



Tolland Middle School

Annual Report
2010-2011

Introduction

In the 2010-2011 school year Tolland Middle School has continued a tradition of excellence despite some significant budgetary challenges that resulted in a reduced schedule (to 6 periods) and a reduction in force. In the coming 2011-2012 year we will be expanding our schedule to a seven period schedule, and thanks to the Jobs Bill, adding back two full World Language positions. Despite these challenges, student performance on the Connecticut Mastery Test was once again, very strong with scores well above the state averages and competitive with like communities. Our Response to Intervention programs in both Reading and Math yielded measurable improvements in student performance for over 120 students. In addition, both our new Red Folder program, and traditional Homework Club, and Academy and Achievement Lab programs served students with over 2500 scheduled student work sessions, both during and after school, keeping students successful and receiving the help they need, when they need it.

The staff at TMS have revamped our Professional Learning Communities (small data teams), and have further developed our use of data driven decision making. PLC teams review data from benchmark assessments, Connecticut Mastery Testing, Reading and Math assessments, and other academic performance indicators to inform the goal making process. PLC teams have moved the goal making process back to align with data we receive in the summer, and therefore will be making more informed projections, and plans, to help our students perform to their maximum potential. This year all 20 PLC data teams demonstrated measurable increases in student performance.

TMS is continuing our work on Standards Based Reporting. A prototype Standards Based Report Card was designed for reporting student performance to parents in a way that will help identify students' strengths and challenges more clearly. The new reporting process established this year will also keep the school accountable for addressing the needs of every child under the RtI (Response to Intervention), also known as SRBI (Scientific Research Based Intervention), movement. Student progress will be evaluated by "strands" and "performance indicators" rather than simply by one aggregate average, although an aggregate average will also potentially still be available. Such indicators, in math for instance, would be: *interpreting data sets, drawing inferences about populations, solving multi-step problems, computing with rational numbers* and student progress will likely be reported as a % of mastery. For instance, a student might receive an "80%" in *drawing inferences about populations*, meaning he answered those sections of multiple assessments correctly 80% of the time. This can be helpful in identifying specific areas in which students are struggling as one or more of those indicators may be at a lower percentage of mastery, and will therefore highlight an area in which the teachers, parents, and students can focus their remediation efforts both at school and at home. It will identify areas in which students can be helped far

more effectively than any average grade, (i.e. a “B-“) could yield alone. The process will be tested in the 2011-2012 year.

In the ongoing process of consistently reflecting and reviewing our own performance as professional educators, TMS educators have embarked on *Instructional Rounds*. This approach is based on the research of Elizabeth City, Richard Elmore, Sarah Fiarman, and Lee Teitel (*Instructional Rounds: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2009). *Instructional Rounds* emulate a process in the medical community of taking teams of professionals on “rounds” to view each others’ practices, and in our case, classrooms. The *Instructional Rounds* teams at TMS were trained to objectively observe and look at all practices and data, and to help diagnose a specific problem (called a “problem of practice”) identified by the team that requested the Instructional Rounds observation. We held *Instructional Rounds* for all teams and grades this year at TMS.

The Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support Program started this year at TMS. Our school’s Core Values: Safety, Ownership, Active Learning, and Respect (SOAR) were established, a new data system for evaluating discipline was established (SWIS), new forms and processing procedures were created, and next year TMS students will participate in many service projects, as an entire school, for our school and community. The PBIS program is based on proven psychological methods and practices that help foster a positive school and community climate.

In a tradition of investing in and reaching out to the Tolland community Tolland Middle School continued its wide variety of fundraising, and community service activities. Students raised money for cancer research, heart research, homeless shelter(s), food banks, and animal shelters to name only a few. The Community Nights and Principal’s Breakfasts continued this year as opportunities for members of the community to ask questions, interact, work cooperatively, and get information from the educators here at Tolland Middle School. Examples of Community Nights this year were the annual Pumpkin Festival and Barnes and Noble night. Nine interscholastic sports, and clubs like Jazz Band, Art Club, Games Club, Yearbook, Math Olympiad, Student Government (6th grade) and Student Council (7th and 8th), as well as the TMS Service Corp, provided students learning opportunities beyond the classroom, and have helped students raise their performance level and commitment to their work and the school.

