

ED COMMITTEE #1
September 24, 2012
Update

MEMORANDUM

September 21, 2012

TO: Education Committee

FROM: Essie McGuire, Senior Legislative Analyst *EMC*

SUBJECT: **Update – Northstar Curriculum Project**

Today the Education Committee is scheduled to receive an update on the Montgomery County Public Schools' (MCPS) Northstar Curriculum Project (renamed Curriculum 2.0). The following individuals are expected to participate in today's discussion:

- Erick Lang, Associate Superintendent, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs
- Marty Creel, Director, Department of Enriched and Innovative Programs

BACKGROUND

MCPS began developing an Elementary Integrated Curriculum (EIC) in 2007, and piloted this new curriculum in the 2009-2010 school year. Development of a revised curriculum is consistent with Board of Education policy that requires curriculum review every 5 years, and coincided also with the State's adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for curriculum.

MCPS also began seeking alternate funding sources to accelerate the EIC development across all elementary grades. MCPS applied for a Federal Investment in Innovation (i3) Fund Grant to support the curriculum development. MCPS also began work with Pearson, LLC, an education services company, to develop a public-private partnership around curriculum development. Securing a match contribution from a private entity was a requirement of the i3 grant; MCPS developed an arrangement with Pearson that could continue the EIC development whether MCPS was awarded the grant or not.

MCPS was awarded the highly competitive three-year Federal i3 Grant in April 2010 and the ensuing curriculum development process was named Project Northstar. The new curriculum implementation has been since renamed Curriculum 2.0; some descriptive materials that have been distributed to inform parents of the new curriculum are attached at circles 4-5.

The Board of Education has received periodic updates on the curriculum development and implementation. The following memoranda are attached to provide additional context:

- July 2011: update on the EIC implementation, including communication efforts, professional development, and student assessments (circles 1-5)
- January 2012: update on Pearson partnership (circles 6-7)
- May 2012: update on current school year 2012-2013 Curriculum 2.0 implementation (circles 8-11)
- May 2012: summary of first year grant evaluation report (circles 12-15)

PROJECT UPDATE

FY13 is the final year of the Federal grant. For the current school year 2012-2013, Curriculum 2.0 is being implemented in all schools in Kindergarten through Grade 3. New curriculum for Grades 4-5 is currently under development. MCPS anticipates Grades 4-5 completion in the spring for implementation in the 2013-2014 school year. At that time the new curriculum will be fully developed and implemented across all elementary schools and grades.

Council staff understands that while the primary element of the project will then be complete, it is not a static effort. MCPS continues to review and refine aspects of the curriculum based on teacher and student experience and feedback. MCPS staff also reports that an important element is determining needs for ongoing related professional development and training, particularly given some of the recent budget reductions in staff development.

The Federal grant included a requirement and funding for external evaluation following each grant year. The first evaluation report was presented to the Board on May 23, 2012 (summary memorandum on circles 12-15). This report focused on preliminary data and responses from teachers and implementation team members. The preliminary survey responses indicated positive responses to the curriculum but emphasized the need for more coordinated information with staff and parents about the transition. MCPS reports (circle 14) steps taken to address some of the concerns raised in the first year evaluation process.

BUDGET UPDATE

The three year budget summary for the Federal grant is shown on circle 16. The grant primarily supports 11 positions to develop and implement the curriculum. MCPS staff states that the positions were hired as three-year term positions; as such, the term positions will expire with the Federal grant at the end of FY13. MCPS staff states that the employees in these positions will have opportunities to take other available positions in the system in FY14, for example as classroom teachers, staff development teachers, or assistant principals. Whether the curriculum development positions are continued in MCPS through tax-supported funds or through the entrepreneurial activities fund will be a budget decision going into FY14.

In addition to the Federal grant funds, MCPS received both in-kind contributions through its arrangement with Pearson and a total of \$1.25 million in direct funding. The direct funding is appropriated through the entrepreneurial activities fund. MCPS staff reports that the Pearson

funding has been used primarily to support professional development for teachers, as well as some technology contractual support.

MCPS also reports that it has to date spent less of the Pearson funding than originally expected. For FY12, MCPS reports that a total of \$225,976 was spent and for FY13 MCPS projects spending approximately \$300,000. At this anticipated spending level, MCPS could end FY13 with as much as \$800,000 of the Pearson up-front contribution left to support continuing curriculum development and implementation needs.

