

# Curriculum Matters...

## For the students in SAU 21!

### Language Arts



The Language Arts team is continuing with their focus on the writing process and how to help our students to become better writers and better synthesizers of information (to write with substance). Last year the team met to review and score more than 600 short essays written by students in grades 5, 8, and 11. The SAT scoring rubric was used for all grade levels as it enabled an efficient score determination with 2 members scoring each essay. The essays represented all districts and presented similar concerns about student performance:



- **Given a 20-25 minute** timeframe for writing did not allow some of the writers enough time to develop and refine their work which would influence outcomes. How do we assist students with effective written responses in assessments?
- There were **common issues** across the grade levels of **students not responding directly to the prompt**, but instead to an alternative interpretation. The team collectively felt that students need practice in reading the question or prompt and narrowing in on the type of response needed.
- The **prompts would be better** if they were more challenging or offered several options that students could choose to respond to.
- **Students often used flowery language but did not speak with evidence.** Discussion ensued about how this continues to plague students with the open response questions on assessment tests such as NECAP or SAT (e.g. citing specific info, trying to vary the types of examples used, and where possible moving away from personal anecdotal experience to more learned or textual references. This was an issue at all grade levels.
- **Sentence structures were very repetitive and common vocabulary** used often. Students would score better with increased sophistication to their word choices and by varying the types of sentences and punctuation used.

The LA Team's work has prompted more concentrated work at our schools. The team continues on November 10th with a meeting of all representatives at the Seabrook Middle School. To see the SAT Scoring Framework go to: <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/sat-reasoning/scores/essay/guide>

### Library/Media



The Library Media Specialists from SAU21 has met twice to share their goals for student learning and the systems they use to support learning in our schools. They thought it was great to get together and to discuss commonalities and ideas. They decided to begin on goal setting and how to advance students' skills. Their initial goal:

**“Students will be able to locate resources by using database systems.”**

All of the schools represented use *Destiny* which serves as a common base for locating resources in the school libraries. The goal of student proficiency using an electronic database, such as *Destiny* provides students with skills to access other systems as well (public libraries, online databases, university systems, etc.). This skill has endurance and leverage across grade levels and disciplines. For example, most 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are expected to complete a research paper in their Social Studies classes and will need to locate credible information to accomplish this. Science students working on an inquiry experiment will need to accomplish some level of research so they can learn what others have tried. This is a powerful 21<sup>st</sup> century skill that all students will need to use throughout their academic careers as well as many other future professions. The team will continue their discussions regarding a system for noting proficiency demonstrated by students in a variety of settings. The Library Media Specialists will need to know when teachers are planning for students to conduct research so they can be supportive and help to provide the pathways to learning this skill for all students. Please include us as you plan!



# Curriculum Matters...



## Inspired work by the faculty and students of SAU 21!

**Science**



The Science Vertical Team met after school on October 25th for about 1.5 hours. They realize the limitations of shorter after school meetings and discussed pros and cons of meetings held after school; They will resume their work on the November 10<sup>th</sup> early release date to try and schedule a meeting time that will work for as many people as possible.

They discussed and agreed upon having a show and share at some point during each meeting (perhaps at the beginning) as an opportunity for us to share work related to the power standards (prioritized skills or knowledge that have endurance across grade levels and leverage in multiple curriculum areas) that the group decides on. Depending on the agenda for each meeting, it might be a brief share by one person or it could be a much more in-depth look at how our students are learning and growing within the most powerful standards.

The team decided to use Blogger.com to enable ongoing communication between team members. This requires a Google account and will be password protected. Lisa from Hampton Falls will set this up and send an invite to each member. Further discussions included:

- **The purposes behind “Probes” (short assessment problems approximately 10 minutes in duration):**
  - To provide additional data about student performance beyond NECAP scores (grades 4,8,11).
  - To provide teachers with more autonomy in action research aimed at improving student learning.
  - To give some focus to what we share and discuss regarding improved students’ science learning.
  - To identify strategies we can use to improve our instruction and measure results.
  - To serve as a reminder to teachers that students need to be able to communicate in writing for all disciplines.
  - To provide information about how students are doing with the identified power standards.

