

◆ Citizens For Education ◆

Spring Issue

May 2013

The objectives of Citizens For Education are to ensure a quality education for all students of the Council Rock School District, to better inform the Council Rock community of educational issues, and to increase the involvement of the community in the decision making processes affecting the quality of education in Council Rock.

Voting is Primary

Why YOU Should Vote in the Primary Election May 21, 2013

As citizens of a democracy, we have no greater privilege than our right to vote. It is our responsibility to exercise this bastion of our freedom. Lead by example and demonstrate that you do not take this privilege for granted.

Citizens For Education is committed to promoting the importance of voting. Three times each year, in conjunction with the Political Science Clubs at CR North and South, we hold a voter registration drive in both high schools for students turning 18 before the next election. Hopefully, these new registrants will become lifelong voters.

Locally, typical voter turnout for a primary is less than 15%! Voting to choose your School Director is one of the most fundamental ways to participate in the decision making process that affects Council Rock, and May 21, 2013 is the primary election for

(Continued on next page)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Voting is Primary!.....	1
New CFE Logo Designed in Collaboration With MBIT Students.....	1
How Study Skills are Taught in CR.....	3
Updating CR's Blueprint for Excellence.....	4
A Look at Secondary Class Sizes.....	5
Tutoring Regulation Updated.....	5
Elementary School Activities.....	6
Staff Websites.....	7
Test Returns: Assessing Implementation of A New Regulation.....	8
Consistency in Grading Practices.....	9
Citizens Membership Form.....	12

Contact us at: citizens4Ed@yahoo.com



New CFE Logo Designed in Collaboration with MBIT Students

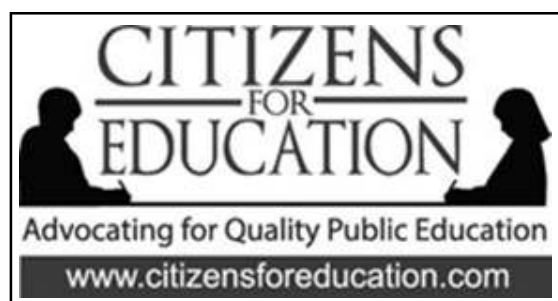
Citizens For Education is proud to unveil our new logo, developed in collaboration with students from Mr. Brad Rosenau's Commercial Art & Design class at Middle Bucks Institute of Technology. Last October, CFE approached Mr. Rosenau to ask if his students would like to contribute logo design ideas. They enthusiastically took on the challenge, presenting over 20 designs. Through a refinement process involving Mr. Rosenau, the students, and the CFE Executive Board, the ideas were whittled down to several favorites. These were combined and tweaked to provide the final logo, designed by a team of three: Mylinh (Midge) Truong (11th grade at Central Bucks South), Maura Finegan (11th grade at Council Rock South), and Marissa Snyder (11th grade at Council Rock South). The students shared some background on their design approach, and the impact this project had on them:

Midge: "I created the headline in Adobe Illustrator to create the cleanest graphic available. I chose the font "Goudy Old Style" for its dignified look."

Maura: "I wanted a graphic with both a boy and a girl. I kept them as a silhouette so they could be any age. I made the graphic of the boy in Illustrator; then I made a copy/paste and a mirror image of the boy. Finally I used the drawing tools to make him a girl."

Marissa: "It's nice to have a piece for my portfolio that is going to be used in a real life situation. Now I can say I have some practical experience dealing with a client on an art job."

(Continued on next page)



(Voting continued from page 1)

four of nine on the Council Rock School Board.

This May, four School Director seats are up in the following Council Rock Regions:

- Region 3: Northampton voting districts #1, #11, #15
- Region 6: Northampton voting districts #4, #8, #13, #18
- Region 8: Upper Makefield voting districts #1, #2, #3, #4
- Region 9: All of Wrightstown and Newtown Township voting districts #1, #2

Many people feel that primary elections are not important – not so! School board candidates are allowed to cross-file in primary elections (filing on both the Democratic and Republican tickets). Therefore school board elections can be won and lost in the primary election. Even though Citizens For Education (CFE) is non-partisan and non-political and does not endorse specific candidates, CFE strongly urges all of our members in the four regions where there is an election to familiarize themselves with the candidates and vote.

