



BUCKS COUNTY INTERMEDIATE UNIT #22

Our Children... Their Future... Bucks County IU

Neshaminy School District

2015-2016

Evaluation of Grade Five Through Eight Implementation

Interim Report
March 29, 2016



Please Note:

In order to provide context, the opening paragraphs of the introductory letter duplicate the information from the letter prefacing the December interim report. Beginning with the bold text on page two, you will find a description of the additional evaluation activities conducted during December, January, February and March.

March 2016

To the Neshaminy School District:

Between April 2014 and May 2015, a Neshaminy School District 5-8 Study Work Group reviewed research literature, assessed grade 5-8 models in neighboring school districts, identified best practices, and developed recommendations for a plan for potential implementation of 5-8 grade level configuration in the 2015-16 school year. The 5-8 Study Work Group included sixty members representing all of the major stakeholders—parents, administrators, teachers, support staff, central office administrators and others. The interim and final reports of the 5-8 Study Work Group are available on the Neshaminy School District website.

The 5-8 Study Work Group made thirty-five recommendations to the Board of School Directors. The Board of School Directors approved thirty-one recommendations, modified three recommendations, and did not approve one recommendation. The report of recommendations is also available on the on the Neshaminy School District website.

Approval of the 5-8 recommendations represented a substantial investment of resources by the Neshaminy School District in its middle schools, projected at \$1,590,939 for all recommended program components. Through reallocation of existing resources and careful planning, school and district leaders have been able to reduce the actual cost of the changes to \$707,699. Ongoing annual cost increases are expected to be \$273,850 for salaries and transportation.

In order to protect its investment, guarantee the quality of middle school programs and instruction, and provide for mid-course corrections, the Neshaminy School District requested the services of the Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 in conducting an independent evaluation of:

- the effectiveness of the planning and action steps associated with transitioning from a 6-8 grade level configuration to a 5-8 grade level configuration
- overall improvement of the middle school program

The evaluation has been planned in three stages with written reports delivered at three intervals following the September 2015 implementation date: December 2015, March 2016, and June 2016.

The scope of the evaluation includes identification of strengths, needs and areas for growth in:

- students' social and emotional acclimation to a different school environment
- school climate
- student academic progress
- transportation
- support services
- enhanced academic programing
- co-curricular activities

Additionally the evaluation reports will monitor the following specific programs:

- Fifth grade exposure to World Languages using the Symtalk Spanish program
- Eighth grade French/Spanish
- Sixth grade (October start) and fifth grade (December start) iPad initiative
- Developmental Reading grades 5-8

During the months of September through November 2015, we visited each of the middle schools for two school days, and attended after school and evening meetings with staff and parents. Data collection included classroom observations, review of documents, and individual and group interviews with students, parents, teachers, principals, school counselors, psychologists, and co-curricular moderators.

During the months of December, January, February and March, we completed eight full day middle school visits. Dr. Eddie Frasca-Stuart, Bucks County Intermediate Unit Director of Teaching, Learning and Professional Development, joined the evaluation team for several days to assist in the evaluation specifically in the area of Reading and Language Arts.

Data collection activities during this period included:

- **Classroom observations**
- **Individual and group interviews**
- **Conversations with bus drivers**
- **On-line survey of fifth grade parents**
- **Review of documents, including**
 - **Curriculum maps**
 - **Student math and English/language arts grades**
 - **Discipline incident reports**
 - **Absence reports**
 - **Panorama survey results**
 - **Neshaminy School District K-12 English Language Arts Task Force Action Proposal**

This second interim report will follow the organization of the first interim report of December 2015, and includes new findings, clarification of questions posed in the first report, and new or revised recommendations.

We wish to thank those Neshaminy staff members and teachers who are participating in this evaluation process. We greatly appreciate the positive and professional attitude displayed by school staff and administration.

Sincerely,

Lawrence E. Martin, Ph.D.

Michael J. Masko, Ed.D.

Second Interim Report March 29, 2016

We continue to observe the benefits of the comprehensive, research-based planning process that was begun in February 2014, nineteen months before the middle school changes were implemented. Our observations and the evidence collected continue to affirm that the planning process provided a strong design for the middle school transition while addressing community concerns.

This evaluation serves to extend the planning process by closely examining the eleven areas below. The data collection has, and will continue to, identify strengths, needs and recommendations for the middle school program's ongoing improvement. It should be noted that all three middle schools are regularly monitoring the implementation, and have made numerous changes to refine and improve middle school programs.

