

# Hawthorn District 73

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## *The Curriculum Quarterly*

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### Zook's Nook

I indicated in the second issue of this year's *Curriculum Quarterly* that we would 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.

Rather than rush this, we are planning to contract with a third-party vendor to conduct a scientifically, research-based survey and audit to gather information on a number of topics. The study will include information about imbalances in demographics, class size, reactions to schools of choice, and other areas that impact our district's quality of continuous improvement.

We expect to begin planning for this study in late spring/early summer and hope to have the company make a report before winter break 2008.

### Report Card Update

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

This year, new report cards were implemented at grades K, 3 and 6. Plans now include training for teachers in grades 1, 4, and 7 for the roll out of the new report cards at those grades next year.

Teachers at the middle school level will continue to work with grading practices that may include counting homework as part of a student's letter grade each trimester. Teachers will communicate with students and parents their grading practices and homework expectations.

Teachers should be contacted with any questions regarding their homework and/or grading practices. General guidelines about homework can be found in the district's *Homework by Design* brochure. A copy is on our website.

### Two Summer Institutes Set

Teachers will have an opportunity to participate in two exciting staff development opportunities this summer.

The first, *Designing a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom*, takes place on June 18-19, 2008. This workshop addresses...

**Motivation** - Students today live, learn and play in a media-saturated society, in a world of "infotainment" and spectacle. For many students the curriculum is not relevant, and they become disengaged from learning.

**Media Literacies** - Rapid developments in technology have brought many exciting changes to life in the new millennium, presenting new challenges for schools. Multiple new literacies are required to navigate the "forest of signs and symbols" of our globalized media culture. (Douglas Kellner, UCLA)

**Diversity** - Globalization and immigration have created a society of increased diversity. Old and new social issues demand an informed, concerned and empowered citizenry.

**Standardized Testing Mania** - has made meaningful curriculum an endangered species. Teachers will find out why it's not an "either-or" situation - they can still teach the way they know they should and kids will excel on their standardized tests!

**Technologies and Multimedia** - teachers will utilize these 21st century tools as the vehicles to implement their curriculum! This is not a workshop that centers on educational technologies, but centers on curriculum design, which incorporates, or utilizes as a vehicle, these technologies in order to achieve curriculum and instruction aligned to the realities of the 21st century.

Space for this training is limited. To date, we have about 50 teachers signed up for the training.

### **Two Summer Institutes Set (cont.)**

The second training session, *The Writing Institute* is scheduled for July 15-17, 2008.

This 3-day institute, open to teachers in grades 2-12, will give teachers the tools to become a stronger, more confident teacher of writing and the strategies to improve student writing across the curriculum.

We continue to emphasize the importance of writing and struggle with helping students get really excited by the prospect of writing. This program, unlike any other, provides focused, in-depth instruction, a proven curriculum, and a dynamic team of skilled literacy leaders, who create a uniquely hands-on and highly collaborative learning experience for teachers.

Our students will benefit greatly as their teachers ...

- Gain teacher-friendly, timesaving strategies for improving student writing across the curriculum
- Understand how to connect writing lessons with the real world to reinforce learning
- Reflect upon and understand the five key writing behaviors that every student needs for success
- Acquire the perspective and tools to increase student engagement and interaction
- Receive solutions for addressing specific classroom challenges
- Deepen understanding of the writing process by viewing it from students' perspective
- Collaborate and confer with a community of like-minded colleagues
- Create 4-5 personal writing models for quick implementation in their classroom
- Become an effective writing teacher

We are very excited to bring this learning opportunity to our teachers. It is an important next step in continuous improvement of our writing curriculum and in helping students do what good writers do. This includes promoting lively, descriptive language use, fostering writing that is expressive and fluent, improving proofreading skills and proper convention use, as well as opening the door to creativity.

### **Many Assessments**

Students in grades 3-8 completed the Illinois State Assessment Tests (ISATs) in reading and math prior to spring break. Students in grades 4 and 7 were also tested in science, while students in grade 5 and 8 completed a writing test. Preliminary results of these tests will be sent to districts sometime late summer or early fall. Individual student reports will not be available until mid-November/early December.

The week of April 7, all students in grades K-8 will be completing spring writing prompts. The writing prompts are sent to ECRA Group for independent scoring. Student proficiency in writing is based on an Integration score of 4.0 or better on a 6-point scale. We plan to send home individual student writing results with the last report card in June.

Spring MAP testing takes place for all students in grades 1-7 on May 5-16, 2008. First graders will only be taking a short version of the reading and math tests to get a baseline achievement score and to practice taking the longer version of the test in the fall as second graders. Students in grades 2-7 will be receiving individual student reports that provide this season's scores, as well as the results from each test season that a student has participated in.

These multiple measures of student achievement not only help teachers to adjust instruction and better meet the needs of students in a timely manner throughout the year, they also assist us with determining the percentage of students who demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, and math at the end of each school year. Recent data suggest the levels of proficiency in reading, math and science range from 91-94%. We continue to focus on writing, as that area has garnered less than desirable results.

Questions about any of the tests should be directed to the classroom teacher or building principal.

### **Contact Information**

Questions or comments related to Student Achievement and Staff Development should be directed to Sue Zook, Ed.D. Her email address is [zooks@hawthorn73.org](mailto:zooks@hawthorn73.org) and direct line at the district office is 847-990-4244.