



Charting the Course to 21st Century Classrooms

Annual Report on Curriculum, Instruction
and Student Achievement
2008-09

**Eastern Carver County Schools
Academic Services Department**

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Eastern Carver County Schools: Charting the Course to 21st Century Classrooms



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s we compiled last year's activities that centered on improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement for this report, I felt a tremendous sense of pride in the men and women working with the students of Eastern Carver County Schools.

Their remarkable commitment allowed us to "change the tires on the car while it was going down the road." Enormous numbers of secondary staff not only taught our students, they also worked with district support staff to design a new program. The courses students are taking this fall reflect the changes made by teachers to curriculum during the 2008-09 school year. It was a year of unparalleled productivity.

All effort, both at the elementary and secondary levels, reflects a commitment to providing our learners with the best program possible in their preparation to become citizens in the world of the 21st Century.

This document summarizes the work of the staff of Eastern Carver County Schools in curriculum, instruction, student achievement and professional development. If you have questions or comments on any item in this report, please don't hesitate to contact me at 952.556.6181 or at scearcyl@district112.org.

Dr. Lynn Searcy
Assistant Superintendent

Secondary School Redesign: Moving from Planning to Practice

Secondary Schools Mission: “To prepare each learner for successful completion of a post-secondary education program, life-long learning, career opportunities and meaningful contributions as a citizen of the local and global community by providing personalized, rigorous and relevant learning experiences”.

Much of the curriculum development emphasis during the 2008-09 school year revolved around efforts to prepare grades 6-12 for the implementation of the redesigned secondary program. Teachers did a complete review of classes offered in every subject area and developed programs to reflect a new, more personal direction in teacher-student relationships.

Thanks to the work that occurred during the 2008-09 year, the new secondary program will offer more depth in subject areas, more intentional relationship-building between students and teachers and, recognizing the importance of harnessing student interests and passion in the learning process, more personalization.

Few school systems have the opportunity to look at grades 6-12 as a whole. One of the most important outcomes of the secondary redesign is the creation of a seamless seven years of instruction. Schedules, course development, relationship building, instructional strategies, counseling goals and curriculum now align between the middle school and high school programs.

Here are some of the critical initiatives addressed in the 2008-09 school year as part of effort to implement the new programming in 2009-10.

Interest Areas – Interest Areas became a curriculum framework for electives choices at the middle and high school level. Those interest areas are: Arts and Communication; Global Studies; Health Science and Human Services; Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM). Teams of teachers reviewed curriculum to develop a three-course sequence of classes now required at the high school level to ensure students receive more in-depth experiences. Middle school teachers developed exploratory electives within the four interest areas to give students a taste of what they could choose in high school.

Schedule – All secondary buildings prepared for the move to the same schedule. All will use a 7-period modified block schedule at all grade levels beginning in the 2009-10 year. This schedule combines year-long classes designed for content depth and relationship building over time with the flexibility of longer blocks of time to support labs and projects.

Credit Requirements – Staff members developed a credit system at the middle level that requires students to earn credits before moving to the next level. The credit requirement ensures mastery of course material.

Counseling – Counselors revised the counseling program for grades 6-12 to reflect the standards of the American School Counselors Association. One new program selected for implementation in 2009-10, the 6+1 Plan, focuses on helping students plan for academic success through proper course selection at both the middle level and high schools. The program will help students create plans to chart a course for success in middle school, high school, and beyond.

Redesigned Gifted/Talented Approach – High ability students will find more rigor and challenge in classes in 2009-10. Two coordinator positions, one at the middle school level and one at the high school level, were created to oversee the options for these students. They will assist in creating classes, adding to current curriculum, and providing professional development for staff.

Middle School Program: Preparing for High School Success

Middle school teachers and administrators worked throughout the 2008-09 school year to prepare the implementation of much of the redesigned secondary program. That work included:

Accelerated classes – In order to better address the daily need of high ability students, teachers created accelerated classes in language arts that will require demonstrated skill in order to enroll.

Grade 6-8 Curriculum Supports High School Program – All math, science, English and social studies classes for grades 6-8 were realigned with the goal of supporting the academic program of the high schools. Teachers looked for any curriculum holes that could delay student success as they transition to grade 9. The middle school curriculum uses the state’s “Foundation, Knowledge, and Skills” as the content organizer along with national content standards. Elective classes were recreated to support the high schools’ four Interest Areas: Arts and Communication; Health Science and Human Services; Global Studies; Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

Project Lead the Way Expands to Middle Schools – Teachers worked to expand Chaska High School’s very successful pre-engineering program, Project Lead the Way, to all three middle schools. The program emphasizes both engineering and biomedical science. This hands-on program addresses the national interest of increasing student interest in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Communication Arts (6th grade) – Teachers created a new course to develop the knowledge and skills 6th graders need for success in middle school and high school. The class addresses important media and literacy skills, works on keyboarding and computer competencies, and also introduces important study skills like organization.

