

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

September 27, 2010

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Elementary Integrated Curriculum Framework

Executive Summary

The purpose of this memorandum is to request your preliminary approval of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Elementary Integrated Curriculum (EIC) Framework (attachment). Curriculum frameworks are submitted to the Board of Education as required by Board of Education Policy IFA, *Curriculum*, and in support of Goal 1 and Goal 2 of *Our Call to Action: Pursuit of Excellence*, the MCPS strategic plan. The framework establishes the organization and sequence of what students should know and be able to do at the end of each subject, grade level, or course. The standards and objectives included in this framework are from content frameworks previously approved by the Board of Education in all areas, except for information literacy, thinking and academic success skills, reading/language arts, and mathematics. The standards and objectives for reading/language arts and mathematics in this framework are based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The Maryland State Board of Education adopted the CCSS in English/language arts and mathematics on June 22, 2010. All curriculum and assessments in Maryland within these two critical areas will be based on the CCSS. The Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs will submit a recommended secondary framework in English and mathematics based on the CCSS for approval later this school year. The Thinking and Academic Success Skills were developed by MCPS as part of the Elementary Integrated Curriculum and are submitted pending further collection of feedback and approval at a later Board meeting. This framework includes new information literacy standards developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Background

MCPS' pre-K–12 curriculum frameworks in English/reading language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies were approved in 2001, setting the stage for systemwide curriculum

reform. In 2006, frameworks were approved in art, health, music, and physical education, following state approval of standards in those areas. In 2007, work began to integrate the existing MCPS curriculum at the elementary level. At the January 12, 2010, Board of Education meeting, a memorandum, *Update on Integrated Kindergarten Curriculum*, was presented for discussion. MCPS responded to research and ongoing stakeholder feedback, including comments from parents, to design a new model for curriculum implementation that included—

- Creative and critical thinking as well as academic success skills;
- Integrated curriculum to maximize instructional time and to save teachers' planning time;
- Small group instruction in reading and mathematics;
- State curriculum requirements in all content areas; and
- An all-electronic platform for disseminating curriculum.

The Integrated Kindergarten Curriculum was developed in 2008 and was piloted in 90 schools during the 2009–2010 school year. Feedback from teachers, parents, and administrators was incorporated in the EIC, now being voluntarily implemented in kindergarten and Grade 1 in 112 elementary schools. The new integrated model provides teachers with instructional strategies and resources for all content areas including reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, physical education, health education, and information literacy. The content for all subjects in the EIC is sequenced and organized to maximize the natural connections among content areas. In addition, during each marking period, the work in the integrated curriculum is tied together through the study of a critical or creative thinking skill and an academic success skill. For each week in a marking period, unifying questions help teachers provide an instructional focus on these skills that permeates all content areas. For example, analysis and collaboration are the target critical thinking skill and academic success skill in the first marking period in kindergarten.

Philosophy

MCPS is committed to the following beliefs about curriculum:

- The goal of curriculum is to provide all students with essential learnings and knowledge to prepare them for success in higher-level courses, and to become productive citizens and lifelong learners.
- The curriculum is integrated and well balanced among the disciplines and appropriate for all students.
- The instruction of critical and creative thinking and academic success skills will help all students become lifelong learners.
- The curriculum structures include Universal Design for Learning principles and culturally relevant curriculum best practices to provide equitable opportunities for all students to succeed academically.
- The curriculum is both challenging and engaging, so that students feel a sense of accomplishment and understand its relevance to their lives.
- The curriculum aligns essential learnings and knowledge, instruction, and formal assessments.

- The development and implementation of curriculum reflects current research, best practices, monitoring of student progress, and use of technology to support instruction.

Development of Curriculum Frameworks

The EIC Framework sets the expectations for student learning that will enable principals, teachers, students, and parents to understand what students are expected to know and be able to do in each discipline at each grade level or at the end of a course. The EIC Framework is based on the standards, objectives, and philosophy of the MCPS mathematics, reading/language arts, science, and social studies frameworks approved in 2001 and the art, health, music, and physical education frameworks approved in 2006. The new framework also reflects changes to mathematics and reading/language arts standards necessary to meet state adoption of the CCSS and includes new information literacy standards developed by MSDE.

