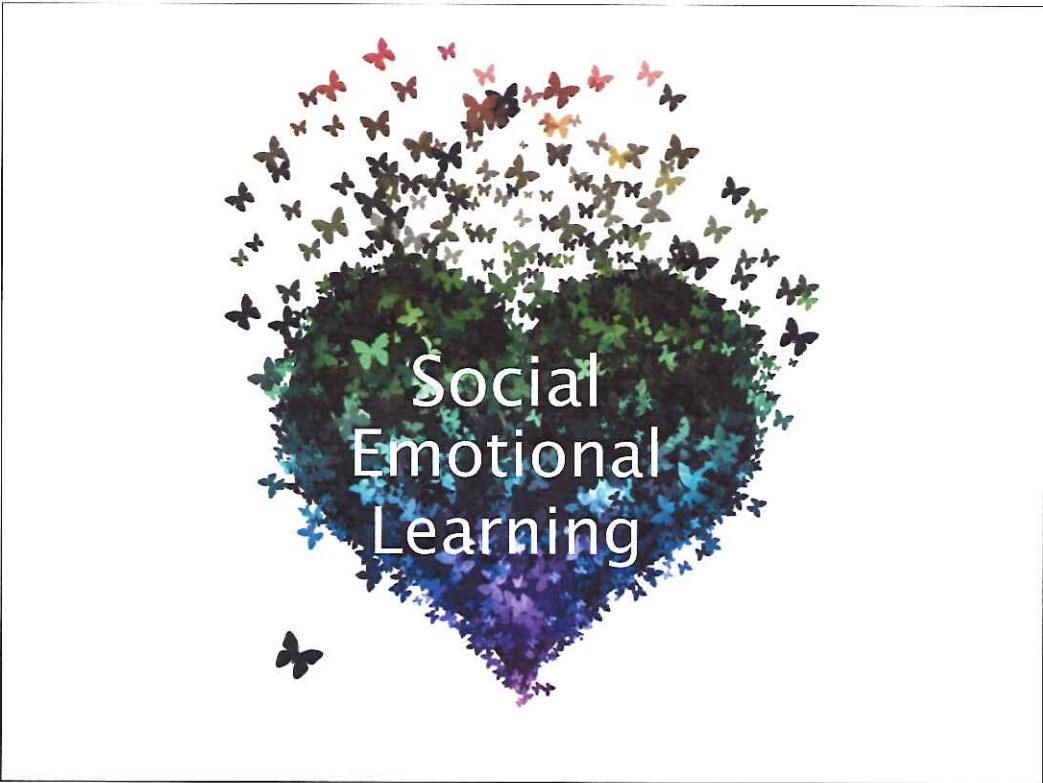
ELA

Common Core
Mathematics

$$\int_a^b f(x) dx = \frac{1}{n}$$

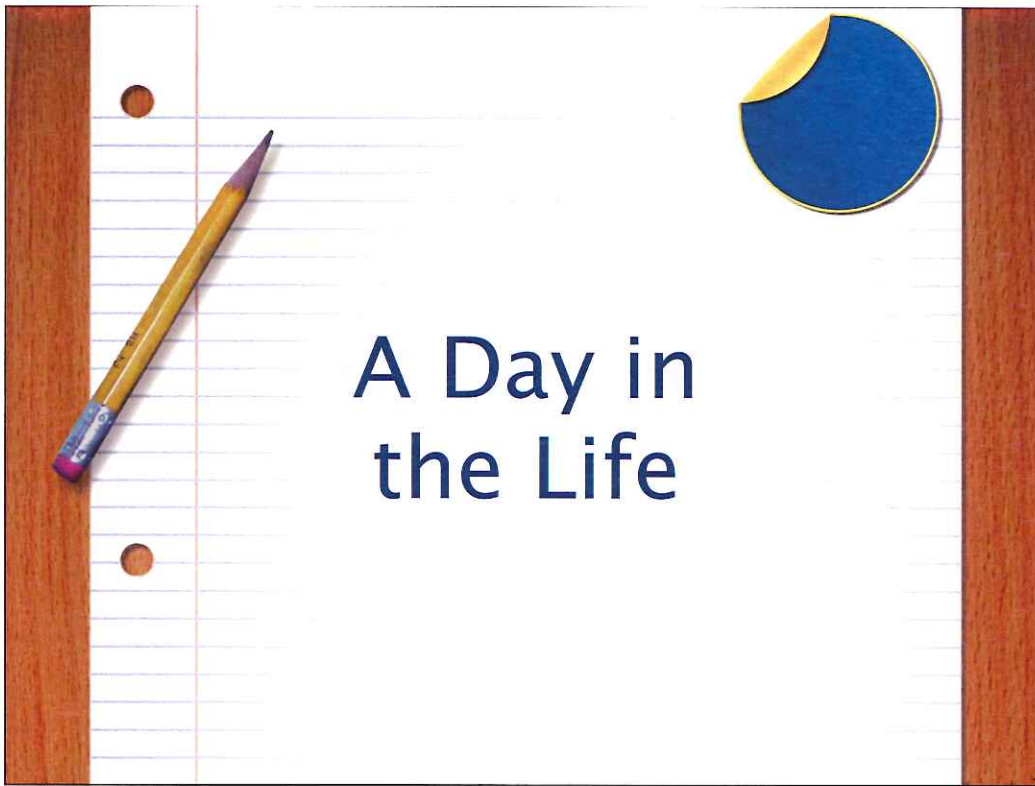


Response to Intervention



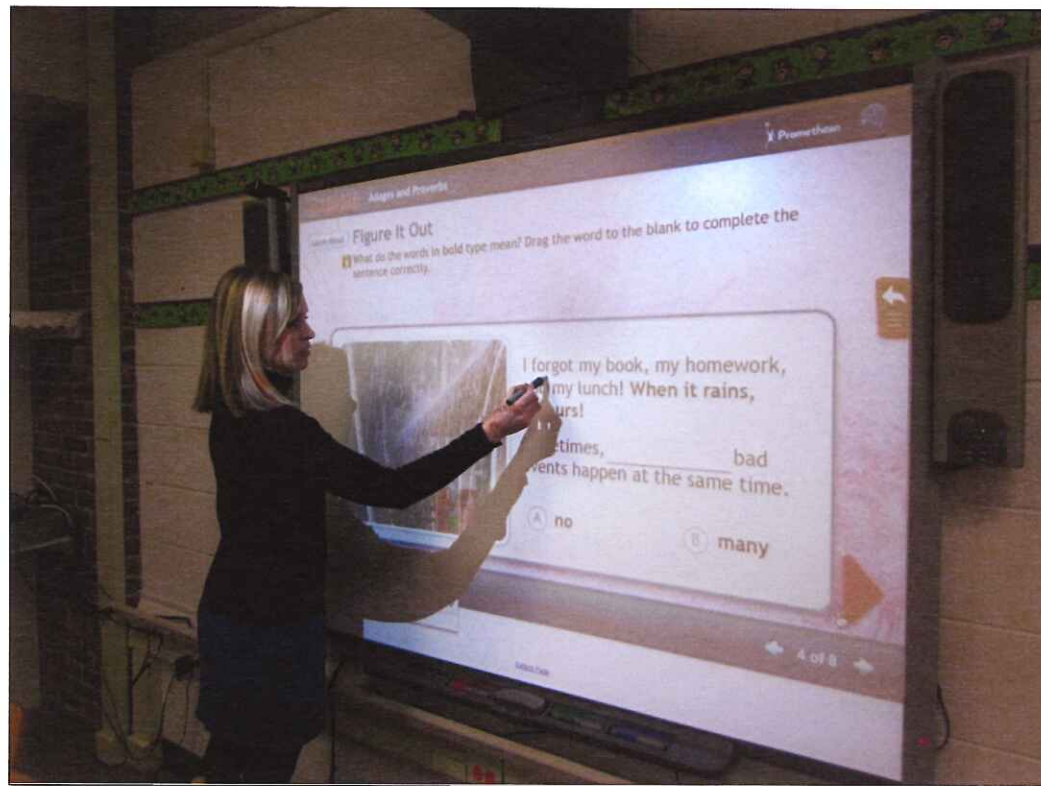
Social
Emotional
Learning





A Day in the Life





Priorities - CCSS Math

vertical alignment

mathematical practices ① 14/15

communication w/ community

assessment

Action Plan CCSS Math

① Spring 14 plan, implement, who, when?

