Monroe Educator Insider

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Vision Statement

The Monroe Township Board of Education commits itself to all children by preparing them to reach their full potential and to function in a global society through a preeminent education.

Mission Statement

The Monroe Public Schools in collaboration with the members of the community shall ensure that all children receive an exemplary

Welcome to the February edition of our professional development/best practices newsletter! There are so many great things happening all over the district, I hope you take a minute to read about some of them.

I cannot believe how quickly the year is flying by! I love reading about all of the great things happening in our schools and that is thanks to all of you! That brings me to the topic for today: Reading across the disciplines! "To meaningfully study any discipline, students must understand how literacy is used in that discipline" (Timothy Shanahan, 2017). Think about all that you read during the day and how you digest the information. I love to read fiction novels which requires different skills than when I read news articles which require different skills when I am installing a new faucet in my kitchen. How are we preparing our students for academic reading and pleasure reading?

Here are some resources for you on this topic:

www.sreb.org/node/1628/done - For units on teaching disciplinary literacy

www.teachingchannel.org/videos/reading-like-a-historian-curriculum - Stanford University has videos showing their curriculum

Timothy Shanahan, C. S. (2017, February). Disciplinary Literacy: Just the FAQs. *Educational Leadership*, pp. 19-22.

Written by: Dr. Dori Alvich, Assistant Superintendent of Schools

One School, One Community *at Oak Tree Elementary*

Written by: Stephanie Chin, Maggie Fidura, Kim Synarski, Alexa Tringali

Community is defined as, "a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals." It is warm, nurturing, and reflects and transmits a shared understanding of what it means to be a good person. Research has continuously shown the positive effects of community involvement on students when teachers, parents, and schools continuously support and encourage students' learning and development. Here at Oak Tree we build upon community involvement amongst students, staff, and parents for the greater good of our students. Come take a look!

One Book, One School

"One Book, One School" is a school-wide read aloud where our principal, Mrs. Dinsmore, is the guest reader. Each trimester, Mrs. Dinsmore reads a picture book to the entire school, while questioning the students and allowing them to make connections. The book chosen is reflective of our school goals and a supplemental activity is completed following the "One Book, One School" event. After the most recent "One Book, One School" event, students throughout the entire school engaged in a higher order STEAM activity which coincided with the chosen book, Rosie Revere, The Engineer. This enabled students to apply what they learned from the read aloud and think creatively as a team, working through the problem solving process. With STEAM being a district initiative, this activity tied in perfectly and allowed us to go one step further by working together as a school.

Round Tables

At Oak Tree's Teacher Roundtable sessions, teachers meet once a month after school to discuss assorted topics. These meetings include veteran and new teachers who join to give or seek advice about what they are doing in the classroom. Some of these topics might include positive language, classroom management, conferences, Back to School Night, and technology.

Family Reading Night

Family Reading Night is a winter event, sponsored by the Oak Tree School Goals Committee where parents and their children are invited to attend an evening of literacy activities. Teacher volunteers work at various Literacy Stations including: Teacher-led read alouds, a Writer's Workshop parent/student activity, Madlibs, Boggle, Make a Bookmark, Make a Comic Strip, Sight Word Bingo, and many more! Families are also encouraged to swap a gently used book for a new one to read at home. Additionally, a representative from the Monroe Township Library was available to assist parents with information and resources with how the ELA curriculum can be integrated at home.

Parents as Partners

Parents of Oak Tree students in grades 1-3 were invited to participate in a first ever parent information night titled Parents as Partners. Parents were able to learn about and participate in informational sessions on Math, STEAM, and Technology. Teachers presented parents with information about the curriculum, programs, and were supplied resources for home. Tables were also set up to supply parents with information on Language Arts Literacy and the Workshop model. Additionally, parents were able to explore resources that the PTA and the Monroe Township Library provide. Attending parents were happily engaged in each presentation and provided positive feedback. This successful event provided another outlet for the school and parents to work together.

