

February Newsletter

JFK Student Published in the Free Press!

William Parkinson's haiku featured in December Detroit Free Press! See the poem in this issue.

pg 5



In this issue

Updated District

Assessment Calendar

NWEA, DRA, MSTEP, ACT/WorkKeys

Semester 2 PD

Offerings

Co-Teaching, Visible Learning, Study Island & Accu-Cess, and more

February Calendar

District and Department Events

Power Standards

What are they, and why do we need them?

Kindness in Schools

Why Teaching Kindness is Essential to Reduce Bullying

100+ Stores that Offer Teacher Discounts

Food & Dining, Books, Clothes, Electronics and More!

pg 8

Why Grades Should Reflect Mastery, Not Speed

A middle-school principal in Ohio shares his thoughts on standards-based grading.

pg 6

February Quick Calendar

February 2015						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

4 – Math/Science Leadership Meeting, 8-3 @Harding

5 – NWEA MAP Reports PD, 4-6 @Harding

10 – Visible Thinking Session #2, 4-6 @Harding

11 – Count Day

16-20 – Midwinter Break

23 – Classes Resume

25 - Co-Teaching PD Session #1, 4-6 @Harding

28 - District-wide Open House

Looking ahead to March

BLT Meeting - March 4

Standards-Based Grading PD Session #1: March 11

Elementary Probationary Teachers Mtg - March 24

2nd Community Restructuring Town Hall - March 7

District-Wide Professional Development Day - March 13

Math Leadership Meeting - March 25

ILT Meeting - March 10

FEF Dinner - March 13

Co-Teaching PD Session #2 - March 31

Click our logo on every page to return to page 1!

Power Standards **What are they, and Why Do We Need Them?**

The term **power standards** refers to a subset of learning standards that educators have determined to be the highest priority or most important for students to learn. In most cases, power standards are developed or selected at the school level by administrators and teachers. All fifty states have developed or adopted extensive lists of content-area standards that define, in great detail, the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn in all major subject areas and all grade levels (kindergarten through twelfth grade). But on a practical level, it is often impossible for teachers to cover every academic standard over the course of a school year, given the depth and breadth of state learning standards.

Power standards...are the prioritized academic expectations that educators determine to be the most critical and essential for students to learn, and—in schools that use power standards—courses and learning experiences are designed to emphasize power-standards content and ensure that, at the very least, students learn the content specified in the power standards. It

is important to note that power standards do not preclude the teaching of other standards—they merely determine the highest-priority material. For this reason, power standards may be limited to only a handful of standards, but these standards will typically require students to acquire and demonstrate strong understanding of a complex subject or sophisticated skill. For example, understanding the scientific method and applying it in diverse scientific situations might be an example of a power standard identified by schools.

The educators and authors Larry Ainsworth and Douglas Reeves are widely considered to have coined the term “power standards.” In Ainsworth’s 2003 book, *Power Standards: Identifying the Standards that Matter the Most*, he defines the concept and outlines a variety of strategies schools could use to select or create power standards. Reeves wrote the foreword. The book proposes three criteria for selecting power standards:

Endurance: Standards that focus on knowledge and skills that will be rele-

vant throughout a student’s lifetime (such as learning how to read or how to interpret a map).

Leverage: Standards that focus on knowledge and skills used in multiple academic disciplines (such as writing grammatically and persuasively or interpreting and analyzing data).

Essentiality: Standards that focus on the knowledge and skills necessary for students to succeed in the next grade level or the next sequential course in an academic subject (such as understanding algebraic functions before taking geometry or calculus, which require the use of algebra)...

(Above from <http://edglossary.org/power-standards/>)

In all content areas, Ferndale Schools will be deciding up on and rolling out its own power standards by the fall of 2015! Work will begin in PLCs in 2nd semester to devise agreed-upon power standards from K-12.

