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Did You Know?

Did you know that a comprehensive curriculum is one of the areas that Solutions Teams focus on during their site visits to Underperforming Schools? The School Effectiveness Division has created Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement for use by Arizona schools and the Department's Solutions Teams based on best practices. As part of Standard 2, curriculum, instruction and professional development, school curriculums and course offerings are examined to see if:

1. The school offers content in the 9 academic areas identified with [Arizona Academic Standards](#), including foreign language, physical education and the arts, and
2. The school's scheduling provides access to all content areas for all students

In order for a school to be considered "exceeding the standards" for Standard 2, there must be evidence that the school offers at least 7 of the 9 academic content areas (Standard 2.1B) and communicates to all stakeholders that all students have access to all courses or classes (Standard 2.4B).

For more on the Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement, [CLICK HERE](#) or contact Donna Kongable at (602) 364-2303.

A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Arizona Educator:

People talk too much about AIMS! The obvious is worth repeating; education is about more than passing the AIMS test. Education is for three major purposes:

1. Preparing students to be productive members of society, including skills needed for employment.
2. Preparing students to be citizens. They will be voting, participating on juries, becoming active in their communities. They must know their history and know about their government and the economy.
3. Preparing students to be human beings who can benefit from our rich cultural heritage.

One of my favorite quotations on the subject was in a letter from John Adams to his wife: "I study war and politics so that my children can study business and commerce, so that their children can study literature and the arts." I think this tells us something about what life is all about.

One unfortunate, unintended consequence of the testing culture, has been that some schools focus on the subjects tested - reading, writing and mathematics - to the exclusion of the other vital subjects, including science, social studies and the arts. We, at the ADE, are leaning hard against that wind.

This newsletter is dedicated to initiatives underway at the Department to help schools maintain and grow a comprehensive curriculum for all of Arizona's students, including:

- Spotlight on Success: an interview with a high school which has moved from underperforming to highly performing status in less than three years while maintaining a comprehensive curriculum
- Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement: statewide focus groups emphasize importance of a comprehensive curriculum for Arizona's high school students.
- Arts Education Integration Initiative: recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an innovative use of federal funds to support arts education.
- Content Rich Curriculum Initiative: including integrating reading, writing and math with the sciences and social studies.
- Career and Technical Education Initiative: Learn about expanding opportunities for CTE in Arizona, and how CTE students are faring on the AIMS.
- Solutions Teams: Look at the Solutions Teams rubric and how the effective school standards support a comprehensive curriculum for Arizona's students.

I encourage you to make use of these resources and to join us in battling those who would lower the expectations we have of our students by narrowing the curriculum.

Sincerely,

Tom Horne, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Horne's Arts Education Initiative Receives National Accolades

In its first year of funding, Superintendent Horne's Arts Education Initiative is providing quality arts education programs in music, visual arts, dance and theatre for students at 64 schools throughout Arizona, from San Luis to Ganado, Phoenix to Eloy.

As part of the Superintendent's focus on content-rich curriculum, the Arts Education Initiative is intended to both increase the quality of arts education offerings in Arizona schools as well as to integrate arts learning with other academic areas. Funded through \$4 million of No Child Left Behind funding, this initiative has been cited by former U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, as an example of how federal dollars can support the arts. In a July, 2004 letter, Secretary Paige responded to people who had testified in federal hearings that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was causing schools to cut back on the arts. He wrote that that was not the intent, that the arts are a core subject in NCLB. He cited Arizona as an example of a state using \$4 million of NCLB money for arts programs

Why focus on arts education?

1. The arts change the learning experience for students, and can reach students who are not normally reached through other school activities. One arts education program in Tucson Unified School District, Opening Minds through the Arts (OMA), has shown that students participating in an arts-rich environment outscore their peers in statistically significant ways on both the AIMS and the Stanford 9. Third grade students at OMA schools out-scored their peers at non-OMA schools by 19% on the language portion of the Stanford 9 and 25% on the math section. OMA students also out-scored their peers in statistically significant ways on AIMS in all three areas - reading, writing and math. These academic achievement increases held for all ethnic groups, showing that students who participate in OMA benefited from the program regardless of ethnicity. For more information on this project and its results, visit www.omaproject.org.
2. The arts change the learning experience for participating educators, especially classroom and subject teachers who may not have integrated the arts into their curriculum before.
3. Arts are a core academic subject as defined by No Child Left Behind, and are mandated subject areas in Arizona statutes.