The CCSS were developed by a consortium of states to ensure that all students are well prepared for a world that increasingly demands college-level skills from every student who graduates from high school. The 2001–2010 MCPS curricula in mathematics and reading/language arts included in the EIC were designed to meet high levels of instruction, but have been adjusted to meet the change in grade-to-grade sequencing of objectives of the CCSS. The CCSS are very similar to the MCPS curriculum in scope and expectations, but the standards in mathematics have a greater emphasis on mastery of number concepts at the elementary grades. In addition, the CCSS identify a number of concepts as on grade level that previously had been classified by MCPS as above grade level. For example, some mathematics content taught in Grade 2 or originally in the acceleration lane for Grade 1 is now part of the required curriculum for all students in Grade 1. In addition, some content has been accelerated by a grade and some overall content has been added or deleted. The emphasis on writing in the English/language arts CCSS is stronger than the 2001–2010 MCPS curriculum. The EIC Framework reflects these changes and will establish a firm foundation for MCPS as it adjusts to anticipated changes in state assessments. Maryland is a governing member of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), one of two consortia developing assessments for the CCSS. MCPS is carefully monitoring the development of assessments for the CCSS to ensure that our students will be well-prepared for any changes in state assessments.

The EIC Framework also contains the standards and objectives for the Thinking and Academic Success Skills, which form the core of the integrated comprehensive curriculum.

Critical Thinking Skills	Analysis—Breaking down a whole into parts that may not be immediately obvious and examining the parts so that the structure of the whole is understood.
	Evaluation—Weighing evidence, examining claims, and questioning facts to make judgments based upon criteria.
	Synthesis—Putting parts together to build understanding of a whole concept or to form a new or unique whole.

Creative Thinking Skills	Elaboration—Adding details that expand, enrich, or embellish.
	Flexibility—Being open and responsive to new and diverse ideas and strategies and moving freely among them.
	Fluency—Generating multiple responses to a problem or an idea.
	Originality—Creating ideas and solutions that are novel or unique to the individual, group, or situation.
Academic Success Skills	Collaboration—Working effectively and respectfully to reach a group goal.
	Intellectual Risk Taking—Accepting uncertainty or challenging the norm to reach a goal.
	Effort/Motivation/Persistence—Working diligently and applying effective strategies to achieve a goal or solve a problem; continuing in the face of obstacles and competing pressures.
	Metacognition—Knowing and being aware of one’s own thinking and having the ability to monitor and evaluate one’s own thinking.

To maximize instructional time and to enhance instruction on the Thinking and Academic Success Skills, MCPS rearranged the content standards and indicators within each grade level to take advantage of the natural connections among content areas. The result is a curriculum that helps teachers plan more effectively and develops the critical and creative thinking and academic success skills that will help students build the habits that mark the academic mind—interpret critical perspectives, analyze complex sets of data, solve problems collaboratively, and understand connections among complex ideas. For example, analysis is presented at the kindergarten or Grade 1 level as breaking ideas apart and looking for patterns. In science, students look for patterns in weather. With the arrangement of standards in the EIC Framework, students will be able to collect age-appropriate data about weather and convert it into tables and graphs as part of their study of mathematics. They then will look for patterns in the data and, with prompting and guidance from their teachers, will attempt a generalization about the weather from the data they have collected. This integration of thinking skills and integrated content allows teachers to create authentic, engaging, and productive learning experiences for students. These changes, along with the curriculum content realignment to take place with the implementation of the CCSS, also will allow MCPS to place a greater emphasis on the development of writing.

Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder involvement and input are critical parts of the curriculum development process, as they were for the 2001 curriculum frameworks previously approved by the Board of Education. Central services staff members, principals, teachers, parents, and representatives of higher education and/or businesses reviewed the development of the Integrated Kindergarten Curriculum from 2008–2010. Staff members in the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs are collecting and considering stakeholder feedback through the Curriculum Advisory Assembly, Councils For Teaching and Learning, principals advisory committees, and parent and

community focus groups representing the rich diversity of MCPS. Feedback on the EIC and Thinking and Academic Success Skills will be used to improve the implementation of the curriculum.

