

OFFICE of SCHOOL SUPPORT

OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



DECEMBER • 2015

WHAT'S NEW

Superintendents and Principals,

As the semester comes to an end, it is time to review the past semester and begin making plans for the spring semester. Since August, the Office of School Support team has visited over 400 Oklahoma schools and traveled more than 28,600 miles. It has been a wonderful opportunity to learn about the strengths of our schools, as well as, identify the various areas that our office can provide assistance. From our initial site visit needs assessment, the top five areas of professional learning desired from sites include parent/community support, differentiated instruction, special education instruction, data reviews that impact instruction and strategies to increase student attendance. With this data and information, the Office of School Support will be able to work collaboratively with other departments to provide professional learning and training that will help meet the needs of your teachers and students. Our first opportunity comes just days away as we welcome Dr. Marcia Tate to Oklahoma. Be sure and read more about Dr. Tate on the upcoming pages of our newsletter.

Another highlight for the month of December will include webinar trainings for the new Schoolwide/School Improvement Plan. This plan is designed to provide a framework for school improvement through the implementation of the Oklahoma Nine Essential Elements while also meeting the compliance requirements for a Title I Schoolwide Plan. The upcoming pages will provide you the dates and times for the upcoming webinars as well as a registration link. The first training is **Wednesday, December 9th**. We hope you join us!

In addition, the School Improvement Status Report (SISR) is scheduled to be back on-line by mid-December. We appreciate everyone's patience and understanding during the data loading and final program development stages. Once the report is back on line, data collected by the OSDE from the 2014-2015 school year should be pre-populated into each site's report. It is our hope this feature will save time and reduce the reporting burden on instructional leaders. Although this report will be open to all sites, the timeline for this report is still to be determined until the SY15 Designations are finalized. Please be assured that sites will be provided information and appropriate timelines to meet the responsibilities and requirements associated with their school designation.

Have a restful and safe winter break and we look forward to seeing you next semester.

Desarae Witmer
Executive Director

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SPOTLIGHT

Professional Development Opportunity Closing the Opportunity & Achievement Gap with Marcia Tate

Oklahoma educators will soon have the opportunity to grow their brains as well as nurture their students' dendrites. Dr. Marcia L. Tate, author of the "Won't Grow Dendrites" series, is scheduled to speak on **December 11 at the Reed Conference Center - Sheraton Midwest City Hotel.**

Marcia L. Tate, Ed. D., is the former Executive Director of Development for the DeKalb County School System, Decatur, Georgia. During her 30-year career with the district, Tate has been a classroom teacher, reading specialist, language arts coordinator, and staff development executive director. Tate received the Distinguished Staff Development Award for the State of Georgia; her department was chosen to receive the Exemplary Program Award for Georgia.

Dr. Tate is currently an educational consultant and has taught more than 350,000 administrators, teachers, parents, and business and community leaders throughout the world. She is the author of the following five bestsellers: *Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites: 20 Instructional Strategies that Engage the Brain* (Second Edition); *"Sit and Get" Won't Grow Dendrites: 20 Professional Learning Strategies that Engage the Adult Brain* (Second Edition); *Reading and Language Arts Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites: 20 Literacy Strategies that Engage the Brain*; *Shouting Won't Grow Dendrites: 20 Techniques for Managing a Brain-Compatible Classroom*; *Mathematics Worksheets Won't Grow Dendrites: 20 Numeracy Strategies that Engage the Brain*. Tate also has new books regarding brain engagement and science, social studies, and preparing children for success in school and life.

Tate received her bachelor's degree in psychology and elementary education from Spelman College in Atlanta. She earned a master's degree in remedial reading (University of Michigan), a specialist degree in educational leadership (Georgia State University), and a doctorate in educational leadership (Clark Atlanta University).

Tate's web site, www.developingmindsinc.com, contains participants' testimonials about their workshop experiences as well as additional information about her publications and services. For tickets please go to: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/closing-the-opportunity-achievement-gap-with-marcia-tate-tickets-19299988786?utm-medium=discovery&utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-source=cp&utm-term=listing>

UPDATE

School Improvement Status Report (SISR)

The School Improvement Status Report (SISR) will be back up and running in just a few weeks. As a reminder the application will be available through Single Sign-On. All designated schools will be required to submit data on this application. We will give updates on any deadlines as they become available. The biggest piece of data that schools will be responsible for is the benchmark data because those are site specific.