...On a practical level, it is often impossible for teachers to cover every academic standard over the course of a school year, given the depth and breadth of state learning standards.... Power standards may be limited to only a handful of standards, but these standards will typically require students to acquire and demonstrate strong understanding of a complex subject or sophisticated skill.

Winter and Spring 2015 Professional Development Offerings



The C&I Office is pleased to present our 2015 Winter and Spring PD offerings! These ideas are yours! They came from the PD survey that you submitted in November. The courses are a combination of topics offered in a variety of formats so that you can get the most out of your professional learning experience.

Sign up and see descriptions on our [Weebly!](#)

Using Study Island in Response to NWEA Scores

Facilitators: Beth Grillo, Tom Maes, & Dina Rocheleau
School Improvement Strategies: Intervention and Enrichment and Results
Target Audience: Elementary school teachers who will be using Study Island
Date and Time: Wednesday, January 28 from 4-6 PM

Using Accu-Cess as an Intervention Tool

Facilitators: Beth Grillo, Tom Maes, & Dina Rocheleau
School Improvement Strategy: Intervention and Enrichment; Assessment and Results
Target Audience: Secondary school teachers who will be using Accu-Cess
Date and Time: Thursday, January 29 from 4-6 PM

Understanding and Using NWEA MAP Reports

Facilitators: Beth Grillo, Tom Maes, & Dina Rocheleau
School Improvement Strategies: Intervention and Enrichment; Assessment and Results
Dates: Thursdays; February 5, March 5, April 14

Effective Co-Teaching

Topic: Effective Co-Teaching
Facilitators: Amy Ceglarek, Judy Smith, and Mike Hand
School Improvement Strategies: High-Quality Instruction/ Intervention and Enrichment
Dates: Wednesdays; February 25, March 25, April 22

Visible Thinking

Facilitators: Katie Jeffrey and Derek Adams
School Improvement Strategies: High-Quality Instruction; School Culture
Dates: Tuesdays, January 13 and February 10

Standards-Based Grading

Facilitators: Liz Gillespie and Johanna Mracna
School Improvement Strategies: High-Quality Instruction; Assessment and Results
Dates: March 11, April 16, and May 14

Why Teaching Kindness in Schools Is Essential to Reduce Bullying

by Lisa Currie

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/teaching-kindness-essential-reduce-bullying-lisa-currie>

Phrases like "random acts of kindness" and "pay it forward" have become popular terms in modern society. Perhaps this could be best explained by those who have identified a deficiency in their lives that can only be fulfilled by altruism...

Patty O'Grady, PhD, an expert in neuroscience, emotional learning, and positive psychology, specializes in education. She reports:

Kindness changes the brain by the experience of kindness. Children and adolescents do not learn kindness by only thinking about it and talking about it. Kindness is best learned by feeling it so that they can reproduce it.

A great number of benefits have been reported to support teaching kindness in schools, best summed up by the following.

- **Happy, Caring Children** - The good feelings that we experience when being kind are produced by endorphins. They activate areas of the brain that are associated with pleasure, social connection, and trust. These feelings of joyfulness are proven to be contagious and encourage more kind behavior (also known as altruism) by the giver and recipient.
- **Increased Peer Acceptance** - Research on the subject has determined that kindness increases our ability to form meaningful connections with others. Kind, happy children enjoy greater peer acceptance because they are well liked. Better-than-average mental health is reported in classrooms that practice more inclusive behavior due to an even distribution of popularity.
- **Greater Sense of Belonging and Improved Self-Esteem** - Studies show that people experience a "helper's high" when they do a good deed. This rush of endorphins creates a lasting sense of pride, wellbeing, and an enriched sense of belonging. It's reported that even small acts of kindness heighten our sense of wellbeing, increase energy, and give a wonderful feeling of optimism and self worth.