Healthy Living Night

Healthy Living Night is a spring event, sponsored by the Oak Tree School Garden Committee. Parents and their children are invited to attend an evening of activities that reflect healthy lifestyle choices. Teacher volunteers work at various stations including: a planting station, a gardening station, Parent/Child Yoga, gym activities led by our school gym teachers, and many more!

Here at Oak Tree, we believe in the importance of bridging the home school connection and building a strong, emotional connection between students, staff, and parents. When you work to increase community involvement, great things happen in the lives of children. We believe that our strong ties to the community makes Oak Tree feel like home.

Reading Stamina Superstars

Written by: Debbie Ciaccia, Stacy Blum, Danielle Sano and Marisa Pilgrim

At Barclay Brook School we set a school wide goal to increase reading stamina for all K-2 learners. Our school goal is to have students demonstrate their ability to read without interruptions for a specific amount of time. The reading stamina goal varies based on grade level. The goal for kindergarten students is to be able to read for a minimum of seven minutes, the goal for first grade students is to read for a minimum of 15 minutes, and the goal for second grade students is to read for a minimum of 20 minutes. While students engaged in sustained silent reading each day, each teacher designates one day a month to officially track and report on students' reading stamina to the school goals committee.

What is Reading Stamina?

Reading stamina is a child's ability to focus and read independently for "long-ish" periods of time without being distracted or without distracting others. According to Dr. Richard Arlington there is a strong positive correlation between the time given for silent reading and the comprehension levels of students. Reading volume is actually central to the development of reading proficiencies, especially in the development of fluent reading proficiency. Children who elect to read voluntarily develop all sorts of reading proficiencies, not just the ability to read fluently. The ultimate goal is to create lifelong readers. To accomplish this goal we must allocate a significant amount of time each day for sustained independent reading for students with literature that they are truly excited to read.
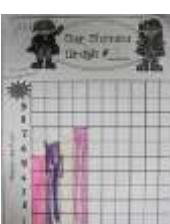
How to Build Reading Stamina?

- Guide students to choose "Just Right" books

- Use a timer to keep track of stamina - http://www.online-stopwatch.com

- All students of all reading levels must participate

- Make independent reading part of a daily routine

- Reinforce being part of a reading community

- Model reading and focusing strategies during mini-lessons

- Create a non-interruptive reading environment

- Self-evaluate at the end using a scale

- Students need to have enough books with them in order for them to reach their stamina goal. Here is a suggested amount.

    o A-D – 12-14 books

    o E-G – 10-12 books

    o H-J – 8-10 books

    o K-M – 5-7 books

Activities to Increase Reading Stamina

There are many suggested activities to help improve reading stamina across elementary age learners. Some of the most popular strategies to help with stamina are pep talks, training, goal setting, motivational charts and celebrations.
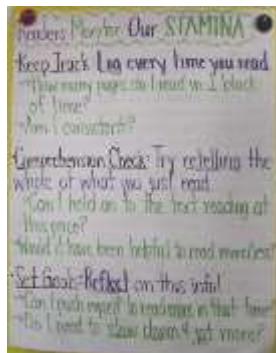
- **Pep Talks:** As a teacher, you can coach your students with positive chants and/or talks. An example would be: "Your brain is a muscle that gets stronger and stronger every time you read. Today and every day we are going to work this muscle and increase your reading power. We will start with just a few minutes and we will build and build as you become a stronger reader!"

- **Training:** Make a classroom goal of reading for a certain amount of minutes each day, increasing each day. A way to have the students track is displaying a timer.

- **Goal Setting**: Inviting students to set, track, and monitor their stamina goals is empowering. There are a number of ways to make and keep track of set goals, such as bookmarks, graphs or reading logs.

- **Motivational charts:** Anchor charts are valuable classroom tools to be used as a guide to motivate and educate students on how to achieve reading stamina.

- **Celebrations:** Reading is hard work, this feat should be celebrated! Students can celebrate with a chant, brief dance or compliments to one another on achieving their stamina goals.