If the same candidate wins on both the Republican and Democratic ticket, the election is essentially over; the same name will appear in November under both major parties. However, a registered independent candidate can file to be on the ballot in November. If the same person does not win on both sides in the primary, it is possible in November to have a registered Democrat on the Republican ticket and/or a registered Republican on the Democratic ticket. This example demonstrates the intent that school board elections are to be non-partisan.

School board elections should not be about political parties; they should be about educating the future generation therefore benefitting our community and even society. A truly representative outcome to the School Board Director elections is when all constituents vote, including parents, older adults, adults with no children in the district, and voting age students.

In the last school director elections in 2011, in Bucks County, the voter turnout was 13.57%. If this statistic is repeated in this year's May primary, the winner of a Council Rock School Board election could be decided by the votes cast by just 1 out of every 8 registered voters. This makes YOUR one vote very valuable!

DON'T let a small minority, or uninformed voters, decide YOUR FUTURE! We encourage you to remember that apathy puts our community and our children's future at risk.

Your vote is important because the elected school board director's job is to ensure a quality education at a reasonable cost, and protect property values while producing young adults that will be contributing members of our community and the nation.

Please vote on May 21, 2013!



(Logo continued from page 1)

These students, and their instructor, are commended for their excellent effort! Mr. Rosenau commented, "We always appreciate when the opportunity arises to allow students to take the skills and knowledge they practice every day in class and apply them for a local community organization. In this case it was a fortunate coincidence that two of the three finalists are also student artists from the Council Rock School District." Citizens For Education presented certificates of appreciation to each of the three student finalists for a job well done.



Pictured (l to r): Teacher Brad Rosenau, Mylinh (Midge) Truong (11th grade at Central Bucks South), Maura Finegan (11th grade at Council Rock South), and Marissa Snyder (11th grade at Council Rock South)

How Study Skills are Taught in CR

“Study skills are the trellis that holds the curriculum together,” according to Dean Hentz, Council Rock’s Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator. Citizens For Education couldn’t agree more which is why we decided to find out how Council Rock incorporates how-to-study instruction into the daily lives of students.

Many study and organizational skills, such as taking notes, are taught at the elementary level. For example, teachers are expected to look at students’ notes to confirm that key information is being recorded effectively. At the middle level, study skills are incorporated into the Literacy Learning and Literacy Skills classes, where students learn about and practice organization, note taking, use of mnemonic devices, and textbook reading strategies.

At the secondary level in Council Rock, students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are offered a Study Skills course, but in regular education classes study skills are embedded in the structure of each course and in the instructional practices of teachers.

Students are instructed on various ways to study, based on each student’s strengths as a learner. Those who are more visual learners might do well making flash cards to study, while others might be better served using outlines and notes. Both could benefit from graphic organizers, devices that assist students in organizing ideas and communicating effectively. Some ideas for effective study include pre-reading the text book before the lesson is taught, working with a partner to ask and answer study questions, reviewing lessons and notes at home soon after the lesson is taught, reading through notes out loud, using graphic organizers, creating outlines, and attending clinic on a regular basis. In addition, when teachers provide note packets, students are encouraged to highlight or underline important points stressed in the lecture, and teachers should relate any note packets back to the relevant sections in the course text book.

In math, practice makes perfect and the best way to study math is to do many practice problems. Textbooks contain practice problems, and

online textbooks, now available to many students, have links to additional problems. Students are encouraged to do these problems to solidify their knowledge of the subject matter, and to ask their teacher for solutions that are not provided in the book

The Common Core State Standards initiative is now being used throughout Pennsylvania. According to the PA Common Core website, “this is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.”

One core standard is the ability of students to navigate complex texts, since much of future learning will involve self-mastery of complex reading material. To that end, Council Rock has implemented a Reading Apprenticeship, which allows staff to become teachers of reading in addition to their specialty. This is a district initiative started three years ago in English and now being rolled out in social studies, with five social studies teachers participating to date. This program is designed to provide teachers with tools to help students navigate specific disciplines and to apply these skills across the board in all courses.