Part of the arrangement with Pearson was that MCPS would receive royalties from the future sale of curriculum. MCPS provides the following update on that process:

...Pearson Education's development of a nationally available curriculum based on MCPS Curriculum 2.0 is an entirely separate process. Pearson takes the centrally-developed MCPS curriculum files and adapts them for use in multiple states and converts them to a technology platform that can be used in many districts. This process lags behind MCPS development. Field testing by Pearson was conducted in the Spring of 2012 and will continue throughout the 2012-2013 school year. Pearson anticipates that its first paying customers will begin use in the 2014-2015 school year. As a result of the Pearson implementation timeline, no royalties have been generated at this time.

DISCUSSION ISSUES

As the grant period draws to a close, it appears that MCPS is in a transition period between a phase of intensive curriculum development and a phase of evaluating and refining the curriculum and its implementation.

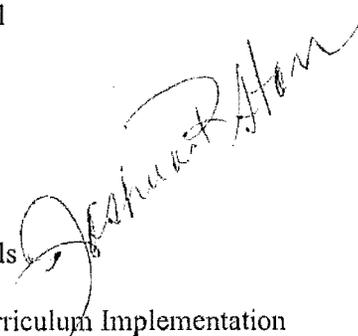
The Committee may want to discuss with MCPS representatives the elements and next steps of this transition and assessment process. Determining the next steps will depend in large part on two variables: what curriculum development needs the Board will identify to meet its instructional goals and what financial resources will ultimately be available to support them. Curriculum development needs will include what is necessary to continue to support the elementary curriculum effort as well as any other curricular areas that may need to be addressed. Resources may include remaining Pearson up-front funding as well as forthcoming royalties of an uncertain amount. Some decisions will be made as part of the FY14 budget process, which is underway now, while others will be made at the conclusion of the grant next year. **The Committee may be able to better understand in discussions today how these various elements will be assessed and in what general timeframes. The Committee will also want to continue to follow the Board's decision making for FY14 and beyond in this important area.**

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

July 28, 2011

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Joshua P. Starr, Superintendent of Schools 

Subject: Update on the Elementary Integrated Curriculum Implementation

As we approach the beginning of the 2011–2012 school year, I would like to update you on several efforts in place to support schools in anticipation of the full implementation of the Elementary Integrated Curriculum (EIC) in Kindergarten and Grade 1. Schools also have the option to voluntarily implement the EIC in Grade 2. The 25 elementary schools participating in the Online Assessment and Reporting System (OARS) will implement the EIC in Grade 2, to ensure alignment with our elementary OARS report card.

As the 2010–2011 school year came to a close, our elementary school principals signaled to us that they needed more support to fully implement the EIC with confidence and fidelity. My staff met with a small group of principal representatives throughout the month of June to ascertain their needs and agree on the support needed to ensure a successful implementation this fall. Their work focused on three topics: 1) communication, 2) professional development, and 3) assessment. I am pleased to report that based on productive collaboration, principals and central services staff agree that we are well positioned to proceed with full implementation in Kindergarten and Grade 1 and voluntary implementation in Grade 2.

Communication

First, I would like to inform you that staff has been working with the Office of Communications to facilitate clear communications with staff and parents about the EIC. To that end, we are now referring to the Elementary Integrated Curriculum as Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Curriculum 2.0. Staff believes this simpler name will be easier to remember, and in much the way that we consider technology upgrades, will be considered an improvement upon the original. There is no question that our existing curriculum has been effective over the past 12 years. We believe Curriculum 2.0 will be even better at engaging students and teachers. Upgrades in Curriculum 2.0 are based on a strong body of research and intensify the focus on teaching the whole child and on the critical and creative thinking skills that are so important to being successful both in school and in life.

To support schools to effectively make this transition, communication materials have been developed that include a letter from me to families and a flyer describing the main upgrades to the curriculum. The letter (Attachment A) and flyer (Attachment B) will be enclosed in local school summer mailings. Both of these documents have been translated into the five most frequently spoken languages in MCPS.