- **Improved Health and Less Stress** - Being kind can trigger a release of the hormone oxytocin, which has a number of physical and mental health benefits. Oxytocin can significantly increase a person's level of happiness and reduce stress levels. It also protects the heart by lowering blood pressure and reducing free radicals and inflammation, which incidentally speed up the aging process.
- **Increased Feelings of Gratitude** - When children are part of projects that help others less fortunate than themselves, it provides them with a real sense of perspective. Helping someone else makes them appreciate the good things in their own lives.
- **Better Concentration and Improved Results** - Kindness is a key ingredient that helps children feel good about themselves as it increases serotonin levels. This important chemical affects learning, memory, mood, sleep, health, and digestion. Having a positive outlook enables greater attention spans and more creative thinking to produce better results at school.
- **Reduced Depression** - Dr. Wayne Dyer, an internationally-renowned author and speaker, says that an act of kindness triggers an increase in serotonin, a natural chemical responsible for improving mood. This boost in happiness occurs not only in both the giver and receiver of kindness, but also in anyone who witnesses it. This makes kindness a powerful, natural antidepressant.
- **Less Bullying** - Shanetia Clark and Barbara Marinak are Penn State Harrisburg faculty researchers. They say, "Unlike previous generations, today's adolescents are victimizing each other at alarming rates." They argue that adolescent bullying and violence can be confronted with in-school programs that integrate "kindness -- the antithesis of victimization."

(continued)

Why Teaching Kindness in Schools Is Essential to Reduce Bullying (continued)

Many traditional anti-bullying programs focus on the negative actions that cause anxiety in children. When kindness and compassion are taught instead, it fosters the positive behavior that's expected. Promoting its psychological opposite is key in reducing bullying to create warm and inclusive school environments.

Maurice Elias, Professor at Rutgers University Psychology Department, is also an advocate for kindness. He says:

As a citizen, grandparent, father, and professional, it is clear to me that the mission of schools must include teaching kindness. Without it, communities, families, schools, and classrooms become places of incivility where lasting learning is unlikely to take place . . . [W]e need to be prepared to teach kindness, because it can be delayed due to maltreatment early in life. It can be smothered under the weight of poverty, and it can be derailed by victimization later in life . . . Kindness can be taught, and it is a defining aspect of civilized human life. It belongs in every home, school, neighborhood, and society.

It's become quite clear that modern education must encompass more than just academics, and that matters of the heart must be taken seriously and nurtured as a matter of priority.

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-Maurice Elias, Rutgers University



JFK Student Published in the Free Press!

JFK 6th grader William Parkinson's haiku was published in the Free Press Sunday, December 14!

William is the son of Pamela and Geoffrey Parkinson of Oak Park. William is a member of JFK's Paper Clips writing club. He is truly a gifted writer.

Just get him a tie
 And then get her the earrings
 Forget the in-laws

Ferdale Haiku Challenge!

What is a Haiku?

A haiku is a 3 line Japanese poem that has 5 syllables in the 1st line, 7 syllables in the 2nd line, and 5 syllables in the 3rd line. Here are some other examples of haikus (which may or may not be based on near-future or recent events):

The east coast is calm
 Now, but in a day or so,
 Juno will arrive.

A vendor walked in,
 No appointment; fifteen min
 Later, still talking.

Write your own haiku and [submit it to Beth!](#) We'll put it in the next newsletter!

Why Grades Should Reflect Mastery, Not Speed

By Ryan McLane (<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/06/05/33mclane.h32.html>)

I am the principal in a grades 7-8 school, perhaps the last venue where we try to give kids second, and sometimes third, chances. This happens mostly with discipline, but also with academics, because this is the last time when a kid's grades do not really matter. What I mean by this is that I am unaware of any college or employer that has ever requested a transcript from a student's junior high school.

My teachers and I are currently having discussions about grading practices, standards-based grading, and everything in between. I do not know that we will ever adopt a truly standards-based grading system, but I believe we are on our way to making our grading system more meaningful.