Council Rock believes that the best way to teach a student to study is to model how to become proficient with the skill. For example, a teacher will “talk to the text” which involves reading the textual material, then talking back to it, framing and asking questions. Students should be active readers – reading with pen or pencil in hand to take notes, whether in the margins, on sticky notes, or on paper. These skills are relevant to informational or non-fiction texts as well, such as in science and math. Teachers are in-serviced on these techniques and should consistently model these behaviors and verify that their students are learning them. For example, a teacher would model the thought process of how to break down a mathematical word problem to extract the important

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Updating Council Rock's Blueprint for Excellence

In April 2012, the school district formed a committee to review and revise the Strategic Plan from 2006. The committee consisted of School Board Directors, administrators, teachers, students, and representatives from the community. While the original plan was designed to span six years, the current plan is designed for the next three years. Therefore the scope of what could be accomplished in that time needed to be scaled down to a challenging but still viable strategic plan.

The process of developing the 2006 strategic plan was very labor and time intensive. Subsequent plan developments are able to utilize the blueprint that was created in 2006 and revise or build upon it, as needed, to have it evolve into a more current assessment of where the district is and what direction it wants to take. The process of developing the new strategic plan was led by JoAnn Perotti, the Director of Strategic Services at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22.

Like the previous plan, there are six "yardsticks" of success that the district will use to measure its effectiveness:

- Student attitude, motivation and achievement
- Student acquisition of knowledge through the appropriate use of technology
- Student attendance
- Student acquisition of positive life skills
- Student learning and enrichment through participation in co-curricular activities and diverse opportunities for course electives in our high schools
- Successful student transition from grade-to-grade and elementary to middle school, to high school, to post- secondary

During the initial session, the participants brainstormed to create a list of district level action areas to concentrate on over the next three years. It was ultimately determined that there were three areas of priority:

- Teaching and Learning
- Building Relationships
- Technology

The participants of the committee broke into these three smaller groups, based on their own interests and expertise, to continue to refine and expand those three concepts. First, the goals related to those areas were defined, as well as the markers for success. The small groups then identified strategies for development. Finally, the groups created action steps, i.e., working plans for implementing the strategies and successfully reaching the three major areas of priority for the strategic plan. The team leaders of each group were charged with compiling the data for their respective topics into a workable document.

For further information and to peruse the Strategic Plan, go to: http://www.crsd.org/cms/lib5/PA01000188/Centricity/domain/1/strategicplan/CRStrategicPlan12_120712R4.pdf

(Study Skills continued from page 3)

information and set up the appropriate math equation, which can then be solved.

Entire curricula have been developed to address study skills, but with state and federal demands on instructional time and limited availability in their schedules for students to take additional courses, it would be difficult for CR to offer these to students during the school day. Embedding study skills in each course and discipline, and teachers modeling ways to study, may be the best way for most students to learn these skills. **CFE encourages the district to share study skills best practices with parents, perhaps via a district webpage, so that these skills can be reinforced with students at home, and to consider extra-curricular study skills offerings, such as an online course, for those students who may need further instruction.**

Citizens For Education thanks Joy McClendon (Director of Elementary Education and Curriculum), Dean Hentz (Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator), Julie Eastburn (Math Curriculum Coordinator) and Peggy Walsh (Secondary RELA Curriculum Coordinator) for taking the time to inform us on this important area of educational practice affecting every student in Council Rock.

A Look at Secondary Class Sizes

Each year, Citizens For Education tracks the class size data for the secondary schools in Council Rock (Elementary data is posted on the district website). This is helpful in determining trends in both class sizes and rigor of classes over time at each of the middle and high schools. Citizens only analyzes the class size data for the 5 core areas: Math, Science, Social Studies, English/Language Arts and World Languages.

Middle Schools

At the middle schools, the only dramatic change that has occurred is due to the redistricting of Rolling Hills Elementary (RHE) from Holland Middle School (HMS) to Richboro Middle School (RMS). The redistricting began with just the 7th grade last year (2011-12) and added the 8th grade this school year. With Rolling Hills no longer at HMS, the number of classes at HMS has dropped from a total of 131 to 104 core classes.