Curriculum and Instruction

Reading/Language Arts

The McDougall-Littel Literature anthology serves as the core reading program in grades six through eight. This is a reading strategy-based program that builds on the same reading strategies taught through the Houghton Mifflin Reading program in grades K-5. Students read, analyze, and respond to a variety of fiction and non-fiction selections in the anthology. Students also read a variety of classic and contemporary novels and literary works. Teachers design and incorporate questions modeled after those on the Connecticut Mastery Test into classroom discussions and in assignments.

Sixth grade reading teachers utilize a variety of grouping patterns for instruction. This promotes a more “differentiated” approach to the teaching of reading as students are making their literature choices, teachers are ensuring that the books students are reading are appropriate for the student’s reading level, and small group lessons are based on students’ needs. Reciprocal teaching and literature circles are the primary structures for this small group reading instruction.

Teachers use a variety of strategies for teaching the main types of writing – narrative, expository and persuasive. Most teachers utilize strategies from the Empowering Writer’s program. Two seventh grade teachers incorporate the Six Traits approach into their writing instruction and assessment.

This year, writing instruction was split between teachers. Prior to 2010-2011, every sixth grade teacher taught reading and language arts (writing process, grammar, and spelling), and the four seventh and eighth grade language arts teachers taught a block of language arts (reading, writing, grammar, spelling). Due to budget

reductions, this structure resulted in the disintegration of the language arts. This structure is contrary to best practices in the teaching of language arts. It lead to inconsistent instruction particularly in grades 7 and 8 where students were shared between two different language arts teachers. Furthermore, the writing instruction in grade 6 was fragmented even more due to the lunch period which split the language arts period in half.

A direct result of the split in language arts was an increase in class size in the language arts classes. Class sizes ranged from 24 to 28. This is unsatisfactory for the teaching of language arts. There were not enough trade books for students and no money to purchase copies. Group work is constrained due to the size of the classroom and the number of students. Furthermore, teachers find it very difficult to keep up with the paper load of the discipline.

A writing curriculum map was created and distributed in the fall to encourage consistency in instruction between and across grades, as well as to ensure that all students in the grade had opportunities to write a variety of pieces.

The Scott Foresman *Everyday Spelling Program* is used in sixth grade classrooms. Every student has a consumable book. A formal spelling or vocabulary program does not exist in grades seven or eight.

All language arts teachers were introduced to the new Common Core State Standards in Language Arts. These standards are the foundation for the draft of the school’s standards-based report card that was created this year. Teachers began the process of aligning their assignments and assessments to these standards. The grade level benchmarks are already aligned to the essence of these standards.

Mathematics

Grade 6 & 7

Teachers are working hard to provide good Tier 1 instruction in our math classrooms at Tolland Middle School. This includes strong instructional lessons with guided practice and opportunities for small group instruction to support the diverse needs of the individual students. Staff-meeting time was devoted to Tier 1 instruction and how we can be most effective in supporting all our students.

In grade 7 Pre-Algebra, common formative benchmark assessments are in place for each unit. The introduction of an Open Response activity at the end of each unit was introduced but needs further work... Realignment in Math 7 took place, which provided student with a greater exposure to more geometry concepts. Alignment to the newly adopted national standards, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), will require further work in both grades. The ability to meet students on a daily basis provided teachers the opportunity to deliver the curriculum in a more consistent way.

Grade 8

A great deal of change occurred in grade 8 math this year. Two new sections were introduced, Honors Algebra and CPIA (College Prep Algebra). Both courses reflect the curriculum that is delivered at THS

with respect to content and assessments. Work began on pacing, scope and sequence, and assessments. Additional work will be done next year with respect to all three categories listed above. Also, alignment to the newly adopted national standards, CCSS, will require further work at all levels.

- **Honors Algebra 1**
 - The major source used to deliver the curriculum is Larsen Algebra 1. It provides rigorous core content for students and is aligned with that which is used for Honors Algebra 2 at THS. Upon successful completion of this course, students would take Honors Geometry or CP Geometry at THS.

- **CP1A**
 - The major resource used to deliver the curriculum is Pearson Prentice Hall Algebra 1. CP1A is the first half of Algebra 1 and students complete the second half (CP1B) at the THS. There is a Final Exam given to students consistent with that which is given at THS.

- **Pre-Algebra**
 - This course provides as many students as possible with the opportunity to enter THS and begin with CP Algebra 1A&B as a freshman at THS. We continue to see positive results from the rigor of this curriculum and the work done by staff members. Unit assessments and benchmark data provide teachers with important data to assess student learning.