World Language Expansion – Seventh and eighth graders will have the option in 2009-10 to take a full year of French, Spanish or German. If they show proficiency at the end of the year, they will receive high school credit. Students may also choose to sample a variety of languages before choosing one for credit through the middle level language exploratory classes beginning in 7th grade. (Low enrollment limited the options for French and German in the 2009-10 school year.)

The 8th Period – The new schedule will allow an 8th period for important school initiatives. Planning took place in 2008-09 to ensure that this time will be spent working on the social/emotional/behavioral needs of middle level students.

High School Program: Paving the Way to Post-Secondary Education

Believing that a high school diploma is no longer enough, high school staff members spent the 2008-09 school year developing an increasingly relevant and rigorous academic program for high school students. Their work focused on these changes:

Interdisciplinary Teams – Our middle schools have long used interdisciplinary teams in working with students day-to-day. Borrowing a winning formula, high school teachers in core academic subjects of English, social studies, math and science, will work with freshmen and sophomores in instructional teams. Teams will allow teachers to plan instruction across subject areas. Integrating curriculum improves the meaning and relevance of what students learn. Working as an instructional team also allows four sets of eyes on each student in the team, enabling teachers to pick up on student needs and plan interventions on behalf of individual learners.

Accelerated Courses in English and Science – Staff created new courses in English and Science in which time becomes a variable for students with the ability to move more quickly through coursework.

Physics moves to 9th grade – Science teachers reframed the sequence of classes to reflect best practices. In fall, 2009, freshmen will take “physics first.” Chemistry moves to 10th grade with biology finishing off the required series.

Personal Wellness Credits Required Every Year – Acknowledging the importance of healthy lifestyles to a successful future, teachers worked to combine Health and Physical Education under one umbrella called Personal Wellness. Students will be required to take a Personal Wellness class for one semester each of the four years of high school to ensure that students stay aware and informed about healthy choices.

8th Period – Counselors and teachers explored the potential of the 8th period, one 90-minute block a week, to connect students to activities and preparation for service and success in school, the community and the world. Students will engage in activities around the “Top Twenty” curriculum (focused on the premise that twenty percent of the population make eighty percent of the difference in the world), assemblies, and clubs. Seniors will have an option for a Senior Project.

Secondary Professional Development: Building Professional Communities of Learning

Our secondary professional development plan was designed to support teachers and staff in implementing the redesigned secondary program. Teachers learned within professional learning communities where they could share expertise and grow together in essential teaching skills. Teachers received ongoing training in the following areas:

Backward Design – Teachers learned to “begin with the end in mind” as they plan lessons which focus on essential knowledge and skills and develop authentic, real-life learning activities.

Curriculum Maps – Departments worked together to align curriculum within and across grade levels by mapping essential standards and units to ensure alignment and increasing rigor.

Teaming – Teachers received training on how to develop a successful interdisciplinary team structure and common planning.

Common Assessments – Science, World Language and Math began the process of implementing a system of common assessment to ensure that students possess the critical skills and knowledge to be successful.

Building a New Culture – Staff engaged in the work of building new school cultures for students and staff in all five buildings by working on student-teacher connections through advisory, 8th period and Top Twenty training at the high school level.

Instructional Technology – A number of middle school and high school teachers were involved in “learning cohorts” in which participants planned lessons using technology and peer coaching techniques to share feedback and expertise with each other.

For more information on the professional development program at the secondary level, please contact Nancy Thul at 952.556.6187 or thuln@district112.org.

Elementary Professional Development: Implementing New Reading Series

Language arts instruction at the elementary level is the foundation for success in middle school and high school. The ability to read, to process information, to create, to speak, to write, to spell, and to listen clearly paves the way for the challenges of the future.

Eastern Carver County Schools implemented a new language arts series in 2008-09: Story Town, a Houghton-Mifflin-Harcourt series. As the selection process ended in the spring of 2008, the process to train teachers began.

Using a train-the-trainer model, teacher leaders from each elementary school came together during the summer of 2008 to learn the new series and return to their buildings with the ability to help colleagues make the most of the program.

Four ‘late start’ days provided teachers additional opportunities to align current writing curriculum to the new language arts program. Teachers also explored strategies to develop rich vocabulary throughout the elementary curriculum to reinforce one of the key components of the new program.

Professional development opportunities also focused on instructional strategies to enhance reading comprehension. Teachers were introduced to the School-wide Enrichment Model (SEM) to support advanced readers and used eight hours of collaborative team time to imbed reading curriculum across subject areas.

