



SUPERINTENDENT'S END-OF-MONTH NOTES

October 2011

OUR MISSION is to provide educational excellence for all students.



IN THIS EDITION:

- **Interactive Notebook** (Notes #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, & #6)
 - **ACT Insights** (Notes #7 & #8)
 - **Schmoker on Post-Secondary Readiness & the Four Core Subjects** (Note #9)
 - **Principal-for-the-Day** (Note #10)
1. **Earlier this month, instructional strategist Dan Mulligan worked with representative members of each school's faculty on further understanding and implementation of interactive notebooks.** Using an interactive notebook design, inclusive of the recognition that our students learn in multiple intelligences, Dr. Mulligan shared a number of key points the likes of which we would do well to think about ...
 2. **Mulligan: Why should teachers use MIND (Multiple Intelligences Notebook Design) notebooks?**
 - Verbatim note taking is perhaps the least effective way to take notes because students are not engaged in synthesizing ("putting together") information.
 - Students know clearly what is essential to know and understand. It also provides students with a **MODEL** of how notes should be taken.
 - Students' interaction with the notes ensures their working with the information without wasting 12-15 minutes mindlessly copying from the overhead or board.
 - Research demonstrates that students reach a 34% gain in achievement when summarizing and note taking strategies are used—with fidelity—in instruction (Marzano, et al., in *Classroom Instruction That Works*).
 - For learners to internalize ideas, they must act upon them: draw it, connect it, manipulate it, and struggle with it.
 3. **More on the Rationale for Interactive Notebooks:**
 - Writing down lecture notes does not guarantee students have learned the information.



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- Students must actively do something with the information before they really understand it.
- Note-taking becomes an active process.
- Students will organize as they learn. Students can record ideas about every task that they engage in during a unit.
- Students will use organizational techniques such as topic headings, colored highlights, and different writing styles to synthesize concepts.
- Interactive notebooks give students permission to be playful and creative in their responses without "messing up" their notes.
- When students are creative, they will remember more.
- It serves as a reminder to the teacher to give students time to absorb ideas as instruction unfolds.
- If teachers see blank left-hand pages that tells them that they are providing too much information without giving students enough time to process the material.
- **BOTTOM LINE**: The interactive notebook becomes a *portfolio* of what the student actually learned.

4. **Interactive Notetaking Guidelines:**

- Teacher input and student connections to learning are on the right side of the notebook.
- On the left side, students process, question, and wrestle with the information presented on the right side.
- Suggestions for the left side include: (a) personal reaction, most significant information; (b) illustrations, symbols, and graphics; (c) diagrams, webs, clusters, maps; (d) Venn diagrams, matrices, and flow charts; (e) cartoon or caricatures representing ideas; (f) one sentence/one paragraph summaries.

5. **Interactive notetaking is not more formal writing:**

<u>Interactive Notetaking</u>	vs.	<u>Genre Writing/Formal Art</u>
spontaneous		planned
short		lengthy
exploratory		authoritative
expressive		transactional
informal		formal
personal		audience-centered
Unedited		polished



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6. With so many of our students in need of solid background knowledge necessary for academic achievement, the interactive notebook [now being used in all math classes in NCSS] is a key strategy for increased student learning for many of the reasons already listed above. Still another key component of the interactive notebook is Dr. Mulligan's advice that these notebooks include a glossary of vocabulary terms in the back by which the student can identify the term, the page it is found on, the definition, and a description or example. After all, vocabulary is one of two chief strategies for building background knowledge!
7. Recently, a number of NCSS personnel attended a College and Career Readiness Workshop sponsored by the publishers of the American College Tests (ACT). As we've indicated before, "college and career readiness" is certainly the emphasis of the state of Georgia's Adequate Yearly Progress or "AYP" proposal to the federal government. While we still do not know exactly how Georgia will calculate or determine AYP going forward, we do know that if the federal government approves the Georgia proposal, the ACT, SAT, AP, Dual Enrollment, and the like will suddenly take on much more importance in the formal accountability program of the state as soon as next 2012-13 school year. The new Georgia proposal also heightens the importance of student results on the state's End-of-Course-Tests (EOCTs).
8. Among the important learnings gathered at the ACT workshop some of us attended at Macon State College were as follows:
 - A Definition of "College Readiness": the acquisition of the knowledge and skills a student needs to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing, first year courses at a post-secondary institution (such as a 2- or 4-year college, trade school or technical school) *without* the need for remediation. [Importantly, we were told, the authors of the new Common Core Curriculum to be used in over 40 states, including Georgia, adopted this very definition of "college readiness."]
 - ACT's College Readiness Standards—which represent those standards to be mastered in college algebra, college biology, college language arts/composition, and college-level reading in the social sciences—have been aligned with the new Common Core Curriculum. This can be found on the ACT website.



