

Hawthorn District 73

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The Curriculum Quarterly

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Zook's Nook

The first trimester of the 2007-08 school year was filled with many activities in the areas of student achievement and staff development.

At the building level, teachers continued to examine data in Whole Faculty Study Groups or Professional Learning Communities. Action plans were drafted and adjustments continue to be made to individual students' instruction and learning plans to improve overall achievement.

Ongoing training continues in the following core areas: Understanding by Design (UbD), Bernstein Artful Learning, Differentiation and 6-Traits Writing. Training to support the Report Card Implementation Plan and writing, with the use of the new MyAccess!, a web-based writing program continue to be priorities.

With so many exciting things happening in and around the district, we'd like to take a moment to pause, reflect, and gather parents' thoughts and feedback on how we are doing.

Hopefully, we have done a good job of communicating with you and the community at-large about our many programs. Hopefully, you understand and appreciate the efforts we have made over the past several years to provide the best in opportunities for the students at Hawthorn. With on-going assessment and expecting continuous improvement, we will keep moving toward preparing our students for the 21st Century. We can't do that without making some changes in our practices. We can't have 21st Century Schools by teaching 20th Century skills and using 20th Century instructional practices. (More later...)

This spring we will invite you to weigh in and share your thoughts and level of satisfaction with the district - its programs, curriculum, instructional and assessment practices - by participating in an online **Parent Satisfaction Survey**. Look for more information in April 2008.

Summer School Schedule Set

The 2008 Hawthorn Enrichment Institute (HEI) will include two, three-week sessions. Robin O'Connor will return as this year's HEI principal. She has planned and coordinated with the Vernon Hills Park District to provide the option of a full-day program and a variety of special Friday events.

HEI classes will meet Mondays-Thursdays from 8:30-11:30 a.m. at Middle School South. Session I will run from June 11-July 2, 2008. Session II is scheduled for July 7-24. Parents can opt to enroll children in one or both sessions.

Complete information about the program will be provided on February 1. A registration round up for the summer enrichment program will take place on select evenings and weekends. This structure will allow you to leave registration with your child's summer schedule in hand!

Report Card Update

The Professional Report Card Grade Team continues its work of developing new report cards, which are aligned with our standards.

The first trimester saw the rollout of the new report cards at grades K, 3 and 6. While the elementary implementation went smoothly, there was some controversy and concern over the work habits, including homework, being separated from the student's academic achievement grade.

Based on this feedback, another adjustment was made to the report card implementation plan. The adjustment allows middle school teachers to return to their previous grading practices. Teachers will clarify with students their grading practices and homework expectations. These will be communicated to parents as well no later than January 23, which is when the midterms for the second trimester go home. New *Homework by Design* brochures will be sent home at that time, reflecting this change.

Possibilities for 21st Century Education

Below is a summary/highlights from an article that faculty and staff received and that was discussed during a monthly "ABC - Article, Book Chat" to help us with our visioning and planning for preparing our students with a 21st Century Education. To read the article in its entirety, go to www.21stcenturyschools.com/What_is_21st_Century_Education.

What is 21st Century Education?

It is bold. It is flexible, creative, challenging, and complex. It addresses a rapidly changing world filled with fantastic new problems, as well as exciting new possibilities.

What is 21st Century Curriculum?

It is interdisciplinary, project-based, and research-driven. It is connected to the community. The curriculum incorporates higher order thinking skills, multiple intelligences, technology and multimedia, the multiple literacies of the 21st century, and authentic assessments.

The curriculum is not textbook-driven or fragmented, but is thematic, project-based, and integrated. Skills and content are not taught as an end in themselves, but students learn them through their research and application in their projects. Textbooks, if students have them, are just one of many resources.

Knowledge is not memorization of facts and figures, but is constructed through research and application. Assessment moves from regurgitation of memorized facts and disconnected processes to demonstration of understanding through application in a variety of contexts. Media literacy skills are honed as students address real-world issues. Students find their voice as they create projects using multimedia and deliver these products to real-world audiences.

As a result, standardized test scores are higher. This is because students have acquired the skills and content in a meaningful, connected way, and the understanding is there. They actually KNOW the content on a much higher level of understanding.

The 21st Century Classroom

In the article this classroom is compared to the 20th Century Classroom. Let me focus here on what Hawthorn would like to move toward, in other words, 21st Century Classrooms. We are planning to see more classrooms that are...

- Outcome-based
- Focus on what students KNOW, CAN DO, and ARE LIKE after all details are forgotten
- Learning is designed on higher order thinking skills - synthesis, analysis, and evaluation
- Research-driven
- Active learning
- Learners work collaboratively with classmates and others around the world
- Student-centered; teacher is a facilitator or coach
- Great deal of student freedom
- No "discipline problems" - students are motivated and have a mutually respectful relationship with the teacher
- Integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum
- Grades are based on what was learned
- High expectations/Standards
- Self, peer and other assessments
- Curriculum is connected and instruction addresses student diversity
- Multiple literacies of the 21st century

While many districts have responded and reacted to the No Child Left Behind legislation and are delivering a curriculum that is nothing more than standardized and test-prep, Hawthorn has not. We are focused on the bigger picture and know that focusing on the trailing indicator - ISAT results - could actually make test scores and student achievement worse.

The curriculum must be relevant to the student, and must be connected to the real world. A rear view mirror perspective of 20th century skills is not the answer. Let's continue to look to the future... for our kids' sake!

Contact Information

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