It is interesting to note that at Richboro Middle, the Rolling Hills redistricting has a less noticeable impact; the number of core classes running has only increased by one, from 102 in 2011-12 to 103 classes in 2012-13. The major shift at RMS, however, has come in class size. In 2011-12, only 13% of the core classes at RMS 8th grade held 26 or more students; in 2012-13, that number increased to 61%. Looking at the number of classes that were over 30 students, in 2011-12 there were 2 classes; in 2012-13 the 8th grade had 21 classes with 30 or more. For example, all 5 of the Spanish classes have more than 30 students; the highest (and highest in the school) was 35 students.

High Schools

At the high schools, the number of core courses being run at CR South overtook CR North last year as, for the first time, all of RMS began feeding into CR South. CR South went from running 348 core classes in 2009-10 to 360 this year. There is a more dramatic drop in classes being run at CR North; from 388 in 2009-10 to 337 this year. In both schools, the vast majority of classes are enrolled within the 20-29 student range. There has also been consistency in the level of course rigor that students are electing to take. The only interesting item to note is that the numbers of AP classes being run at CR North and the enrollments in them have not declined, although the overall population of the school has decreased over the last few years.

All the data related to class sizes may be found at our website: www.citizensforeducation.com. Click on Supporting Data for 2013 Spring Newsletter => Secondary Class Size Data.

Tutoring Regulation Updated

Council Rock Administrative Regulation 116, which addresses the topic of instructional tutors, was updated in November 2012. Key aspects of the regulation include the following:

- For the convenience of parents, a tutor list is maintained by the school district and is available to parents and students through their assigned Guidance Counselor.
- Individual teachers shall not make specific recommendations for a tutor if asked by a student or parent, but should direct requests to the Guidance Office.
- A Council Rock employee may not tutor a student currently assigned to his/her class.
- Tutors shall not have access to course materials or course tests other than those tests and materials generally available to all students in the course.
- A list of music instructors available for private lessons will be maintained by the Council Rock Music Coordinator and kept on the music webpage as a service to parents.

The complete AR 116-R can be found on the CRSD website at this link: <http://www.crsd.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=593> or on the district website => Resources tab=> Administrative Regulations.

Elementary Schools Offer a Variety of Enrichment Activities

Citizens For Education recently surveyed elementary school principals and PTO presidents to determine the range of enrichment activities, trips, and clubs offered at each school. A table with these activities identified is shown on www.citizensforeducation.com, click on Supporting Data for 2013 Spring Newsletter => Elementary Activities Chart.

Students have a wide variety of enrichment and club offerings, many of which are available at every elementary school. Some of these include choral and instrumental groups, bingo night, science fair, Reading Olympics, Student Council, some version of mother/daughter/father/son events, and after school sports for 5th and 6th graders. Many, but not all, of the elementary schools offer art clubs, back-to-school picnics, book fairs, carnivals/spring fairs, chess clubs, family math nights, field day, before-school foreign language classes, geography bees, garden or botany clubs, homework clubs, Halloween parties and parades, Kids Vote, newspaper clubs, roller skating parties, Secret Shop, 5th/6th grade school plays/talent shows, and Trenton Thunder or Phillies trips.

Other enrichment activities organized at several, but not all, elementary schools are broken down by grade level including:

- Kindergarten: Solly Brothers Farm trips
- First Grade: First grade play; Honey Hollow trips
- Second Grade: A wax museum-like display, where students dress up as characters within a certain theme; insect-related play or field trip; dinosaur show; patriotic show
- Third Grade: A wax museum-like display; trips to a rock gym or Lost River Caverns, or a rock/mineral show; a multiplication show; Rotary Dictionary Day, where students receive a free dictionary courtesy of the Rotary Club; trip to the National Constitution Center
- Fourth Grade: Trips to Pennsbury Manor and Churchville Nature Center; state fair trips; visit to the Kimmel Center; Electricity City Night where students display their lighted construction projects
- Fifth Grade: Humanities dig trip; a wax museum-like display; trips to Pennsbury Manor, historic Philadelphia, or Washington Crossing State Park
- Sixth Grade: Dances; trips to Penn Museum, Citizens Bank Park, or the Philadelphia Zoo; various spirit activities

Some events are only held at one or two schools, such as bracelet club; donuts/breakfast with Dad; dog walk; knitting club; May BBQ; Odyssey of the Mind; pumpkin decorating night; walking club; coat drive; Young Author's Days, where students read their works aloud for a small audience; and College Settlement, an overnight trip which consists of team building and wilderness activities on a 234-acre site in Horsham, PA.