To make Curriculum 2.0 easier to understand at a glance for busy parents we boiled the essence of the curriculum down into three simple messages:

- **New internationally driven standards in math, reading, and writing**
Math, reading, and writing are based on new, strengthened standards, also called the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These strengthened standards, adopted by Maryland last year, describe the content that students must learn at each grade level and are designed to help U.S. students compete favorably with students around the world.
- **Renewed focus on teaching the whole child**
The curriculum provides more instructional focus on subjects such as the arts, information literacy, science, social studies, and physical education by blending them with math, reading, and writing. Students will receive instruction across all subjects in the early grades.
- **Integrated thinking, reasoning, and creativity**
The curriculum is designed to do an even better job of teaching MCPS students the academic, creative and critical thinking skills that build confidence and success and prepare children for a lifetime of learning.

Other communication materials include a revised MCPS Curriculum 2.0 website set to go live on August 5, 2011. The website, at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/2.0/ will house a variety of information on Curriculum 2.0, including frequently asked questions, parent guides, videos, and more descriptive information about the philosophy and research related to the curriculum. To illustrate changes to mathematics directly related to the state's adoption of the internationally driven CCSS, we created a video that can be accessed at the following address: www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/integrated/math/. Schools also will be provided with a short 3-minute video for Back-to-School or Curriculum nights, along with PowerPoint presentations articulating key messages developed to promote consistency in communication. In addition, the Department of Family and Community Partnerships (DFCP) will conduct nine Parent Academy classes across the county this fall to give parents an opportunity to learn more about the improved curriculum. DFCP staff also will lead a series of community information meetings throughout the district at the beginning of the school year, beginning with information sessions at the Back-to-School Fair in August.

Professional Development

Reductions to the budget over the past few years have resulted in cuts to staff development resources, including local school staff development substitute time, as well as funding constraints for face-to-face professional development for all implementing teachers in the summer or during the school year. As a result, during the 2010–2011 school year, we utilized a model that operates to train core teams of local school leaders to provide job-embedded professional development at school. In response to requests from principals and teachers to provide more professional development opportunities for other school staff, during the 2011–2012 school year, we will increase the core team membership to include a teacher at each implementing grade level. For those schools that do not have a math content coach (MCC), a math representative also can participate in core team trainings.

These math representatives will attend several of the MCC trainings throughout the year to build their math content knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of the CCSS and accompanying math practices.

Finally, to build the capacity of all school-based instructional staff implementing the EIC, 1.5 substitute days will be allocated to each teacher to facilitate collaborative planning and professional development. These substitute days will be funded using some of the proceeds received from our Pearson partnership.

Assessment

Changes in mathematics related to the Maryland State Department of Education's adoption of the internationally driven CCSS, will affect not only what is taught, but also how it is taught, and how it is assessed. These changes have resulted in new mathematical practices as well as new formative and summative assessments. Some anxiety and discomfort accompany these changes as instructional staff learn to plan using new standards and indicators, evaluate using new assessments, and monitor the use of new tools. Assessments in the EIC include five to eight checks for understanding per week aligned with the Sample Learning Tasks, and marking period formative assessments. Measures of Academic Progress-Primary Grades will be used as a benchmark assessment in Kindergarten through Grade 2. Working hand-in-hand with our principals and teachers, we feel certain that these changes will result in a stronger mathematics program that will well prepare all of our students for higher-level mathematics in secondary school.

Managing change requires attention to the details of the process, but more importantly, it requires attention to the individuals involved in the change. We will continue to collect feedback on our work and make modifications based on the needs of our students, school-based staff, and parent community. It is through honest two-way conversations, a willingness to listen and learn, and the ability to recognize that all stakeholders are onboard that successful transitions occur within an organization.

I am confident that our Curriculum 2.0 will continue to set the standard for the nation and will ensure that our students have an exceptional foundation for secondary school.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Martin M. Creel, director, Department of Enriched and Innovative Programs, at 301-279-8529.

JPS:jls

Attachments

Copy to:
Executive Staff
Mr. Creel



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org
MARYLAND

August 2011



Dear MCPS Families:

I am excited to tell you about some important upgrades to the curriculum in our kindergarten and first grade classes this fall, and in second grade classes at several elementary schools.

For the past two years, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has been testing some significant enhancements to the elementary school curriculum. You may have heard about this upgraded curriculum—the Elementary Integrated Curriculum or EIC. There are so many improvements to the curriculum that we are simplifying the name and calling it MCPS Curriculum 2.0, reflecting the way upgrades in technology changes often are described.