- mathematical practices

critical resource(s) for instructional practices - PD?

critical docs (instr. practices resources)

agree on a template & a timeline

review of assessments

- balanced - Annual (how much?)

- info. provided (app. cover up) to little?

- purpose (formative, summative)

① Spring 14

Priorities SEL

- Second Step - K-5 - Going well
- Middle School - implemented by PE teacher (possible gaps)
- SW - focus on Tier 2 and Tier 3
- Teaching students expected behaviors
- SEL - Teachers (at Rose) need to have a clearer understanding of what's going on
- PBIS / Universal Expectations Responses
- Teacher Student

② 14-15

• ABCO - don't know what they're doing

• Water Pipe 14

• **Table groups - across subject areas (related to above) 02**

• **Shared knowledge base of practices using e.g. Bloom's to discuss advanced differentiation**

① 14-15 PD show

• **Trimester Assessment → conversations**

① 13-14

Priorities Collaboration

- 1) National focus
- 2) Tier 1 components
- 3) Current
- 4) ...

(Teacher)

(Student)

(S) ...

Action Plan - Collaboration

- Meet with ABCO
- Coordinate w/ CEC
- Determine pd planning just leaders first? Summer?
- Determine/execute trimester assessment work
- Talk w/ ABCO about what we're doing
- PLC w/ all staff - show this to with CEC
- Do we need an outside vendor? If so, who?

Parking List

- Collaboration: All table sets of seats to (e.g. specific meetings per week, no interaction with parents, etc.) plus I'd need to meet with team leaders on this (also PLC?) Learning?
- Community expectations re: acceleration
- Loss of instructional time in trimester
- Systemic PD (e.g. Bloom's - DOK)
- Shared/Behavioral Expectations - where does this need to go?
- Dec TLC - focus on Writing Time
- Label Priorities on 15 signs

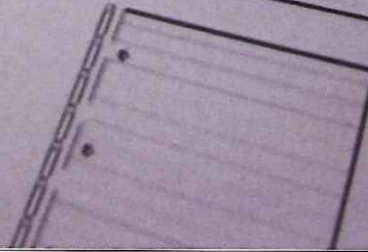
**First Grade
Math Parent Letter
Unit 3**

Our next unit in math is about measurement and data. The children will use objects to express the length of an object as a whole number of length units. Laying multiple copies of a shorter object, such as a paperclip, end to end with an accurate measurement, in part, by laying the objects end to end with a foundational building block for a child's understanding of measurement. Using informal units for beginning measurement activities is beneficial at all grades. This letter focuses on the attributes being measured.

Sample Question:

Using 1 inch paper clips, how long is the paper?

Answer: 8 paper clips



Task: Students will use paper clips to measure the length of the paper.

Extended Response (Question #12) Scoring Guide

Question	8 points	6 points	4 points	2 points	0 points
Extended Response (#12)	A. Student accurately describes how Eagle's attitude changes.	A. Student accurately describes how Eagle's attitude changes.	A. Student describes how Eagle's attitude changes in a mostly accurate way.	A. Student describes how Eagle's attitude changes in a mostly inaccurate way.	A. Student does not describe how Eagle's attitude changes.
			B. Student provides only 2 specific, relevant details from the text that explain Eagle's change in attitude and	B. Student provides only 1 specific, relevant detail from the text that explains Eagle's change in attitude	B. Student does not provide any details from the text that explain Eagle's change in attitude



Looking Forward



Tweet

EdgeWave

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FEATURE

For the Love of the Game: Instructional Coaching

Teachers get support and encouragement to hone their skills and open their classroom doors to help b

By: *Melissa Ezarik*

District Administration, Jun 2002

[DA Archive](#)

Quick:

You've got an additional \$10 million in the budget for next year. Where will you spend it? Technology? Teacher bonuses? More teachers? Thanks to a mill levy, teachers and administrators in Jefferson County (Colo.) Public Schools faced this "problem." And they opted to hire more coaches.



No, athletics isn't the district's number one priority. What this committee saw the need for was more instructional coaches for teachers. Superintendent Jane Hammond says one retiring teacher's words sum up why the money would be put to good use: "I am a better teacher because of the coach."

