



Monroe Educator Insider

June 2017

Volume 4, Number 2

In This Issue

- Growing with Google at Mill Lake School
- The Professional Development Transfer at MTMS
- School-Wide S.T.E.M. at Brookside
- Google Applications for Education at Applegarth Elementary

Vision Statement

The Monroe Township Board of Education commits itself to all children by preparing them to reach their full potential and to function in a global society through a preeminent education.

Mission Statement

The Monroe Public Schools in collaboration with the members of the community shall ensure that all children receive an exemplary



Welcome to the June edition of our professional development/best practices newsletter! Please take a few minutes to relax and enjoy reading about the great things happening in our district.

As you are preparing for a well-deserved break this summer, remember to take some time for you. I did a quick google search on ways to rejuvenate and so many ideas came up: don't make too many decisions, shopping, power naps, vacation, etc. The point is, try to find what works for you. For me, I enjoy reading and spending time with family. Some new books that are on my reading list this summer (not all for work):

- *Leverage Leadership: A Practical Guide to Building Exceptional Schools* by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo details seven principles that leaders can use to allow for consistent, transformational growth.
- *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly. I know the movie is available, but I love to read the book first.
- *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. I never read it and my daughter has it for summer reading.
- *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck. Always a good book to reset your growth mindset.

Any other suggestions?

Whatever you choose to do this summer, enjoy a wonderful and relaxing break from all the wonderful hard work that you do for our students. You deserve it!

Written by: Dr. Dori Alvich, Assistant Superintendent of Schools

education by well-trained committed staff in a safe and orderly environment.

We would like to acknowledge all of the hard work that went into this publication and all that contributed to our publication:

Dr. Michael Kozak,
Superintendent of
Schools

Dr. Dori Alvich,
Assistant
Superintendent of
Schools

Patricia Dinsmore,
Committee
Chairperson of PD

Sherri Fatovic,
Stephanie
Goldberg, Staff
Developers

Ryan Tolboom,
Educational
Technology
Coordinator

Applegarth School
PD Committee:
Tanya D'Agostino,
Jessica Boll, Susan
Voza, Nancy Poland

Barclay Brook PD
Committee:
Danielle Sano,
Debbie Ciaccia,
Stacy Blum, Marissa
Pilgrim

Brookside School
PD Committee:
Laura Horoszewski,
Lara Gallelo, Beth
Nagle, Sarah Levine

Mill Lake PD
Committee: Brooke
Kreiger, Lisa
Papandrea, Ashley

Growing with Google at Mill Lake School

Written by: Robin Silverman, Lisa Papandrea and Jessica Strincoski

In Mill Lake School students and teachers are embracing technology as a part of their everyday learning. Teachers are using technology as a springboard for learning at the elementary level that grants students access to 21st century educational standards.

The Chromebook grant made it possible for technology to be utilized throughout the building whereas it was previously only available to third grade.

At Mill Lake School first and second graders are experiencing technology in an exciting, motivating and innovating new way. Google classroom is a learning platform that is a creative way to put a new spin on classroom assignments that excites students because of its technology base. Google Classroom is a virtual paperless forum for students to interact with their assignments and receive immediate feedback from their instructor since both people have continuous access to the live documents.

Google Apps for Education (GAPE) are apps from Google that support learning. These include Google Docs, Google Slide and Google Forms. All of these apps are available to students through the use of Google Classroom or their Google account. Teachers create lessons and then invite students to log in to take part in their assignments. Students have the ability to access their own Google accounts which allows them to complete lessons, save unfinished work and share work with other students. Students have opportunities to work cooperatively with fellow classmates to compose presentations, create original writing pieces, edit their work and develop living portfolios that highlight their growth and development as learners. Google Classroom is utilized during teacher/ student conferencing as well as parent/teacher conferences since all saved work is available to see at any time. Students have access to everything they do throughout their educational career as long as they maintain their Monroe Township email accounts. Google Classroom is a paperless way to trace a student's educational journey.



