

A Message from the Holmdel Township Board of Education

Holmdel Schools Mid-Year Progress Report

With second semester beginning, we review our progress to date in meeting our 2011-12 goals. Each goal – World Language program enhancement, Technology improvement and integration into instruction, Character Education, Differentiated Instruction, and Financial Enhancements – builds on prior years’ efforts, although this report focuses on current accomplishments.

World Language K-12

At Village School (VS), Spanish classes are now longer, allowing more to be accomplished in each session. Teachers conduct lessons in Spanish, with students responding in kind, as much as possible.

Fourth and fifth graders at Indian Hill (IH) now have Spanish weekly. As students become more proficient comprehending and speaking, reading and writing in Spanish are added to their instruction.

At Satz, the focus is differentiating world language instruction so children at all levels can benefit. Collaboration among the classroom teacher, in-class resource co-teacher, and the Child Study Team has produced In-Class Resource and Replacement classes. The World Language Lab helps tailor instruction to individual student needs. Using frequent assessments as a guide, the team will re-evaluate and tweak instruction as the year progresses. All together, there are eight in-class resource classes and two replacement classes available to 7th and 8th graders.

Holmdel High School (HHS) now has a full-time In-Class Resource teacher offering five sections of In-Class Resource Spanish, split between Spanish I and II.

Technology

New to IH is Study Island, a program that identifies and remediates student achievement gaps in math and language arts. The program is aligned with the core curriculum content on which our students are state-tested. Because it’s web-based, students and teachers receive immediate results, and the remedial work is customized to each student’s level. Study Island is being integrated into students’ weekly homework. Thanks to gifts from the PLG and HFEE, teachers now have access to 64 Nook e-readers and 33 iPEVO Document Cameras to enhance class instruction. Every classroom is now equipped with a Sound Field System which amplifies speech while damping out distracting noises. A new half-time technology coach helps teachers by creating and modeling lessons, offering professional development, and introducing resources teachers can use to enrich their lessons, e.g., virtual field trips, video clips, music, etc.

At Satz, all students now use Study Island to ensure they are meeting state curriculum benchmarks. A new Technology lab/class for both grades integrates the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) disciplines with computer literacy. We believe it will better prepare students for life and work in the 21st century. Thanks to the HFEE, several English and Social Studies classes are using student response “clickers,” through which students respond immediately and anonymously to teacher-

posed questions. Responses let the teacher see whether s/he has effectively taught a concept, or gauge class opinion. Clickers also empower shy students to more actively participate in class.

Through MCIA lease-purchases, HHS upgraded the TV studio's software and workstation capability, refurbished the Graphic Arts and Web Design computer labs, provided 15 laptops for teacher use, bought and installed 15 more LCD classroom projectors for teaching, and more than doubled the classrooms equipped with Sound Field Systems to 47. All wireless access points were upgraded, giving HHS a solid foundation for improving classroom access to technology, and bringing it closer to filtered Internet access for personal computing devices.

Character Education

All schools are implementing the new Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying law that took effect in September. While we have always taken bullying seriously, the new law requires a precisely defined response.

VS is using the longer school day for "Morning Meeting" which supports character education goals of kindness, compassion and empathy. The school has shared with families the language and positive reinforcements used at school so parents can reinforce the message at home. Teachers report this has increased the program's effectiveness.

At IH, Morning Meeting now occurs in all classrooms, grades 4-6. With Holmdel Alliance funding, IH is in the fifth year of the Heroes and Cool Kids program. HHS students mentor 6th graders to reinforce the importance of abstaining from drugs and alcohol. Character education is reinforced by Red Ribbon Week activities, a food drive for Project Paul food pantry, and an "I Pledge Tree" art project on which students show their commitment to developing good character traits.

Satz is continuing the 7th grade Peer-Proof program using grant funding from the Holmdel Alliance. New this year is GenerationTextOnline, which focuses on ending cyber-bullying with its devastating effect on students.

HHS provides the mentors for Heroes and Cool Kids, and is now seeing former 6th graders step up to become mentors for others. "Transitions" has evolved into a mentor program that matches groups of 9th graders with upperclassmen mentors. It helps freshmen settle into HHS, supports school involvement, and includes activities designed to build character and combat bullying.

Differentiation of Instruction

VS staff use data analysis and technology to help differentiate instruction to meet students' varying needs. Study Island and Running Records (reading) are both used. The Reading Specialist and Columbia University's Readers/Writers Workshop support these efforts.

IH is also using Readers/Writers Workshop. New this year is a Reading Specialist who supports teachers by modeling lessons and offering feedback. Teachers will also participate in Columbia's Teachers College Workshop training.

Satz uses Study Island to pinpoint and address individual gaps, and "clickers" to spot areas in need of further teaching or reinforcement.

HHS is focused on its “Collaborative Team Teaching Initiative”, which pairs general and special education staff in one classroom to meet divergent student learning needs. Monmouth University is providing workshops and class visits to enhance team teaching.

Curriculum revisions in Social Studies (K-6) and Language Arts (1-6) are in process to meet revised state core curriculum content standards for fall, 2012. New elementary science standards are being reviewed, as well as HS science course needs. Math course pre-requisites and placement levels are also under review.

Financial Enhancements

Our 2 ½ year old Energy Conservation program has cut energy use by more than 50%, saving \$3 million. Outsourcing the final 40% of student transportation services this year saved roughly \$400K. *In January, we approved a power purchase agreement, utilizing roof-mounted solar panels at each school, which will reduce our energy costs roughly \$2.3 million over the 15 year life of the contract. The solar panels will be installed this summer.

By bidding our paving work with the Township, we saved roughly \$250K. We joined the Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission to gain further joint purchasing opportunities.

We are exploring the possibility of accepting tuition-paying students for a complementary Kindergarten program that would provide a full day of activities for kindergarteners.

All schools are reducing costs by changing from paper communications to email, Parent Portal, web pages and the like. Our parent groups continue to support student activities and learning with their time and funds, as do the Holmdel Alliance, HFEE and other community groups and members. We are most grateful for their support.

We look forward to sharing our final progress report at our State of the District presentation this spring.

On behalf of my Board colleagues,

Barbara Garrity, Board President

There are two easy ways to stay informed of district/schools happenings. Please visit the district website at www.holmdelschools.org for event updates, school announcements, district progress reports, board meeting information, and much more. You can also subscribe to our E-Alert at <http://www.holmdel.k12.nj.us/home/joinlist.shtm> to receive email alerts on your choice of topics, such as school security alerts, committee notes, parent support group minutes, the district calendar, career opportunities, and school lunch menus.

*change made 1/31/12 for the Patch edition.