

The STANDARD

ISSUE 2

FALL 2014

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEER PARK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

EVOLVING CURRICULUM: *Past, Present and Future*

Change has been the watchword for the district's curriculum, both over the last few years and looking into the educational future.

The integration of Common Core Learning Standards has necessitated hard work on the part of administrators and teachers to better understand the scope of children's learning and build consistency between grade levels, aided by increased professional development. Instruction is becoming more inquiry-based, and our students are using more and better technology to communicate and share ideas.

Prior to the Common Core, on the elementary level, the district implemented the Foundations spelling program, initially in grades K-2 and then extended to grade 3, to provide a strong research-based approach to spelling and phonics. A balanced literacy approach was developed that supported students to develop as readers and writers, and grade 3-5 reading teachers were trained in Wilson Reading Interventions to increase expertise and develop different levels of interventions specific to student needs. In reading, the curriculum supports each child as an individual reader, offering the right books at the right time, at an increasing complexity level as the student's abilities grow.

Elementary students are creating narrative stories, using improved writing strategies and different writing styles,

supporting the Common Core. A greater emphasis has been placed on nonfiction and informational writing, as well as research reports in the higher elementary grades. Second-graders are learning how to add tension and emotion to their written efforts, while fourth-graders are improving their personal stories by trying out different leads, starting with dialogue or setting. Even in pre-K, the youngest students are making their own books. "They are getting the idea, very early on, that they are writers and have ideas to convey," said Danielle Sheridan, district administrator for elementary curriculum and instruction.

As a result of the Common Core, the district has increased elementary focus on balancing teacher-guided, whole-group reading activities and students reading independently or with partners. The writing process has moved to center stage, from the idea phase through to planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing in three genres – narrative, informational and persuasive writing. "Students are spending a lot of time reading, gathering ideas about what they've read, and having conversations with peers and teachers to grow and develop their thoughts and ideas," explained Sheridan.

On the math front, Deer Park implemented math instructional strategies to address three key areas: fluency (fast facts), problem-solving (word problems) and concept



development (learning grade-level concepts). September's Math Curriculum Nights at JFK illuminated the current math core curriculum for grades 3-5, explaining new instructional methods and showcasing the use of models and pictorial representations to think through solving problems.

"Using a systematic approach has provided students with a concrete sequence for problem-solving," said Sheridan. "They are reading word problems more carefully and identifying the most effective way to solve them. Multiple methods are used to help students understand the reasoning behind math functions. As a result of students' improvement in math facts and deeper understanding of how to solve problems, they are mastering new concepts faster and with greater accuracy than in the past."

Exciting developments in social studies include the current move toward a more inquiry-based approach. Teachers and students now study a time period, country or historical event through the lens of inquiry, reading informational literature; watching videos; and studying photos, art, maps and statistics to develop a deeper understanding of themes across

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“Our students will learn to view themselves as social scientists and researchers able to build theories and make discoveries.”

- Danielle Sheridan

AP Scholars *Recognized*

The College Board recognized 77 Deer Park High School students as AP Scholars for 2014, an increase of nine since last year. AP courses are graded on a scale of 1 to 5, with a score of 3 or higher qualifying high school students for college course credit. Through its Advanced Placement Program, the College Board presents several levels of AP Scholar Awards honoring top students who demonstrate outstanding college-level achievement via AP courses and exams.

Deer Park boasted a total of six National AP Scholars, a category reserved for students who received an average score of at least 4 on all AP exams taken and scores of 4 or higher on eight or more of those exams. The school can also take pride in its 14 AP Scholars with Distinction, a title awarded to students who received an average score of at least 3.5 on their AP exams and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of those exams; seven AP Scholars with Honor, who received an average score of at least 3.25 on all of their AP exams and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of those exams; and 56 AP Scholars, who received scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP exams.

history. In both science and social studies, Deer Park plans to expand these research-based approaches, with students studying primary source artifacts to draw conclusions. “Our students will learn to view themselves as social scientists and researchers able to build theories and make discoveries,” said Sheridan.

The use of technology to conduct research and gather information has become standard, with our elementary students beginning to use different digital learning tools including Reading A to Z, Learnzillion and IXL, as well as gathering and presenting information electronically with PowerPoint, Google Docs and green screen technology. Digital literacy will continue to advance, with increased use of digital resources to gather and present information more efficiently and effectively. Video will come to the fore, with students conducting video interviews with family or other adults who are experts in a field or who have enriching travel or cultural experiences to share. An even greater share of the student population will manipulate technology to communicate and share ideas, using green screens for presentations and reports, Skyping in the classrooms, and connecting through digital media.

At the high school, current priorities include using more critical thinking skills across all subject areas and infusing instructional technology with Google Classroom. To ensure that research is consistent between the ELA and social studies departments, curriculum associates Christina Poppe and Heather Stewart and a team of teachers worked together during the summer to prepare a collaborative research project for their students. Teachers have become fluent on Google Docs, and use this technology to facilitate research and help students create projects they can be proud of.

The ELA curriculum for grades 6-11 has been completely aligned to the Common Core, aided by the use of New York State ELA modules and the Odell Education Units, with grade 12 on the horizon. In secondary math, algebra and

now geometry have been aligned, and an extra Algebra II class was created as a bridge between geometry and Algebra II and trigonometry to enable more students to earn an advanced Regents diploma. Similar to the JFK Math Curriculum Night parent presentations at the beginning of the school year, Frost will host ELA and Math Curriculum Nights by grade level, to show parents what the Common Core looks like at the middle school level. The secondary science curriculum has not yet been overhauled by the state, but Deer Park has nonetheless infused some of the ELA Core Standards, requiring students to think more critically and cite evidence.