In first grade, Google Slides has been utilized to create Women's Research presentations. The students worked in groups to conduct their own research on a woman of interest. Once the students completed their research outline, they were given a mini-lesson on the use of Google Slides. The students used Google Slides to input all of their research. Each group completed a ten slide presentation that provided biographical information such as birthdate, birthplace, and other interesting facts about their specific woman. In addition to biographical information, each student also prepared an individual paragraph describing the most important woman in his/her life. Students also completed supervised Google searches to find pictures of their selected woman to add to their presentation. Through Google Slides, multiple students were able to complete their individual portions simultaneously, which expedited the completion of the assignments. The culmination of this project was

Shur, Robin
Silverman

Oak Tree PD
Committee:
Kimberly Synarski,
Stephanie Chin,
Maggie Fidura,
Alexa Tringali,
Caitlyn Prestridge

Woodland PD
Committee: Nick
Reinhold, Natalie
Michael, Allison
North

MTMS PD
Committee: Dawn
Graziano, Rochelle
Kapel, Patricia
Smith

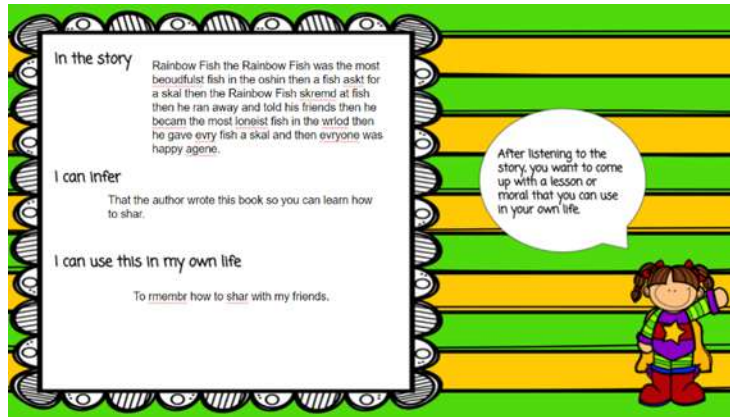
MTHS PD
Committee: Sharon
DeMarco, Jackie
Puleio, Sheree
Gugliemi, Dr. Kevin
Higgins

each group's final presentation for the class. Through these biographical presentations, each group was able to cooperatively interact through Google Slides and create an oral presentation to accompany their slideshow. The students were able to navigate Google Slides with ease and comfort.



*Sample of students work from Mrs. Papandrea's first grade class. *

In second grade, through the use of Google Classroom and GAFE, we have been using Google Classroom to complete various assignments to assess learning and track growth over the course of the year. Google Classroom has put a new spin on the reader's and writer's workshop model. The teacher can assign a Google slides presentation that incorporates strategy based questions that are differentiated by individual student needs. The students can go in, edit, and complete the presentation as a way to respond to literature. Responses can be based on a book they're reading or a book that they have listened to or watched on their Chromebook. Teachers can provide students with immediate feedback enabling them to make corrections while it is still fresh in their minds.



Sample work from Ms. Strincoski's second grade class.

Google Forms is also a great app that can take the place of formal assessments in the classroom. This app allows you to create multiple choice and open ended questions that can be tiered and modified to meet the student's individual needs. Not only does this motivate students to do their best, Google forms does the work for you by grading the multiple choice questions. As preparation for all future learning, Google Classroom provides the opportunity for students to interact with technology as a means of formal assessments such as PARCC and MAP.

Google classroom assists in the transition to 21st century learning in a way that is student friendly and develops a comfortability with technology for all students.

Sample work from Ms. Strincoski's second grade class.

Character feeling	When does the character feel this way?
Loveing	She does not care what other People think about herself.
fair/understanding	Molly did not want to move but she knew she had to.
proud	Molly scored a touch down!!!!

Sometimes a character may feel and act a certain way but they do not always behave that way.