CFE commends the elementary school staffs, the PTO leadership, and the many PTO volunteers for their efforts in providing a wide variety of fun and enriching activities for students. Sharing of successful programs between schools is recommended as a great way to spread the fun while not having to "reinvent the wheel." Updates to the table can be forwarded to Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com.

Is your membership expiring in October 2013?

Avoid the rush! Renew now!

Use the membership form on back cover.

Staff Websites

In the fall of 2009, Citizens For Education reviewed staff websites at all 15 of the district's schools to determine if information was current. At that time, it was learned that more than 60% of the staff websites were up-to-date. Citizens decided to re-assess the websites to see what, if any, improvement was made in the last 3 ½ years.

Below is a comparison of core teacher websites. Core refers to classes in English, Math, Science, Social Studies and World Language. Not included in these figures are Administrative and Specialist websites.

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2013</u>
Elementary Schools (10)	88% current 12% non-current	92% current 8% non-current
Middle Schools (3)	62% current 38 % non-current	87% current 13% non-current
High Schools (2)	60% current 40% non-current	80% current 20% non-current

The term "current " refers to websites that contain relevant, up-to-date information for the 2012-13 school year. "Non-current" refers to websites that either do not have up-to-date information or are entirely blank.

As the percentages above indicate, there has been a significant increase in the number of teacher websites that are now being kept current. Eighty percent or more of websites are being utilized as a supplement to classroom and administrative communications. Up-to-date websites are a valuable resource for students and parents at every level. Students today are so tied to their computers that websites are often the first place they'll look to obtain information and homework.

Citizens commends the staffs at the following schools for having 100% of their websites current: Churchville, Goodnoe, Holland, Sol Feinstone, Maureen Welch, and Wrightstown Elementary Schools, and Holland Middle School.

In addition, many websites go "above and beyond" in posting relevant information. These websites provide supplemental educational links to subject areas, recommended reading lists, educational game links, links to students' work and helpful study habits, just to name a few.

Citizens hopes that in another 3 years 100% of the staff websites will be current and up-to-date as they've proven to be a great communication and teaching tool between staff, students and parents.

To view the data breakdown by school, please go to www.citizensforeducation.com and click on Supporting Data for 2013 Spring Newsletter => Staff Website Data.

Did you know that Citizens For Education, in partnership with the Political Science Clubs at CRHS North and South, runs 3 voter registration drives each year? This allows students turning 18 by the next election to register to vote.

Test Returns: Assessing Implementation of a New Regulation

In September 2012, the Council Rock administration updated its policy relating to the return of student tests and assessments. The revised regulation states, in part: "With the exception of District Assessments, students have the option of taking assessments home." (You can read the full regulation here under AR 213: <http://www.crsd.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=593>)

The change means that beginning this school year, almost all tests, quizzes, essays, papers, lab reports and homework should be available to all students and coming home. The exceptions include mid-terms, finals, and other district-wide exams (such as quarterlies), or work that students choose to leave in school. In addition, parents and students should easily see what assessments are available to bring home through the Home Access Center; there should be an asterisk next to any assessment item that is not available to bring home.

Citizens For Education recently collected some anecdotal data from parents to get an understanding of how well this new regulation is being implemented in our two high schools. As would be expected when a new policy takes effect, progress is slow but steady. The good news is that many people are reporting improvement with more student work going home than before.

However, there are still areas where implementation is not as successful. Some teachers are consistently re-collecting tests and quizzes after class review and not sending things home. Others are only allowing work to go home if parents or students specifically ask the teacher. Confronting the teacher about this is sometimes stressful to both students and parents. In other instances, teachers are allowing work to go home only for a limited time, such as 48 hours, or only allowing one test home at a time.

The administration is committed to keeping this issue a priority and having continuous improvement. When confronted with specific problems,

Did you know that free tutoring by National Honor Society members is available for students in grades 7-12. The required form can be found at: <http://www.crsd.org/Page/26714> for North <http://www.crsd.org/Page/5953> for South

or go to each high school home page and click on Clubs tab => NHS => Tutoring.

administrators have been able to work directly with teachers to get improvement. Teachers are informed of the regulation through many sources: in faculty meetings, department meetings, building

meetings and directly from district administration. The message about this change in procedure will continue to be communicated at the start of each school year, with the goal of continuous improvement and ultimately, total compliance.

