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Sarah Noble Intermediate School
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Mrs. Anne Bilko, Ass't. Principal
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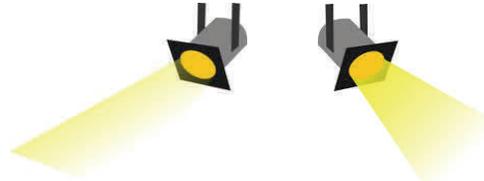
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Spotlight on New Milford Schools

Volume 4, Issue 5

December 2013

Spotlight on Instructional Coaches



This issue of the *Spotlight* focuses on the New Milford Public Schools **Literacy and Math Coaches**. First brought into the district in 2010 through the Education Jobs Grant, the coaches have proven to be a valuable asset. With the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and assessments happening this year, their value will only increase over time.

New Milford Public Schools currently has three literacy coaches and two math coaches who provide services to our schools. Their job goals include assisting in planning, coordinating, and implementing school-wide math or literacy programs which facilitate learning; providing instructional strategies to raise achievement in math, reading and writing; identifying and supporting staff development needs of the district and schools; and modeling best practices lessons using math and literacy based learning strategies.

Assistant Superintendent Joshua Smith says “Research continues to affirm that coaching, teacher collaboration, and teacher reflection are the vital components for developing effective instructional practice. Our coaches provide the structured and facilitated conversations that are essential for improving student instruction within our schools. They serve our students by helping our teachers work through complex issues, solve problems with curriculum implementation and help translate major national, state and local initiatives into practical, deliverable, and teachable elements.”

We contacted the coaches to see how they go about accomplishing all their responsibilities and to find out what a typical day might entail. What we found out was that their days are anything but typical! Look inside to see a description in their own words.

From Karen Hartle—Literacy Coach:

My day is comprised of conferring with teachers about student work, planning with teachers for instruction, analyzing data to set goals for students, and working within classrooms, which can be comprised of demonstrating common core-aligned lessons, co-teaching, or observing and providing feedback to the teacher about a certain instructional strategy he or she is trying. Additionally, I facilitate two book studies a week around professional texts. This year teachers, in groups of ten, are studying *Be Core Ready: Powerful, Effective Steps to Implementing and Achieving the Common Core State Standards* by Pam Allyn and *Notice and Note: Strategies for Close Reading* by Kyleen Beers and Robert Probst.



Mrs. Hartle is pictured providing a demo lesson launching a 4th grade non-fiction unit.

I help teachers adjust the pacing of their instruction to ensure that all standards are taught to mastery over the course of a year and work with outside consultants to develop and implement new curriculums in reading and writing. Basically, I provide on-the-job professional development opportunities embedded in the teacher's typical workday. I have also done mini-lessons on determining importance, critical analysis of literature, writing concisely, writing about authors' treatments of themes, small group word work lessons, and close reading to name a few. Close reading asks students to choose a specific passage and analyze it in fine detail, as if with a magnifying glass, to really focus their understanding of what the passage means. It is an important building block for larger analysis of the text in general. For parents who want more information, this blog clearly explains close reading: <http://www.shanahanonliteracy.com/2012/06/what-is-close-reading.html>.

My lessons are tailored to the individual teacher's needs, which are dictated by the needs of his/her students.



Mrs. Kennison works on math concepts with a 3rd grade class.

From Corby Kennison—Math Coach:

With all the changes coming due to the common core state standards, there is a heightened need for elementary math support. My focus is always on what I can do to support teachers and administrators as we make math student centered and meaningful.

