

PLAINFIELD  
2007 Curriculum Audit and  
Professional Development Review

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# **Curriculum Audit Report**

## **Plainfield School District**

**February 12 - February 15, 2007**

### **PART 1.**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

##### **Team Members:**

Don Schreiber  
Terry Burik

Bill Hoffman, Arlene Pincus, Carmen Mitcho, Vincent Capraro, Barbara Sachs, Marilyn Barouch, Irving Marchall, James Lerman, Sam Citron, Willa Pryor

##### **Audit of District Curriculum Materials and Professional Development Contracts**

February 12 and February 13, 2007 by Don Schreiber and Terry Burik

##### **School Visitations and Dates:**

Evergreen	ES	Feb. 14
Clinton	ES	Feb. 14
Cedarbrook	ES	Feb. 14
Plainfield	HS	Feb. 14 & Feb. 15
Maxson	MS	Feb. 14 & Feb. 15

##### **Focus and Questions:**

The focus of this report is to document evidence pertaining to the following overarching questions:

1. Is there a Board approved curriculum that is aligned to NJQSAC elements in existence for all of the subject content areas?
2. To what degree is the District's curriculum being implemented in the classrooms?
3. Is the academic program supported by staff development?
4. What staff development has the district had since September 2005 and what has it cost?

## **Curriculum Audit Report Process Used in all School Districts**

The charge for this project was to document the evidence in support of the above overarching questions and not to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction and / or curriculum resources. To achieve the aim, 57 retired superintendents, staff developers, principals and supervisors as well as university personnel were selected to visit the districts and record evidence available to an observer.

At the beginning of the process, two members of the district team examined the written curriculum in each content area required by the state and listed the materials outlined in the district documents. They noted the presence or absence of the following important curricular elements

- The curriculum is clear about what is taught to children.
- There are references of the NJCCCS to the curriculum.
- The curriculum includes grade-level benchmarks and / or interim assessments.
- The curriculum contains a pacing chart / scope and sequence.
- The curriculum contains references to technology.
- The curriculum identifies instructional resources.

The information from the written curriculum review was given to school visitors who used it in their visits to the classrooms in selected schools. (The schools in each district were selected by the process developed by the director of the QSAC research) The classroom observations served as evidence of the extent to which the written curriculum was being implemented. The observers looked for evidence that the teachers used the district curriculum to make decisions about what to teach. They noted teachers' expectations as expressed in their objectives, observed student work as displayed in the rooms and hallways and recorded what was happening in the classroom during the five minutes they were in the class. For this latter observation they used the protocols set forth in the book, The Three-minute Classroom Walk-through by Carolyn Downey, Betty Steffy, Fenwick English, Larry Frase and William Poston, JR.

The District's professional development contracts and staff surveys serve as evidence that staff development supports the instructional program and serves the needs of the system. While all staff development was examined, only contracts near or above \$100,000 are reported individually.

Finally, a short survey of teachers in each of the schools was distributed to the teachers and collected anonymously. The results give some sense of whether the staff values the district's staff development efforts and whether they report that they use the information in their practice.

All data collected for this project are called an Appendix and included in a file held in the Department of Education office. In addition to the completed forms, sample forms that were used in the whole project are also included in this appendix.

# Plainfield Public Schools

## Curriculum Audit

### Overview

The Plainfield curriculum is underway. All the content areas in all grade levels have been worked on during the last two years but none is complete.

More important is that there is little evidence of the use of any of the curriculum documents in the Plainfield classrooms. Few Plainfield High School and Middle School teachers knew of these materials and most appeared to have limited strategies for attracting students to learning. The visits to the elementary schools were characterized by more interesting classrooms and more examples of active students. The most coherent educational program, with maximum differentiation of learning activities was observed at Cedarbrook Elementary School where there were a large number of self-contained special education classrooms.

#### **1. Is there a written curriculum in all content areas that include all elements cited in NJQSAC?**

Plainfield's written curriculum for the elementary and secondary grades as documented by a recent audit is missing key components making it difficult to support a coherent program consistent with the state standards. The various components of the curriculum have, for the most part, been approved by the board in the last 2 years.

Elementary language arts and mathematics guides include essential questions, reference special education and English Language Learners, and cite cross content connections. No guidance for benchmarks and assessments was noted by the visitors. Scope and sequence charts for language arts and mathematics are currently under development by select teaching staff. Technology integration is addressed by the inclusion of website resources. The science curriculum has no documentation of board approval and is tied to science kits that are used throughout the early grades (K – 3). It is not clear that the science kits are aligned with NJCCCS. There is no evidence of a coherent science curriculum for grades 4 and 5.