Science

The science curriculum at TMS has undergone a major overhaul over the past five years. During the 2010-11 school year science process skills continued to be our focus area. Each grade implemented more inquiry type experiences for our students. Students in grades 3-10 have state required inquiry experiences embedded in the curriculum. For the past five years, we have implemented the labs, last year we included a science inquiry assessment associated with the state embedded lab. Students in grades 6-8 completed the lab, and then were assessed on their skills and knowledge about the inquiry process. Teachers used the data in planning their lessons for this year. All students were assessed on the required science process skills again this year.

Cheryl Mawaka and Joanne Hadyka worked for 5 days each last summer revising the grade seven Earth Matters unit. They mapped the essential skills and knowledge, then planned the unit based on the required state science standards, and re-wrote the unit benchmark. Both reported the newly designed unit was successful and engaging to their students.

Carolyn Tyl, science coordinator, presented several model lessons for grade 7. The summary of her lessons are listed in the following table.

Grade	# classes	Unit	Title	Date	Location	# students	# adults
7	3	<i>Cells, Heredity & Evolution</i>	Diffusion & Osmosis	Apr	Mawaka's Room	28	2
7	6	<i>Cells, Heredity & Evolution</i>	Using Digital Probeware	Apr	Mawaka/Hadyka	150	4

7	10	<i>Cells Heredity & Evolution</i>	Salmon River FT Assembly	Apr	TMS Auditorium	255	10
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Science teachers at all grade levels worked together again this year to align their instruction with the standards that will be used in two years when the “Standard-based Report Card” is implemented in grades 6-8. Next year, teachers will continue this process during the 2011-12 school year.

Due to several factors, the schedule at TMS included larger classes this year. The space limitations are causing us to re-think lab activities due to safety concerns. Hands-on activities, with the variety of materials and scientific equipment require extra diligence on the part of the classroom teacher. They are reporting difficulty because of space issues and the inability to supervise properly the large number of students in the classroom. The liability rests directly on the teacher.

Carolyn Tyl and Jenn Olsen presented a workshop to all science teachers on “Brain Compatible Teaching”. Teachers left the workshop with several concrete examples about how to attempt to address the learning styles of all of their students.

Social Studies

Sixth grade students learned about ancient history from the founding of civilization through the Middle Ages. The sixth grade team worked together to provide students with a consistent social studies experience regardless of the teacher. In addition, teachers focused on providing nonfiction reading strategy instruction for students. A new common assessment for the Middle Ages unit was piloted last year and revised for this year’s students.

The seventh grade curriculum is World Cultures and Geography, specifically focusing on the Middle East, India and China, Africa, and Latin America. Significant curriculum writing was done this past summer to update this curriculum and align it to the new social studies standards. Each unit emphasizes how the geography influences the people of the region, the culture and beliefs of the region, and the interconnectedness of countries around the world. Students on both teams participated in Art Link, a global project that is designed to provide students with an expanded awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the lives of their peers in another country. This year our students shared their artwork with students from Japan. We sent 60 drawings about American culture to a Japanese school, and they sent us their artwork demonstrating Japanese culture. For their Africa unit, all students participated in an in-house field trip with a presentation by Dr. Mama from ECSU, African drumming, and the creation of students’ own Kente cloth designs.

We received a grant from the Tolland Education Foundation (TEF) this year for Stratalogica, a web-based program that combines Google Earth with our Nystrom atlases. Seventh grade students and teachers have online access to the Nystrom Desk Atlas, which is full of special-purpose maps for countries around the world. Teachers received professional development to learn how to use Stratalogica.

The eighth grade U.S. history curriculum began with the issues facing the newly formed United States after the Revolutionary War. Students learned about the birth of the United States, the growth of the country during the 1800’s, and finished their study with World War I. This curriculum aligns with the 5th grade and the 11th grade United States history curriculum. Both 8th grade teachers participated in the Teaching American History grant through EASTCONN again this year. This program provided top-notch professional development to teachers of American history. 8th grade teachers attended three after-school workshops and three full-day trips to local areas of historical interest. Both teachers will participate in the summer institute at the end of June.

Seventh and eighth grade teachers participated in a workshop on using primary source materials for social studies instruction. The goal of this workshop was for teachers to share instructional strategies and specific examples of student work using primary source documents.