In the School District of Greenville County, S.C., teachers have come to rely on coaches just as much. Knowing that the coaching program might be in danger of getting cut next year, an anxious teacher recently asked coach Becky Hughes if she would still have her job. "I said I don't know," Hughes recalls. "And she said, 'Well, we'll just take up a collection!'"

Teachers and administrators in a growing number of districts across the country have hired full-time instructional coaches. And they're willing to do just about anything to keep them. Coaches identify and meet teacher needs in any number of ways, by orienting teachers with a new curriculum, helping them integrate technology, organizing staff development efforts or facilitating collaboration, for example.

These professionals go beyond mentoring, taking a more active role, says Kathleen Madigan, executive director of the National Council on Teacher Quality and a former teacher, coach and coach trainer. The training most coaches receive gives them the expertise that mentors may not have, and they don't need to carve out time to meet with teachers.

"The better coaching models are focused on elevating the instructional capacity of every teacher," says Lawrence Leak, assistant state superintendent of the Maryland Department of Education's division of certification and accreditation. Placing coaches in schools to improve instruction is a result of this age of greater accountability, he says.

Studies have shown that staff development is better when teacher study groups include peer review and coaching. If you simply train teachers and send them back to the classroom, a small percentage of what they learned will be used. In district-wide efforts of peer coaching and other team-oriented elements, the knowledge transfer rate can soar to nearly 100 percent.

In the 20-plus years Hughes taught, the classroom was an isolating place. "It was, 'Close my door and let me do my thing,'" she says. Placing a coach in every middle school is one way Greenville has encouraged a team environment. Hughes says teachers are

realizing that "you have to open your doors to do your business."

The effects of coaching programs transcend the classroom. District-wide efforts foster a stronger link between the central office and classrooms. And, administrators get the chance to re-think teacher leadership capacity. Some coaches may even take that next step and move into administrative positions themselves, but that's not the main point. "The model we really should be thinking about ... is this idea of teachers working together, a professional community," says Kathleen Fulton, director of Reinventing Schools for the 21st Century, a National Commission on Teaching & America's Future initiative.

Part of the Team

Perhaps the greatest factor in getting teachers to open their doors to coaches is that evaluation is not the coach's job. "It's very difficult to establish rapport with a teacher if the feeling is that I'm going to tell on them," says Renate Ford, who coaches mainly at Goethe Middle School in Sacramento City Unified School District.

In Jefferson County, coach Barbara Ellis at Van Arsdale Elementary School says the way her role was initially introduced to teachers helped. The principal made it clear that she wasn't an evaluator, a teacher substitute or a tutor for small groups of students.

So just what is a typical day in the life of a coach? There's no such thing. For Hughes, the day may be scheduled around which teachers catch her in the hallway as she enters Greer Middle School in the morning.

Amy Kines, a coach at Ritchie Park Elementary School in Montgomery County, Md., says she often facilitates as groups of teachers from the same grade evaluate student work. Kines also tries to communicate district initiatives without making teachers feel overwhelmed by all that's new.

Ellis, a literacy expert, helps Jefferson County teachers get resources, as well. Van Arsdale Principal Holly Anderson explains that if a teacher has a content question outside of this area, Ellis might bring in another district coach to help. "That's the kind of thing that teachers don't have time to do." The coach also brings teachers together through a professional reading program she initiated.

Teachers generally welcome coaches, especially after hearing colleagues' praise. Jefferson County's high school teachers recently voiced some concerns about why coaches are necessary. The elementary teachers in the room, who had already worked with and been won over by coaches, were asked to communicate their initial reaction to the program. "They laughed and said, 'We said exactly what the high school teachers are saying now,'" Hammond recalls.

When Madigan was a coach, she remembers veteran teachers remarking that they have children older than she. So why should they listen to her? A database coaching model, where the coach records data on student performance during class, can help mediate conversations between coaches and teachers. For example, the data might show how students reacted to positive words from the teacher versus more negative interactions,

says.

Because every coach has a unique set of strengths, and each school is different, districts typically leave the daily schedules of coaches up to site administrators. In meetings with other principals in her district, Anderson says they share strategies for how to structure a coach's time. In addition, principals can view the weekly coaches' meeting agenda online, so they always know what topics the coaches are covering.