In February of 2016, in order to solicit greater parent participation in the evaluation process, all parents of fifth grade students were invited to respond to an online survey regarding elements of their child's fifth grade experience. One hundred ninety-nine parents responded to sixteen specific items, and one hundred eight parents provided explanatory or general written comments. Item seventeen invited the respondents to add additional comments concerning the fifth grade transition to middle school. These data were coded using the following process: The responses to this item were analyzed to identify recurring major themes. Five major themes were identified, each of which had at least ten comments:

- Transition
- Homework
- Transportation
- Spanish
- Communication

Minor themes (fewer than ten comments but five or greater) included the iPad Initiative, Safety and School Environment, the WIN Period, and a fundamental opposition to inclusion of the fifth grade at the middle school level.

These data were also analyzed to determine the level of positive, negative or neutral input. In addition, the data were analyzed for the level of specificity of the comments (e.g., describing discrete phenomena or addressing general trends). Summary statements reflecting these analyses are included throughout the individual sections of the report, as are the survey results. Appendix A provides a Fifth Grade Parent Survey Results Overview.

1. Students' Social and Emotional Acclimation to a Different School Environment

Students, teachers, administrators and support personnel continue to report that the social or emotional issues presenting at mid year are typical. Our school visits have reinforced our previous finding that the three middle schools are safe and

students are in a secure environment.

Related Parent Survey Item(s)

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #1:

81% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that their child has adapted very well to a new middle school environment.

19% disagree or strongly disagree.

Discussion of survey data, including parents' written comments:

Approximately four out of five respondents provided a positive response to item #1. The issue of transition emerged as a major theme in the data. More than thirty respondents commented, with the majority reporting that the transition had been successful for their child, and giving praise to the school district, and their schools, for careful planning. A minority indicated that their child had encountered either social or emotional difficulties during the transition from elementary to middle school; however, the difficulties seemed to arise from circumstances particular to individual students.

Recommendations

As preparations begin for the next cohort of fifth graders in 2016-17, we recommend continuation of the best practices employed for 2015-16, for example, orientations, buddy systems, videos, special seating on buses and judicious assignment of classrooms and physical space within the school.

We continue to recommend that school leaders give consideration to scheduling more opportunities for students in different grade levels to interact, both during the school day and in other activities.

In planning for 2016-17, consideration should be given to providing the fifth grade with a modified bell schedule that supports delivery of the planned curriculum and also allows more planned interaction with students in grades six, seven and eight.

2. School Climate

Overall, we continue to observe a positive school climate at all three middle schools. Staff demonstrate collegiality and enjoy an excellent rapport with students. Posters promoting school pride; announcements promoting a positive culture; and adult modeling of safety, pride, integrity, respect, involvement and teamwork are evident in the schools.

This judgment is supported by the data from the Panorama Surveys conducted in all of the middle schools in the spring of 2015 and repeated in the fall of 2015. Both staff and students participated in the survey process.

The staff survey reports the percentage of respondents who answer favorably for ten separate categories and an overall average (See Appendix B). The ten categories are: Climate, Collaboration, Communication, Family Engagement, High Expectations, Instruction, Leadership, Sense of Belonging, Student Engagement, and Support. Overall the district middle schools nearly duplicated the results from spring to fall, retaining the high percentages of favorable perceptions in nine of the ten categories and the overall average. The lone category that had a major change in

value (greater than 6 percentage points) was Sense of Belonging. For staff, this dropped from 96 percent to 80 percent. One explanation for this change in perception is that the percentage change is approximately the same percentage of staff new to the school. Those staff may have been less likely to report as favorably in this category due to being in a new school environment.

The student survey reports the percentage of respondents who answer favorably for six separate categories and an overall average. The six categories are: Emotional Regulation, Grit (sticking to it), School Safety, Sense of Belonging, Teacher Personal Interest in Students, and Teacher-student Relationship (See Appendix C). Four of the categories showed very similar results from spring to fall. However, three categories showed large increases from the spring to fall for the students. They were: Sense of Belonging increased from 53 percent to 61 percent, Teacher Personal Interest in Students increased from 45 percent to 55 percent, and Teacher-student Relationship increased from 68 percent to 77 percent.

These survey results, taken together, are indicative of schools with a strong positive climate for staff and students. The student results support our finding that that school climate was enhanced by the transition process.

Our preliminary data for attendance and grading indicate these measures are on par with the prior year.