For more information [CLICK HERE](#) or contact Lynn Tuttle, Arts Education Specialist, (602) 364-1534.

Contests & Opportunities

Now Seeking Nominations

Preserve America, History Teacher of the Year

The ADE is seeking nominations for the "Preserve America History Teacher of the Year" award. This is a national program sponsored by Preserve America and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to honor outstanding teachers of American history across the country. History teachers at every level, from elementary through high school, are eligible for nomination. Winners will be chosen based on several criteria:

- A deep career commitment to teaching American history.
- Evidence of creativity and imagination in the classroom.
- Close attention to documents, artifacts, historic sites, and the other primary materials of history.
- Demonstrated effectiveness in improving students' knowledge of and enthusiasm for American history.

Nominations can be made by a department or division head, or a school director, principal, or head.

[CLICK HERE](#) to nominate an outstanding history teacher at your school!

Now Seeking Nominations

ADE Teacher Talent Pool Recommendations

The State of Arizona maintains a talent pool that consists of a cadre of distinguished teachers and principals. These educators may be considered for membership on advisory boards and task forces, and may be candidates for special recognition programs. Your recommendations will identify educators who will be of great value to your community and state. We are very fortunate to have a rich base of veteran educators represented in our current talent pool. They have been and continue to be a valuable resource in our state efforts. What is particularly lacking at this time is representation from educators relatively new to the profession who demonstrate unusual instructional ability. Such teachers exhibit strong potential for professional leadership and inspiring presence that impacts students, colleagues, and community.

Do you know a relatively new educator that is not only our state's, but the nation's best?

Previous recognition is not required.

[CLICK HERE](#) to nominate an outstanding teacher at your school!

Native American Advisory Committee

April 18th

Superintendent Tom Horne invites you to exchange your ideas, concerns, and recommendations regarding Native American education through a statewide teleconference designed to bring Native American educators together.

You can attend the conference through televideo at locations in Flagstaff, Ft. Defiance, Phoenix and Tucson.


[CLICK HERE](#) for more information, or call (602) 542-5460

Academic Contest Funds Available

Districts may now apply for legislated funds to assist winners of state competitions in attending competitions on the national level. A total of \$50,000 will be divided among districts for selected contests. Only districts may apply for the funds, and travel must be approved by the governing board of the district.

Applications are due April 29, 2005.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information, or contact Amy Koenig at (602)-364-1555

it's what i eat and what i do™ 

Look for a healthy treat for Arizona teachers from McDonald's in next month's issue! It's all the "buzz!"

Free Summer Workshops Hosted by US Department of Ed

The U.S. Department of Education will host a series of summer workshops for K-12 teachers and principals. Some of the nation's best teachers and researchers will share their strategies for raising student achievement and informing teachers of the latest, successful research-based practices for both elementary and secondary schools. Breakout sessions will cover literacy, reading, mathematics, science, history, arts, special education, English language learners, school leadership, the No Child Left Behind Act, using data effectively, federal grant writing, and teaching strategies that enable students to improve academically. Registration is FREE but space is limited. To Register **[CLICK HERE!](#)**

Creating a School that Works...

An Interview with Principal Frank Mirizio

Frank Mirizio is principal of Marcos de Niza High School in Tempe Union High School District. Marcos has moved from an Underperforming school label in 2001 to a Highly Performing label in 2004 (missing the Excelling label by less than one percentage point!). Marcos will be showcased at the ADE's upcoming [Spotlight on Success conference](#) on May 3-5. This interview reveals how Marcos increased student performance on AIMS while maintaining and expanding a comprehensive curriculum for all students:

Mr. Mirizio, thank you for taking the time to answer some questions about Marcos de Niza's incredible academic growth over the last 4 years. First, can you tell us how Marcos made such progress in terms of math and language arts?

Because of receiving the Title I label of Underperforming in 2001, Marcos had the opportunity to apply for and receive funding under the Comprehensive School Reform program. We worked with technical advisors to create a school improvement plan, with target areas being: all students will improve their reading comprehension; all students will improve their math skills; and all students will demonstrate respect.