The middle school language arts and math curriculum, dated 2006, provide content sequence guidance that is aligned or connected to the state standards. Both disciplines have frequent references to cross-content indicators and activities. Technology integration is addressed by the provision of website resources and the inclusion of specific software training (PowerPoint, Inspiration, etc.) that provides application experiences for students. The science curriculum is not dated, but contains many references to the NJCCCS. It doesn't reference teaching materials or interdisciplinary activities/concepts, provides no guidance for pacing, scope and sequence, assessments and/or benchmarks, or technology integration. The social studies curriculum, dated in this current school year, provides the actual NJCCCS as a resource, but no further guidance in the form of a curriculum map, pacing chart, scope/sequence chart or assessment/benchmark suggestions.

The high school math curriculum is undated and uneven, providing pacing and scope guidance for Algebra I and II and Geometry, but no information on technology integration, benchmarks or assessments. No references on textbook or support materials were found by the auditors and no evidence of correlation to the state standards. Similarly, the high school science curriculum has little or no connection to the CCCS in biology, but does provide content indicator references for physical and earth science. The high school physical education/health curriculum, dated. Fall, 2001, references the original standards and is currently undergoing a revision. Grades K – 5 phys ed/health curriculum was updated in November, 2006.

The high school English curriculum, dated Dec. 1, 2006, contains pacing, interdisciplinary references and suggestions, and technology integration for all four grade levels. The social studies curriculum also provides support in the form of essential questions, assessments, and pacing guides. The visual and performing arts

curriculum, approved during the 2005 – 06 school year, offers interdisciplinary pacing guides that tie in with all the core content classes and features websites that encourage technology integration.

## **2. Is this curriculum being used in the classrooms to manage instruction?**

### **Plainfield High School**

Visitors to 33 classrooms in Plainfield High School often found teachers without a curriculum guide or lesson plans (“forgot it”, “waiting for new text to arrive”, “can’t find it”) . In some cases, when the visitor walked in, the lesson plan for the day was scrapped without a reason and replaced with a “read aloud, round robin” lesson that had little to do with the stated/posted objective. Some teachers appeared to be teaching without a clear sense of purpose and direction. Students read aloud, as directed, but with little emotion or interest in content, and discussion was limited to brief questions on vocabulary. Observers reported little evidence of higher order thinking skills being stimulated. Most classes did not have the objective or essential questions posted. Some texts in use are dated (ex. 1995, 1968). Technology use not observed in most classes.

### **Maxson Middle School**

The observers at Plainfield Middle School visited 24 classrooms. They found that most teachers had lesson plans and curriculum guides or copies of the NJCCCS. Approximately one third to one half had no access to pacing guides or support for interdisciplinary activities and related indicators. Some educators had online access to curriculum supports, but they were the exception, not the rule. Objectives, written in SWBAT (students will be able to) format, were found on the chalkboard in most classes. Vague objectives or none at all were observed in classrooms with no guide or map available.

### **Cedarbrook Elementary School**

A significant number of classes at Cedarbrook are self-contained. Visitors observed that virtually all teachers posted the objectives in plain view and there was often clear alignment with the NJCCCS. Lesson plans and curriculum documents were on hand. Classroom activities were well connected to the stated goals of the lessons. Teachers appeared to strive to move students beyond the knowledge and comprehension cognitive stages to the levels of application and evaluation. As one would expect in a special education environment, much of the teaching took place in small groups or in a one-to-one setting. Aides were present in most classes. There were several exceptional examples of interdisciplinary linkages that made learning more exciting and relevant for students. Technology use was evident and students were allowed to demonstrate knowledge in varied ways due to mixed abilities and physical challenges.

### **Clinton Elementary School**

Visitors to this school found many activities taking place that had a strong literacy component. Students often worked in small groups or one-to-one with teacher, student teacher or classroom aide. Word walls, writing stations, computer centers, library “clinics”, and guided reading were just some of the strategies being utilized. Most classrooms had objectives posted on the chalkboard and there was clear correlation between the activities of the class and the stated goals. The objectives focused on student actions more than student understanding. That is, the objectives were directed to what students would do rather than what the students would learn. Computer use was evident in more than half the class visits as independent or small group work, not whole group instruction.

Visits to bilingual and self-contained classes indicated that the same curriculum was in use for special classes as for general education classrooms.

### **Evergreen Elementary School**

Visitors to the K – 5 classes in this school found most teachers possessed curriculum documents, but seemed unfamiliar with them as they were newly delivered or very old. Most classrooms visited were distinguished by posted objectives on chalkboard or in pockets hanging on the wall. Frequently, the activities of the class had nothing to do with the stated objective or taught the objective at a very basic, shallow level. For example, a class with the objective “TSWBAT read and compare numbers” had students playing the card

game “War”, and in another class with the objective “TSWBAT identify phonemes”, students read aloud and made up oral stories with prompts, but with no mention of phonemes by the teacher.