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- A correlation between various ACT score ranges and ACT College Readiness Standards was obtained at the workshop and distributed at last week's NCSS Leadership Team Meeting of Principals and Central Office administrators. (This is quite a nifty and empirically-driven correlation of various ACT scores connected to which college readiness standards have been mastered or not mastered.) It was recommended that school systems conduct a curriculum review to determine whether or not the ACT College Readiness Standards were included in local curriculum and at what grade level the standard is first introduced and at what grade level the standard is to be mastered.
- As we would anticipate from any publisher of educational materials, the ACT folks did provide us with a system of assessments meant to "measure student progress towards both college and career readiness" beginning as early as the 8th/9th grade ("Explore"), continuing through the 10th grade ("Plan"), culminating, of course, with administration of the "ACT" in the senior year. The ACT presenters also advocated the company's product known as "Engage" which measures middle and high school behavioral factors of academic success. Interesting!
- 9. **More from Mike Schmoker's *Focus: Elevating the Essentials To Radically Improve Student Learning* (all about "college or post-secondary readiness"):**
 - **In Social Studies:** "Literacy is the key word; the teaching of history should have reading and writing at its core." [Identify essential standards/topics. Select common readings for discussion and writing—specific textbook sections; historical/primary/current documents; generate questions/tasks to argue, infer, resolve conflicting texts, problem-solve. Define parameters for common writings, number and length.]
 - **In Science:** "Being science literate entails being able to read and understand a variety of science texts to form valid conclusions and participate in meaningful conversations about science." [Identify essential standards/topics. Select common readings—specific text sections, 15-25 science articles per course, etc. Discuss, debate, write to explain, argue, resolve, problem solve.]
 - **In Mathematics:** "Math teachers need to focus on the interplay of numbers and words, on expressing quantitative relationships in meaningful sentences. To make mathematics meaningful, all three Rs must be well blended in each student's mind." [Identify essential standards/topics. Teach/model close reading of math text/word problems. Write, ala Marilyn



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Burns, "I think that the answer is...." "I think this because...." "I figured this out by" Discuss in pairs—whole class.]

- **In Language Arts:** Identify essential standards/topics. Generate common list of quality fiction/non-fiction books plus articles, poems, etc.—divide by grading period. Assign "x" number of papers of "x" number of pages—divide by grading period. For all of the preceding, generate questions/tasks to argue, infer, resolve conflicting texts, problem-solve. For all of the preceding, model for students how to underline/annotate, cite and explain supporting text, participate in Socratic discussions.
10. **November will see a collaborative effort between the Covington-Newton County Chamber of Commerce and NCSS.** More specifically, community leaders will be "matched" with various school Principals in a **Principal-for-the-Day "shadowing"** format. The purpose of this initiative is to "Bring community leaders into our schools to give them a first-hand view of how our schools and classes operate on a daily basis and to provide school leaders with earnest, constructive feedback."
11. **Principal-for-the-Day objectives are:**
- To have the PFTD observe all aspects of a Principal's daily tasks and take an active role in the day's responsibilities including overseeing bus lines and lunchrooms, visiting/observing classrooms, attending meetings, greeting parents, and other appropriate activities which do not involve confidential matters.
 - To ask PFTD to attend a 12:30 p.m. debriefing with the superintendent and executive team for an exchange of observations, recommendations, ideas, etc.
 - To invite the PFTD to serve as a positive ambassador for his or her school visited/observed.

"Foxes pursue many ends at the same time...Hedgehogs see what is essential, and ignore the rest."

■ Jim Collins in *Good to Great*

GSM
10/31/11