The first thing we attempted to clarify was what exactly is a grade? If I were to look in my grade book and see that Johnny has a B, what picture does that actually paint? That B *should* tell me that Johnny is pretty proficient. He obviously has some flaws, but I would venture to say he is fairly well-versed in the subject at hand.

The question is, however, what actually went into that B? Unfortunately, a teacher's grade book is one of life's greatest mysteries. Did Johnny do well on tests, but fail to turn in some homework assignments, thus dropping him to a B? Possibly worse, did he do poorly on his tests, but those deficiencies were masked by Johnny's reliable turning-in of homework or participation in class? Perhaps worse yet, did Johnny's grade increase because he brought in a box of tissues or earned some other type of extra credit? I firmly believe the problems of the American education system are not the result of years of poor teaching practices. They are the result of years of poor grading practices.

Now I am not looking to debate the relevance of homework. There are experts out there who can cite research and data to both support and refute the importance of homework, and I have no desire to wade into that discussion. It is also not my intention to debate the merits of high-stakes testing. What I hope to bring to light is what a grade really is.

Ideally, Johnny's B should tell me that Johnny has a good handle on things and will likely do well on any standardized test in that subject. Realistically, I have no idea what Johnny's B means. To fix that problem, I suggest we make sure Johnny's grade reflects what he knows and is not influenced by factors such as discipline or responsibility. Those should be separated.

I believe it is our responsibility to make sure all students are learning the content and skills that are required of them. I am a big believer in reteaching and reassessing. It is more important that the child *learns* the material than *when* the child learns the material. If a child takes an assessment (I dislike the word "test") and fails because he or she does not know the topic, that child receives a low grade. So far, that is fair. However, simply putting that grade in the grade book and moving on is the exact reason why public schools are in the position they are in today. This process begins early in a child's education when a child never learns the nec-

essary skills, and then continues to fall further and further behind. It would be my hope that a struggling student receives additional instruction and is reassessed and that his or her grade is updated to reflect the new knowledge gained.

At my school, many teachers will have a brief discussion with students before or after class to identify a problem, and teachers will give suggestions on looking at the content from a different angle. Sometimes a student will come to school 10 minutes early for the reteaching portion of his or her day, and then the student and teacher will work out a convenient time to reassess what's been learned (or not learned). We have built two daily intervention periods into the school day (around lunch time) for all students to assist in this endeavor. But it still brings us back to the original debate of grading based on what's been learned versus *when* it was learned.

When I share this view with other educators, the No. 1 response I get is that it is not fair to the kids who got it the first time to allow kids to be reassessed.

Really? I missed the part in education school where they taught us that a grade's primary purpose was to compare and rank students. It was my understanding that a grade is a tool that tells us about an individual's level of mastery. If that is the case, then it is unfair if we do not reassess that individual.

The second-most-common response, and one gaining some momentum lately, is that by giving students extra supports, we are not preparing them for college because there will be no opportunities for a redo there. That is probably correct, but what is more important for us to teach our students: deadlines or the actual skills they will need to be successful? I argue that it is the latter. I understand that deadlines and a sense of responsibility are important skills to learn, but not at the expense of learning the primary skill that was at the heart of the assignment, project, or assessment in the first place.

So how do we fix the grading system? If we are going to continue to use the traditional 100-point grading model, then we need to make grades more meaningful and more reflective of what students have mastered, not how compliant they have been. We need to get to the point of looking at a student's grade and knowing exactly what it means. We can do that by basing students' grades on their levels of mastery. If we can identify the students who need help simply by looking at our grade book, we will be able help those students rather than just passing them along. I am not a proponent of just passing them along. I am a proponent of fixing the problem.