"When you give your students the chance to practice and strengthen their reading skills on high-quality, high-interest books that they can read with confidence and accuracy, they will make progress—in fact, studies have shown that independent reading is the best way to get students to make gains," says Serravallo.

Tools & Resources

http://www.online-stopwatch.com
https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Reading-Stamina-Book-Mark-Whoooo-is-Ready-to-Read-Owl-Themed-2733452
https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Reading-Stamina-Graph-K-3-1430555
http://lightsailed.com/literacy-strategies/five-ways-to-create-a-class-of-stamina-superstar s/
https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/10-questions-about-independent-reading/
Allington, R.L. (2014) *How Reading Volume Affects both Reading Fluency and Reading Achievement.* International Electronic Journal of Education, 7(1), 13-26.
Serravallo, Jennifer (2015) *The Reading Strategies Book.* Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann

STEM at Woodland!

Written by: Nick Reinhold, Natalie Michael, Allison North
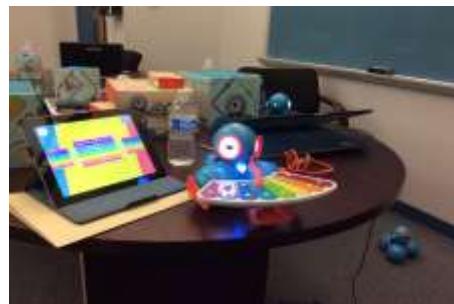
Teachers and students at Woodland School are diving deeper into STEM this year. Using Wonder Workshop's Dash and Dot, Modular Robotics Cublets, Lego Mindstorm Kits, and Bloxel's students will explore coding robots, video game creation, problem solving and sequencing at their readiness level.

The Woodland School Goals Committee has been exploring resources and developing activities in preparation for implementation in April. The goals committee has had hands-on time with each resource over the past few months. The entire staff will explore the resources over the next few months during faculty meetings and optional morning workshops. We are excited about continuing to explore and expand our STEM resources and experiences for both the staff and students at Woodland!
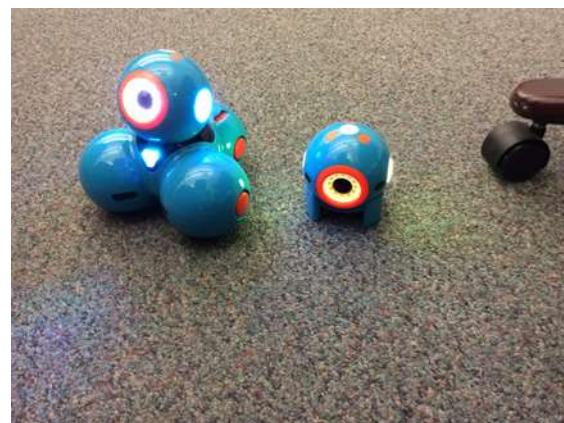
MTHS Garners Great Changes with Google

Written by: Sharon DeMarco, Jackie Puleio, and Sheree Guglielmi

At Monroe Township High School, professional development focused on technology topics designed to reap the benefits of our exciting new status as a Google Apps for

Education (GAFE) school. Through this web-based suite of word processing and data management software, teachers and students share assignments, links, videos, as well as collaborative discussion threading.

GAFE Tools

In professional learning communities organized by content area, teachers spent their in-service days learning about the essential GAFE tools: Google Classroom, Docs (word processor), Forms (self-grading online quizzes), Sheets (spreadsheets), and Slides (slideshow presentations).

Similar to a wiki but with the added ability to grade and return work, Google Classroom is the platform that teachers can use to organize and share content for their classes. Major benefits of Google Classroom include shared workflow and communication between teachers and students. Teachers create a class for each section they teach and students join via a special class code. In this organized and private, "members only" space dedicated to student learning, teachers upload assignments and provide students access to documents and templates, choosing either view, edit, or "make an individual copy." Teachers give feedback and assess student work online, adding private comments and editing suggestions as needed. All assignment posts and submissions are time stamped to encourage greater student accountability and organization. In fact, Classroom automatically creates a calendar to show students upcoming due dates. Google Classroom is ideal for MTHS's 1:1 iPad environment because the teachers can use the Classroom space as a vehicle for focusing students on certain tasks and websites. Classroom is also essential for pushing out GAFE tools, such as Docs, Forms, Sheets, and Slides.