Development Partnership

Goal 3 of *Our Call to Action: Pursuit of Excellence* calls on MCPS to strengthen productive partnerships for education that support student achievement. MCPS has partnered with Pearson Education, Inc. (Pearson), the world-leading textbook and assessment publisher, to accelerate and enhance the development of EIC from a simple framework to a user-friendly online learning community with curriculum resources, lessons, assessments, and professional development. This collaborative partnership will allow MCPS to build out the framework in three years instead of five and improve the quality of assessments and professional development offered in the online learning community. The recent award of a United States Department of Education Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund Grant recognized the importance of this partnership for students in Montgomery County and across the nation. The i3 funds will be used to support MCPS development efforts and reduce costs. It is important to note that neither the partnership with Pearson nor the i3 grant changes the fundamental goals of MCPS curriculum expressed in the EIC Framework. MCPS staff members, parents, and students remain as the only parties making instructional decisions for the children of Montgomery County. Additionally, alignment of the EIC with the CCSS will ensure that MCPS' students meet or exceed proficiency on future assessments designed by MSDE to gauge college and career readiness.

Next Steps

Approval of this document sets the stage for the continued development of the EIC and alignment to the CCSS. The EIC will not include instructional guides. The curriculum is in the form of the online learning community that includes planning tools, professional development, sample learning tasks, and instructional resources for teachers. Future development of the online learning community will include parent access to resources. For this year, parent resources for the EIC are located on the MCPS website at <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/integrated>.

The changes in the CCSS and the work of the PARCC consortium will require MCPS to realign some of its assessments. During the 2010–2011 school year, schools implementing the EIC will use formative assessments to report student progress to kindergarten and Grade 1 parents. MCPS also will study the implementation of the CCSS in kindergarten and Grade 1, review possible acceleration models, and plan for adjustments that may be required by new state assessments.

In the 2011–2012 school year, mathematics progress reporting for kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2 students will include benchmark assessments aligned to the CCSS. Schools will continue to use existing mathematics assessments for students in Grades 3–5. Full implementation of the EIC in Grades 3–5 is planned for the 2012–2013 school year.

The following resolution is presented for your consideration regarding the curriculum development process.

WHEREAS, On February 13, 2001, the Montgomery County Board of Education approved a curriculum policy that guides the development, implementation, and monitoring of curricula throughout the school system; and

WHEREAS, The Montgomery County Board of Education approved the curriculum frameworks in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies on July 2, 2001, and approved frameworks in visual arts, general music, health education, and physical education on April 20, 2006; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in English/language arts and mathematics on June 22, 2010; and

WHEREAS, Montgomery County Public Schools has created the research-based Thinking and Academic Success Skills Framework; and

WHEREAS, Montgomery County Public Schools has woven the Thinking and Academic Success Skills into the existing curriculum frameworks along with the Common Core State Standards to form the innovative Elementary Integrated Curriculum; and

WHEREAS, Feedback and input from stakeholders will be used to develop and refine the Elementary Integrated Curriculum and Thinking and Academic Success Skills framework; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montgomery County Board of Education grant preliminary approval of the MCPS Elementary Integrated Curriculum Framework, which combines existing elementary curriculum, Common Core State Standards, and Thinking and Academic Success Skills as the foundation for the development of the Elementary Integrated Curriculum.

At the table for tonight's discussion are Mr. Erick J. Lang, associate superintendent, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs; Mr. Martin M. Creel, director, Department of Enriched and Innovative Programs; Ms. Theresa A. Cepaitis, director, Elementary Integrated Curriculum Team; Mrs. Niki T. Hazel, supervisor, Elementary Integrated Curriculum Team; and Mr. A. Raymond Myrtle, supervisor, Elementary Integrated Curriculum Team. Ms. Betsy Brown, director, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs, is in the audience to help answer Board members' questions.

JDW:smw

Attachment -- copy available for review in the Board Office