One of the reasons the Story Town series was selected for use at the elementary level is the opportunity for teachers, students, and parents to access additional resources beyond the classroom. A dynamic online tool, the Story Town website provides an array of options for use as needed. Teachers took time to know and understand the potential this online resource provides.

In January, elementary teachers participated in a day-long professional development event called “Story Town Heroes.” In the morning, teachers chose to attend sessions taught by colleagues willing to share language arts strategies they found successful as they implemented the new language arts series. The afternoon allowed more collaboration as teachers worked together in grade level groups.

For more information on the professional development program at the elementary level, please contact Cathy Gallagher at 952.556.6182 or at gallagherc@district112.org.

District Assessment Plan: Measuring Achievement and Informing Curriculum Decisions

The objectives of our testing program are twofold. First we seek to assess student achievement on state standards and district outcomes. Second, we use results to evaluate our curriculum and assessment, making changes when necessary as identified by our testing results. The following summary describes how we use test results, the type of tests we administer, and the timetable for the year’s testing program.

Use of Test Results:

- ▶ Develop focused instruction and intervention for increased student achievement
- ▶ Examine data for instructional planning
- ▶ Design and implement staff development programs to meet specific academic areas

What do these tests measure?

- ▶ The **NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)** is an adaptive, computer based test that measures student progress in math and reading curriculum over time.
- ▶ The **Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment II (MCA-II)** evaluates student performance on the state standards in math, reading, and science.
- ▶ **GRAD** (Graduation-Required Assessment for Diploma) tests measure proficiency on Minnesota Academic Standards and other essential skills in writing, reading, and math. Students must meet the requirements of these assessments to graduate from a Minnesota public high school.
- ▶ **PLAN** helps identify skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college, areas students may need extra help with, and career areas that match their interests. It is also an indicator on how students may score on the ACT. It is given in 10th grade.
- ▶ Additional teacher created classroom assessments also serve an important function in measuring progress and achievement but are not included in the following chart.

Testing Program Schedule

Elementary Testing Program:

NWEA MAP Test	Grades 1 – 5	Fall/Spring
MCA-II Math and Reading	Grades 3 – 5	Spring
MCA-II Science	Grade 5	Spring
Individual Kindergarten Assessments		Fall/Spring

Middle School Testing Program:

NWEA MAP Test	Grades 6 – 8	Spring
MCA-II Math and Reading	Grades 6 – 8	Spring
MCA-II Science	Grade 8	Spring

High School Testing Program:

GRAD Writing Test	Grade 9	Spring
MCA-II Reading (with GRAD built in)	Grade 10	Spring
MCA-II Math (with GRAD built in)	Grade 11	Spring
GRAD Reading and Math Retakes	Grades 11 – 12	Fall/Winter/Spring
GRAD Writing Retakes	Grades 10 – 12	Fall/Summer
PLAN Test	Grade 10	Fall
PSAT (optional)	Grade 11	Fall
AP Exams	Grades 11, 12	Spring
ACT, SAT	Grades 11, 12	selected dates all year

Eastern Carver County Schools: Outperforming State MCA II Averages

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment II (MCA II) results show students in Eastern Carver County Schools outperforming state averages at every grade level.

The MCA II tests measure student proficiency in meeting high rigorous standards in math and reading.

In math, 76 percent of Eastern Carver County students scored at or above proficiency in state standards compared to this year's state average of 62.3 percent.

In reading, 83.1 percent of Eastern Carver County students scored at or above proficiency in state standards compared to the state reading average for 2009 of 72 percent.

Eastern Carver County scores held fairly constant from last year's results in which 76 percent of students in math and 82 in reading met or exceeded proficiency.

Particularly notable in this year's results was the 7.5% increase in eighth graders who met or exceeded proficiency in math.

State assessments are one of several resources District 112 teachers use to review student performance and refine curriculum and classroom instruction.

The MCAII results were used by the state to assign schools to the list of schools that do not meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement. This is a component of the federal "No Child Left Behind" law which mandates that every child in American public schools will be proficient in math and reading by 2014. The Minnesota Department of Education expects the number of schools not making AYP will increase this year as the required proficiency percentage increases.

The following chart compares district/state results by grade level.