I have two daughters, and they both enjoy playing golf. It would be nice if they made it to the LPGA Tour (I'm really not *that* dad, just trying to prove a point). But it is more important for them to learn the basic skills than it would be to learn those skills on the lightning-quick greens of Augusta. So I choose to take them out to the local public course. My detractors might say: "Well the greens on the LPGA Tour are not that slow. You are not preparing them to be successful." I think most people would look at that viewpoint and find the logic flawed. I wish more people saw it that way in education.

Updated District Assessment Calendars and Windows

DRA	
Winter Kindergarten: By January 31 Grades 1-6: At Risk Only by January 31	Spring K-6 All Students: By May 30

NWEA All Schools (except DLC) Grades 2-10	
Winter Testing Window <u>All Students Grades 2-10</u> Reading, Language Usage, and Math due February 13	Spring Testing Windows <u>Grades 2, 4, 5; Middle Schools; and High Schools</u> Reading, Language Usage and Math due June 5 <u>Grades 3 & 6</u> Reading, Language Usage and Math due June 12

M-STEP Below are the scheduled windows for M-STEP. Building administrators will be scheduling time slots for specific teachers/classes.		
Elementary 3rd Grade: May 18 - June 5 4th Grade: April 28 - May 15 5th Grade: April 14 - May 1 6th Grade: May 18 - June 5	Middle Schools 7th Grade: April 27 - May 15 8th Grade: April 13 - May 1	High Schools Grades 9-11: April 13 - June 5

ACT & WorkKeys (11th Grade Only)
ACT: March 3 WorkKeys: March 4

There's some big standardized testing news in Michigan: Next year, juniors will be taking the SAT instead of the ACT. More news will be forthcoming from our office as we receive it.

100+ Stores that Offer Teacher Discounts ([for the full list, click here](#))

Crafts, Teacher Supply & Organization

The Container Store: Teachers who register for the Organized Teacher Program with The Container Store are eligible for 15% off in store and online, as well as special discounts throughout the year.

Jo-Ann Fabric and Crafts: Sign up for a Teacher Rewards discount card with Joann's to get 15% back on your purchases.

Michael's: At Michael's craft stores, teachers with a valid educator ID can take 15% off all regularly priced items in store.

Blick: Get art materials at a discount by registering your school with Blick.

FedEx Office: Offering a National Educators Discount Program, FedEx Office gives teachers 15% on most of the products and services they offer nationwide with no limit on the savings, plus special offers for educators.

Simply Stamps: NAE members can take 20% off purchases with Simply Stamps.

Party City: Throwing a classroom party or using party supplies for a lesson? Just mention it at Party City to get a teacher discount.

Dollar Tree: Although it's not advertised, at most Dollar Trees, teachers can get 10% off with their school ID.

Books

The New York Times: Teachers can get a special rate for a New York Times digital subscription; 99 cents for the first 4 weeks, and then 50% off the regular rate.

Half Price Books: Half Price Books already offers great deals, but teachers with the Teacher & Librarian Discount Card can get 10% off year round, for school purchases and beyond. Ask about free books, too.

Barnes & Noble: Teachers, join the B&N Educator Program for 20% off the publisher's list price on all purchases for classroom use, and even 25% off during Educator Appreciation Days.

NEA Magazine Service: Teachers who are members of the NEA can get up to 85% off cover price on a variety of magazines.

Clothes & General Merchandise

The Walking Company: Get comfortable shoes for the classroom at 15% off from The Walking Company. All you need is your NEA membership.

Target: Using your [International Teacher Identity Card](#), you can get \$5 off \$50 and free shipping on select items on Target.com.

Ann Taylor LOFT: Want some new duds for the classroom? Head to Ann Taylor LOFT, where you can get 15% off full-price purchases, as well as access to school grants, sweepstakes, style guides for teachers, and teacher appreciation nights.

Banana Republic: With your teacher ID, you can get 15% off all full-priced purchases in stores.

Macy's: Use your [International Teacher Identity Card](#) for 10% off in store purchases at Macy's.

The Limited: At The Limited, teachers can get 15% off every purchase when you flash your school ID.