Additionally, all teachers in the social studies department, as well as the math, science, language arts, and world language departments, participated in half-day workshops on Tier 1 instruction and how to meet the needs of a variety of students in the classroom.

Unified Arts

The Unified Arts program continued to work diligently to have students connect the UA curriculum activities to the 'real world.' UA teachers worked tirelessly to give opportunities to students to apply knowledge in other subject areas to project based activities that are well established in the literature to augment and facilitate acquisition of knowledge and human learning. Classes like *Keeping it Real* helped students learn to manage their money. Students wrote simulated complaint letters which focused on the rights and responsibilities of being a wise consumer. Spending plans were created, and current software, such as Microsoft Excel, was utilized by students in creating spreadsheets and reports. The UA curriculum was further developed, adding two new classes on Foods and Nutrition in grade 7 and Technology and Cultures in grade 8.

The Music/Choral department had the following accomplishments this year:

- Three after school clubs – Beginning Jazz Band, Advanced Jazz Band, Pep Band
- Auditioned and presented the TMS 2011 Student Variety Show on April 8th
- Pep Band played at the Student-Faculty basketball game and Variety Show
- Band played at the Pumpkin Festival
- Sixth Grade Chorus sang in the Sr. Citizen's Variety Show in April
- 8th Grade Band and Chorus students participated in the THS Step-Up Concert
- 7th and 8th Grade Band played at TMS promotion ceremony
- 7th and 8th Grade Chorus took a family field trip to the Bushnell to see *Shrek the Musical*
- 7th and 8th Grade Band and Chorus participated in the PAC Adjudication Festival in June
- TMS hosted a student teacher from the Hartt School
- Ms. Stewart accompanied the TIS 4th Grade Chorus at their May concert
- Ms. Titus invited the TIS 5th grade band to play in the 6th grade Spring Concert
- Ms. Stewart helped judge the THS Madrigal auditions in May
- Ms. Stewart chaperoned and accompanied the THS Women's Choir on their trip to Broadway in May
- 6th, 7th and 8th Grade Spring and Winter Band/ Chorus concerts
- January Jazz Band concert for grades 6-12
- Ms. Socha played the congas at the Sr. Citizen Variety Show and the Spring Choral Concert
- Ms. Titus commissioned Thomas Bourgault to write *Jester's Ballet* for the band
- Ms. Stewart invited Debra Lynn, professional vocal coach in to work with 6th and 7th grade chorus members

The Technology and Art Department had the following accomplishments this year:

- Successfully adjusted into the Tech Ed woodshop classroom.
- Created and changed curriculum to adjust for new schedule this year.
- Continued the process of changing the program from Industrial Arts to Technology Education.
- Acquired equipment such as router table and plunge routers to further develop the repertoire of the woodshop.
- Worked with the UA PLC team to enhance the mathematics skills of our students in the 7th grade class.
- Art executed Daily Help sessions & after school open studio hours.
- Art news articles in Falcon News
- Student participation in the *Tolland Lions International Peace Poster Contest*
- Student-generated promotional posters

The UA department was also heavily involved this year in the execution of the Variety Show put on by the students and staff of the school. From the building of the sets, to the creation of the clothing, to the music and choreography, the Unified Arts department made this show happen for the TMS students and community. It was a great example of educators coming together for the benefit of the students, and the community.

Student Assessment

Benchmark assessments are administered two to three times a year. The reading comprehension benchmarks in grades 6, 7, and 8 include multiple choice and open-ended questions. Questions are aligned with the language arts standards and are developed using question stems used on the Connecticut Mastery Test. Rubrics and anchor sets are used to correct the open-ended responses. Grammar is assessed through an editing and revising assessment resembling the CMT.

A *Response to Literature* assessment is one of the end-of-the year 8th grade language arts benchmarks. The four questions are the same ones students respond to on the CAPT, and the scoring rubric is the same as that used on the CAPT RTL test. These tests are given to the ninth grade English teachers in the fall.

Writing benchmarks are administered in September, January, and May and take the following forms – Grade 6 – Expository and Persuasive, and Grades 7 and 8 – Persuasive Writing. The state rubric for scoring the writing prompts is utilized in order to predict student performance on the CMT as well as to inform instruction. Anchor sets are used as benchmarks for each of the score points on the rubric.

Middle school students who are two or more years below grade level are given the Developmental Reading Assessment in lieu of the regular language arts benchmark. These students do respond to the writing prompt.