Two middle schools have fully implemented a school wide positive behavior intervention and support (SWPBIS) initiative, and the third middle school intends to begin an initiative. The SWPBIS initiatives are designed to teach appropriate behaviors explicitly in all areas of school life in meaningful and visible ways, including before and after school, in classrooms and hallways, in lavatories and locker rooms, and at social and community events.

Related Parent Survey Item(s)

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #2:

89% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that their child's school is a safe place where students, teachers and principals are respectful and kind.

12% disagree or strongly disagree.

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #4:

92% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that educators in their child's school are good role models.

5% disagree or strongly disagree.

Discussion of survey data, including parents' written comments:

Approximately nine out of ten respondents provided positive responses to items #2 and 4. School climate emerged as a minor theme in the data. Many of the responses dealt with discrete issues that represented a mismatch between documented school communications and procedures and the parents' understanding.

Recommendations:

We recommend that design of future school schedules and staffing provide opportunities for teachers to plan lessons and instruction together, or to discuss students' specific and social needs, where these opportunities do not already exist.

In an earlier report we noted that some staff members characterized the schools' organization as a "junior high model." Many of the changes implemented in 2014-15 and 2015-16 were designed to move the schools closer to the model of a true middle school. It is understood that several years' work is required in order to change the culture of a school. We note that school and district leaders are committed to the ongoing support and refinement of a middle school model reintroducing best practices from middle school research. We recommend that Neshaminy school leaders continue to examine and refine the master schedule to determine the degree to which it contributes to, or detracts from, a collaborative, child-centered school climate.

3. Student Academic Progress

In our December report, we communicated our plans to track achievement data throughout the year and compare these data to historical data, where possible. Our investigation continues to review student grade data for Mathematics and English Language Arts. We currently have two data points for grade six. They are for marking periods one and two, comparing the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. (Grade five could not be compared because letter grades were not given in grade five in 2014-15.) English Language Arts includes both Reading and English course grades. There is variance between student grade distributions in the two school years: the distributions seem to indicate an improvement in student grades at all three middle schools. Additional data from marking periods three and four will allow us to render a better informed judgment regarding student grades.

Related Parent Survey Item(s)

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #3:

92% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that their child is learning and growing academically.
8% disagree or strongly disagree.

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #7:

87% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that their child is interested and engaged in school work.
13% disagree or strongly disagree.

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #9:

76% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that their child finds schoolwork challenging.
23% disagree or strongly disagree.

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #11:

77% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that, on average, their child has a reasonable amount of homework.
23% disagree or strongly disagree.

Discussion of survey data, including parents' written comments:

Approximately nine out of ten respondents provided positive responses to items #3

and 7. Approximately three out of four respondents provided positive responses to items #9 and 11. A number of the comments that addressed the theme of transition also provided positive feedback corresponding to items #3, 7 and 9. Homework was also identified as a major theme in parents' written comments. The majority of the respondents were critical of the amount of homework, with several comments directed toward the nature of homework. The other evidence gathered has indicated that this problem has improved since the start of the school year.

Recommendation:

Given the survey results from question #11 and the respondents' comments, we recommend a comprehensive review of the purposes, types, amounts, and grading practices related to homework, particularly in grade five.

4. Transportation

Based on discussion with the Board of School Directors in December, we have continued to monitor middle school bus transportation issues. The precaution of seating fifth grade students in the front rows of bus seats continues to provide closer supervision by the bus drivers, as well as some separation from older students. Enhanced and updated security video cameras in buses and schools have contributed to monitoring and identifying accurately student behaviors. We have spoken individually to numerous bus drivers, who indicate that the level of inappropriate behavior on buses has not been a serious problem nor has it changed significantly from prior years. Principals and assistant principals communicate with drivers for their schools on a daily basis and confirm the bus drivers' reports. We will continue to monitor transportation for the remainder of the year.

Related Parent Survey Item(s)

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #5:

57% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that bus transportation is safe, reliable and orderly.

19% disagree or strongly disagree.

24% of parents responded with "not applicable."

Discussion of survey data, including parents' written comments:

With one in four parents responding that item #5 is not applicable, approximately three out of four of the other respondents responded positively. Transportation was identified as a major theme. The majority of the written comments addressed bus service issues (e.g., bus arriving late), and a minority of the written comments addressed student conduct on the bus (e.g., inappropriate language). The majority of the comments were negative, but dealt with isolated or individual events. This is not to diminish the seriousness of any incident that negatively affects a child.