Of the 13 classes visited at Evergreen, only two were teaching a subject other than language arts or math. One class, art, focused on students creating floor plans. The posted objective: “TSWBAT draw floor plan” did not appear to be directly linked to the NJCCCS and although it would be a great example for making interdisciplinary connections, there was no report of linkages to math, science or language arts. The science class observed was conducted by an itinerant teacher with kits. The lesson plan was based on the 1996 standards.

## Professional Development Findings: Plainfield

Plainfield administrators submitted fragmented and very limited documentation reporting 33 professional development activities in the period September 2005 to December 2006, at a total cost of less than \$191,000 (a precise total could not be calculated because at least one contract included multiple services, and the amount dedicated to professional development was not specified). Costs varied from \$75 to \$24,000 per vendor.

The district uses a “Consultant Request Form” that asks key questions, including “How will the staff evaluate the effectiveness of the program?” The few forms that were submitted show that responses to this question were sometimes superficial: “Evaluation forms provided by Staff Development” or “Staff will be engaged during the year in this new process and will receive training and information as a part of their ongoing profession development.” On the other hand, some responses showed at least the basis for true evaluation: “Classroom practice will show evidence of inquiry-based science. Student work and assessments will be reviewed.”

Teacher Professional Development Survey results (see Appendix) indicate that:

- by a narrow margin, respondents tend to agree that they receive high-quality professional development that relates to improving student performance (QSAC C1b), but differ in this regard from school to school (ranging from 2.97 to 3.89 on a scale of 1 to 5);
- by a narrow margin, respondents tend to disagree with the statement that their district or school provides follow-up training, such as coaching or classroom visitations, after professional development activities (QSAC C2), but differ in this regard from school to school (ranging from 2.55 to 3.42 on a scale of 1 to 5);
- 61.5% of respondents report that their district or school sought their input about quality or results of professional development at least once in the past two years (QSAC C1h), but differ in this regard from school to school (range = 53.2% to 89.5%);
- 64.1% of respondents report that their district or school provided professional development about how to improve achievement of student subgroups at least once in the past two years (QSAC C3b), but differ in this regard from school to school (range = 52.1% to 84.2%); and
- 71.1% of respondents report that they have modified their classroom practice as a result of recent professional development activity, but differ in this regard from school to school (range = 60.9% to 94.4%). However, only 39.6% of respondents provided a meaningful example of such modification, as requested.

Variations in survey responses from school to school suggest that the district may need to conduct its own periodic professional development surveys, including items about follow-up training and outcomes, and devote efforts to ensure that teachers in all schools have equal access to high quality professional development as defined by QSAC.

## Teacher Professional Development Survey Results: Plainfield

1. My district or school provides me with high-quality professional development activities that relate to my needs in relation to improving student performance. [1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree]

<u>School</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>Responses</u>
Cedarbrook	3	3	15	9	2	3.13	32
Clinton	0	2	2	11	4	3.89	19
Evergreen	0	9	12	9	7	3.38	37
Maxson MS	2	9	17	15	7	3.32	50
Plainfield HS	12	17	36	26	6	2.97	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>235</b>

2. After professional development activities, my district or school provides follow-up training, such as coaching or classroom visitations. [1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree]

<u>School</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>Responses</u>
Cedarbrook	2	10	13	5	2	2.84	32
Clinton	0	3	7	7	2	3.42	19
Evergreen	3	8	18	5	3	2.92	37
Maxson MS	9	11	18	7	5	2.76	50
Plainfield HS	21	24	31	17	3	2.55	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2.76</b>	<b>234</b>

3. In the past two years, my district or school has sought my input about the quality or the results of the professional development I have received.

<u>School</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Cedarbrook	59.4
Clinton	89.5
Evergreen	77.1
Maxson MS	56.5
Plainfield HS	53.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>61.5</b>

4. In the past two years, my district or school has provided professional development about how to improve achievement of student subgroups.

<u>School</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
Cedarbrook	67.7
Clinton	84.2
Evergreen	82.9
Maxson MS	63.6
Plainfield HS	52.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>64.1</b>

5. I have modified my classroom practice as a direct or indirect result of professional development activity in the period September 2005 to December 2006. If yes, describe how your practice has changed.

<u>School</u>	<u>% Yes</u>	<u>% Providing Example</u>
Cedarbrook	80.6	43.8
Clinton	94.4	57.9

Evergreen	82.9	35.1
Maxson MS	66.7	30.0
Plainfield HS	60.9	30.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>71.1</b>	<b>39.6</b>

*Response Rate*

<u>School</u>	<u>% Faculty Responding</u>
Cedarbrook	72.7%
Clinton	48.7%
Evergreen	82.2%
Maxson MS	53.8%
Plainfield HS	62.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62.3%</b>