Although our existing MCPS curriculum has been strong and effective, we believe Curriculum 2.0 will be even better at engaging students and teachers. Curriculum 2.0 upgrades are based on a strong body of research and intensify the focus on teaching the whole child and on the critical and creative thinking skills that are so important to being successful both in school and in life.

Parents have been asking for more instruction in the arts, sciences and social studies. These topics have been crowded out at times over the past decade because more attention has been given to reading and math due to federal accountability mandates. Curriculum 2.0 will provide more instructional focus on the arts, information literacy, science, social studies and physical education. By blending these subjects with the core content areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, students will receive instruction across all subjects in the early grades. In addition, research has shown that well-rounded students are more successful students.

At the same time, math, reading *and* writing will be strengthened significantly by being based upon new internationally driven standards, also called the Common Core State Standards. These standards, adopted by Maryland last year, describe the content that students must learn at each grade level and are structured to help students in the United States compete favorably with students around the world. MCPS incorporated these new internationally driven standards into Curriculum 2.0 to ensure that all subject areas are taught and to ensure a renewed focus on teaching the whole child.

In short, Curriculum 2.0 is designed to do an even better job of teaching MCPS students the academic, creative and critical thinking skills that build confidence and success and prepare children for a lifetime of learning.

After implementation of the curriculum in kindergarten and first grade this year, we will roll out Curriculum 2.0 to each new elementary grade one year at a time. As you learn more about our improved curriculum, I'm sure you will have some questions. There will be a number of opportunities to discuss the new curriculum and learn more about it when school opens this fall. We also will have regular updates on our website to keep parents informed. Please visit www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/2.0/ often and give us your feedback. If you have immediate questions about how it is working in your child's school, please contact the principal at your child's school.

Sincerely,

Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

MCPS CURRICULUM 2.0

Empowering Students • Connecting Content • Fostering Creativity

There are so many upgrades to the Elementary Integrated Curriculum, we've taken to calling it Curriculum 2.0!

New internationally driven standards in math, reading, and writing

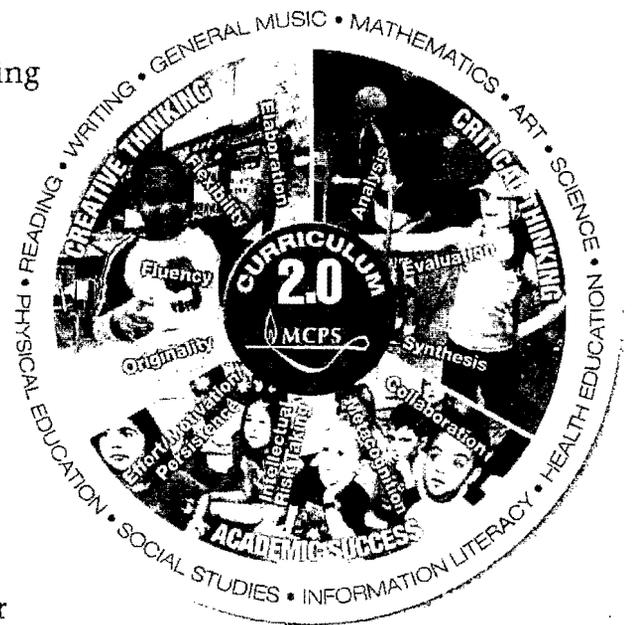
Renewed focus on teaching the whole child

- Nurtures skills that build confidence and success
- Engages students beyond reading and math, to spark greater interest in science, social studies, information literacy, art, music, physical education, and health

Integrates thinking, reasoning, and creativity for a lifetime of learning

- Enhances learning by connecting subjects

MCPS CURRICULUM 2.0 is built around developing students' critical and creative thinking skills, as well as essential academic success skills, so that students are well prepared for a lifetime of learning. We are upgrading the existing MCPS curriculum for the elementary grades in a way that will better engage students and teachers, and dedicate more learning time to subjects such as the arts, information literacy, science, social studies and physical education. By blending these subjects with the core content areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, students will receive robust, engaging instruction across all subjects in the early grades – in short, we are building a stronger foundation at the elementary level.



To learn more—www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/2.0/

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

January 17, 2012

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Joshua P. Starr, Superintendent of Schools 

Subject: Update on the Partnership with Pearson Education, Inc.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Pearson Education, Inc. (Pearson) entered into a partnership in June 2010 to develop a unique integrated curriculum to prepare elementary school students for a lifetime of learning. The Elementary Integrated Curriculum (EIC) (now called Curriculum 2.0 in MCPS) is based on the internationally driven Common Core State Standards and has at its foundation the successful and highly rigorous curriculum developed by MCPS in 2002. Curriculum 2.0 provides teachers with a single-source online instructional guide that demonstrates connections among all subjects; builds on the existing MCPS content-specific curriculum, and provides just-in-time multimedia professional development.