The Language Arts Coordinator administered diagnostic reading assessments to individual students upon the request of a guidance counselor and/or teachers. Additionally, the coordinator administered the DRA to those students who have intellectual disabilities.

Mathematics

We were very pleased with the growth that we saw in our student's math performance this year as reflected in their performance on internal benchmark assessments and the CMT's. Teachers continue to use benchmark data to monitor student progress. There were many new assessments developed and

revised at TMS especially in grades 7 and 8. Besides benchmark assessments, diagnostic assessments for Pre-Algebra placement to grade 7 and Algebra placement for students entering grade 8 were revised and given to all students.

This year, work began on reviewing the new state and national mathematics standards, CCSS. Next year, we will continue the process of revising our curriculum and aligning our assessments to these adopted state standards.

In our Math Resource center, Tier II and Tier III intervention is provided to students identified as at risk or below grade level in specific mathematical content i.e. numeracy skills. The table below provides information for the year:

	Grade 6 Students	Grade 7 Student	Grade 8 Students
Quarter 2	12	8	9
Quarter 3	10	5	8
Quarter 4	11	4	7
Totals	33	17	24

* The number of students serviced is dynamic. Some of the same children may revisit the Math Resource at different times of the year

Science

Teachers are continuing to administer benchmark tests at appropriate times throughout the school year. Although benchmarks are being administered, teachers report that once the benchmark is given, there is still little use of the data to guide instruction. Although, this year, with the implementation of the new 60 minute schedule teachers report more time to remediate students.

We continue to use our web-based benchmarking system, Mastery Manager, to input data and teachers are becoming more comfortable using the system. This should help teachers to make sense of the wealth of data at their fingertips. We will continue to revise benchmark assessments. The goal is to use them to give us a true picture of what each student knows and is able to do. This is an ongoing process and will continue over the next few years. A goal is to align benchmark tests with the format & content of the CMT as well as to use the results of the benchmark results to guide instruction. Our present benchmarks ask students to recall a tremendous amount of material, and benchmarks with questions about the big ideas we present are lacking.

Discussion regarding benchmark tests took place during the curriculum review process and within PLC groups and adjustments will be made as recommended by the committees. Seventh and eight grade benchmark tests have been shortened and are administered at several points through out the unit so that instructional adjustments may be made. Modified benchmark assessments have been developed by our special education staff for all units in grades 6-8 for those students who are designated as requiring them.

Social Studies

Benchmark assessments were given at the conclusion of each unit in grades six, seven, and eight. Most of the seventh grade benchmarks and several of the eighth grade benchmarks were revised during this year. Teachers used the data on a regular basis to understand their students' performance. The following table shows benchmark results from all three grades:

Grade 6	Average Score	Grade 7	Average Score	Grade 8	Average Score
Prehistory/ Mesopotamia	80%	Introduction to Geography	87%	Developing the Nation	83%
Ancient Egypt	86%	The Middle East	88%	Westward Expansion	84%
Ancient Greece	89%	Asia	89%	The Civil War	86%
Ancient Rome	***	Africa	88%	Spanish- American War	83%
Middle Ages	***	Latin America	***	World War I	85%

***The data for the assessments has not been compiled yet because the assessments have not been given yet or a teacher has not finished inputting the data.

Teachers at all three grade levels worked to refine the report card standards for the new standards-based report card. Once this process was completed, teachers then started to match their assessments to the new standards and identify assessments that no longer matched the social studies standards or areas where new assessments might need to be created. This work will continue during the 2011-2012 school year.

Staffing

At the writing of this annual report, June 15, 2011, staffing at the middle school for Reading/Language Arts and Social Studies is appropriate.

Staffing remained the same in Science during the 2010-11 school year. There are three sixth grade science teachers, and two in both seventh and eighth grade. With the change of building last year, all teachers report less classroom space to conduct inquiry activities, their former rooms in the TIS were much better equipped to accommodate their large classes. They are also lacking storage space for the many supplies & materials necessary to conduct a solid science program.

We were thrilled to add the position of full time math interventionist this year. This position provided services to approximately 22-24 students per quarter who were in need of intervention in grades 6-8. The interventionist also worked in a co-teaching environment in one Pre-Algebra class in grade 8 and one Math 7 class that was identified with a high number of at risk students in math. Her role in the class provided significant opportunities to differentiate instruction and meet the individual needs of students.