Recognizing it as a top priority at the high school, college and career readiness will also expand. Right now, a Suffolk County Community College program enables juniors and seniors to attend courses at the college, taking 3-6 credits per semester, transferable to SUNY schools, in subjects like English and math. “We are looking to expand this program and grow it into something even more substantial,” said Kimberly Skillen, district administrator for secondary curriculum and instruction. The goal is a Pathways program in which students from eighth grade onward can explore different career paths in business, technology, and family and consumer science.

A recent state requirement directs districts to identify students with disabilities who may not be on the path to obtain a Regents diploma, so they can provide the means to obtain a Career Development and Occupational Studies Commencement Credential. According to NYS, the CDOS credential provides a more meaningful substitute than the prior IEP diploma. The district’s current career planning classes will expand to include senior year internships at Wilson Tech, ensuring students graduate with useful career skills, and the process of identifying such students and offering a work-based learning program will begin as early as freshman year.

Top 10 Seniors Named for Class of 2015



The top 10 ranked seniors were recognized at an annual breakfast ceremony in the school's library, and valedictorian Sabrina Grunseich and salutatorian Aaron Zhang were announced.

The senior top 10 list – students with the highest grade point averages in this year's graduating class – was rounded out (in order) by Kyle Dillon, Emily Fowler, William Keller, Mauricio Montes, Maria Skoljarev, Alban Astafa, Shahan Mian and Jonathan Wagner.

“What is even more impressive than these students' academic resumes are their accomplishments outside the classroom,” said Principal James Cummings. “They are in the top 10 because of their GPAs, but are just as impressive as athletes, artists, musicians and community members. They make Deer Park High School a better place, and the Deer Park community a better place.”

Dedicated Chorus Singers Recognized

Four superb singers from the high school – Katherine Keller, Mauricio Montes, Jessica Orelus and Alec Winters – were recently selected for the 2014 All-County Mixed Chorus. The foursome performed at the NYSCAME/SCMEA All-County Concert on Nov. 21 at Half Hollow Hills High School East. This honor was the result of their strong sense of dedication to their musical studies as well as their high-scoring performances at last spring's NYSSMA solo festival.

Her superior vocal talent and dedication to music, Orelus was also chosen to perform in this year's All-State Mixed Chorus at the NYSSMA Winter Conference in Rochester in December.



Learning Fire Safety

Students at John Quincy Adams and May Moore learned about fire safety during recent visits from the Deer Park Fire Department, designed in conjunction with national Fire Prevention Month.

Assistant Chief Phil Scarfi, who has been conducting Deer Park's fire safety workshops for decades, emphasized the “three Ps” – preventing a fire, planning in case of fire and practicing the plan – and discussed ways that the students could avoid fires happening in the home, and important topics such as candle safety and the proper use of smoke alarms.

Following Scarfi's indoor presentations, students at

both schools went outside to see one of the department's fire trucks in action, shooting water from the fire hose into the sky. They were also able to meet local firefighters and take an up-close look at the engine.



Career Day Enlightens Freshmen

Seeking guidance on future career ideas, 360 high school freshmen participated in the school's annual Career Day. After a keynote speech from Broadridge Financial Solutions VP Stacy DeNoyior, the students moved to the school's cafeteria and gym for workshop sessions with visiting business professionals.

The 46 presenters hailed from a vast variety of careers, including New York State Assemblyman Andrew Raia, Board trustee Kristine Rosales, Huntington Hospital nurse Carlene Williams, police officer Angelo Agro, firefighter Thomas Richardson, Star Career Academy chef instructor Cathrine Tysland-Breskin, authors Linda Frank and Valerie Pfundstein, and several Deer Park alumni, such as entrepreneur and author Jean Alerte. Groups of students rotated among tables, giving each a chance to discuss careers with different professionals and spark ideas on their future dreams.



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Homecoming:

A Great Day to Celebrate



Hundreds of marchers and spectators filled the streets for the homecoming parade on Oct. 25. Upbeat marching band performances, colorful class floats, and peppy cheerleader and kickline numbers continued throughout the route.

school's women's choir. The homecoming court was announced, with Jasawn Thompson and Alexis Blumengold winning as king and queen, respectively. The pair donned royal gear as they were escorted around the track in a sporty convertible.



"This is the one day people look forward to," said Athletic Director Dominick Fontana. "It's a nice venue to celebrate Deer Park."

Cheerleaders from Deer Park Youth Football, the middle school and the junior varsity and varsity squads pumped up the crowd, as did as the Falconettes kickline team. The Marching Falcons provided a powerful musical score for the varsity football game against Copiague, which the Falcons won decisively, 53-12.



Principal James Cummings kicked off the homecoming ceremony, announcing local politicians and dignitaries who were in attendance, as well as honoring the Downey family of Deer Park for their continuous donations and involvement in district scholarships. Serving as grand marshal was Rosalie Downey, widow of FDNY Deputy Chief of Special Operations Ray Downey, a hero of 9/11. The ceremony also included a performance by the high

The class floats were presented at halftime, all representing a Dr. Seuss theme. The seniors won the contest with their depiction of "Oh, The Places You'll Go!"