A unique characteristic of Curriculum 2.0 is the integration of thinking and academic success skills, or those skills that contribute to students' ability to solve problems creatively and collaboratively, interpret multiple perspectives, analyze complex data, and understand connections among a variety of ideas. These skills have been identified in the educational research as the tools necessary to participate and thrive in the 21st century global knowledge economy.

MCPS began the development process for Curriculum 2.0 in 2007 as part of the curriculum review process articulated in Board of Education Policy IFA: *Curriculum*. This process included ongoing stakeholder input and feedback; research on integrated curriculum models as well as critical thinking, creative thinking, and academic success skills; and components of existing content-specific curriculum guides.

In June 2010, MCPS entered into a contractual agreement with Pearson to secure financial resources, services, and professional expertise to accelerate the development and implementation of all components of the EIC by 2013. On August 4, 2010, MCPS was awarded one of 49 Investing in Innovation (i3) grants that required a 20 percent match from a private or nonprofit partner. Pearson provided the match. Through the partnership contract and the i3 match, Pearson invested \$2.55 million to accelerate the development and implementation of the EIC and share best practices beyond MCPS—\$1.25 million in cash and \$1.3 million in-kind. In-kind funds facilitate the collaborative creation of professional development (short video clips, online courses, multimedia presentations) and the development of assessments (performance-based

assessment of the Thinking and Academic Success Skills). Partnership monies facilitate implementation of Curriculum 2.0 in MCPS by funding teacher substitutes for collaborative planning, curriculum study, and local school and core-team professional development. The partnership also provides MCPS with access to national consultants with expertise in the Common Core State Standards and the Thinking and Academic Success Skills. Pearson will use their assets to conduct a validity and efficacy study of the national product, and MCPS will have access to the study results.

Two versions of the EIC are being developed. The i3 grant funds 12 MCPS staff members to develop the curriculum that is being implemented in our schools, retaining autonomy in all curriculum content. MCPS provides Pearson with the curriculum files and they prepare the curriculum for the national market. Pearson and the MCPS team meet at least monthly either virtually or face-to-face to review progress and share product information. The MCPS Curriculum Team also designs and delivers professional development for MCPS core teams from all 131 elementary schools.

A requirement of the i3 Grant is an external evaluation. RMC Research Corporation, based in Arlington, Virginia, was selected, through a competitive bid process, to conduct the evaluation. The evaluation will assess both implementation and outcome measures. Findings on the implementation will be available periodically throughout the three-year grant period, with outcome data available following the termination of the grant in 2013.

Kindergarten through Grade 2 curriculum was completed in 2011. Grade 3 curriculum will be completed in April 2012, and Grades 4 and 5 curriculums are scheduled for completion and delivery to Pearson in December 2012. Pearson has selected districts to begin piloting components of the national Kindergarten integrated curriculum beginning in January 2012.

I will continue to keep you updated on the status of our partnership with Pearson throughout the grant period. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Erick Lang, associate superintendent, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs, at 301-279-3411.

JPS:sjl

Copy to:

Dr. Lacey

Mr. Edwards

Mr. Lang

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

May 8, 2012

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Joshua P. Starr, Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Update on Curriculum 2.0 Implementation for 2012–2013

This memorandum provides an update on the continuing implementation of Curriculum 2.0 for the 2012–2013 school year. Plans include rollout at Grade 3; use of standards-based report cards for kindergarten–Grade 3 students, including an electronic grade book, in all elementary schools; and the creation of a traditional electronic grade book for Grades 4–5 in those schools that currently are not using standards-based grading and reporting.

Background

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) began the development process for Curriculum 2.0 in 2007. This process included ongoing stakeholder input and feedback; research on integrated curriculum models as well as critical and creative thinking, and academic success skills; and components of existing content-specific curriculum guides. A unique characteristic of Curriculum 2.0 is the integration of thinking and academic success skills, or those skills that contribute to students' ability to creatively solve problems collaboratively, interpret multiple perspectives, analyze complex data, and understand connections among a variety of ideas. These skills have been identified in the educational research as the tools necessary to participate and thrive in the 21st century knowledge-based global economy.