Administrators urged parents to talk to teachers and administrators if they have concerns or are not getting assessments home. Curriculum coordinators can also help and their contact information can be found at: <http://crsd.org/Page/228>

Citizens For Education applauds the Council Rock administration for continuing its commitment to this very significant change, which will lead to greater productivity, better communication and, hopefully, less stress for students.

Consistency in Grading Practices

Citizens For Education met with CRSD Superintendent Mark Klein and Director of Secondary Education Barry Desko on two occasions over the last year (April 2012 and January 2013) to better understand consistency in grading practices among different teachers who teach the same high school level course. The following Q&A provides a synopsis of the outcome.

Citizens For Education (CFE): In the five core curricula, which courses have district midterms administered?

Mr. Klein/Mr. Desko: The courses in the following table have district midterms administered. This includes all math courses except AP and Computer Science courses.

Midterm Exams by Curricular Area					
Grade	Math	Science	English	Social Studies	World Language
9th	Alg 1 Accl Alg 1 Hon Alg 2 Concepts	Phys Sci Accl Phys Sci Hon Bio	None	None	All Courses
10th	Alg 2 Pt A Accl Alg 2 Hon Geometry	Accl Bio Bio	None	None	All Courses
11th	Accl Geometry Geometry Hon Analysis	*Physics *Accl Physics *Hon Physics	None	None	All Courses
12th	Accl Analysis Accl Statistics Analysis Alg 2 Pt B Trigonometry	Behavioral Sci Environ Sci Microbiology	None	AP Psych	All Courses
*Physics midterms were not given in 2012-13 due to Keystone Exams					

CFE: Which core courses have district finals administered?

Mr. Klein/Mr. Desko: All math, science, English, social studies, and world language courses have final exams, with the exception of the following: Animal Science and Astronomy, which have final projects instead of final exams. Read 180 courses do not have a final exam. [Note: Read 180 is a comprehensive system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development proven to raise reading achievement for struggling readers in grades 4–12+. Designed for any student reading two or more years below grade-level, READ 180 leverages adaptive technology to individualize instruction for students and provides powerful data for differentiation to teachers. Critical reading, vocabulary, writing, 21st Century learning, and grammar skills are components of the program.]

CFE: Are there plans to develop district midterms or finals for any courses that currently do not administer them?

Mr. Klein/Mr. Desko: Nothing additional is currently being considered.

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(Consistency in Grading continued from page 9)

CFE: Which courses have summer assignments? Please indicate the nature of the summer work, i.e., reading, reading and writing, math packet, etc.

Mr. Klein/Mr. Desko: The following courses have summer packets assigned:

- Science – AP Biology only. All AP Biology teachers use the same summer packet. The reading assignment is due in January but delivered in June to allow students the opportunity, if they choose, to do this over the summer.
- English – AP Literature, AP Composition, Honors 12, Honors 11. The assignments are the same by building.
- Social Studies – AP Euro, AP World, AP Psych, Hon Philosophy. Assignments are not consistent, but are determined by each teacher.
- World Languages – AP courses only. Consistent at school level only.
- Math – Students entering Honors/Accelerated Analysis and Calculus have summer packets. The math packet is the same across subject and across schools. Honors Analysis and Accelerated Analysis use the same summer packet.

CFE: Within a given course having multiple teachers in one or both high schools, is there consistency in:

- a. The assignment, extent, grading, and weight of summer assignments? If yes, how and by whom is this consistency assessed? Does anyone monitor if teachers count differently those packets that are turned in complete on day 1 of the school year versus giving students additional time to complete them after the start of the school year?
- b. The grading of homework, i.e., homework graded only for completion, homework graded for completion and accuracy, homework not graded at all?
- c. The use of partial credit on assessments?
- d. The inclusion/exclusion of class participation as part of grading? If included, is the weight of class participation monitored to determine consistency?

