



# Greetings from the Curriculum Department

From the Bernards Township Curriculum Department, I would like to welcome you back to another school year! Summers are a busy time for teachers and administrators in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment and this summer was no exception. Over 60 K-5 programs in both general and special education were revised and improved. Staff also spent many hours in professional development to hone their skills and learn new strategies. We are eager to implement these improvements so that all of our students are actively engaged and reaching their potential.

In this inaugural newsletter you will find a variety of articles from the district's curriculum staff with a focus on changes to programs in 2014-15. We hope to release a newsletter several times throughout the year as a way to better communicate with the entire school community, so keep an eye on the district Friday Folder. One of the changes was an improvement to our K-5 Enrichment Program. This improvement saw new digital resources added as well as the inclusion of multiple capstone math challenges at each grade level. These resources will be used by classroom teachers as well as our two new Gifted and Talented Teachers. To follow up on my presentation to the Board of Education on the future of Gifted and Talented in the district, I have included a link to an FAQ about our plan going forward and how we can better serve the needs of our gifted students while also improving outcomes for all students. (<http://tinyurl.com/pcwjlef>) This presentation can also be viewed on YouTube: Part 1 <http://tinyurl.com/kmy5hj6> and Part 2 <http://tinyurl.com/k7b6a22>. I will also be talking further about Gifted and Talented in the district at an open K-5 PTO meeting on October 8th, 9:00 AM at Mount Prospect School.

As a curriculum department we strive to continually improve our K-12 programs as well as the instructional strategies and assessment methods we employ. We have experienced a great deal of academic success as a district and we should be pleased with our performance, but we should not be satisfied with maintaining a status quo. As we move forward, I would ask you to help us work through these changes and support your children, as well as the district, in making sure we are all prepared for success in the 2014-15 school year.

Best of luck to our students as they enter a new year,

Dr. Brian Heineman

Director of Curriculum and Instruction

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## Fine & Practical Arts

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The Fine & Practical Arts Department was quite involved this summer, busy preparing for the upcoming school year and beyond.

The Business Department began a program evaluation in July, the beginning of a formal review process of our curriculum that will continue throughout most of the school year. The staff will meet regularly with their supervisor to develop surveys for students and parents, as well as research offerings of other districts throughout the state and beyond. New courses under consideration include Entrepreneurship, additional courses in Marketing and on-line course options, providing our students additional opportunities to prepare for academic studies beyond high school.

Curriculum updates were performed in K-5 Art, Ridge High School Theatre and Woods curriculum, and curriculum development began for a course entitled Technical Theatre and Design Construction that will be offered in the 2015-2016 school year.

This school year will be filled with collaboration amongst the staff as we delve into our district STEM initiative. The staff at WAMS will begin the use of MakerBots, a 3D printer that creates physical objects from digital plans. This equipment will offer the next generation an opportunity to learn the digital designing skills required to solve the problems of the future. Just like the youth of the 1980's who had access to computers, children with access to a MakerBot will become the leaders who make a better tomorrow.

Michael Fackelman, Supervisor, Fine & Practical Arts

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## World Languages

This spring the World Language Department finalized its program evaluation and set forth to embark on the restructuring of the 6-12 scope and sequence. Teachers gathered over the summer to revise the WAMS and RHS level 1 curricula for French, Italian and Spanish to better align with the national world language standards set forth by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL.) The new curriculum includes thematic units based on topics such as festivals, holidays and traditions that are geared to teach students new ideas and concepts via the target language. The revision included the implementation of Integrated Performance Assessments or summative assessments that include three components based on the three modes of communication: Interpersonal (spoken or written), Interpretive (aural or written) and Presentational (spoken or written.) Furthermore, a chapter-based reader was implemented at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade for students to improve their comprehension skills and to build confidence in their general proficiency. During the next 5 years, the course titles at Ridge will slowly transition to a new format naming courses Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4, Level 5 and AP. Additionally, the department will see great change including this year's addition of a French culture course for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, and the proposal of American Sign Language and Mandarin Chinese as new offerings. The World Language Department is working diligently to develop students who excel world languages so they can be not only culturally aware but also active participants in a global society.