Voluntary implementation of Curriculum 2.0 began in 2009–2010 in kindergarten. During 2010–2011, implementation was voluntary for both kindergarten and Grade 1. This year, all schools were required to implement Curriculum 2.0 in kindergarten and Grade 1, with voluntary implementation in Grade 2.

Implementation of Curriculum 2.0 at Grade 3

Beginning in summer 2011 through this school year, Curriculum 2.0 professional development has been provided to core teams of school leadership staff members and job-alike groups

(administrators, reading specialists, staff development teachers, and math content coaches/math representatives). Additionally, substitute time has been allocated to schools for collaborative planning and curriculum study by grade-level and/or school teams. Central office staff members are supporting individual schools through visits and consultation.

Many Grade 3 teachers are participating in local school Curriculum 2.0 professional development this year. Identified Grade 3 teachers from each school attended the April 2012 core team training, and will attend core team training in June 2012. The Grade 3 curriculum was posted in the Instruction Center on *myMCPS* the first week of April 2012, allowing Grade 3 teachers to begin to work with the curriculum almost six months prior to actual classroom implementation. To preview the curriculum and begin planning this spring, Grade 3 teachers were allocated substitute time (one day).

Additionally, in January 2012, the Elementary Curriculum Implementation Self-Assessment was used with all elementary school principals to reflect on their implementation status of Curriculum 2.0, as well as their readiness to implement Curriculum 2.0 in Grade 3 for the 2012–2013 school year. Following completion of the self-assessment, community superintendents and directors of school performance met with principals to gather school responses, identify effective practices to share across clusters, and collect feedback that outlined suggestions for improvements.

Standards-Based Grading and Reporting for Kindergarten–Grade 3

During the past six years, a cadre of our elementary schools has been working with us to develop a standards-based grading and reporting system that includes standards-based report cards and an electronic grade book. Montgomery County Board of Education Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, states that grading and reporting practices must align with the MCPS curriculum. In support of this policy, new report cards have been developed for kindergarten–Grade 3 students that align with Curriculum 2.0 and the Common Core State Standards. This year, the 25 elementary Online Achievement and Reporting System (OARS) schools have been piloting these report cards and helping to ensure that they support the instructional program, facilitate teachers' work in fair and accurate grading and reporting, and are user-friendly and informative for parents. During the past two years, parent representatives from the 25 elementary OARS schools have worked with our curriculum office to provide feedback and input on features of standards-based grading and reporting, including the report card. As a result, the modified report card is more user-friendly and informative for parents.

In addition to the standards-based report cards, OARS includes an electronic grade book that allows teachers to manage and manipulate a variety of data, automatically calculate grades, and monitor multiple measurement topics. With this tool, teachers may more easily maintain and manage a wide variety of data in an effective and timesaving manner.

Ongoing Support for Curriculum 2.0 and Standards-Based Grading and Reporting

Beginning in March 2012 and continuing this summer and throughout the 2012–2013 school year, professional development and technical assistance to support Curriculum 2.0 and standards-based grading and reporting will be provided to the following audiences:

- Principals
- Local school teaching and learning representatives (standards-based grading and reporting liaisons)
- All implementing grade-level teachers
- Other school-based teacher leaders and specialists

These professional development opportunities will be differentiated to allow for early exposure to content prior to implementation; just-in-time help and support at the local school during initial implementation; coaching from a colleague with strong content knowledge; and collaborative learning in professional learning communities.

Additionally, instructional technology specialists will be available to schools during preservice week and throughout the first marking period to provide on-site support as schools transition to using the electronic grade book. Core team training will continue for Grade 3 and substitute time will be allocated to teachers for planning and continued curriculum study.

We believe we are building the skills and knowledge of our school staff members and have the momentum to implement Curriculum 2.0 in Grade 3 in all schools next year, continue implementation in kindergarten–Grade 2, and integrate standards-based grading and reporting.

Electronic Grade Book for Grades 4–5

Teachers of Grades 4–5 students will have an electronic grade book in which they will manage assignments, record data related to student performance, and share information with parents. The provisioning of the electronic grade book for Grades 4–5 will help facilitate report card preparation, enable the completion of report cards from any computer, and provide teachers with a more efficient and streamlined approach to recording student data and reporting the data to students and parents.