- How to best move forward with our focus on inquiry for the 2011-2012 year.
- Skills we value about using inquiry in the classroom and how students demonstrate these skills across grade levels.
  - Data collection and organization
    - Organize information for analysis
    - Read and understand data
    - Create, interpret and read graphs
    - Recognize trends and patterns
    - Measurement
  - Design investigations
    - Use of creativity to solve problems
    - Use of appropriate equipment
  - Communicate lab results in a variety of ways – writing, speaking, poster presentations, etc.
  - Recognize importance of content outside of classroom
  - Construction and use of models
  - Appropriate use of technology
  - Understand that science is a process (it’s dynamic)

### During our next meeting we will:

- Finalize the initial list of power standards (for process skills) by the end of the meeting – these will be our focus for much of our work this year.
- Discuss how to move forward with those power standards
  - Sharing best strategies (lessons/resources, etc.)
  - Development of probes or other assessment strategies that relate to those standards
  - Mechanisms for communication of student achievement within those standards
  - Other ideas!





# Curriculum Matters...

## Preparing SAU 21 students for future endeavors!



The Social Studies Vertical Team met after school on October 13<sup>th</sup> to discuss next steps for the SAU21 curriculum. Last year a draft curriculum was collected, organized, and reviewed by the team; which demonstrated a broad alignment throughout the SAU. In general:

- The primary grades focused from the classroom organization to the community and towns and then developed further into local history and New Hampshire to early American history and up to the Civil War in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- The Middle grades broaden students' knowledge of the world with history, geography, government and politics which include 20<sup>th</sup> century US studies with Immigration, Civil rights, and Wars to patriotism and protest.
- The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum deepens students' understanding through studies involving government, civics, human rights, and a deeper understanding of the economics related to geography and current world issues.
- In many cases the concepts and events above are often accomplished as interdisciplinary units integrating writing and other skills to spiral conceptual understanding.

The team plans to identify how the themes and strands are developed throughout the grade levels. This is a complex task which requires input at all grade levels. Additional essential skills such as: **acquiring information, organizing and communicating information, and real world applications of these skills** is also supported across the disciplines. As the team completes their review, they will bring forward suggestions for areas in need of greater focus. The team regularly shares best practices with each other. We hope this newsletter will assist the sharing of teaching strategies with all teachers and also foster greater integration of skills between disciplinary areas. Social Studies Content Strands include **Civics, Economics, Geography, NH and US History, World History and Contemporary Issues. Embedded Themes** include:

- Conflict and Cooperation
- Civic Ideals, Practices and Engagement
- People, Places and Environment
- Material Wants and Needs
- Cultural Development, Interaction and Change
- Global Transformation
- Science, Technology and Society
- Individualism, Equality and Authority
- Patterns of Social and Political Interaction
- Human Expression and Communication



The SAU 21 art teachers met as a vertical curriculum team after school on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011. SAU 90 teachers also attended. They all expressed how pleased they were to come together for this meeting after such a long hiatus. The last curriculum document was revised in 2000. They all agreed that meeting at least once a year for an exchange of ideas would be productive for curriculum planning. Excluding North Hampton's art teachers all the others are in a solitary role in their schools which creates feelings of isolation. The vertical team will advance our ability to communicate and collaborate in planning.

The teachers discussed their classes and found that students receive on an average 40 to 55 minutes a week except for the kindergarten students who receive 30 minutes from the art teacher. All of the art teachers are involved in integrating Art into the core classes to a lesser or greater degree depending on their schedules. North Hampton has two art teachers who spend considerable time in the regular classroom as they do in the art room.



The teachers will meet again on November 10<sup>th</sup> to begin the revision and refinement of their curriculum. They will update and design a more current SAU 21 Art Curriculum in accord with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. They plan to include how the Visual Arts assist students in achievement and success in other disciplines and in life. Including how the Visual Arts encourages cultural perspectives, respect for diversity, creative problem solving and time management. The ideas of measurement, scale, and proportion for quantitative literacy, written and oral communications, material characteristics and functions provide both support and intrigue for advanced learning in Math, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies.