Old Navy: Hit Old Navy during Teacher Appreciation Week in May and show your teacher ID and score 10% to 20% off their total purchase. You'll need to visit **J.Crew**: Show your valid school ID, and J. Crew will offer 15% off any full priced in store item for teachers.

Electronics

Bose: Famous for its music systems, Bose offers up to 15% off for teachers. You'll need to call Bose directly and ask for their "Educators' Program."

AT&T, Verizon, & Sprint: Many educational organizations offer a discount on wireless service

Lenovo: With the Lenovo Academic Purchase Program, teachers can receive exclusive offers and discounts for Lenovo products. You'll just need to select your school.

Apple Store: Apple offers special education pricing on computers, software, and other products for teachers for school purchases, as well as personal ones.

Sony: Sony offers both discounts and rewards to teachers, with cut rates on projectors and flat-panel displays, plus "extra credit" points for your school that can be redeemed for Sony products.

Adobe: Teachers can take advantage of discounted software through Adobe, just by purchasing Teacher editions of their most popular products.

HP: Register with HP Home Stores' Academic Purchase Program, and teachers can purchase products with discounts of up to 15%.

Food & Dining

Uno Chicago Grill: With your [International Teacher Identity Card](#), you can get 10% off your meal at Uno Chicago Grill (not just in Chicago!).

Starbucks: Although Starbucks doesn't have a formal teacher discount, if you ask nicely, many baristas will give you one.

Home & Hardware

Homes for Heroes: This company contracts with realtors, lenders, and other service providers to offer substantial discounts to heroes, teachers included.

Home Depot: With exempt paperwork, you can skip sales tax when shopping at Home Depot.

Lowe's: Just like Home Depot, Lowe's offers a break on sales tax for teachers, plus they'll cut wood and pipe for you.

Sherwin Williams: Ready to paint your home, or even your classroom? Hit Sherwin Williams and ask for a discount-you may get up to 50% off each gallon.

Angie's List: TotallyTeacher.com brokered a discount deal for teachers, offering a 20% discount on membership.

Whirlpool: Get special NEA member pricing on appliances from Whirlpool Corporation, including brands like KitchenAid, Maytag, and Amana.

Attractions, Travel, Transportation, and Entertainment

Marriott, Motel 6, Red Roof Inn, La Quinta: Many hotels and resorts offer a discount for teachers. Just ask to find out what they can offer.

Alamo Rent A Car, Enterprise, and Hertz: NEA members enjoy member discounts and special offers

SpaFinder: Use your [International Teacher Identity Card](#) to get 10% off SpaFinder gift certificates.

AMC Theaters: AMC Theaters regularly offers discount tickets for teachers. Check with your school district to find out if they have an agreement.

National Park Service: With a school ID, all teachers enjoy a 15% discount on items from the National Park Service.

Firestone: Teachers with an [International Teacher Identity Card](#) can get huge deals on tires with Firestone, plus 15% off on maintenance and car repair.

Vacations To Go: Often, cruise lines offer discounts for active and retired teachers. Check out the site to find out about current specials.

Broadway: With your [International Teacher Identity Card](#), you can get up to 40% off New York Broadway tickets.

Amtrak: You can save 15% on lowest available fares with your International Teacher Identity Card.

Graceland: If you're a big fan of Elvis, you're in luck. Teachers tour Graceland for free!

Chrysler: As an NEA member, you can get Preferred Price, which is 1% below factory invoice on Chrysler vehicles including Jeep, Dodge, and Ram.

Park Ride Fly: You can save 10% on Park Ride Fly rates at the airport with your NEA membership.

Walt Disney World Swan & Dolphin Resort: The Walt Disney World Swan & Dolphin Resort offers a special reduced room rate.

Universal Studios Hollywood: Teachers can get buy one get one free days at Universal Studios Hollywood with the [International Teacher Identity Card](#).