The Professional Development Transfer at MTMS

Written by: Pat Smith and Dawn Graziano

As teachers, we are always striving to find new ways to help our students arrive at a deep understanding of new content, and we want to give the time and support for them to utilize these new understandings as they develop as learners. Further, we want for them to continue to utilize this learning across the curriculum and into the future.

A wide variety of professional development opportunities exist here in Monroe Township, including participating in coursework offerings from MLP or developing your own course to teach. Further, many staff members are involved with PLCs which allow us to learn about subjects that have immediate relevance and application to our positions. In addition, at MTMS there is a wide variety of in-house professional development offered during faculty meeting time. This time allows us to learn from our peers who are utilizing new strategies and technologies.

When our children learn new concepts, we want them to practice and apply what they have learned. Similarly, teachers need to transfer what they learn in professional development to their students. We decided to survey the MTMS staff to see how their professional development training has been transferred to the students.

Erica Coonely, the Media Specialist at MTMS, has been implementing a Makerspace club after school. Through district professional development, Ms. Coonely was able to visit Manalapan schools and is developing the concept here in the middle school. Makerspaces focus on education, engineering, and design. A Makerspace is a place in which students with shared interests, especially in computing or technology, can gather to work on projects while sharing ideas, equipment, and knowledge. While a fairly new phenomenon, a variety of significant projects can be developed through Makerspaces. The vision for Makerspaces is cross curricular implementation and expanding the program to all teachers in the building. A Makerspace class is even being considered for next year! Ms. Coonely stated that another goal is to show teachers how to best utilize Makerspace. "The word just needs to spread," she stated. "It's here."



Teachers Returning to the Field

Every school year, teachers at MTMS have many opportunities for access to Professional Development. While veteran teachers may attend a district workshop to learn about a new initiative, train on new programs, or become familiar with recent updates to curriculum, teachers returning to the field after an extended period of time away may be overwhelmed by the changes that have taken place since they last stood in front of a class. For those teachers, the District's Professional Development program is a lifeline. For one such teacher, sixth grade science teacher Brooke Metzger, claims that the changes she encountered returning to teaching after a stay at home with her young daughters, were daunting. Said Brooke, "Not only did I have to acclimate back into maintaining working full time, but changes in curriculum, standards, and advancements in technology and the digitized world proved to be unfamiliar territory," The easily accessible hours of professional development helped to acclimate her to the district and enabled her to quickly adjust to her new work environment. She has also taken advantage participating in a number of training sessions that allowed her to use new technology in her science classroom, most notably the GIZMO website. It has become a resource that she has found herself using frequently, with great success.

Brooke says that she has been able to take advantage of a variety of other professional development workshops to "keep me up to speed with challenging activities and experiences for my students." Earlier this year, she was also chosen to attend an Inspiring Engineers workshop at Rutgers University to foster more thorough understanding of STEM activities to deepen knowledge and increase academic inquiry and success. STEM is a curriculum based on the idea of educating students in four specific disciplines — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — in an interdisciplinary and applied approach.



Readers Workshop

Language Arts teachers in the middle school have spent extensive time in professional development recently. They have been learning how to implement a Reader's Workshop model in their classrooms. When asked how this professional development was impacting her teaching, veteran ELA teacher Stacy Levier commented, "For the past two years, the ELA Department here at MTMS has participated in extensive PD for Reader's Workshop. This experience has been completely transformative to my teaching practice, and I believe my students have benefitted tremendously. More than ever before, I feel my enthusiasm for literature has been communicated to my students in a meaningful way, and has fostered the beginnings of a unique community of readers."

During the past school year, Kirsten Widmer, a Literacy Consultant, has facilitated several sessions of a Readers Workshop training. Kirsten demonstrated a vast knowledge and understanding of young readers and implementing the Reader Workshop Model. The emphasis this year was on "dipping our toes in" to begin to get a sense of the Workshop Model. But true to form, the MTMS language arts department jumped in with both feet from the beginning of the year and worked Kirsten hard to help teachers begin to transform their classrooms into reading oasis. Katie Lederman, sixth grade ELA teacher says, "From the start of the school year, Kirsten, our instructor, addressed all of our questions and concerns. Her instruction was direct and informative, providing us with sample units, lessons, and suggestions tailored specifically to our school's resources."