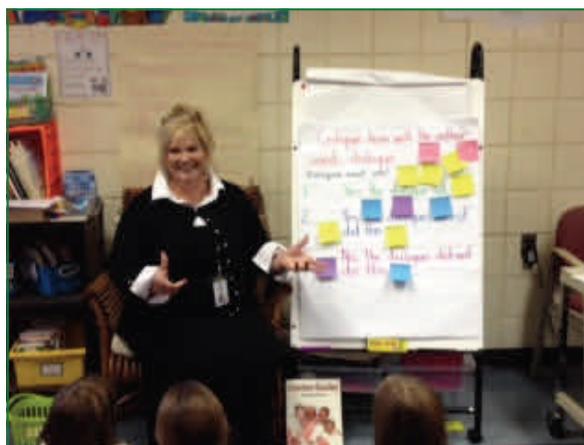
I often check in with teachers in the morning before school starts or during the day. Sometimes teachers have specific questions or want suggestions for lessons on specific content. Other times teachers want to "pick my brain" on a standard or way of presenting a lesson to students.

My current schedule rotates with two days at a school and teachers can schedule me to work with them. If I am modeling a number talk, the lessons are about 15-20 minutes and focus on a specific strategy or number-sense building routine. Longer, concept building lessons might focus on the concepts of more, less, and the same in kindergarten, or numbers in parts in first grade, and solving addition/subtraction problems mentally in second and third grades. I'm facilitating a book study for K-3 teachers; our first book is *Teaching Student Centered Mathematics* by John Van de Walle. I am also available for collaborative meetings where the entire grade level can discuss a common issue. The constant is that I am here to support and stretch teacher and student learning.

From Alison Huntington —Literacy Coach:

A major focus of my day entails collaborating with teachers regarding our literacy curriculum, the management of reading and writing workshop, and raising the rigor of reading and writing. My day begins with checking in with teachers, listening to their thoughts on literacy, and answering their questions. One of my favorite questions is, "Do you have a minute?"

Due to the introduction of a new writing program, *Core Ready*, and the vetting of New Milford Public Schools created reading units, I've been in classrooms modeling lessons and creating rubrics to assist in raising the rigor to help tackle the common core state standards. The rubrics help students be actively engaged in their own learning process by reflecting on their work, looking toward where they need to go next, and what they need to do to get there. While modeling reading and writing workshop lessons, I'm incorporating Interactive Notebooks (IANs). The purpose of the IAN is to enable students to be creative, independent thinkers and writers. They are used for class notes as well as for other activities where the student will be asked to express his/her own ideas and process the information presented in class. They address common core state standards and reach multiple intelligences. I'm finding students really enjoy working in them.



Mrs. Huntington works with a 3rd grade class.

I've also hosted reading and writing conferences on administering and analyzing running records. A running record is a method of assessing a student's reading. We examine student fluency, miscue analysis and comprehension to look for patterns to see student strengths and where they struggle in order to formulate a plan for future success. The conferences also include how to know if a student is in a "just right" book, what their goal should be, and how to help them move forward independently to accomplish their goal.

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My book studies with teachers this year are *No More "I'm Done!"* by Jennifer Jacobson which revolves around creating a writer's workshop in the classroom and *Notice and Note: Strategies for Close Reading* by Kylene Beers and Robert Probst which centers on identifying signposts while reading to help increase comprehension.

From Stephanie Zappone —Math Coach:

I have been working primarily with teachers in grades 4-6 at Sarah Noble, but have also spent some time with the K-3 and 7-8 teachers as well. My work has been focused on helping teachers align their current practices with the common core state standards by providing them with various resources, modeling lessons that align with standards and mathematical practices, and by conducting lesson studies with the units that were written over the summer. I also meet with teachers to help with their planning, give them suggestions on how to differentiate their lessons, and suggest ways to assess their students. I lead district professional development day sessions and hold book studies during the year that serve as great in-house professional development.

While my day is never typical, I am able to adjust my schedule to meet the needs of teachers in the building, whether it be in their classrooms, meeting together in my office, or working on particular grade level requests.