Mr. Klein/Mr. Desko: There is agreement across all curricular areas that there should be a level of consistency in the grading practices across all teachers of the same course. Some flexibility is necessary for the teacher to apply grading practices that best meet class needs. This has been a conversation led by Curriculum Coordinators and this will continue to be a focus for curriculum meetings. If a parent believes there is a major discrepancy in a teacher's grading practice, they should contact the teacher and then the Curriculum Coordinator or Principal.

CFE: How often do curriculum coordinators or other staff compare data on identical courses within and across both high schools? What data is compared? What actions are taken if inconsistencies are identified?

Mr. Klein/Mr. Desko: All district assessment results are reviewed and data collected for monitoring of curriculum and teaching except World Languages. World Languages is in the process of moving their district assessments into Performance Tracker (an online database containing test results for all students). The data collected on district assessments is shared with Principals and School-level Department Chairs.

CFE: Does the district monitor the Home Access Center (HAC) across departments/schools to compare how teachers are calculating grades?

- a. Are the same categories of assessment used across departments/schools?
- b. Are similar percentages of weight assigned to similar categories?
- c. Are similar quantities of assessments included?

Mr. Klein/Mr. Desko: The district does not have the ability to "monitor" HAC. Principals do review Teacher Grade Books when there is a concern or if they need to gather information.

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(Consistency in Grading continued from page 10)

CFE: Does the district monitor HAC across departments/schools to ensure grades are input in a timely manner? What parameters are used to define “timely manner?”

Mr. Klein/Mr. Desko: The district does not have the ability to “monitor” HAC. Principals and Curriculum Coordinators do regularly remind teachers to return assessment results in a timely manner; however, because of the number of variables, specific requirements are not in place. If a student/parent has a specific concern with a teacher they should contact the teacher.

CFE: Is training given to teachers on how to use HAC to provide helpful information, including the use of categories (besides “Other”) and weighting?

Mr. Klein/Mr. Desko: Teachers have been trained in the use of the electronic Grade Book on HAC. In addition, each secondary school has several trained teachers that in-service their staff and act as a resource. Teachers are given the flexibility to use total points or percentages to calculate their grades. A new version of Teacher Grade Book will likely be introduced in September 2013 and there may be changes to the system.

CFE: Is there a rationale for the inclusion of +/- designations on final grades and/or transcripts when they may not be used consistently by teachers and do not factor into GPA calculations? If so, what is it? If not, would you consider eliminating it from final grades and transcripts?

Mr. Klein/Mr. Desko: The teacher's electronic grade book will add a + and a - according to parameters set by the district. So, for any of the marking periods, an 89% will default to a B+ and a 91% to an A-. The final grade in any subject does not have that default. In fact, teachers need to manually enter that grade based on their consideration of the average of the four (or two) marking periods and any other considerations that would go into the final grade. The +/- discussion remains among school administrators for now. We are gathering some information from colleges and universities on the impact of +/- on transcripts and then will make a decision on how to move forward with this discussion. I don't expect to make any further progress on this issue until next school year.

Citizens For Education thanks Mr. Klein and Mr. Desko for their responses, and feels strongly that reasonable consistency in grading practices and HAC usage among teachers who teach the same course should be emphasized and monitored by the district Curriculum Coordinators or by the administration to ensure fairness for students. It is further suggested that each of the five core curriculum areas maintain a webpage to allow sharing of resources (e.g., website links, list of teachers who teach each course in that core area, grading criteria, etc.) for that department. The webpage would be a resource for staff, students, and parents and would go a long way toward efficiently enhancing collaboration and consistency. Finally, a staff in-service about HAC, specifically with a review of how the system's weighting works to support (or sometimes contradict) the teacher's grading system would be helpful.

**Vote for
Kids' Sake**

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public education is delivered.





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Citizens For Education

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Newtown PA 18940

\$25.00 - 4 Years w/electronic delivery (3 years via mail) *

\$10.00 - 1 year *

Circle one:

New Member

Renewal**

*Membership entitles you to receive our newsletter published semi-annually and voting privileges at our general membership yearly planning meeting, held in the fall.

** Already a member, but need to update information (current address, phone #, e-mail, etc.)? Please contact Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com.

Citizens For Education is a not-for-profit, non-partisan community group whose objectives are to ensure a quality education for all students of the Council Rock School District, to better inform the Council Rock community of educational issues, and to increase the involvement of the community in the decision making processes affecting the quality of education in Council Rock.