Recommendation:

The school district has procedures in place to address transportation issues; we recommend that school and district leaders continue to closely monitor transportation so that any incident will be reported promptly, so that it can be investigated and resolved.

5. Support Services

Our observations and conversations with staff provide evidence of effective support services including individual counseling, attention to special needs, and the teaching staff continuing to provide extra academic help before and after school.

Related Parent Survey Item(s)

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #6:

65% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that school counselors are available when their child needs them.

6% disagree or strongly disagree.

29% responded with “not applicable.”

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #8:

82% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that teachers provide extra help if their child needs it.

9% disagree or strongly disagree.

9% responded with “not applicable.”

Discussion of survey data, including parents’ written comments:

Approximately nine out of ten respondents, excluding those who responded “not applicable,” responded positively to items #6 and 8. Support services did not arise as a major or minor theme in the written comments.

Recommendation:

Neshaminy students and their families now enjoy a comprehensive set of support services, including counselors, school psychologists, and other specialists. In our first report we recognized the valuable contribution to student well-being in each middle school made by a Coordinator of Student Affairs. We recommend the continuation of these services.

6. Enhanced Academic Programing

We increased our observations and interviews in each middle school of STEM, eighth grade Geometry, fifth grade keyboarding (BCIT), and WIN (Whatever I Need). In all of these programs students are engaged and we observed evidence of thorough teacher preparation and planning, as well as a thoughtful and appropriate curriculum. In BCIT, students are developing touch typing skills, and the STEM classes stress development of student design and manufacturing skills, often using CAD software.

Eighth grade Geometry teachers among the three middle schools collaborate on a regular basis to implement this new program.

Our observations and reports from school staff indicate that WIN has vastly improved since the beginning of the school year, and students report that it is a valued opportunity to pursue any number of interests or to access extra academic help when needed. The WIN program emerged as a minor theme in the written responses to the parent survey, where the few comments suggested that the time could be better spent.

7. Co-Curricular Activities.

The listing of intramural, athletic and club activities can be found on the website of each middle school. Each middle school offers a minimum of nine intramural or club activities available to fifth through eighth graders; numerous special events such as GirlsSTEM; activities such as Reading Olympics; music programs including designated fifth grade chorus, fifth grade band, and fifth grade orchestra as well as sports teams for seventh and eighth grade students. Fifth graders are also included in school musical productions. The school district provides late buses as a support for student participation.

Related Parent Survey Item(s)

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #6:

62% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that a wide variety of extra-curricular activities is available to their child.

31% disagree or strongly disagree.

Discussion of survey data, including parents' written comments:

Approximately two out of three respondents provided positive responses to survey item #6. Of all the survey items, this had the highest degree of dissatisfaction among fifth grade parents. Surprisingly, co-curricular activities did not emerge as a major or minor theme in the written responses. We will need to collect additional data around this issue to better inform this evaluation.

8. Other Themes from the Survey of Fifth Grade Parents

Three items on the parent survey addressed communication. In addition, communication emerged as a major theme in parent's written responses.

Related Parent Survey Item(s)

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #14:

87% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that communication from their child's school is easy to access.

13% disagree or strongly disagree.

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #15:

91% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that communication from their child's school is current.

8% disagree or strongly disagree.

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #16:

78% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that communication from their child's school is comprehensive.

20% disagree or strongly disagree.

Discussion of survey data, including parents' written comments:

Approximately nine out of ten respondents provided positive responses to items #14 and 15. Eight out of ten respondents provided positive responses to item #16. While many parents value the varied means through which the middle school communicates to home, the comments contain suggestions for improvement.

Suggestions include weekly or monthly notifications and consolidation of communications.

Recommendation:

This closely mirrors the feedback that we received in parent focus group interviews at all three middle schools: some parents are overwhelmed by the numerous media used by the schools, including telephone, text, e-mail, website, and student portal. We recommend that the school district work with parent representatives to design processes and procedures that make information more easily accessible while maintaining the richness of communication that now exists. One solution might be a “communication dashboard” that consolidates and streamlines the interface between parents and the information they seek.

