

SALEM
2007 Curriculum Audit and
Professional Development Review

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NJ Performance Assessment Alliance

Curriculum Audit Report

Salem School District

January 22 – January 25, 2007

PART 1.

INTRODUCTION

Team Members:

John Battles
Anthony DiPietro

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Audit of District Curriculum Materials and Professional Development Contracts

January 22, and January 23, 2007 by John Battles and Anthony DiPietro

School Visitations and Dates:

John Fenwick ES	Jan. 25
Salem HS	Jan. 24 & Jan. 25
Salem MS	Jan. 24 & Jan. 25

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.

Salem City, New Jersey School District Curriculum Audit

Overview

Salem is using a special type of curriculum document; it is based on technology mapping that provides direction for the teaching staff about what to teach and when to teach it. It includes benchmarks, assessments and technology references as well as showing interdisciplinary possibilities. Where possible, the teachers are using the software for all aspects of the curriculum. Where the technology is not complete, there are few available documents. The elementary school and the middle school classrooms show evidence of technology integration. The elementary school also provided classrooms with a variety of student learning strategies. The middle school had fewer classrooms that used teaching practices beyond “teacher talk.” The high school was engaged in preparation for exams and all classrooms were engaged in teacher directed practice activities.

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

Salem City’s schools use an online curriculum mapping service: TechPaths, which is aligned to the New Jersey standards for all grade levels and all content areas. All teachers have access to the website features including assessments, benchmarks, essential questions, indicators, and unit and lesson plans. All features are based on the state’s curriculum standards. Interdisciplinary integration noted in documents, particularly technology/literacy integration at the middle school level. Such integration was not as common at the high school level.

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

High School

Teachers uniformly have access to *TechPaths* as the curriculum guide and use it for lesson planning, pacing and assessment development. Interdisciplinary integration was observed infrequently in classroom practice. Technology integration was not observed as most classes were engaged in final exam review and teaching was primarily didactic or conducted in student-to-student study group format. Instructional materials often were teacher-designed review sheets. The geometry text in use since 1992, other texts (science, math, literacy) are less than 3 years old.

TechPaths allows teachers to plan online with supports such as links to related standard indicators in other content areas and the ability to search a database of plans created by other faculty members. Most teachers don’t have a printed curriculum guide in their classrooms but can access TechPaths readily on the school computer and at home. Objectives and essential questions linked to the content standards are utilized as evidenced by uniform posting on chalkboards in different classrooms.

Observers visited 42 classrooms at Salem High School and found most to be engaged in teacher-led review activities for impending final exams. Evidence of student work included writing portfolios, historic timelines/murals, and science posters. Students were sometimes found to be engaged in interactive games (Jeopardy) or in small group work. Technology was rarely in use in any of the classes at this time, although the curriculum references technology integration.

Middle School

The online program: TechPaths was the source for curriculum mapping and lesson planning in all 20 middle school classrooms visited by observers. Most classes were teacher-directed and the objectives as written on the board were diluted and simplified, presumably for ease of student use and comprehension. Most objectives reported by observers focused on student actions (“indicate”, “identify”, “describe”,

“recognize”) as opposed to student cognition (“analyze”, “understand”). Connections to actual content standards indicators were vague and tenuous.

Science classes utilized kits that supported hands-on group work (labs) featuring interdisciplinary activities such as webquests and interactive learning centers. Integration of several disciplines was noted in literacy classrooms as well. Technology use (graphing calculators) was observed in some of the advanced and regular math classes.

Assessments were varied and included open book, open-ended, and multiple-choice formats. Worksheets were in use in most classrooms, while writing prompts and active computer use were observed in a few cases.

J.W. Fenwick Elementary School

Visitors observed 36 classes at the K – 5 elementary school. TechPaths provides curriculum map and pacing support for grades 3 and up, not clear as to the source of teacher guidance for scope and sequence at K – 2 grade levels. Lesson plans are referenced in the visitors’ notes, but it is unclear if teachers reference a written guide or utilize the online mapping tool.

