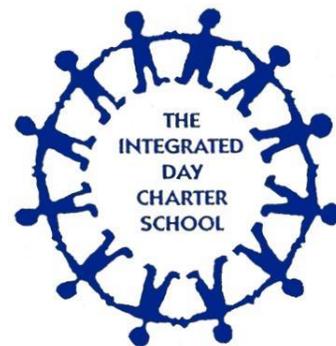


IDCS CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1 / NUMBER 2



CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to ensure high-quality shared experiences, materials, and assessments across our school-wide community while preserving the IDCS philosophy and tenets. We will develop timelines for the creation and implementation of curriculum, analyze progress, and disseminate relevant information to stakeholders.

A PRODUCTIVE AUTUMN . . .

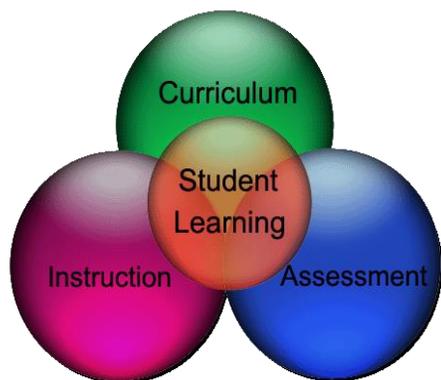
It's hard to believe that we're already into December – the beginning of the year sure has flown by! In addition to their weekly planning time, grade level teams have had the opportunity to meet with the Curriculum Coordinator at least once each month for **in-depth curriculum documentation and planning**. We have had additional time to meet in **vertical teams** to discuss curricular alignment and have had professional development opportunities to discuss some of the changes that have arrived with the Common Core Standards.

All faculty took part in a half-day workshop on the **ELA shifts** with the Common Core and how it may look at IDCS. Teachers had the opportunity to work with their grade level team to reflect on lessons they had previously done and revise them to more closely align with the new shifts and expectations. The new lessons teachers shared were impressive! Some of the ideas that were discussed were the use of textual evidence, using sentence starters especially with younger children, revising premade materials to better suit student needs, asking deeper questions to encourage depth of thought, maintaining text complexity, helping students to code text as they read, and providing various structured opportunities for rich peer discussions. Teachers also had the opportunity to begin exploring the Smarter Balanced Digital Library.

Let's All Speak the Same Language!

Q: What is the difference between the standards and the curriculum?

A: The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of high quality academic expectations in English-language arts (ELA) and mathematics that define the knowledge and skills all students should master by the end of each grade level in order to be on track for success in college and career. In contrast, the term curriculum refers to the academic content, units, and lessons taught in a school or program. A curriculum generally includes learning standards, units or lessons that support the standards, assignments and projects given to the students, listings of the books, materials, videos, and presentations

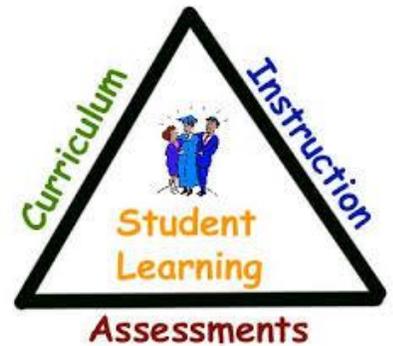


used in the units; as well as the assessments used to evaluate student learning. At IDCS, our curriculum committee has determined that **we want to develop a multiage, integrated curriculum with meaningful assessments. Our curriculum should highlight IDCS tenets, include a task analysis of skills (especially math to fill in any gaps), include vocabulary to be used vertically across grade levels, and ensure supporting resources are available and inventoried.** The Curriculum Development Committee meetings are open to all. If you'd like to join us our next meeting is scheduled for [December 10 at 3:30](#) in the conference room on the main floor.

Q: What supports the curriculum?

A: Instructional resources, methods, and strategies all support the curriculum.

Instructional resources are the materials, staff, and equipment that can be drawn on to help instruction be delivered more easily and/or effectively. These resources are not meant to replace an effective curriculum. IDCS has a wealth of instructional resources to draw upon including a variety of textbooks and literature, Responsive Classroom materials, Lucy Calkins Units of Study, engageNY materials, Moby Max, Sitton Spelling, Being a Writer, Making Meaning, Calendar Math, Junior Great Books, Handwriting without Tears, manipulatives, games/puzzles, science kits, maps/globes, computers and other technology, and a variety of support personnel!



Methods and strategies refer to the techniques that teachers bring to the instructional plan. There are many **methods and strategies that you'll find throughout IDCS classrooms** including choice, activity workshop, charts and checklists, planning sheets, "Help" boards, peer assistance, workshop model, integrated content, arts integration, critical pedagogy, mini-lessons, guided differentiated groups, inquiry/research, project-based assignments, science labs, centers, technology, performance tasks, collaborative learning, independent learning, Service Learning, discussion, hands-on manipulatives, and class meetings.