# Curriculum Matters...



**To keep our students healthy  
and creative!**

## Physical Education



SAU 21 PE and HE teachers reviewed their programs as the initial focus of their first meeting. Discussion continued around the PEP grant proposal (which was not funded) and the reapplication process in the spring. There was discussion on collecting student baseline data at 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades to fortify a second try for the PEP grant. After consulting with other teachers not present, we will look for opportunities to collect this data throughout the year so broad reporting can be compiled for another PEP application. Teachers shared some of their strategies for promoting student fitness and wellness. They also discussed the after school meeting time frame as coaching, school-based meetings, and other life issues make it difficult. They will look at getting together again and plan for the allotted early release time on March 13 for the curriculum areas to meet. In the meantime teachers were encouraged to look at current practices for data opportunities and better narratives to explain how the proposed project will improve each school's ability to meet both PE and HE standards.

## World Languages



The World Language Team met on November 3rd and had communicated information electronically regarding high school placement tests and student competencies organized by grammar/verbs and vocabulary - for the level 1 classes. If a student can test out of level 1, they could be successful beginning at WHS in level 2. The collaborative work accomplished last spring has resulted in fewer transfers.

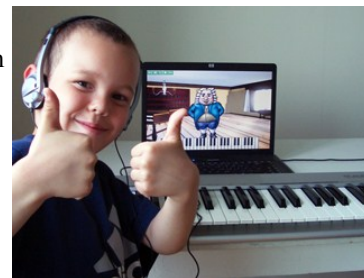
The team members also received the WHS Graduation Expectation Rubrics for Read, Write, Speak; which are used to evaluate students during each level of language courses. The teachers compiled a comparative chart of language education across the SAU which included general details of school Language programs (grades taught, hours per week, etc.) and set group goals for the year: electronic communications, sharing of expectations, and continued collaboration for students' success.

## Music



The music teachers have met in past years and discussed delivery of music instruction to meet the New Hampshire and national standards for music education. The greatest obstacle to teaching and assessing these standards is time. There is a great disparity in time allotted to music instruction throughout SAU 21 and SAU 90. We hope to get the music teachers together on November 10 in the afternoon to continue this discussion and to establish the core competencies for all music instruction. Once those competencies have been agreed upon, we will work on establishing grade level expectations and assessment options.

We are also continuing to work on the transition from our four sending schools to Winnacunnet High School by hosting our 9<sup>th</sup> annual SAU wide Band and Chorus concerts. Band students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade from Hampton Academy, North Hampton, Lincoln Akerman, and Seabrook Middle



School will prepare 2 or 3 pieces that will be performed together as a massed band on **Monday, March 19, 2012 at 6:00 PM**. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders will also learn a piece to perform with the Winnacunnet High School Band as a step-up experience.

The Chorus students from Hampton Academy, North Hampton, Lincoln Akerman, Seabrook Middle School, and Winnacunnet High School will each prepare a short program to perform with their school group on **Monday, March 26, 2012 at 7:00 PM**. Following the WHS Chorus performance, all of the students will combine for a massed chorus finale.

These concerts are designed to establish connections across the SAU 21 and SAU 90 schools between the students and the teachers. By preparing the same music, the students are having a common experience and are working to meet the same performance standards.

We are also initiating a plan to have our Winnacunnet Tri-M Music Honor Society students get involved with the students from the sending schools by working as mentors who will go to their schools as schedules permit and sit in with them in their band and chorus rehearsals or give them individual help. We look forward to continuing to work together to provide quality music instruction to all of the students in SAU 21.



# Curriculum Matters...

## Numeracy or quantitative literacy is valued across the disciplines.



The Mathematics Vertical Team discussed goals and outlined their meeting dates for the year. Addressing the new Common Core Standards is curriculum priority and some of the schools have used the Cross-Walk materials on the NH Dept of Education site (<http://www.education.nh.gov/spotlight/ccss/math/side-by-side.htm>). The team will begin by sharing the work done by WHS on the Common Core to assess current Algebra 1 classes. Jay will be sending out the documentation for each sending school to complete. We will also plan to review examples of student work across grade levels within a specific power standard (prioritized skills or knowledge that have endurance across grade levels and leverage in other curriculum areas). The team will determine that focus at their next meeting. We will also plan to pilot the Performance Pathways program (we thought 10 students from each sending school) to help communicate and follow specific students' level of understanding across grades and schools. The team will need training in this program with assistance from the SAU.

