

Kaleidoscope



FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

EXPANDS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Common Core Implementation

2

Expanded Computer Science Offerings

3

Educators Improve Curricula

3

Track and Field Update

4



For the first year, KLSD is offering its kindergartners a full day in school, an initiative the district has embraced enthusiastically and thoughtfully.

“We wanted to emphasize a balanced full-day program, including purposeful play and centers to support literacy and math,” said Katonah Elementary School Principal Cristy Harris. “We have maintained the developmental approach of working with students.”

Starting last spring, kindergartners-to-be were invited to visit their new buildings. As the young students entered their new schools on the first day in September, teachers introduced them to older “buddies” and led building tours, supporting a smooth transition.

“It’s such a wonderful thing – the gift of time,” said Meadow Pond Principal Carolann Castellano. “One teacher said she was very excited that the class was able to stop working on something before lunch and come back to it later in the day, not the next day.”

For some time, elementary

administrators and teachers have collaborated on developing a common kindergarten curriculum, tackling subjects from literacy to science, including common assessments for each module.

Citing an example of this curricular work, Increase Miller Principal Kerry Ford said, “Cristy [Harris] and I worked with kindergarten teachers over the summer on their literacy work for kindergarten. They basically revised their reading and writing units of study using Common Core Learning Standards as resources and a guide, as well as the Lucy Calkins Reading and Writing Project.” Math centers have also been incorporated into the kindergarten school day.

A full day in school means more learning in kindergarten classrooms, and teachers and parents alike are taking notice.

“A parent told her son’s teacher she was ‘blown away’ by his eagerness to read and write,” Ford said. “She said he goes home every day and starts writing right away.”

Spotlight *on Curriculum*



Common Core Implementation Takes Next Steps

From kindergarten through 12th grade, administrators and teachers have been busy incorporating New York State's Common Core Learning Standards into district curricula. In some areas, the integration has been a multi-year initiative.

"Both the mathematics and ELA departments have been doing ongoing work," said Assistant Principal Vincent Bell. "We have been revamping these programs for a couple of years to align with Common Core expectations. Last year, we implemented Common Core algebra along the New York State required timeline. This year, for the first time, we are implementing Common Core in geometry."

Other areas, such as middle school social studies, are just now seeing new

output from the state.

"The social studies department is unpacking the new framework," said middle school Principal Richard Leprine, referencing a recent Staff Development Day initiative. "Grades six through eight analyzed the new framework and focused on how it will change and what we will teach."

Meadow Pond Principal Carolann Castellano said of the elementary level, "In most cases, a minimum of three people in each grade level across the district are developing mid-year and end-of-year common assessments in math. These are Common Core connected and use the EngageNY math modules."

Added Increase Miller Elementary

...continued on page 4

At MS, HS Expanded Computer Science Offerings

More than two decades ago, John Jay High School offered a computer science elective. This year, the school is again offering AP Computer Science to students.

"There has been a reinvigoration and interest in programming because of the design of apps," said Assistant Principal Vincent Bell.

The district has quickly responded to this boom in enthusiasm by integrating computer work into the school day in as early as sixth grade with the introduction of JavaScript.

"It's a basic programming language that students are being exposed to, and it's very exciting," said middle school Principal Richard Leprine. "We are building computer

programming units that are sequential."

Programming work continues as part of the unified arts program in seventh and eighth grade before students move up to the high school.

"We have changed the technology and computer education program over the last several years," said Bell. "We have an introduction to coding."

Offering these lessons, in addition to the new AP Computer Science elective, helps prepare students for college and beyond as potential future programmers.

"Computer programming represents a career path that is



growing in jobs with companies like Google and application design firms," said Bell. "We even have a computer science club that is working on designing a game through coding. It's pretty interesting stuff."



"This is really important because it lends consistency to the program and gives us a good gauge of our learning."

It was a busy few months off for KLSD educators and administrators.

At John Jay Middle School, the unified arts program was examined and reworked. "In eighth grade, we are now going to have an independent research project that students will complete primarily in their home and careers class," revealed Principal Richard Leprine. "It's a career-driven project teachers worked on over the summer."

Teachers also worked on developing common assessments in mathematics districtwide. "There was a great deal of teacher involvement in this work over the summer," said Meadow Pond Elementary School Principal Carolann Castellano. Added Leprine,

"This is really important because it lends consistency to the program and gives us a good gauge of our learning. We also use the data to inform future instruction."

High school teachers also had the opportunity to prepare for new electives being offered based on student interest, including Ceramics, Sports and American Society, Financial Algebra, Macroscopic Anatomy and Physiology, Astronomy and AP Computer Science.

"As kids get older, their interests develop," said Bell. "We say the high school students vote with their feet by moving toward the electives that interest them. We always look to identify those interests and offer electives in those areas."

INDICATORS OF Success

- KLSD's 3-8 students scored significantly higher on NYS and ELA math assessments in 2013-14 than the average Westchester County student.
- Six John Jay HS seniors were named 2014 National Merit Semifinalists.
- John Jay HS students received average scores of 95% on the 2013 English Regents exam, compared to the 77% state average.
- John Jay HS students' science, math and U.S. Government Regents scores on average were at least 20% higher than the New York State average.
- In 2013, John Jay HS was named the 38th best school in New York by U.S. News and World Report.
- The Town of Bedford Conservation Board awarded the Katonah-Lewisboro School District and Katonah Elementary School its 2014 Green Award.
- Annual Harvest Days and Soup Days at KLSD elementary schools give students a chance to participate in harvesting and preparing food from the school gardens.
- Reach Out John Jay members participate year-round in community service initiatives.



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Common Core Implementation Takes Next Steps

...continued from page 2

School Principal Kerry Ford, “For the last two years – and we are going into our third year – Carolann and I have led a progress report committee with teachers from around the district, K-5, to ensure all the indicators are aligned with the new Common Core Learning Standards and all teachers are focusing on the standards and skills outlined by the state.”

A large part of the integration of Common Core Learning Standards districtwide has involved expanding English language arts skills.

“In second-grade writing, the second unit of study is a lab report,” explained Katonah Elementary School Principal Cristy Harris. “Students are going to write a lab report based on their science unit of study. This integrates a science topic with a writing unit of study.”

And while the state has not yet released its new science standards, the high school curriculum is already embracing “reading in the informational text,” according to Bell. “Science teachers have been working for a while on reading scientific texts and developing student skill in that area,” he said.

Track and Field UPDATE

The district anticipates the John Jay High School turf field replacement and renovation and replacement of the adjacent track will break ground this spring.

“The State Education Department in Albany has seen all the plans and has communicated with the district that it all looks like it’s in good order,” said the district’s director of facilities, Paul Christensen. “The New York City Department of Environmental Protection is also reviewing the storm water abatement plans.”

The track and field project, which includes the renovation of the connected storm drainage system, will cost no more than \$1.62 million. Voters approved the proposition in May.

“We are just waiting for approval, but [doing so] happily, because we believe that all questions have been answered and all concerns have been addressed,” said Christensen.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Michael Jumper said he anticipates the necessary approvals will come in later this fall and the project can be put out to bid over the winter, with groundbreaking in late spring. Currently, the district believes work should wrap up over the summer of 2015.