From Mary Lavoie —Literacy Coach, Grades 7-12:

One aspect of my job that I love is that no two days are alike. In addition to the instructional shifts and curriculum changes in response to the common core standards, I also shift my focus depending on the school I am in that day. Of course, the literacy interests and needs of adolescents are different from elementary age students, but there is also a difference between middle and high school students. My job is to not lose sight of that as I work with teachers at Schaghticoke Middle School and New Milford High School.

I enjoy any time I get to talk about teaching with teachers. I help teachers analyze data in order to plan effective lessons that include specific reading strategy instruction, with connected written responses. We work together to raise students' interest and learning in all subjects. At Schaghticoke we are in the midst of our first teacher study group based on our reading of *Notice and Note* by Beers and Probst, and a plan for another study group with a different topic is in the works. New teachers always have questions and concerns specific to their school, so I meet weekly with this group to discuss pedagogy and share new learning.

As the district works to modify the Literacy classes at Schaghticoke and align them to common core standards, the Reading teachers and I meet regularly with Assistant Principal Suzi Greene. We concentrate on how to continuously engage and challenge the students with motivating lessons and meaningful activities. The Literacy classroom has been given a face-lift and is now more student-centered including an organized classroom library with new books, desk arrangements that invite student discourse and comfortable reading chairs. The students and teachers like the changes and more reading is the positive end result.



Mrs. Lavoie confers with SMS teachers in the Literacy classroom.

Lesson Modeling in Action

One of the many ways our coaches assist teachers is by lesson modeling. Mrs. Zappone says “One of the lessons I modeled in a number of fifth grade classrooms was called Columbus Day Parade. It focused on factors, square numbers, prime numbers, and composite numbers. The students were told that they were responsible for helping the parade director figure out all the ways each group could be arranged in marching form. Each group of students was given a different group (such as the fire department) and the number of members marching in that group. They were also given color tiles and graph paper to model and draw their arrangements. When the students were finished with their task, we had a classroom discussion about the arrangements they had made. All of the arrangements are equal



Mrs. Zappone provides instruction in a 5th grade class.

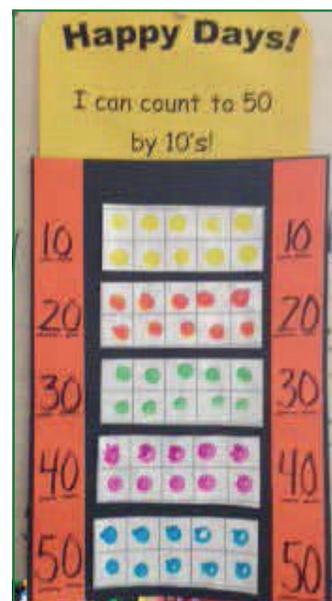
to the number of factors in the number they were given, as well as whether that number is prime, composite or square. This lesson was a great way for a teacher to assess student learning within their unit. Next year the lesson would be more appropriate for fourth grade students, since it was used this year to fill in the CCSS shift.”

Mrs. Kennison gave examples of how kindergarten and grade 1 teachers used a model lesson on ten-frames for student learning. A ten-frame is a simple graphic tool that allows students to “see” numbers. It is a visual consisting of two rows of five boxes. The ten-frame uses the concept of benchmark numbers (5 and 10) to help students develop visual images for each number. Students know that if the top row is filled in, there are five counters without having to count by ones. [Click here if you'd like to see a short video clip on ten-frames.](#) Mrs. Kennison says “Using ten-frames helps students develop number relationships to ten. A strong sense of ten is a prerequisite for understanding place value.”