### Future Meeting Dates-

- December 15 at 3-4pm at North Hampton School (Room 234)
- January 12 at 3-4 pm at North Hampton School (Room 234)
- February 9 at 3-4 pm at North Hampton School (Room 234)
- March 13 at a location to be determined possibly WHS- all day or early release? 8-3pm
- April and May TBD- we talked about inviting representatives from lower grades to discuss their programs and reflect the work accomplished at that point.

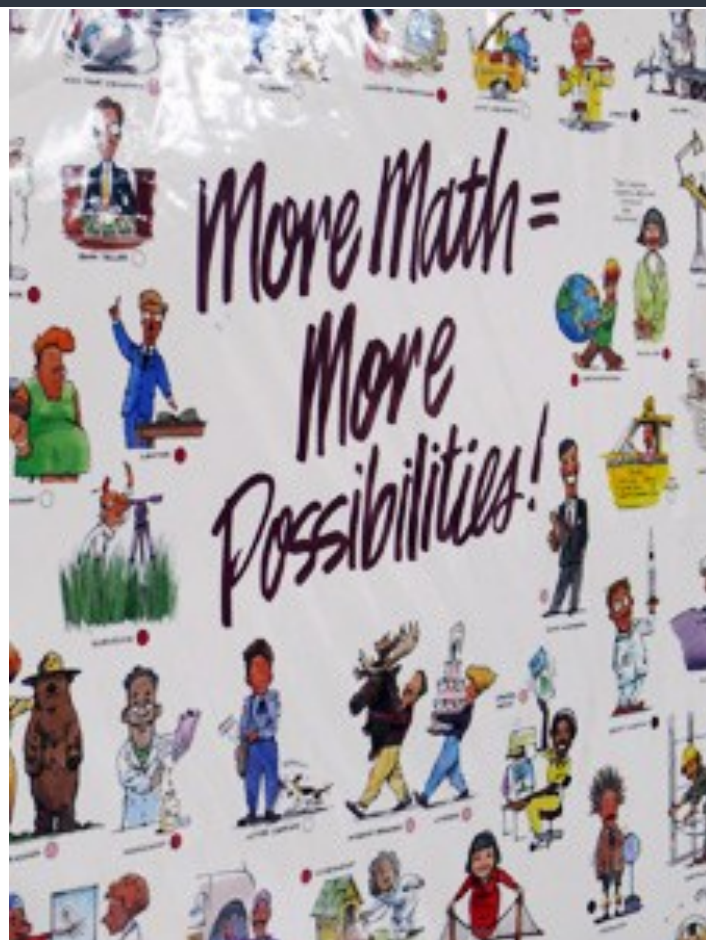
There will need to be an additional ½ day to complete the Performance Pathways training.

Midterm and Final exams will also be shared so Algebra 1 teachers can continue the alignment of their courses.

The team is planning a "shared folder" for all math teachers to have access to a set of documents (curriculum, exams). The SAU will try to assist with this access. The team may also set up Google Docs for ongoing communications between teachers.

Common Core Standards can also be accessed at:

<http://www.corestandards.org/>



**Curriculum Matters** is a communication tool for SAU 21 teachers, parents, and community members. It provides a mechanism for the Vertical Curriculum Teams to share their efforts to build a coordinated curriculum that enhances the learning opportunities and performance of all students. Please learn with us as we embark on these efforts and look for opportunities that align across disciplines. We encourage parents, guardians, and students to follow some of the web links to see how student work is being scored (SAT Essay Assessment Tool used by the Language Arts team) and to help students understand how to do their very best in learning and performing. Please direct any questions or suggestions to the SAU 21 office at 926-8992 x104. We appreciate your collaboration as we learn more and advance. The next publication is scheduled for February, 2012.