Early childhood instruction is supported by programs such as Everyday Math, My Time to Share, DIBELS, and the Scott Foresman Kindergarten Testing Program. Computers, manipulatives, learning centers, and small group instruction are uniformly present in the early grades. Observed classes were primarily heterogeneous, with one visit to a self-contained environment. In all cases, the same curriculum was followed but delivery was varied. Some Kindergarten classes had as many as three teachers and one aide in the room at one time.

Teachers relying on TechPaths support typically had very interactive lessons, punctuated by posted essential questions, center work, and independent and small group games. Student work on display included portfolio assessments, writing samples, and cross-cultural projects like “Flat Stanley”. Science kits were in use in grades 4 and higher. Lower grades just recently received their kits and will begin the labs shortly. All grades made liberal use of manipulatives in math instruction.

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In addition to the data accessible on the *TechPaths* website, auditors reviewed documents dated within the past two years with the exception of Kindergarten science (dated September, 2000). No written documentation was found for middle school (grades 5 – 8) visual & performing arts, physical education/health, career education, and consumer, family and life skills. Secondary health/physical education curriculum documents also were not observed. These content areas are covered by the *TechPaths* website even though there was no evidence of specific board approval of print documents.

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Professional Development Findings: Salem

Salem submitted documentation reporting nine professional development activities in the period September 2005 to December 2006, at a total cost of \$40,761. The district submitted no professional development contracts, so auditors were unable to determine whether contracts specified expected outcomes of activities, and the district cited no evidence that any activities had resulted in improved instructional practice or student achievement.

According to district administrator reports, district professional development in the period under review satisfied QSAC requirements that professional development address data driven instruction, classroom assessment practices, how to use assessments to adjust instruction and how to seek assistance for students who fall behind (QSAC C1d); address how staff can contribute to student achievement of the NJCCCS and support the intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of all students (QSAC C1e); address culturally responsive teaching and ways to address needs of diverse learners (QSAC C1g); include support and follow-up (QSAC C2); and address student subgroup performance and improving student achievement in areas of need (QSAC C3b).

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

- tend to believe 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 3.35 to 4.74 on a scale of 1 to 5);
- tend to disagree 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 2.87 to 4.69 on a scale of 1 to 5);
- are likely to report that their district or school sought their input about quality or results of professional development (QSAC C1h) at least once in the past two years (76.2%), but differ in this regard from school to school (range = 56.5% to 100%);
- are very likely to report that their district or school provided professional development about how to improve achievement of student subgroups (QSAC C3b) at least once in the past two years (84.3%), but differ in this regard from school to school (range = 70.0% to 100%); and
- are very likely to report that they have modified their classroom practice as a result of recent professional development activity (87.6%), but differ in this regard from school to school (range = 56.5% to 100%). However, only 58.1 percent of respondents provided a meaningful example of such modification, as requested,

Wide variations in some survey responses from school to school suggest that the district may need to conduct its own periodic professional development surveys 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: Salem

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>
John Fenwick	1	2	6	10	5	3.67	24
Salem M.S.	2	7	11	2	0	2.59	22
Salem H.S.	5	8	12	8	2	2.75	36
Total	8	17	29	20	7	2.98	82

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>
John Fenwick	0	7	5	6	6	3.46	24
Salem M.S.	2	9	9	1	0	2.32	22
Salem H.S.	8	11	10	5	2	2.50	36
Total	10	27	24	12	8	2.73	82

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>
John Fenwick	75.0
Salem M.S.	61.9
Salem H.S.	66.7
Total	67.9

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>
John Fenwick	87.5
Salem M.S.	81.8
Salem H.S.	67.6
Total	77.5

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>
John Fenwick	87.5	62.5
Salem M.S.	95.5	54.5
Salem H.S.	57.6	36.1
Total	77.2	48.8

Response Rate

<u>School</u>	<u>% Faculty Responding</u>
John Fenwick	42.9%
Salem M.S.	36.7%
Salem H.S.	62.1%
Total	47.1%