Math MCA-II 2009 (2008 in parentheses)

District Overall: 76%

State Overall 62.3%

Grade	3	4	5	6	7	8	11
District	88.1 (90.4)	81.1 (81.3)	75.5 (75.6)	73 (75)	79.1 (80.1)	80.7 (73.2)	54.8 (54.6)
State	79.2 (81.4)	72.4 (71.6)	63.7 (66)	62 (64.6)	61 (61.4)	58.2 (58.2)	41.1 (34.4)

Reading MCA-II 2009 (2008 in parentheses)

District Overall: 83.1%

State Overall: 72%

Grade	3	4	5	6	7	8	10
District	86.5 (87.5)	86 (83)	83.7 (83.4)	78.4 (77.1)	76.5 (77.4)	84.2 (75.4)	86.3 (86.5)
State	78.3 (79)	74.5 (72.2)	72.2 (73.4)	72.5 (69.6)	64.9 (64.7)	67.1 (65.7)	74.2 (70.7)

GRAD Writing, Reading and Math 2009 (2008 in parentheses)

Writing (Grade 9)

Reading (Grade 10)

Math (Grade 11)

District	95.5% (94.4%)	87% (88%)	75.5% (new this year)
State	89% (89 %)	78% (75%)	57%

Eastern Carver County Schools: AYP Status Mixed

While all District 112 schools scored well above state averages on state MCAII reading and math tests, four schools have been placed on the list of schools not achieving Adequate Yearly Progress as defined by state's participation in the federal No Child Left Behind law (NCLB).

The seven district schools meeting the state's AYP benchmark are: Chaska High School; Chaska Middle School West; Pioneer Ridge Freshmen Center; Chanhassen Elementary; Bluff Creek Elementary; Clover Ridge Elementary; East Union Elementary. The Kindergarten Center does not participate in state testing.

The four schools appearing on the state's list of school not making AYP are:

Chaska Elementary – for math in the Hispanic subgroup; math and reading in the Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Free/Reduced Lunch subgroups; and reading in the special education subgroup. Because Chaska Elementary qualifies for Title I instruction and because this is the second year for this designation, it must offer a school choice option to parents

Jonathan Elementary – for math and reading in the Hispanic subgroup; math and reading in the LEP subgroup; and reading in the Free/Reduced Lunch subgroup. This is Jonathan's first year on this designation; staff will be working with a plan to address these issues.

Victoria Elementary – for math in the Hispanic subgroup. Victoria made significant gains this year, moving four out of five subgroups out of the needs improvement AYP category. There are no consequences under this designation because VES does not qualify for Title I services.

Chaska Middle School East – for math and reading in the Hispanic and Special Education subgroups; for math in the LEP and Free/Reduced Lunch subgroups. This is the first year CMS East has been on the list. There are no consequences because it does not receive Title I services.

The state also named the district as a whole as not making AYP in math in the Hispanic, LEP, Special Education and Free/Reduced Lunch subgroups; and in reading in the LEP, Special Education subgroups.

Eastern Carver County Schools: State Science Test Results Show Gains

State science test results show students in Eastern Carver County Schools outperforming their peers across the state. The test measures proficiency in meeting the State's high science standards at grades five, eight and in high school for those taking high school biology.

At fifth grade, 67.3 percent of Eastern Carver County Schools' students met or exceeded proficiency compared to 45 percent state-wide.

At eighth grade, 62 percent of students met or exceeded proficiency compared to 42.6 percent state-wide.

In high school, of the students enrolled in Biology, 57.8 percent met or exceeded proficiency compared to 49.5 percent state-wide.

"We are pleased with the gains made in this second year of testing," said Jill Velure, student assessment/testing manager. "Fifth grade gained 10.2 percent; eighth grade gained nearly 16 percent; high school students gained 2 percent."

The largest gain at individual schools occurred at Jonathan Elementary School. This year's 59.4 percent of 5th graders who met or exceeded proficiency is 22.1 percent above last year's results. "JES staff should celebrate the terrific progress students made!" said Cathy Gallagher, K-12 Curriculum Coordinator. "Kudos to them for their hard work."

East Union scores makes Science Top 10 List

East Union Elementary also made a significant increase, with 83.3 percent of their fifth graders proficient in science. "East Union delivered a 'Wow!' performance," Ms. Gallagher said. "Absolutely fabulous results!" The percentage lifted East Union to the list of Minnesota's Top 10 Schools as defined by science test results.

Individual school state science test results for Eastern Carver County Schools

Percent Proficient

Chaska High	57.8
State	49.5
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CMS East	56.5
CMS West	67.0
State	42.6
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Chaska Elementary	54.7
Chanhassen Elementary	75.6
East Union Elementary	83.3
Bluff Creek Elementary	76.2
Clover Ridge Elementary	67.4
Victoria Elementary	66.4
Jonathan Elementary	59.4
State	45.0

For more information on our testing program contact Jill Velure, Student Assessment/Testing Manager at 952.556.6184 or at velurej@district112.org.

Thank you to our Advisory Council!

We thank the following members of the Curriculum Advisory Council for their service to the students of School District 112.

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