To help improve student reading and math performance, Marcos developed a Literacy Council and a Math Council. These councils are made up of members from every department on campus – including career and tech education (CTE), fine arts, and social studies. Each department representative on the councils received training on how to integrate reading, writing and/or math strategies into their curriculum area, and then taught those strategies to their department members on staff development half days.

Let me spend some time talking about how we made this work for math. The Math Council worked extensively to help teachers overcome their fear of math, and to integrate AIMS math vocabulary words into their perspective curricular areas. For example, all of our CTE classes have been aligned with state standards. In addition, our CTE staff spent time looking at the AIMS standards, including math, and illustrating how they are taught in our CTE classes.

Many high schools are thinking about increasing the number of math or English classes a student needs to take in a school year in order to help students who might be at risk for failing AIMS. Is this an approach you used at Marcos?

Yes – and No. To help students who are not reading at grade level, we offer a required reading class in addition to the student's regular English class. This has continued in part because we feel good reading skills are a must for performing well in any other subject area at our school. We have not added a second math class, in part

because we recognized that we would be requiring yet another class of pretty much the same group of students, in essence tying up 2/3 of a student's schedule with just English and math. Marcos' staff and administration were concerned that doing this would limit our students' access to our other high-quality programs such as CTE and the arts – the programs that help create the whole kid. Instead, we approached the problem as being of the entire school, and needing an all-school solution. That is why we created the Literacy and Math Councils – to help us integrate math and reading and writing skills into all that we teach. Marcos also decided to use our Title I funds to help focus on student achievement in math. Instead of requiring students who were doing poorly in math to take a second math class per day, Marcos hired additional math teachers out of Title I funds and placed them in the existing math classes. This lowered our teacher to student ratio to less than 1:15, and allowed the teachers to focus more directly on individual student needs.

Can you describe briefly the comprehensive curriculum offered at Marcos and what changes, if any, you've made to the curriculum during this process?

Marcos offers a wide variety of courses and more than 70 extra-curricular clubs (not counting sports!) for its students. I am fortunate to be a graduate of Marcos myself, and I was trained by our prior leaders that a content rich, comprehensive school environment helps us reach all students. Here are just a few highlights:

- We are offering AP American History, bringing up to 9 the number of AP courses offered on site. We believe in increasing the offerings for all students, including those who are excelling.
- Our music programs have received Superior with distinction ratings in all three areas – orchestra, band and choir.
- We were the National Club of the Year for our Best Buddies Program, which provides opportunities for one-to-one friendships between students with and without developmental disabilities.
- The Marcos Wrestling Team was three-time consecutive State Champions.

**For more information on Marcos de Niza, [CLICK HERE](#)
For more information on the upcoming [Spotlight on Success conference](#), contact [Cheryl Lebo](#) at (602) 364-2267.**

**Your Colleagues believe in the Value of Comprehensive Curriculum:
Findings from the Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative**

As part of the Department's Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative, staff from ADE hit the road during the month of October to meet with more than 100 stakeholders including business leaders, parents, K-12 educators and higher education officials. These meetings gave the Department an opportunity to learn what Arizonans require of their high schools. Findings of these focus groups were published this January, and the message from the field was very clear: Arizona's high schools should ensure all students have access to a rigorous, relevant and comprehensive curriculum. As noted in the report:

Focus group participants want to ensure competency in the traditional core, but it was also very important to participants that students have access to learning in areas such as the arts and foreign languages. They were concerned that too much of an emphasis on building student skills in reading and math might lead to a reduction in the kinds of offerings that motivate students the most and that enrich their learning. In particular, focus group participants mentioned the arts, foreign languages, and extra curricular activities as important to student learning (P. 10 – Recommendations, Report of the Regional Focus Groups on High School Renewal, January, 2005).

To read more about the Regional Focus Group findings and the Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative, visit www.ade.az.gov/asd/AZHSRI/.



Principal Frank Mirizio works with student Matt Breschini in the library where he often stops to see how things are going.



Artwork created by Central High School geometry students, incorporating geometric principles in design. Teaching Artist: Joan Bourque. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#)

Curriculum...

Delivering a Content Rich Curriculum

Arizona has nine academic areas with their own content standards. If you take written versions of the standards and stack them on top of one another, the pile is almost a foot high! How, then, can Arizona's teachers incorporate and teach all of these standards in their classrooms? And how do these standards relate to those currently tested via AIMS and focusing on reading, writing and math?