Monitoring of Specific Programs

A. Fifth Grade Exposure To World Languages Using Symtalk Spanish Level 5

To refresh your understanding, fifth grade Spanish is a language exposure program, as opposed to a traditional level 1 world language program. Fifth grade teachers provide the Spanish exposure program to all fifth grade students during 15-20 minute lessons. There is much collaborative learning, high levels of student engagement and interest, and we continue to observe best practices of teaching a second language, including:

- Students speaking as much as or more than the teacher in the target language of Spanish
- Total physical response
- Choral repetition
- Use of visual cues

Related Parent Survey Item(s)

Results of the February 2016 5th grade survey item #12:

67% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that their child enjoys learning to speak Spanish.

17% disagree or strongly disagree.

17% responded with “not applicable.”

Discussion of survey data, including parents’ written comments:

Approximately eight out of ten respondents, excluding those who responded “not applicable,” responded positively to item #12. Fifth grade Spanish was a major theme in parents’ written responses. Several of the eleven written comments reflect a misunderstanding of the purpose or approach to world language exposure that is designed into the Symtalk program. Some comments suggested extending the program into grades six and seven. Other comments noted that 20 minutes per cycle is too little time. The foreign language option was one of the recommendations approved by the Board of School Directors, and our observations of classes and interviews with students support continuation of the program.

Recommendation:

In planning for 2016-17, the district should review the appropriateness of the Level 5 Symtalk materials for the fifth grade. While age appropriate for fifth grade, they may provide too strong a focus on grammar for students in their first stages of second language acquisition. Consideration should be given to expanding the second language exposure program to sixth, and eventually seventh grade for this cohort of students.

More staff development from Symtalk should be provided to all teachers participating in this program. This would include sixth grade teachers if the decision were made to expand the program. Increasing the teachers' knowledge and skill related to the Symtalk curriculum will lead to increased program fidelity and a greater consistency of instructional practice across classrooms.

B. Eighth Grade French and Spanish

As a reminder, in eighth grade, students who read at or above grade level choose a world language: French or Spanish. These students participate in an introductory world language course, that meets daily throughout the school year. Certified French and Spanish teachers teach the courses.

Recommendation:

As a best practice, world language teachers need to increase the use of French/Spanish as the language of communication in the eighth grade courses, so that students acquire a second language more effectively. The National Foreign Language Standards and second language acquisition theories emphasize that teaching in the target language is absolutely critical to students' vocabulary acquisition and development of skills in a second language.

Certified world language teachers would benefit from ongoing coaching and job-embedded professional development provided by an expert in foreign language input theory and associated methods.

C. Sixth Grade And Fifth Grade iPad Initiative

In October, we observed abundant evidence of a well-designed rollout of iPads to students in the sixth grade, which was replicated for the fifth grade in December 2015.

The student iTeams have continued to be helpful by providing a peer-coaching support system. The librarians replicated the orientation for sixth grade students focusing on how to operate their iPads; sign onto network accounts; while again conveying a clear sense of the responsibilities, procedures, and expectations of using the iPad

Related Parent Survey Item(s)

Results of the February 2016 5th grade parent survey indicate that:

88% of responding parents agree or strongly agree that their child and they were well prepared for the introduction of iPads in December.

12% disagree or strongly disagree.

Discussion of survey data, including parents' written comments:

Approximately nine out of ten respondents responded positively to item #13. This area emerged as a minor theme in our examination of the parents written comments. All the comments were positive. They addressed both the "roll-out" and the use of the iPad as an instructional tool.

Recommendation:

The iPad initiative has been successful in both the fifth and sixth grade. We have noted, over time, more examples of students and their teachers using iPads successfully across the curriculum. Consideration should be given to developing a catalog of lessons that contain examples of "best practice" using the iPad as an essential element in the classroom. This should be coupled with focused, content oriented staff development that includes coaching and job-embedded practice.

D. Developmental Reading Grades 5-8

Prior to the transition of fifth grade to the middle schools the district increased the time in Language Arts from one to two periods. We noted in our first interim report, that for a variety of reasons, some of benefits of the two periods are not being realized. Over the past four months we paid particular attention to this area. As a result, in this report we are presenting our summative evaluation for this area identifying strengths, needs, and recommendations.

Strengths:

1. Neshaminy School District's K-12 English Language Arts Action Proposal 2014 was drafted in 2014 as part of the response to the English Language Arts Program Quality Review (PQR) conducted earlier in that school year. The Action Proposal references five needs listed in the PQR report, which lead to the development of five "Actionable Themes". These were identified as priorities for the district.

The Action Proposal importantly contains a Statement of Philosophy; a list of Guiding Principals for a comprehensive literacy program derived from those themes and delineates the necessary foci for reading and writing. Agreement on these concepts is an essential precondition to true system change.