Perhaps one of the most productive features of the new suite of GAFE tools is the ability for teachers and students to simultaneously edit the same product, whether it be an essay in a Google Docs or a slideshow in Google Slides. Two traditional class activities that have been completely transformed due to the Google platform are peer editing and collaborative presentations.

Peer editing is accomplished in Google Docs, which is compatible with many other word processor file types, such as Microsoft Word and Pages. Students create a Google Doc using the app and share it with their teacher and students in their peer editing pair or group. All of Google Docs' word processing functionalities, such as fonts, formatting, tables, and images, are a natural transition for most students from Microsoft Word. During the editing process, teachers and students can make comments, provide helpful links to resources, and add suggestions to the document while the student revises the essay--all in real time. If visions of plagiarism start to dance in your head, take comfort in knowing that during the editing process, all keystrokes are stored and color-coded by user and can be reviewed or even reset at any time under See Revision History. Students can even revert their document to an earlier time in history, if desired. With these powerful editing and collaboration features, Google Docs has increased student engagement and essay scores.

While lengthy essays are primarily the work of history and language arts, slideshows that can creatively and concisely arrange important terms, showcase research findings, or sequence complex processes are often the student product of choice for all the content areas. Collaborative presentations have never been easier in the 1:1 environment. Instead of emailing separate copies of files and getting caught up with older and newer version confusion, one student creates a Google Slide file and shares it
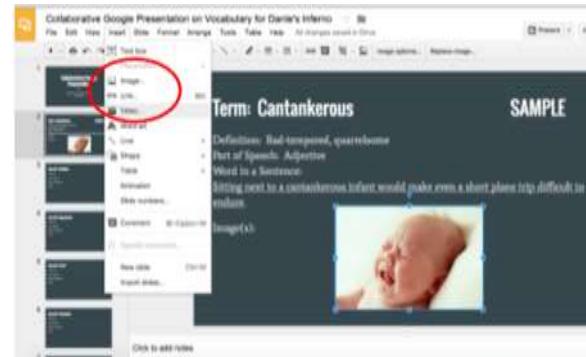
with group members. Students can edit slides simultaneously to achieve a truly collaborative product. Working in the Google Slides environment looks and feels much like Powerpoint. So, all of the text, video, and image capabilities are familiar to most students and teachers, and, best of all, Powerpoint files can be converted into Google Slides, and vice versa. Professional presenting tools and animations make for a final product that prepares students for college and career environments. And if anyone is absent on presentation day, the project has been shared and is therefore stored on all group members' iPads via Google Drive, so everyone has access to the file as long as they have access to the Internet.

The third component of the Google suite of productivity apps, Google Forms, is an excellent way for teachers to survey their students in a variety of different ways. Teachers can create a Google Form in the beginning of the school year to collect information about their students, such as parent phone numbers and email addresses. Using Forms as a database affords teachers the ability to sort, edit, augment, and query the information. For example, when textbooks are assigned, teachers can add textbook numbers to each student's Google Form to ensure that all pertinent information regarding each student is in one place. The use of Google Forms eliminates the need for binders or folders to store stacks of papers. It also provides teachers the convenience of accessing this information from any device, whether it be a laptop, iPad, home PC...anywhere that they can access Google Drive.