The Arizona Department of Education has been working on two ways to address these questions:

- quality integration of curriculum areas
- emphasizing the reading of informational texts

Informational Texts

By emphasizing the use of "informational" texts, not just "narrative" texts in reading instruction beginning in primary grades, students can learn to read and read to learn from their earliest days in school. This is supported by research, and it makes good sense. Six key reasons why informational text should be in every primary classroom are:

1. It is a key to success in later schooling.
2. It is the preferred reading material for some children.
3. It often addresses children's interests and questions.
4. It builds knowledge of the natural and social world.
5. It builds vocabulary, academic language and comprehension.
6. Students cannot pass AIMS reading tests without sufficient science and social studies knowledge to understand what they are reading.

As a starting point, the Standards Unit of the Department is assembling a group of Arizona teachers to develop a list of suggested trade books - both fiction and non-fiction - that link to our social studies and science standards as well as help develop reading skills for our students. If you have ideas of books for the Department to consider, please forward the title, author, date of publication, and publisher information to [Lacey Wieser](#).

Integration Across the Curriculum

Beginning this summer, the ADE Standards unit will begin offering "Integration Workshops" designed to examine ways in which instruction can be designed to address several performance objectives across the content standards. With thoughtful and intentional lesson design and curriculum mapping, teachers can make connections for students across the standards. More information and registration materials will be available via ADE's [web calendar](#) beginning in June.

In addition, the Reading and Writing Standards are designed to be integrated and reinforced in the content areas. Training in embedding reading and writing skills in all content areas will be sponsored by the ADE. More information and registration materials will be available via ADE's [web calendar](#) beginning in June.

In conclusion

If we view the standards as separate and isolated sets of learning goals defining what students need to know and be able to do in each content area, we will continue to grapple with two alternatives: the frustration of "too much to cover in too little time" OR narrowing the curriculum to teach what is tested. However, if we focus our efforts on designing a comprehensive curriculum that preserves the interconnectedness of knowledge, skills and abilities across content areas, we will provide students with the rich education they so deserve.

CTE - Part of a Comprehensive Curriculum

Superintendent Horne supports Arizona's Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs as part of a comprehensive curriculum. As of this school year, all 30 Arizona CTE programs have aligned curriculum with Arizona's academic standards in reading, writing, and math, including the standards tested on AIMS. Science standards will be incorporated during summer of 2005.

CTE continues to build Tech Prep partnerships with Arizona's community colleges, offering more than 796 such articulated programs in 2002-2003. Tech Prep partnerships provide students access to a curriculum integrating academic and occupational skills, as well as a career pathway into post-secondary education.

CTE students achieve academically. By the time CTE student concentrators** graduated from high school 2003-04, they had achieved the following results on the reading, writing and math portions of the AIMS test:

- 66% of the CTE concentrators had successfully passed the AIMS Reading test.
- 73% of the CTE concentrators had successfully passed the AIMS Writing test.
- 40% of the CTE concentrators had successfully passed the AIMS Math test.

*** A student who achieves two Carnegie units/credits in a single CTE Program.*

In recognition of CTE program excellence, Superintendent Horne recently announced an initiative to "...expand three successful programs in career and technical education that build important occupational skills while successfully addressing academic standards in reading, writing and mathematics." These three programs are Automotive Technology, Health Care, and Drafting and Design Technology.

CTE produces a monthly [Fact sheet](#) which showcases the latest data about our award-winning CTE programs. In addition, CTE offers an annual professional development conference attended by over 1,700 of Arizona's CTE educators and members of business and industry. [CLICK HERE](#) for information about the conference.

To subscribe to this monthly newsletter, [CLICK HERE](#). If you have questions, comments, or story ideas, contact Constituent Services at: adeneews@ade.az.gov or call 602-542-3710. Designed and edited by Amy Koenig

Dates To Remember in April... Click each for more information

4th-5th Classroom Observation Protocol

5-7, 12, 15, 19, 20 SPED Data Collection

7th & 28th Unwrapping the Science Standard

14th & 21st Six Traits & AIMS

26th Character Education Conference

8th Autism Spectrum Disorder Training

28th Alternative Math Techniques

15th Grad Rate & USDOE Grad Survey open

Other ADE Events