

Office of the Director of Curriculum and Assessment
Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
(978) 264-4700, x3213
<http://ab.mec.edu/curriculum/curriculum.shtml>

TO: Glenn Brand, Superintendent
FROM: Deborah Bookis, Director of Curriculum and Assessment
DATE: November 14, 2014
RE: Report on Professional Learning Day, November 6, 2014

The November 2014 Professional Learning Day was planned and organized by individual schools and/or departments to support the learning and work of their respective goals. Below are the Professional Learning Day summaries from the schools and departments of the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District.

Blanchard School: Submitted by Dana Labb

Our Professional Day at Blanchard was committed to continuing our work with our new math curriculum: Math In Focus. Specifically, we had three concurrent breakout sessions:

- MIF Training with the PD trainer Jo-Ann Feniger was based on instructional strategies. It included resources for teachers, students and parents and continued work on lesson structure, planning, assessment, and integration of content.
- Our Scope, Sequence and Pacing activity, led by Heather Haines, addressed implementation, as well as navigated the transition resource map.
- The Math Practices group, headed by Tina Bloom, included key strategies (Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract), as well as problem-solving and questioning techniques.

Staff moved through each activity in two-grade level groups to encourage bridging and conversation. We wrapped up as a whole building at the end to re-cap and discuss lessons, homework, differentiation and technology.

Conant School: Submitted by Damian Sugrue

We focused on using the district writing rubrics to calibrate our scoring of narrative writing prompts. Teachers worked in grade level teams to score pieces and discuss scoring discrepancies to ensure they were all on the same page as to what their grade level expectations look like.

Douglas School: Submitted by Chris Whitbeck

The staff at Douglas School spent the day working together with Dan Wise, a visiting lecturer at Tufts and a former teacher at High Tech High. The goal of the day was to form a model for grade levels of pedagogy to meet our school vision and to "tune" each teacher's specific plans for instruction. Together we practiced Critique, a method of providing kind, specific, and helpful feedback. We critiqued and planned from models of instruction that Dan Wise brought, and we participated in tunings of instruction in grade five and grade one.

Gates School: Submitted by Lynne Newman

The Gates Staff used the Collaborative Problem Solving model to learn how to work with students with challenging behaviors. [Teaching Challenging Kids: The Collaboration Problem Solving Approach by J. Stuart Ablon, Ph.D. Director of Think:Kids from Mass General Hospital.]

The philosophy of Think:Kids is, "Kids do well if they can... if they can't, something is getting in the way. We need to figure out what so we can help."

In working with challenging behaviors we need to identify triggers/expectations, lagging skills, and challenging behaviors. Lagging thinking skills include:

- Language and Communication Skills
- Attention and Working Memory Skills
- Emotion and Self-Regulation Skills
- Cognitive Flexibility Skills
- Social Thinking Skills

Once a skill deficit is identified, the problem needs to be solved collaboratively. Traditional discipline doesn't work with our most challenging kids. Challenging kids lack skill, not will.

McCarthy-Towne School: Submitted by David Krane

The days when the entire faculty of a school can be together to work on instructional issues are incredibly valuable. This year was no different. Our day was divided into two parts, with the morning being devoted to literacy. We used Protocols to explore the work that has already started with the Primary Teams (K-2) and anticipating the work to be started with the Intermediate Teams (3-6) in January. We then came together as a school to discuss what emerged from each of the protocols, as well as some questions about assessment expectations.

The second part of the day was used to look at what many in our school have called portfolios. We used the time to look closely and critically, again using Protocols, at using authentic work as assessment, collection, and archive. Student work has always been used to illustrate progress and growth when conferring with parents, and so it is important for us to define how we use student work as a school in different contexts.

Merriam School: Submitted by Ed Kaufman

At Merriam School, Steven Levy (former Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, author of [Starting from Scratch](#), and consultant for *Expeditionary Learning*) was our guest facilitator for the day. One of our goals this year is to reinvigorate and deepen the project-based work we do at our school, and Steven will be working with us six times this year to assist us in that process. He used videos, activities, student work samples and project description samples to stimulate discussion with our staff. The feedback from the evaluation forms was extremely positive, and we look forward to his next visit with us!

R.J. Grey Junior High: Submitted by Andrew Shen

For Professional Day, staff members at the Junior High met in their respective departments during the morning to continue work related to District Determined Measures and developing protocols for analyzing student results and identifying growth bands. A few departments also pursued work on shared curricular pursuits and adapting units to meet new goals. In the afternoon, most staff members met with their teams (i.e., 8 Green, 7 Gold) to develop team-based plans and activities for the year, along with discussing strategies and interventions for particular students who would benefit from additional support. Non-team staff met with colleagues from other schools, and our assistants met to discuss a book that they read as a group and how the ideas might apply to their work with students.

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School: Submitted by JoAnn Campbell

Departments at the high school balanced both school-wide and department-specific work during the November 5 Professional Day. School-wide topics included our academic integrity statement and examples to use within departments to educate students, discussions about homework and assessments, and mid-year exams.

Department-specific work focused on unit-based DDMs, grade level outcomes and frameworks within specific disciplines, and curriculum mapping.