School Facilities

Custodial tracking forms continue to be utilized and have been very successful. Planned maintenance projects and timelines have helped make the transition effort a success. Very few complaints were received this year regarding their services despite the challenges the move provided. The custodial staff is working hard to make TMS a safe and clean environment.

Student Support Services

The Early Intervention Project model continues to see success. Many students were given individualized help and modifications that would have otherwise not been provided. At TMS, the EIP is the pre-referral process. The TMS Guidance Department is core to its overall success and they continue to work hard to make a difference in the lives of the students. Through Principal Grade Meetings, the Rachel's Challenge program, and various support programs the guidance department works hard to provide support for our students to tackle not only academic, but social and emotional challenges as well. Our Scientific Research Based Initiatives and RTI programs such as the TMS Academy, Achievement Lab, Homework Club, and Failure Reporting have yielded strong benefits this year as parents were constantly kept informed, and students were given support. These programs resulted in only two retention hearings, and no outright retentions this year.

Student Activities

Reading/Language Arts

Students were invited to participate in a number of language arts-related contests and activities. These included but are not limited to the following:

- Anthology of Poetry, Inc.
- Celebration of Young Poets -Creative Communications, Inc.
- State of Connecticut Law Day Essay Contest
- Tolland Junior Women's Club Spelling Bee for 6th graders
- Journal Inquirer Limerick contest

Mathematics

The curriculum at TMS provides teachers and students the opportunity to apply mathematics concepts routinely through daily instruction, investigations, and in class projects and activities. These activities align with classroom lessons and instruction.

Most of the student population at TMS participates in sports & clubs. In addition to this, special programs such as Hoops for Heart continue to break national records for fund raising. Special evening activities such as the

Read-In, Fantastic Fun Night, community service projects, and dances provided students very beneficial opportunities to socialize, learn, and have fun.

The late bus at TMS is an invaluable tool for students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Students are able, due to the late buses, to receive help from teachers, work in after-school groups, or meet with administrators. For many parents the challenges of career and home would be exacerbated by the lack of an afternoon bus program. Students clearly benefit from our after-school buses.

Science

There were several special activities that students were involved in this year in the area of science.

Grade 6: Highlights

- All science teachers continue to learn more about their SMART Boards and ceiling mounted projectors. All teachers report high interest by their students.
- Students completed state embedded lab, “Dig In” within the Ecology Unit. This lab is part of the Grade 8 science CMT.
- Teachers and students used the dedicated science lab facilities during the year to conduct experiments on plant growth and to learn the basics of scientific equipment used in their classes. Because the room is away from the regular classroom space for sixth grade, the room is not used as much as it should be. Next year, we plan to use it for seventh and eighth grade laboratory experiments.
- Many students received privileges for using the on-line version of their science text. The on-line version is interactive. The subscription was included with the purchase of our new textbooks. We will have access for the next three years without an additional charge.
- The entire grade level visited the Connecticut Science Center in June.

Grade 7: Highlights

- All students completed the State CMT embedded lab “Feel the Beat” within the Cells, Heredity and Evolution unit. This lab is part of the Grade 8 science CMT.
- The entire 7th grade class participated in a science field trip titled The Great Salmon River Environmental Blitz. Our science coordinator organized the event where students participated in several different science activities as they toured Salmon River State Park with their homeroom. The highlight of the day was releasing a hundred salmon fry that the students raised from eggs in their classroom. Due to extreme weather conditions on the day of the event, the Salmon River trip was cancelled. Students participated in an abbreviated version of the activities on the TMS grounds.
- Many students received privileges for using the on-line version of their science text. The on-line version is interactive. The subscription was included with the purchase of our new textbooks. We will have access for the next three years without an additional charge.

Grade 8: Highlights

- In October, students participated in a custom-made lesson developed, presented and funded by the New England Air Museum. Students studied the forces involved in flight.
- All students completed the State CMT embedded lab “Shipping & Sliding” within the Work, Energy & Motion unit. This lab is part of the Grade 8 science CMT.
- Many students received privileges for using the on-line version of their science text. The on-line version is interactive. The subscription was included with the purchase of our new textbooks. We will have access for the next three years without an additional charge.