Kathy Stotler, Supervisor, World Languages

# Social Studies

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## K-2 Social Studies Curriculum Revision

The social studies program in Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade has been revised this year to align to the current New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards in Social Studies. The students will engage in activities that foster their understanding of the world around them, and their role in that world. The curriculum focuses on the development of the students' knowledge, skills and habits of mind that will develop their ability and desire to become active citizens in their communities. Students across all of these grades will study a variety of topics that support a developing understanding of the following big ideas of social studies:

- What does it mean to be a citizen in my family, classroom and community?
- How and why does change happen? How do I recognize and adapt to change?
- How does the world around me affect the way I live? How do I affect the world around me?
- How are we similar? How are we unique?
- How are people affected by the availability of resources? What factors influence our choices? What is the difference between needs and wants?

## Community Service

Students in all levels of American History are required to complete 25 hours of community service as part of their course work in American History. It is the goal of any effective Social Studies program to provide a thorough civic education

through the promotion of active citizenship. Community service is a vehicle through which students can facilitate positive change in their community. We believe that this experience is linked directly to what the students learn about in American History with regard to the individuals and organizations that have shaped the development of our nation through volunteerism and a desire to give back to the community. Students and their parents are encouraged to visit the Community Service Opportunities page on the Ridge High School website for details of the project and specific project ideas (<http://tinyurl.com/q9b6w5h>). Students can also read about previous students' experiences by asking their American History teacher to see the collection of reflective letters written by former students. This may give them ideas about organizations to consider, or perhaps even what not to consider! The idea is for students to choose something that will be meaningful for them.

## Ridge Empowerment for Political Participation - Candidates' Forum

Ridge Empowerment for Political Participation, REPP, is a non-partisan student activism group at Ridge High School dedicated to increasing political awareness and encouraging political participation for students for both national and local issues. Together with The League of Women Voters of Somerset Hills, REPP will be hosting a Candidates' Forum for the Bernards Township Board of Education election at the Ridge Performing Arts Center at Ridge High School on

October 13, 2014 at 7pm. The format for the evening will consist of opening and closing statements from each candidate, questions from members of REPP, and questions from the audience.

## Remembering September 11th

On Thursday, September 11, teachers in Bernards Township recognized the anniversary of 9/11 in their social studies classes. In the younger grades, teachers did not discuss specifics about 9/11. Instead, the focus was on related themes and lessons from this significant event, including acts of heroism, kindness and appreciating differences in others. In the upper grades, the lessons were connected to appropriate course themes and the overall goals of the social studies curriculum as they relate to the students' understanding of the world around them.

Kristin Fox, Supervisor, Social Studies



## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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Over the summer the English Language Arts Department has been hard at work revising curricula at both the elementary and secondary levels. Our goal is to craft an engaging and educational experience for your children that will develop their abilities as readers, writers and critical thinkers.

In kindergarten through second grade, we infused phonics and word study activities and resources into the curriculum to accelerate students' reading and writing achievement. In grades 3 through 9, we revised district curricula in light of information released in the past school year regarding the new PARCC assessment, which is scheduled to replace the NJASK and HSPA this spring. Rather than focusing the curricula on test prep, our goal is to ensure students have ample opportunities throughout the year to practice and develop their reading skills and written expression using a variety of texts.

Your child's achievement depends upon the culture of learning you set at home - as a parent, you are your child's most important teacher. One critical way you can support your child's reading achievement is to encourage a love of reading at

home.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefit of reading outside the classroom, even for just ten minutes a day. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends reading aloud to children daily. Oxford University Press writes that "the biggest single indicator of whether a child is going to thrive at school and in work is whether or not they read for pleasure. Young people who read outside of class are 13 times more likely to read above the expected level for their age."

As we enter into a new school year, I encourage you to set a culture of reading in your home. Below are some tips and resources to help:

1. Set aside time every day for reading – even ten minutes a day can have a significant impact.
2. Read aloud to your children, and, when they can read, ask them to read aloud to you, or encourage independent reading.
3. Discuss with your children the different materials that you are reading and why, the books you are reading to them, and the books that they are reading on

their own.

4. Talk with your children about their interests, plan trips to the library, and find books that will support and extend what interests your children most.