Performing Arts 7-12: Submitted by Mark Hickey

The Performing Arts Department was assigned to do a few different things. Our elementary staff either took part in school-based professional learning in their own building or arranged a visit to another school to observe classes that held some significant learning for them. Kerrie Stewart is involved in a classroom music iPad project at Conant and visited another teacher using iPads in her class to see how they were being used there. Margaret Callaghan visited a school to observe lessons using recorders. She is including recorders in her curriculum to bring the Blanchard School in line with the department's curriculum.

The grade 7- 12 staff met as a group to continue its work on DDMs and to consider a new schedule of drama productions in order to resolve some scheduling concerns of the district.

Visual Arts K-12: Submitted by Diana Woodruff

The elementary Visual Arts teachers either took part in the school-based professional learning in their own building or collaborated on iPad applications for the art classroom and aligned art units to the National Visual Arts Standards.

The junior high Visual Arts teachers worked with other exploratory teachers and the technology specialist on PowerSchool grading/comment issues and also focused on Art I and Art 2 cohorts' DDM data.

The high school Visual Arts teachers continued to work on DDMs, compiling and recording data from initial implementation.

Physical Education and Health: Submitted by David James

Throughout the day, the k-12 health and physical education department worked on:

- Drafting a mission and vision statement for the future.
- Comparing curriculum to k-12 national outcomes.
- Learning the Fly Casting unit that is taught at the JH.
- Working on DDMs in grade-level department groups.

We concluded with building-based small group work. The elementary staff did belay escapes. The junior high and high school staff continued with DDM work.

Nursing: Submitted by Diane Spring

All members of the nursing department were fortunate to attend a daylong presentation specifically for school nurses, presented by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) in collaboration with the Northeastern University School Health Institute. We were among about 450 school nurses from our State.

We were enthralled by a dynamic speaker, Charlie Applestein, MSW, who spoke with us on "Working with Challenging Students, Creating a Strength Based Culture in your School Setting." We also received timely updates from the MDPH on Ebola and enterovirus D-68 surveillance, prevention of prescription and other drug abuse, and oral health initiatives.

The updates were relevant to our school nursing practice, and it was our group's consensus that Mr. Applestein would be a great candidate as a speaker for our entire educator population.

Educational Technology: Submitted by Amy Bisiewicz

The EDTech Operations team met to share knowledge about ABSchools admin tools and to test Google Classroom. The EDTech Academics team updated the edtech@ab website and began exploring digital citizenship curriculum.

Carol P. Huebner Early Childhood Program: Submitted by Joe Gibowicz

During the morning, the Early Childhood Program staff participated in a Professional Learning workshop led by Teachers21. Thirty five Early Childhood staff were in attendance; included were Special Education Preschool Teachers, Classroom Assistants, Speech Pathologists, a Physical Therapist, ABA Trainers, the Preschool's BCBA, and the Early Childhood Coordinator. The morning workshop, led by Abby Hanscom from Teachers21, focused on Resiliency and what it means for students and teachers. During this interactive workshop, Carol Dweck's work on Fixed Mind Set vs. Growth Mind Set was highlighted. One of the areas we focused on was how we deliver feedback to children (and each other). We talked about growing hope and the importance of using "growth mindset praise" (attributing success to hard work and perseverance rather than being smart or the best).

In the afternoon, the Special Education Preschool Teachers continued their ongoing work on aligning the Early Childhood Progress Report with the Common Core Standards and

Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment. The Speech Pathologists collaborated together on the following speech/language topics: fluency, assessing their current evaluation tools, reviewing multilingual evaluation and treatment and use of visual supports for play and Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

Secondary Special Education: Submitted by Mary Emmons

Secondary special educators focused on self-determination skill building for the purpose of transition to adulthood and post-secondary planning.

There was a slide presentation and group work related to self-determination and self-advocacy curriculum, as well as development of IEP goals related to these skills.

Secondary Counseling Department: Submitted by Todd Chicko

The high school counselors met to discuss our DDMs, create the tool/spreadsheet to follow both DDMs, and discuss our timeline for doing them. We were also able to discuss our shared goal in the afternoon around our SST.

The junior high school counselors met to discuss their DDMs; then they met with their teams to discuss students, plan activities for the year, and discuss the Ambassador Program.

Speech and Language Pathologists: Submitted by Lannon Twomey

Most of the SLPs were involved in building-based programs. Two participated in webinars related to evaluating and working with ELLs, as well as learning instructional strategies and accommodations for students with word retrieval deficits.

Special Education Assistant Training: Submitted by Mary Emmons

One hundred five special education and speech/language assistants, K-12, attended this training.

Agenda

- I. Behavior Training Protocols: Behavior interventions and how to implement them across the grades

Presenter: Nicole Souci, BCBA

- II. Learning Disabilities Training

Presenters: Lynne Laramie, Coordinator of Special Education, K-6

Louise Provan, Acting Coordinator of Special Education, 7-12

Goal: Understanding characteristics of students with learning disabilities and implementing programming, strategies, and accommodations

Activities:

1. F.A.T. City: Video on Understanding Learning Disabilities
2. CASE studies on various disability types and implementing appropriate programming, strategies, and accommodations. Each group created a plan for the student profile they were given.

Community Education, Extended Day Staff: Submitted by Erin O'Brien Bettez

We started our day reviewing the powerful interactions we have with children and how our actions dramatically affect them. We learned to identify the signs of stress in children, as well as what triggers and signals we can look for, and discussed some methods of de-escalation. Our day included work as a full staff as well as in small groups discussing various scenarios and strategies.