Mrs. Kennison provided photo examples of the concept. “Kindergarten and grade 1 teachers in the district are using ten-frames to keep track of the number of days of schools we have had. On the fiftieth day of school, kindergarten students represented the days on ten-frames that they put in Happy Days

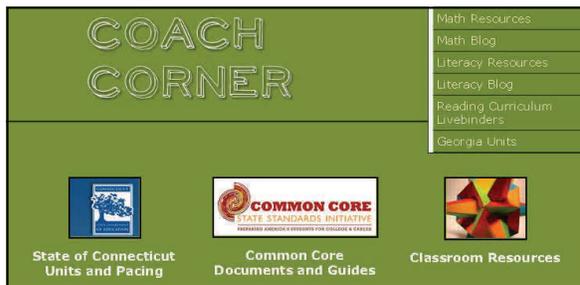


‘juke boxes’. The students could count by tens and they knew that there were five groups of ten in 50. In the “Do you like spiders?” photo, kindergarteners’ responses were recorded on ten-frames under the watchful eye of an artful spider.



More Teacher Resources

Coaches provide teacher resources in many other ways besides lesson modeling. All teachers have access to the “Coach’s Corner” on the district website. All the coaches contribute regularly to this site which contains draft curriculum units, resources that align with common core state standards and other helpful tips. This way all the teachers can benefit from the coaches’ instruction whether they have worked with them personally or not.



The coaches’ work is very much appreciated as evidenced in the ringing endorsements provided by teachers. Grade 5 teacher Mrs. Dianne Johnson finds Math Coach Stephanie Zappone “a wonderful resource for classroom teachers as we navigate through the common core state standards. Her guidance has been invaluable to me in regard to instructional practice and professional development. Each week my fifth grade colleagues and I meet with Mrs. Zappone to discuss teaching points and lesson plans that align with the common core. She has professional resources, lesson plans, materials and ideas for differentiation that I have used to deliver the new curriculum.” Grade 5 teacher Mrs. Lisa Montemurro echoes the praise in speaking about Literacy Coach Karen Hartle: “Karen works collaboratively with teachers to increase the literacy achievement of Sarah Noble students through innovative instructional practices. With Karen’s guidance I feel empowered to try new literacy strategies to enhance the learning experience of my students. Most recently Karen modeled several lessons to extend readers through book clubs with close reading. This approach targeted my ‘high-flyers’ as well as my struggling readers. Karen and I then developed creative ways to engage student response to reading via ‘blog’ postings.” Mrs. Lavoie, Mrs. Huntington and Mrs. Kennison draw similar effusive praise from their colleagues.



Mrs. Hartle facilitates a teacher book club at SNIS.

Math Coach Corby Kennison is hoping to expand her instructional support in the near future by including parents through the development of a webpage. Mrs. Kennison says “I plan to organize it by grade level and by common core state standard so parents will be aware of what students will be learning at each grade by standard. There will be ideas for activities to do at home and interactive websites that students can use, all by standard and grade level. I’m hoping to have it ready for parents by the new year.” Parents will be able to access the webpage through the district website.

As students, parents and staff continue the transition to common core state standards, more resources are sure to follow.



New Milford Public Schools

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Winter Begins!

“A day without sunshine is like, you know, night.” –Steve Martin

Non-winter lovers may feel like the season has already been here forever but astronomical winter in the Northern Hemisphere begins this year on December 21st. Known as the winter solstice, this is the shortest day of the year.



The district notifies parents of weather related and other school closings and early dismissals through a rapid notification service. This service allows us to send a voice mail message to all parents within minutes.

The ability to deliver a message is only as successful as the contact information that we have for your child, therefore, **please make certain that your child’s school has the most up-to-date direct dial numbers.** This information is typically updated annually at the beginning of the school year. If your information has changed since the annual update, please let your child’s school know immediately.

Please note there will be one call at approximately 5:45 a.m. to delay or cancel school. In rare instances a call will be made later if the weather conditions change.

P.S. Spring arrives on March 20, 2014.

[Click here for a handy widget to track the time until then.](#)

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The mission of the New Milford Public Schools, a collaborative partnership of students, educators, family and community, is to prepare each and every student to compete and excel in an ever-changing world, embrace challenges with vigor, respect and appreciate the worth of every human being, and contribute to society by providing effective instruction and dynamic curriculum, offering a wide range of valuable experiences, and inspiring students to pursue their dreams and aspirations.