The Innovation Agenda

A Design for Excellence In The Cambridge Public Schools

School Committee Update: July 29, 2011

Innovation Agenda Highlights

- *Upper School Program Developer Chris Saheed has joined the team*
  - Chris Saheed, recently retired principal of CRLS, began his new role as Upper School Program Developer at the end of June. Chris is contributing to planning in the areas of curriculum design, professional development, and school climate and expectations.

- *ELA/Social Studies/Humanities Guidelines have been completed, shared for feedback, and forwarded to Curriculum Coordinators for their work with teacher teams*
  - The Guidelines for Upper School Programming in ELA/Social Studies/Humanities were completed June 30, mailed to CPS middle grades staff for feedback, and posted to the CPS website for public feedback. The guidelines are the result of two forums held with over 30 CPS faculty members and administrators serving students in grades 6-9. They represent the very best of our collective thinking, expertise, and experience in these academic areas. This document defines the attributes for excellent programming in these areas and our goals for students. These guidelines will inform the work of the curriculum teams.

- *Plan for engaging middle grades staff in the creation of curriculum for the Upper School Program is underway*
  - The redesign of CPS curricula initiated by alignment with the national Common Core has continued this summer. At the same time, district leaders are developing plans for inviting middle grades teachers to participate in the creation of unique integrated units of study in core subject areas. An update letter was sent to staff this week, and more information will be shared during the August 31 professional day.

- *Planning for middle grades staff professional development, in August and for the 2011-12 school year, is underway*
  - Innovation Agenda professional development for middle grades staff will be held August 31. Members of the Innovation Agenda Teacher Planning Team have been invited to join district leaders next week to review and discuss plans for this day. In addition, work is underway to develop the 2011-12 professional development calendar and plan for middle grades staff. An update letter to all middle grades faculty, principals, and coordinators was mailed this week.

- *Planning for a family survey, to be designed and administered by a survey firm, is underway*
  - In order to gather feedback from families, we will engage a firm to design a survey that will provide data to inform the design of the Upper School Program. For example, areas of inquiry may include student transition at grades 5 and 8, out-of-school-time programming, and more. We have begun researching survey firms for this purpose.

- *Professional development in developing school/family/community partnerships will be provided to school and district leaders by Dr. Karen Mapp of Harvard*
    - Beginning in September, Dr. Karen Mapp of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, an expert in the field of school partnerships, will provide professional development to principals, family liaisons, and district leaders. Dr. Mapp is the author of *Beyond the Bake Sale*, a text to be used for this work.

- *Implementation Benchmarks have been updated, with detailed information on status*
    - IA Implementation Benchmarks have been updated and will be posted to the website with this status report. This update identifies benchmarks that are pending, in progress, and met.

- *Regularly scheduled meetings of upper school building principals and district leaders, to identify and discuss campus implementation issues, have begun*
    - To ensure high-quality communication with building principals throughout the planning and implementation year, the Cabinet will begin meeting regularly with the four principals of the upper school campus buildings every other week starting in September. The first meeting was held July 7, with principals from all four school buildings attending.

- *The Governance Subcommittee of the Citywide School Advisory Group (CSAG) has continued to meet throughout the summer*
    - The Governance Subcommittee has continued to work throughout the summer, exploring the charter and governance issues identified by CSAG in June, and drafting a welcome letter and materials for their page on the CPS website.