Collaboration with Stakeholders

Throughout the year, we have worked closely with our employee association partners as well as parent and community stakeholders to provide information, answer questions, and receive input and feedback on Curriculum 2.0 to improve our products, services, and communication. These efforts include the following:

- Regular meetings with the Montgomery County Education Association Councils on Teaching and Learning
- Fourteen Parent Academy workshops

- Meetings with individual schools/clusters, upon request
- Monthly Elementary Principals' Curriculum Update meetings
- Quarterly Curriculum Advisory Assembly meetings

Communication Plan

As we prepare for the full implementation of Curriculum 2.0 and the use of standards-based grading and reporting in kindergarten–Grade 3, we are working with our principals, teachers, and parents to create multimedia, multilingual communications materials. This work will be informed by our learning over the past several years as we piloted standards-based grading and reporting in the 25 elementary OARS schools. We understand how critical it is to provide clear, concise, and consistent information to our schools to use with parents and the broader community as we make this transition in curriculum and instruction as well as grading and reporting.

As we did last summer in preparation for full-implementation of Curriculum 2.0 in kindergarten and Grade 1, and voluntary implementation in Grade 2, we are developing a multimedia communication plan. A sample of items in the plan includes the following:

- Newsletter article and summary points for school leaders to use with parents and staff members this spring to support the transition.
- Materials for Back-to-School Night, parent conferences, and curriculum nights will be distributed this summer and in early fall.
- Curriculum 2.0 posters on Thinking and Academic Success Skills for the classroom will be disseminated prior to the opening of school in August.
- Information for inclusion in local schools' summer mailings will be forwarded to principals in July.

At the table for today's discussion are Mr. Sherwin A. Collette, chief technology officer, Office of the Chief Technology Officer; Mr. Erick J. Lang, associate superintendent, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs; Mrs. Ebony Y. Langford-Brown, director, Elementary School Instruction and Achievement; and an elementary school principal.

JPS:EJL:sjl

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

May 23, 2012

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Joshua P. Starr, Superintendent of Schools 

Subject: Investing in Innovation Grant External Evaluation—Curriculum 2.0
Year 1 Report

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with a summary of the Year 1 report of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Investing in Innovation (i3) development grant. RMC Research Corporation (RMC), the external evaluator, submitted the attached report covering the first project evaluation year, March 2011 through March 2012.

Background

The United States Department of Education awarded MCPS an i3 development grant in 2010. The three-year grant period operates from the 2010–2011 through the 2012–2013 school years. The purpose of this federal program is to provide competitive grants to applicants with a record of improving student achievement to expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative practices that are demonstrated to have an impact on improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, increasing high school graduation rates, or increasing college enrollment and completion rates.

The MCPS i3 grant is supporting the development and implementation of Curriculum 2.0, a unique elementary integrated curriculum. Critical and creative thinking skills and academic success skills form the nucleus around which reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts are carefully planned. The proposed goal was to increase the number of graduates in MCPS and across the nation who are college ready and eliminate the disproportionality in college-ready graduates by race/ethnicity or income. The project's objectives included:

- Develop digital, kindergarten through Grade 5, curricula and assessments that integrate the four core subjects, along with the arts, around critical thinking and academic success skills that may be adopted by school districts nationally.
- Create an Online Learning Community (OLC) that supports professional development focused on successful implementation of the integrated curriculum and assessments.
- Increase percentages of traditionally underrepresented students performing at advanced levels along the *Seven Keys to College and Career Readiness* trajectory.

Four key Curriculum 2.0 components include: curriculum and assessments, district and school level structures and supports, professional development, and the OLC.

The implementation of Curriculum 2.0 is staggered to allow for learning and improvement as each grade level initially experiences the curriculum. In 2010–2011, MCPS provided ongoing professional development to core teams of instructional leaders from each implementing school during a year of voluntary implementation for kindergarten and Grade 1. In 2011–2012, professional development continued as Curriculum 2.0 implementation was required for kindergarten and Grade 1, with voluntary implementation for Grade 2.