Research shows that integrating technology and formative assessments are two ways to improve instruction. Forms can also be used to check for understanding, similar to an Exit Ticket. After students fill out the Google Form, a spreadsheet can be generated to quickly take a look at which questions or concepts students are struggling with. This can be implemented as part of a teacher's routine at the end of every class or as needed when a difficult concept is being taught. Using Google Forms to check for
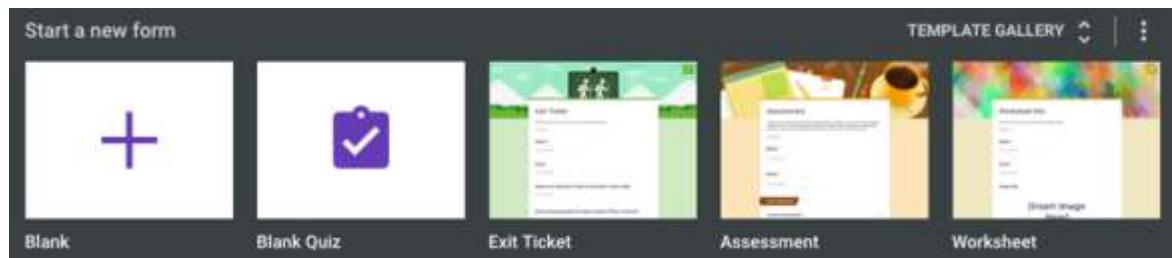
understanding can be especially beneficial in a special education class where it is imperative to periodically assess student's understanding before, during, and after lessons. Digital copies of the data generated in the spreadsheets can be kept to track and analyze student's progress, such as for SGO's. If the teachers wish, they can grant students access to anonymous results of the forms, displaying the results in pie or bar charts, so they can see how they are doing in comparison with the rest of the class.

Forms can also be used to administer quizzes, assign classwork and Do Now's, or even assign a study guide. To expedite grading, teachers create an answer key so the assessment or assignment is graded automatically. Customization happens through Forms' easy set up: Each question on the form can be multiple choice, range, short answer, and can be assigned a set number of points. Teachers can email students the link to the form they created or the link can be posted on the teacher's wiki page.

Another valuable feature of Google Forms is the ability to determine which students have already submitted their work and when. As students submit, their work is time stamped. Once you give Forms permission to accept responses, a list of students will appear live as they complete and submit their work. This is a very effective way for teachers to manage their student's progress and ensure that students are on task.

Another valuable feature of Google Forms is that it allows you to quantify and analyze key components of an assessment. For instance, having students select the answer on

a practice assessment for a multiple choice exam in Google Forms can allow for a quick analysis of strengths and weaknesses in different units within the course. This is especially useful for reviews that take place in preparation for the exam in advanced placement courses.

Google Drive

While the aforementioned GAFE implementations have supported classroom instruction and student assessment, the many features of Google Drive, working as a virtual school-wide filing cabinet, have allowed for the staff to grow professionally as a collaborative team. Not only has Google Drive been transformative in the classroom, but it has also been a vital component of synergy among staff members.

While the depths of Google Drive are still a work in progress for many staff members, the benefits of the interface have been explored with use as a collaborative tool and for distributing large quantities of continuously changing information in an effective and efficient manner. While sharing resources between teachers may have required an inventive method of transfer in the past, Google Drive allows teachers to share gigabytes of information in a few keystrokes.

The tools of Google Drive have allowed for more efficient and accurate reporting, permitting edits to be made in real time. Teachers are able to simultaneously work on important documents, such as unit plans or final exams, while making suggestions and giving feedback to improve the quality of the overall product. For large projects that are school or district-wide, Google allows for teachers to simultaneously edit, provide suggestions, and comment on the same document without exchanging emails with different versions. In addition to using shared Google Docs as a method of document collaboration, Drive is a space to share work on our Academy Teams and other important staff documents. This provides a venue so that all contributing members can view and edit the same document, without the dire necessity of finding common planning time.