Q: What's the difference among formative, interim, benchmark and annual assessments?

A: **Formative assessment** is a range of formal and informal assessment procedures that are employed by teachers throughout the learning process – they happen minute by minute in the classroom. Formative assessments may include observation, anecdotal notes, classroom assignments, quizzes, discussion, journal writing, exit tickets, gallery walks, responses, post-its, quick writes, lightning shares, reflection journals, and presentations. In contrast, **interim assessments** generally take place after an instructional unit to determine whether a student is on track in his/her learning. This may include unit tests, performance tasks, and project-based rubrics. Formative and interim assessments are often most useful to teachers in providing and differentiating instruction in the classroom.

Benchmark assessments are administered periodically throughout the school year at specified times during a curricular sequence to evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to an explicit set of longer-term learning goals. Benchmark assessments can inform policy, instructional planning and data teams, and decision-making at the classroom, school, and/or district level. At IDCS, we use instruments such as the DRA and DRP, Developmental Spelling Assessment, On-Demand Writing Tasks, and Moby Math Placement Tests. The IDCS Curriculum and Instruction Team is also working on revising our benchmark assessment plan this year to better reflect the new Common Core State Standards. In contrast to benchmark assessments, **annual assessments** are given by the State of Connecticut for accountability purposes to monitor school progress and student achievement. This is the Smarter Balanced assessment which is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. It is designed to be computer adaptive and hopes to provide meaningful feedback and actionable data that teachers and educators will be able use. More information will be coming regarding the status of this year's testing!

GRADE LEVEL PROGRESS

Grades K/1 has begun to **pilot the newly created IDCS math task analysis**. They have also piloted their first On-Demand writing task for a personal narrative and have used the newly created IDCS writing rubric. Grades Pre-K through K/1 have also documented numerous lessons on setting up a classroom through the first six weeks as well as creating a reading and writer's workshop. They are now planning units on neighborhood and community in the social studies and the sun, moon, and stars in science.



Grades 2/3 have documented numerous lessons, supporting units on author Patricia Polacco and family heritage. They are now **piloting Math Snapshot Assessments** with the IDCS math task analysis. They are in the process of creating their On-Demand writing tasks.

Grades 4/5 have developed a nearly complete unit surrounding the novel *The Tale of Despereaux*. They have documented numerous lessons and supporting materials for this unit. **They have also piloted their first On-Demand writing task and have used the newly created IDCS writing rubric.** Grades 4/5 will also be piloting the Math Snapshot Assessments.

Grade 6 has been researching and **developing a critical unit on Slavery: Past and Present**, integrating many social studies and ELA standards which they will soon begin implementing and documenting. Grade 6 is also piloting the Math Snapshot Assessments and the IDCS math task analysis.

Grades 7/8 have continued **to refine the shifts in their math instructional approach** this year. The i-math classes have focused attention on teaching conceptually and sequentially aligned common core standards through an integrated, problem-based approach. The i-math classes are also piloting the Math Snapshot Assessments. The progress math classes have continued to work on designing problem-based differentiated lessons. Each of these progress classes now includes a support teacher or paraprofessional to allow for **increased differentiation!** Many lessons have been documented to support their units on rational numbers and ratios and proportions. Grades 7/8 ELA has designed a **nearly complete unit** around the novel *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, which has been supported with fabulous guest speakers. These students have also begun to take part in Socratic Circles.

The IDCS Integrated Arts teachers, together with the grade level teams, have been integrating the arts across the grade levels. **Numerous IDCS productions are in-progress**, including the grades 5-8 production of *Alice in Wonderland*. The new addition of the "Healthy Living" classes has been extremely well-received from teachers and students alike! The Integrated Arts team has also continued to meet to **revise the current IDCS specials report card** to more closely align with IDCS expectations.

Some new instruments from the Curriculum Office include:

- IDCS Math Task Analysis (K-8)
- IDCS Math Problem Solving Rubric (K-8)
- IDCS Writing Rubrics – narrative, informational, argumentative (Pre-K – 8)

Congratulations on all of your hard work thus far!

REMINDER . . .

KEEP DOCUMENTING YOUR LESSONS!

STUDENT WORK SAMPLES AND PHOTOS ADD INTEREST TO OUR CURRICULAR DOCUMENTS!

I invite all of you to contribute summaries of ongoing activities and accomplishments at your grade level and/or area of expertise to help us stay connected! We want this newsletter to reflect all YOUR hard work!

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS,

PLEASE CONTACT ANY MEMBER OF

THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION LEADERSHIP TEAM

Anna James, June Morrone, Sheri Cooke,
Melissa Dearborn, and Amanda Hicks

Integrated Day Charter School

Sheri LaRowe Cooke, Ed.D.; Curriculum Coordinator

68 Thermos Avenue; Norwich, CT 06360

860.892.1900 ext. 846

SheriC@idcs.org

www.idcs.org