Technology also keeps Greenville's district office in the loop. Gloria Talley, director of professional growth and leadership, says the coaching listserv has been a useful tool for this purpose. "I see the instructional coaches as a missing link that connects the central office with the school," she says. Sherida Peterson, Jefferson County's assistant superintendent of instructional services, agrees. "They are our liaison into the schools, along with the principals."

Dollars and Sense

Proving the value of coaches is a must for administrators who are seeking funding for their programs. In Greenville and Jefferson Counties, connecting the coaching program to the district strategic plan has been crucial. "The plan provides a context for a coaching program," Hammond says. If the program is seen as "a stand-alone, if it doesn't have a framework as part of something else, [it becomes] a program to sell," Peterson adds.

In Sacramento, that context was a decision to adopt a common district-wide reading program. "In order to do something that sweeping ... we would need to offer a kind of professional development support that went way beyond orientation and workshops," says Kathi Cooper, associate superintendent of instruction and learning. "Implementation really happens all day long, every day in classrooms."

Evaluation ensures that coaching programs are worth the administrative costs and coaches' salaries, which often mirror the teacher pay scale. Greenville's original evaluation process, where principals evaluated coaches, is changing so the district can work collaboratively with principals on the process. "When you spend that kind of money, your board of trustees is really holding people accountable," Talley says.

Montgomery County relies on teacher feedback, as well. Darlene Merry, associate superintendent in the district's office of staff development, meets with coaches and teachers mid-year to go over teacher surveys and discuss changes that might be helpful in the coach's approach. Through a partnership with George Washington University, the district gets objective feedback on the program as a whole.

Coaching the Coaches

Initial and ongoing training are cited by districts as crucial pieces in a coaching program. Coaches are "only as effective as they are prepared," says Sharon Van Vleck,

The district chose a coaching model developed by the University of Oregon. Bonnie Grossen, executive director of the Center for Applied Research in Education at the university, assisted in training coaches. It's a hands-on model that includes practice coaching under the direction of a more experienced coach, explains Catherine Bardo, director of secondary curriculum, language arts for the district. Once coaches assume their own duties, Bardo meets regularly with the two full-time and 40 part-time coaches she supervises.

Coaches in Jefferson County meet every Friday for seven hours of intensive training. "[This was] initially a stumbling block for us," Peterson says. A lot of principals were concerned that coaches, who are typically split between two schools, would not have enough contact to establish a place in each school's community, Anderson explains. "But I think everyone recognized that we don't want a coach in our building who doesn't have that [professional development] support," she says.

Montgomery County coaches got an initial 20 days of summer training, followed by two training days per month during the school year. This year, monthly training sessions focus on how to help teachers analyze student work.

Greenville's training focus was on getting the coaches familiar with what a good middle school looks like, Hughes says. The year-long training included a partnership with a middle school principal and superintendent from a Rhode Island district. Talley says the administrators acted as consultants to help Greenville build learning communities within its middle schools, conduct text-based discussions and look critically at student work. At the end of the year, several coaches spent three days in Rhode Island observing practices they were looking to implement at home.

Success Stories

Instructional coaches are quick to point out that the bonds they form during training make a tremendous difference in their coaching. "It's always challenging to be the only person that carries that role within the school. I work closely with the principal, but I'm really by myself," Ellis says. That's why she and other coaches constantly compare notes. Hughes says, "I couldn't do this if I were isolated." The Greenville coaches group is "like a small family," says Talley.

Having Ellis in the school, Anderson says, "provides purpose for what we do." And because she is constantly discussing the program with other principals, coaching has been a way for schools to connect. "We used to be like 100 elementary schools all working individually. ... It doesn't feel like that anymore." Whether it's a textbook decision or staff development strategy for her school, Anderson knows what other schools are doing.

Of course, the ultimate goal for coaching programs is to impact student achievement. Ford's school was "at the bottom of the heap" in reading five years ago. Now, reading is taught daily and separate from language arts. The first year the coaching component was fully implemented in the reading program, test scores went up 14 percent.

Hammond was equally impressed with achievement in

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elementary schools. Test results showed that schools without coaches had only about half the gain in scores. These gains are especially important here, since additional revenue from the mill levy that funded the coaching program depends on it. "We get [funds] as we achieve," Hammond says.