(Adapted from "The Joy and Power of Reading")

- David Hunscher, Supervisor, English Language Arts



### Sources and Links:

[The Joy and Power of Reading: A Summary of Research and Expert Opinion](#) – Scholastic

["Reading with Children – the 7 year ditch!"](#) - Oxford University Press

[How to Encourage a Love of Reading and Learning in Your Child](#) – National PTA

[Modeling Good Reading Habits With Teens](#) – ReadWriteThink.org

[Motivating Kids to Read: Teenagers and Reading](#) – Reading is Fundamental

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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Once upon a time, keyboarding, or typing, skills were important only for students who planned to go on to pursue a career in business. Today, if an individual were to make it through their schooling without acquiring keyboarding skills they would be at a major disadvantage because almost all jobs

require at least basic computer skills. Because these skills are essential for all students, we recently brought together a committee of teachers to take a look at how keyboarding is taught here in district and to identify opportunities for improvement. After reviewing current instructional practice, keyboarding guidelines contained in the Common

Core State Standards for English Language Arts, and evaluating the types of writing tasks students will be challenged with on the upcoming PARCC Assessment the committee established the following set of grade-level expectations:

## Science & Technology—(continued)

	By March of:	3rd	4th	5th
Product	Volume	½ - ¾ page; single-spaced	1 page; single-spaced	2 pages; single-spaced
	Font	12; Times New Roman	12; Times New Roman	12; Times New Roman
	Margins	1”	1”	1”
	Sitting Length	45 minutes	45 minutes	45 minutes
Key-boarding Benchmark	Words per Minute	8	15	20
	Accuracy	80%	80%	90%

Keyboarding instruction will take place, primarily, in grades 3, 4, and 5 and will be integrated into both computer time and classroom writing time. If you would like to work with your child to practice keyboarding at home, a link to some free keyboarding resources is posted here: <http://www.oucoursesystems.com/school/webpage/13461>

Matthew Hall, Supervisor, Science and Technology



# Mathematics

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## **Standards for Mathematical Practice: The Eight Habits of Highly Effective Mathematicians**

Within the past year, news media organizations and social media sites alike have bombarded viewers with information about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). I use the word information rather loosely, as the material I have seen ranges from factual details to comic spoofs to incorrect “evidence.” This can make it extremely challenging for educators, students, and parents to discern the truth. Over the past several years, teachers in Bernards Township have worked diligently to understand the CCSS, create curriculum that reflects the standards, and implement the standards within instruction.

One piece of the Mathematics Common Core State Standards that many people may not be aware of is the standards for mathematical practice. This set of standards could appropriately be titled “The Eight Habits of Highly Effective Mathematicians.” In fact, perhaps a book deal with Stephen Covey is in the future! These standards list and define what mathematically proficient students should be able to do. The standards are as follows:

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Model with mathematics.
- Use appropriate tools strategically.
- Attend to precision.
- Look for and make sense of structure.
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

These practices are designed to be integrated into mathematics instruction from Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. They certainly have different meaning at each grade level based on developmentally appropriate expectations related to the content. However, the overall meaning and approach for each practice is similar throughout the grade levels.

The formal implementation of these practices into standards is an exciting notion in the world of mathematics education! Perhaps the most frequently asked question of any mathematics teacher is “When will I ever need to use this?” While there are many content specific items that are useful for all students to know, admittedly there are certain topics in the upper grades that many adults will not encounter in daily life. Yet, the standards for mathematical practice serve to solidify the notion that the skills and practices that students are learning are equally as valuable, if not more so, than the content.

As we aim to prepare our students for college and career readiness, we must accept that our needs in education are changing. The standard routines, algorithms, and procedures that were the focus of mathematics education for a long period of time must be reimagined. The technology that is in place now will complete complex computations that were once important to do by hand. It is significantly more important that we teach our students to think critically and problem solve.

With the beginning of the new school year, I would encourage you to focus on the relevance of these mathematical practice standards for your children. Clearly a kindergarten student’s idea of attending to precision is different from that of a precalculus student. However, the basic message and premise of each of the standards is important to students at all levels. I look forward to working together with parents, teachers, and students to develop the skills necessary for our students to become highly effective mathematicians this year.

- Kristen Wolff, Supervisor, Mathematics