Kirsten began with an overview of the Workshop Model by sharing the philosophy and components and structure of this model. Kirsten modeled practices for teachers to get a feel for what the Reading classroom looks like in the Workshop model. One of the biggest components of Readers Workshop is the teacher/reader conference. During one of our sessions, groups of teachers visited ELA classrooms and observed while Kirsten conducted a reading conference with a student. Then the teachers worked in pairs to conduct reading conferences and Kirsten and Kelly Roselle, the district ELA Supervisor, observed and provided constructive feedback.

While some teachers began dabbling in Readers Workshop last year, many teachers are just attempting the model for the first time in their classrooms this year. Commented Katie Lederman on her feelings about how the program is going so far, "Our most successful experience this year has been the book club component of Reader's Workshop which promoted student driven learning and engagement. It was great to see the student's taking control, setting goals for themselves, and meeting them while working together. Allowing students to select their novel boosted an interest in reading and created enthusiastic readers in students who were former 'non-readers'." Most teachers have reported an increase in student independent reading as well as student enthusiasm in general for reading.

Another valuable outcome of the implementation of Readers Workshop and the PD planned to support it, has come the many opportunities for teachers to collaborate and articulate across the grade levels as well as on grade level. When tackling new programs or strategies, teachers find that being able to talk to their colleagues about

their experiences, concerns, and problems, as well as successes, has a great benefit to encouraging them to continue, and in fact, try even more new things. Collaborating and sharing resources has been truly important in launching the program. Classroom libraries needed to be built and there has been a lot more sharing going on this year.

School-Wide S.T.E.M. at Brookside

Written by: Lara Gallelo and Laura Horoszewski

Cross-curricular. Problem-Solving. Innovative. Real-World. Collaborative. All of these elements of a 21st century education are at the center of a school-wide S.T.E.M. project at Brookside.

The Brookside School Goals Committee decided to do things differently this year, through a series of actions that had students addressing the question, "How can we improve an area of Brookside to meet the needs of our Brookside community?" Small groups spanning all grade levels are competing for the chance to see improvement projects they've envisioned come to fruition. Beginning in February, students met in small cross-grade-level groups to brainstorm ideas for improving Brookside. An important restriction was that these projects must be feasible on a \$500 budget. With a great deal of research and persuasive writing, groups developed formal proposals by early May. Work days in May were spent creating working models of their proposed improvements. The winning project will be announced in June, and work may begin as early as this summer!



Google Applications for Education at Applegarth Elementary

Written by: Sue Voza, Nancy Poland, Tanya D'Agostino and Jessica Siculietano

Google Classroom

At Applegarth Elementary School, students have been experiencing "flipped classrooms" through the use of G.A.F.E. (Google Applications for Education). Teachers have been applying strategies they gained this school year in developing innovative units and lesson plans to reach the needs of all learners.



Paper is now a thing of the past with Google Classroom. Teachers can easily post educational videos and assignments with the click of a button, which allows for teachers to bridge the gap between home and school learning. Homework is no longer a rote assignment based on the daily lesson, but a mini lesson that introduces concepts, leaving the classroom experience to be more hands on.

The infusion of this technology has sparked a new drive within students to take their learning to the next level. Teachers have noticed that students are now more engaged and are taking ownership of their assignments and learning.



Google KEEP

Tired of sticky notes all over the classroom? Keep them in one secure place! "Google KEEP" allows for students and teachers to simply keep their post-it notes in one organized space. In addition, "KEEP" will infuse collaboration of ideas between students and teachers.

Docs and Slides

Assignments have been a breeze to complete thanks to the utilization of Google Docs and Slides. Students can start an assignment in class and continue working at home which saves valuable classroom time. Collaboration is effortless to share and edit documents in real time when working in a group on an assignment or project.