Based on these parameters, nine concrete action steps are listed with an accompanying template to monitor progress. We recognize that significant work has been accomplished in implementing this Action Proposal, but much remains to be done. The Action Proposal remains an extraordinarily comprehensive plan to guide the district work in revising the district's ELA program.

2. There exists in the new Neshaminy Middle Schools an environment and culture that supports, and celebrates, the acquisition of skills

and knowledge. Both the instructional staff and the students equally embrace this focus.

3. Administrative staff and teachers are cognizant of the need for increased communication and collaboration in the area of English language arts in grades five through eight.
4. The Neshaminy School District has created a leadership position for grades K-12 in the area of English language arts that has the responsibility to review and advance the key elements of the Action Proposal.
5. All of the ELA curriculum maps are aligned to the PA Core ELA standards for Reading Informational, Reading Literature, Writing, and Speaking and Listening. Each grade level curriculum map references relevant standards, specifies enduring understandings and essential questions, and includes content, core materials/resources, and types of assessments. The development of curriculum maps involved multiple conversations at every level including administrators, teachers, and department chairs. The curriculum maps for the reading classes are tied closely to the *Reading Fundamentals* program.

Needs:

1. In practice, the use of curriculum maps in lesson planning varies from teacher to teacher. Some teachers use the curriculum maps consistently, while others rely on the organization of *Reading and Writing Fundamentals*, and/or their own experience and past practice. Over time, a greater consistency in the use of curriculum maps will be desirable.
2. Because the curriculum maps deliberately omit specification of instructional approaches, teachers new to a grade level, school, or the school district may need additional guidance and direction in their lesson planning.
3. In daily usage, teachers, aides and administrators use inconsistent terms to describe programs or courses of study. The terms “Language Arts,” “English,” “English/Language Arts (ELA),” “Reading/Language Arts,” and “Reading” are all commonly used. There is a need to standardize terminology.
4. While every middle school teacher has a preparation period and teachers submit lesson designs to their building administrators, the coordination of lesson planning between and among teachers of English and Reading varies. In some cases, English and Reading teachers closely coordinate their planning on a regular basis; in other cases, coordination seems to be absent. There is a need for a systematic approach for Reading and English teachers to plan their

daily and ongoing instruction, especially when they teach the same children daily.

Recommendations:

1. Develop curriculum overviews in chart form that compare and contrast what currently comprises the curriculum as taught at each grade level. (See Heidi Hayes-Jacobs, *Mapping the Big Picture*, 1998.) These overviews should provide a graphic representation of Reading and English instruction as it occurs throughout the school year.
2. Continue to use the PA Core Standards and the Reading and Writing Fundamentals programs as design tools to:
 - a. Identify redundancies in the charts within and across middle schoolgrade levels.
 - b. Identify gaps in the charts within and across middle schoolgrade levels.
3. Assess to what extent the existing middle school instruction as portrayed in the charts reflects and advances:
 - a. Neshaminy School District's K-12 English Language Arts Action Proposal 2014.
 - b. The principles of Understanding by Design.
4. Revise the charts to provide a curriculum overview for Reading teachers and English teachers that:
 - a. Insures that every day, students learn based on a balanced approach to comprehensive literacy.
 - b. Guides a shared responsibility for teaching Language Arts by Reading and English teachers.
 - c. Requires teachers of English or Reading to plan their instruction with knowledge of the skills and content that will be taught to the same students.
5. Develop consistent terminology: *Reading*, *Reading and Language Arts*, *English*, and *English and Language Arts* are used inconsistently on the web page, in curriculum documents, and among educators in the middle schools.

Instruction

1. Best literacy practices for instruction need to be defined, and ongoing, job-embedded professional learning needs to be planned and carried out, so that teachers are using consistent and effective instructional approaches.
2. Continue and extend the professional development for reading teachers who are not trained as reading specialists.

Assessment

1. School District leaders have already made plans to schedule writing assessments to better correspond to the instructional sequence.
2. Formative assessment practices are widely used, but a district wide, systematic plan for using formative assessment to monitor and adjust instruction is lacking. The work of Dylan Wiliam will be most helpful in planning in this area.

Concluding Recommendation

The Neshaminy School District has addressed and completed most of the nine action steps included in the Neshaminy School District's K-12 English Language Arts Action Proposal 2014. (See appendix D.) Work on the remaining action steps is in progress and ongoing. We encourage continued implementation and monitoring.