In addition to document collaboration using the tools within Google Drive, important documents such as student activity records, like the use of the lavatory, and the Master Schedule have been given an incredible update to the pen-and-paper method of recordkeeping. The Bathroom Logbook is now a universal online Google Sheets document, fondly referred to as "Google Bathroom." The online method of logging students into the bathroom allows for a more accurate (and more sanitary) method of recordkeeping students' locations, as well as an efficient tool to locate a student and verify their arrival to the requested location. On the school administration side, the school's Master Teaching Schedule, a year-long evolutionary document, can be updated and delivered to all necessary correspondents with a record of what changes were made. This eliminates the trouble of identifying the correct version of any document.
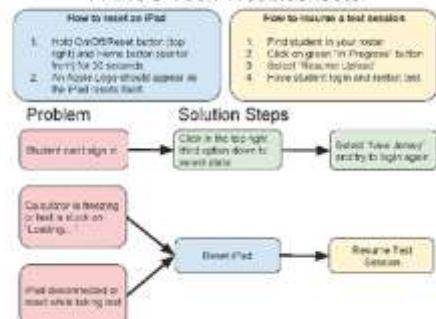
PARCC How To

PARCC Tech Troubleshooter

Getting Started

1. Click on the correct Hyperlink ...
2. Click on PARCC drop down menu
3. Click on "2016 Spring PARCC"
4. In the Testing Symbol, click "Select an Action" to reveal drop down menu.
5. Click "Sessions"

Search for Your Course

Last year, PARCC administration was run more smoothly for a variety of reasons. While teachers assumed a larger role in administering the test in smaller settings, the number of technology issues decreased exponentially from day to day. One of the largest components to eliminating many troubleshooting emails was the use of an online Google Doc PARCC "How To" help document for teachers to either view or print as a reference. After each testing day, teachers who administered the assessment typed helpful tips and tricks on how to fix the various technology issues that come up with the online standardized tests. In addition, the shared resource eliminated many emails, which can quickly be overwhelming since the "How To" document was a continuously updated document.

From enhanced classroom activities to streamlined staff collaboration, the GAFE suite of productivity software, including Google Docs, Sheets, Forms, Slides, and file sharing within Drive, has become an essential component of MTHS's 1:1 environment.

Turnitin Comes to Town

FEEDBACK STUDIO

Feedback on Student Essays
Web-based
Free iPad App
Grade by rubric option
Leave voice comments

GradeMarks

Commenting Tools
Drag and drop revision comments
ETS: e-rater auto-grammar checker
Overall essay comments

PeerMark

Peer Editing
Chosen pairs or groups
Anonymous distribution
Choice of papers

Libraries

Resources for Teachers
Rubrics
Grading Forms
QuickMarks Manager
PeerMark Questions

With all of this technology integration, some proactive tools have been implemented this year. Joining a community of 15,000 schools and 30 million students nationwide, MTHS is now a subscriber of the web-based Turnitin service. Originally designed as a plagiarism detection tool in colleges, Turnitin has amped up their services with editing and annotating features designed to improve student writing at all levels through more actionable, consistent feedback and automated grammar checkers. According to Turnitin, LLC, Feedback Studio has reduced time spent grading by 31%. Continuing with its original purpose, Turnitin still prevents plagiarism by checking essays against millions of journals, essays, books, and websites, as well as a repository of student essays. With the increase in student Internet use, this resource encourages students to do their own work and helps teachers automate the time-consuming process of providing formative feedback while grading essays.

In January and February, two workshops designed especially for content area teachers covered all the essential tools for getting teachers and students live on Turnitin, such as creating classes, adding students, managing rosters, creating assignments, evaluating student work, interpreting originality reports, and building assessment rubrics. Another exciting feature was also covered: Creating master classes with multiple instructors to support the ICR relationship. Classes can be managed by two instructors, so annotating and grading essays can be tailored to the students.

Integrating Turnitin with Google Docs is a no-brainer: In addition to Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, and the usual host of word processing software formats, Turnitin also uploads files directly from Google Drive.

As technology continues to advance, schools face the challenge of supporting staff through all phases and methods of integrating technology in classroom instruction and assessment, especially at the high school level, where staff is charged with training students to compete in a technologically-driven society. Emphasizing this point, NEA President Dennis Van Roekel reminds educators: "If our children are to excel in a fast-changing, global society, we must harness the technology resources they need to function in a digital age. We must remember our commitment to their future as we set priorities and establish policies on their behalf."