

## **PPS Update**

### **December 2014**

Over the past several months the PPS Department has continued its work on addressing several areas of its Improvement Plan relative to curriculum and instruction. After several months of investigating various reading programs the PPS Department purchased a specialized reading program to be utilized with students with reading disabilities. This reading program is a comprehensive, multi-sensory reading intervention program that utilizes an Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching reading. This program integrates phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, spelling, comprehension and handwriting. A special education teacher from each elementary school was provided full day training in the use of this reading program.

Additionally, several special education teachers attended a week long training in implementing the Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching reading. Other special education teachers attended a three day Wilson Reading training as well in an effort to continually improve the quality of reading instruction provided to our students with disabilities in this area.

Several members from PPS administration and district school psychologists attended a full day in-service through Learning Ally on Dyslexia Awareness as well. The PPS Department has also been in contact with the CSDE regarding the addition of dyslexia to the specific learning disabilities special education eligibility criteria and will continue to focus on improving its intervention and identification procedures for students with reading disabilities.

The PPS Department continues to collaborate with the Curriculum office as well as all elementary principals in implementing a social, emotional and behavioral intervention program for elementary students in need. The district has chosen the DESSA (Devereux Student Strengths Assessment) as its screening tool for students and has recently begun implementation of this pilot intervention program for the 2014-15 school year. The DESSA is a measure of social-emotional competencies and is being piloted with select grade one through grade five students. School psychologists and school social workers throughout the district participated in the selection of the DESSA as a screening tool as well as the development of the roll out procedure. This process will be revised accordingly for the 2015-16 school year. The DESSA also aligns well with our elementary school's Responsive Classroom initiative, which supports each school's climate plans.

The District Climate Management team will be meeting next week to establish the calendar for implementing student, parent and staff climate surveys this spring as well as review any additional requirements from the CSDE of our school based climate teams. More information on this is forthcoming. The District Climate Steering Committee also met recently to review its goals and develop budget requests for the 2015-16 through 2017-18 school years.

Members of the STEP Management Team are currently revising its eligibility and exit criteria and will present recommended revisions to the Instructional Committee of the Board of

Education this winter. Our three STEP teachers and other members of this management team have met several times during this fall to review its eligibility and exit criteria, which is currently in its third year of implementation.

The PPS Department has recently contracted with an assistive technology consultant from CREC to assist in the development of its technology plan in order to meet the needs of our special education students in this area. Currently an inventory of technology equipment within the PPS Department is being completed.

Several speech and language pathologists throughout the district will be participating in a research study through Yale Child Study Center throughout the next several months. This research study will examine the utility of an iPad application to treat prosodic difficulties in students with autism and other communication disorders. Our speech pathologists will be working with families and researchers from Yale on this project and will share findings with department staff. The length of this study is approximately twelve weeks.

Finally, the PPS department has recently updated its Strategic (Improvement) Plan, which is in its third year of implementation along with its professional development plan, and held its first annual special education resource fair at the Oakdale Theater on October 28, 2014.

Approximately forty vendors participated in this opportunity to share community resources with families of students with disabilities. Planning for the PPS PTAC's second annual special education resource fair has already begun. Our second annual special education resource fair will be held October 27, 2015 at the Oakdale Theater. More information will follow.