Summary of First-year Evaluative Activities

- April 2011–July 2011: RMC worked with Mr. Marc Moss, Abt Associates, i3 grant technical assistant, to develop required documents: (1) Project Model, (2) Fidelity Matrix, and (3) Project Design Summary.
- August 2011–October 2011: RMC developed two questionnaires to probe perceptions regarding professional development and supports offered as part of the Curriculum 2.0 implementation for administration to kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, as well as school leadership members of the core team.
- January 2012–February 2012: Administration of the questionnaire was postponed until January due to the administration of an MCPS Curriculum 2.0 Self-Assessment and a change in RMC staff.
- February 2012–March 2012: RMC randomly selected nine schools for site visits, developed communications to schools, and created a site visit manual that included observation and interview protocols.

Analysis of Questionnaires

RMC received a 63 percent response rate for core team members with 223 of the 354 core team members responding. Of the 1,655 teachers who were asked to complete the survey, 571 responded, a response rate of 35 percent. Due to the low response rate for the teachers' survey, responses cannot be generalized.

Common themes found in both surveys include the following:

- Positive responses to the curriculum

Supports received from district and school leadership

- Professional development received

Challenges that were raised by both groups of survey participants include the following:

- Availability and use of resources to support implementation
- Underutilization of the OLC, particularly by teachers
- Lack of time for teachers to explore the curriculum, collaborate, and plan in-depth lessons
- Difficulty for teachers and students to make connections across content areas

- Lack of sufficient information for core team members and teachers to communicate effectively with parents regarding the curriculum

Although the Thinking and Academic Success Skills are well integrated into the design of Curriculum 2.0, connections among content areas are suggested and encouraged. As teachers use and become more comfortable with the curriculum, they will make natural connections across content areas and post their lessons in the OLC for other teachers to review and use.

These themes—planning time and professional development, availability of curriculum resources, use of the OLC, and communication—have been ongoing concerns through this first year of full implementation of Curriculum 2.0 in kindergarten and Grade 1. In response, the curriculum and technology offices have undertaken the following:

- Created an alternative method for ordering materials and adjusted curriculum sequencing to eliminate use of common materials at the same time for different grades.
- Allocated substitute time for grade-level teams to plan and study the curriculum.
- Increased the members of core teams to include grade-level team leaders and a math representative for schools without a math content coach.
- Held 14 Parent Academy workshops focusing on Curriculum 2.0; provided numerous parent information meetings in response to cluster and local school requests; and created Web resources, PowerPoint presentations, and videos for principals to share with parents.

As teachers become more familiar with Curriculum 2.0 and the site on *myMCPS*, they will begin to upload their own lessons and resources, rate other lessons and resources, and engage in conversations using the OLC.

Next Steps

Beginning in March 2012 and continuing this summer and throughout the 2012–2013 school year, professional development to support Curriculum 2.0 will be provided for the following audiences:

- Principals
- Implementing grade-level teachers
- Other school-based teacher leaders and specialists

These professional development opportunities will be differentiated to allow for early exposure to content prior to implementation; just-in-time help and support at the local school during initial implementation; coaching from a colleague with strong content knowledge; and collaborative learning in professional learning communities.

As we prepare for the full implementation of Curriculum 2.0 and the use of standards-based grading and reporting in kindergarten through Grade 3, we are working with our principals, teachers, and parents to create multimedia, multilingual communications materials. This work will be informed by our learning over the past several years as we piloted standards-based grading and reporting in the 25 elementary Online Achievement and Reporting System schools.

We understand that it is critical to provide clear, concise, and consistent information to staff in our schools to use with parents and the broader community as we make this transition in curriculum and instruction as well as grading and reporting.

Please refer any questions to Mr. Erick J. Lang, associate superintendent, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs, at 301-279-3411.

JPS:sjl

Attachment

Copy to:
Executive Staff

**Project North Star
Three-Year Summary**

Project North Star	FTE	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Indirect Costs		46,512	55,900	55,900	158,312
Project Supervisor	1.0	0	113,572	113,572	227,144
Elementary Intergrated Curriculum Instructional Specialists	11.0	934,600	1,028,060	1,028,060	2,990,720
Contractual Services		89,250	89,250	89,250	267,750
Office Supplies		10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
Travel Local		5,500	6,600	6,600	18,700
Travel Out		14,250	14,250	14,250	42,750
Workers Compensation		3,738	4,567	4,567	12,872
Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA)		71,497	87,335	87,335	246,167
Employee Benefits		126,630	151,956	151,956	430,542
Retirement		166,826	203,781	203,781	574,388
Unemployment		85	102	102	289
		1,468,888	1,765,373	1,765,373	4,999,634