Social Studies

There were several special activities that students were involved in this year in the area of social studies, including but not limited to:

- The Washington D.C. Trip
- SeeDebate online resources.
- Strattalogica online activities and resources.
- Salem Trip

Parent and Community

Community outreach occurs at Tolland Middle School in many ways. The Principal's Breakfasts, held during the first week of each month provided parents and community members an opportunity to come into the Middle School, sit down, and enjoy a continental breakfast with the Principal while sharing ideas, feedback, and dialogue. These breakfasts have provided great opportunities to discuss the great things going on at Tolland Middle School as well as to discuss the challenges, budgetary and otherwise, that the school faced. These breakfasts proved to be very valuable and will be continued next year.

Another outreach effort at TMS was the TMS Community Night series. Tolland Middle School conducted programs that would allow parents and community members time to talk to the Principal, and ask questions while the children were entertained and supervised. Examples of the past programs included Riverside Reptiles, Drum Circles, A Movie, and more. Examples from this year include the TMS Pumpkin Festival, and TMS Parents' Night Out.

The TMS Awards ceremony was executed in the evening to give parents a chance to attend, and carried out so that student awards balanced athletics and academics. The evening was successful, and will continue to be improved upon, and event was financed by the TMS PTO, the Minnie Hicks Foundation, and fundraisers held during the year by the Principal.

Promotion was carried out successfully again this year, and included two hundred and fifty nine graduates as well as nearly a thousand spectators. The promotion ceremony lasted a little over an hour, included performances by the TMS Band and Chorus, speeches by students and administration, and honored the students and their parents. Students, parents, and staff saw the promotion ceremony as a success.

The Falcon News, a professionally printed newsletter, is an invaluable tool for communicating the happenings at Tolland Middle School to the community and parents. In addition, the Digital Backpack continued to help save paper and resources while electronically communicating information that used to go home in student backpacks, in an e-mail list (the TMSnews listserv), and on the web-site under the Digital Backpack link. TMS has also gone onto *Twitter* this year, and has a growing following. Finally, the reports going out every fifteen days of any and all students that are failing, have helped keep parents in the loop and on top of their children's status.

Tolland Middle School Goals 2011-2012

Reading/Language Arts

- Due to the division of the language arts, it is essential that teachers continue to work towards instructional consistency within the language arts program in their respective grades. PLC teams should be the vehicle for this.
- Analyze data from benchmarks in a timely manner to determine instructional needs of students and trends in curriculum.
- Create common assessments across the grades in reading and grammar.
- Provide a structure for writing portfolios.

- Provide professional development on writing workshop.
- Investigate the feasibility of hiring a full-time reading/language arts consultant to service the needs of the teachers and students at TMS.
- Provide professional development in the area of reading instruction to Special Education teachers.
- Revise language arts curriculum and benchmarks in light of CCSS.
- Investigate the units of study and pacing guides (created by CSDE) for possible adoption in grades 6-8.
- Purchase a sufficient number of trade books to ensure that every student has a copy.

Mathematics

- Alignment of curriculum to the CCSS
- Development of Beginning of the Year Assessments and Mid Year Assessment based on the Common Core.
- Two math levels in grade 6

Science

During the 2011-12 school year, science teachers will be re-working the curriculum because the seven-period schedule is new and instructional time is different than 2010-11. At the writing of this report, it is difficult to predict what budget impacts might be felt by the TMS teachers and students as the final budget has not been determined. Teachers will continue to solidify Tier I instruction at all grade levels. Implementation of the standards-based report card for the 2012-13 school year will be a goal of the science faculty. They will continue to align their instruction with the new reporting document.

Social Studies

- Continue the process of matching current assessments to the social studies standards identified for inclusion on the standards-based report card.
- Include modified benchmarks in data collection on Mastery Manager for 8th grade.
- Increase teachers' instructional focus on inquiry and essential questions.
- Continue to develop common formative assessments to track student progress before benchmarks.
- Continue to develop rubrics and anchor sets for benchmarks at all grade levels.

Closing

Tolland Middle School is a strong educational institution. As TMS finishes this year, we are showing positive growth in student academic performance, the culture of the school, and the school's outreach and community involvement. In addition, our focus on Scientific Research Based Initiatives, Professional Learning Communities, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Instructional Rounds, and Standards Based Reporting have provided a strong philosophical foundation, sound practices, and sound research methodologies that are yielding advances in student learning. Our students are demonstrating academic and social growth. As we look to next year, we will be working with a new schedule and will continue to refine existing programs and develop new opportunities. Our research and reflective practices will continue. We are excited about the coming year, and optimistic about the opportunities that the future will provide.