UPDATE

Transitioning to the Schoolwide/School Improvement Plan

Please note upcoming webinar dates that will have information for the transition to the Schoolwide/School Improvement Plan:

Wednesday, December 9th 10am

Tuesday, December 15th 10am

Wednesday, January 6th 10am

Thursday, January 28th 10am

You can register here: <https://oksdeevents.webex.com>

SPOTLIGHT

Opportunity

Topics of discussion for educators at all levels range from student achievement, student performance, student growth, student improvement, student progress all the way to student attendance and the list continues. The ultimate goal in today's educational world seems to have the most emphasis on improving test scores in order to avoid being placed on what has become known as "The List". We were being attacked by this grade card monster that was unfairly labeling us as a "bad" school. At the time, I felt confident in the quality of teaching methods and strategies performed by the faculty but the feeling of guilt was pressing heavily on my mind. I wanted to go as far as to blame the "broken evaluation system" that was being forced upon us. Whatever extent that these things are true or not, the fact of the matter is we can always improve. So the challenge for me and the faculty was to adjust, adapt and yes even change.

The first thing I looked at was exactly how many students it would take to get us off this list. With our school testing approximately 86 students, it does not take a lot to go either way. After some lengthy statistical calculations and discussions with teachers we identified as "bubble" students. As our team (which is every teacher at a school our size) was coming up with mathematical strategies and targeting plans to solve this problem, we realized that the focus was on test scores and not our students. All students are important. We can't give more time and energy to those students that are more likely to improve our image or score.

We made a schedule change and implemented an extra period to remediate reading and math for 5th through 8th grades. The teachers of these classes collaborated to focus on specific areas in each subject depending on the challenges at the time. With the support of the State Department of Education a Summer Reading Academy was established in 2015. I need to mention that the State Department was very supportive in this whole process. Due to budget constraints, students that had been identified as lower performers were the only students enrolled. By having a smaller number of students in the program it allowed the teachers to concentrate on meeting the specific and diverse needs of those students. This program proved to be very successful. According to 2016 "test scores" each student that participated has experienced academic growth.

After reviewing the benchmark data faculty began to use this data to modify or develop instructional time. One of the positive outcomes of this process is the school did training on benchmarking and data analysis. By organizing this data it allows the teachers to micromanage the curriculum. It becomes evident what area, concept, etc. needs to be remediated. This data is also shared with the student to encourage ownership of the outcomes of each individual.

Opportunity (CONTINUED)

It is my belief that teaching is all about motivation. One way we worked on this area was to develop student incentive programs. Teachers that did not have these programs in place incorporated them into their classes. Several of the teachers that already had a reward system in place tried different ideas to try to make it fresh and new to their students. Our teachers collaborated and shared ideas about what they believed did or did not work. Teachers each tried to create something a little different so the students were not rewarded the same way in each class. The purpose was to have consistency but variation. Also, we have a monthly awards assembly to recognize a student of the month. Not only are teachers involved in the choice of these students but also the support staff. Our small school is considered like a family in many ways. We try to include everyone as much as possible.

The faculty at my school are all in agreement that parental involvement is a strong contributing factor of student achievement. Parental engagement is increasingly becoming more and more of a challenge for our school. Our Parent/Teacher Conference participation decreases every year. Our teachers attempt to make weekly phone calls to parents or guardians of struggling students to inform them of the status of their children and to offer advice on techniques to help them at home. Telephone calls are also made for students that are excelling or improving. Two years ago our school began an Open House Night. The attendance rate is approximately 45% with a slight increase this past last year. Although, this may not be considered an overwhelming success, any efforts to reach out to parents I would consider a success.

Beginning this school year, we were fortunate to offer an after school program. This program allows learning experiences such as tutoring in all subject areas to those students that are able to stay. It not only provides a safe learning environment but also helps build a strong teacher-student relationship.

I need to mention that the State Department was very supportive in this whole process. I really felt that their staff was there to help and not penalize or find fault. Again, we talk about student achievement, student performance, student growth, student improvement, etc. Teaching and caring for students with such diverse needs is taxing. Students should be the main focus. I also believe that we do not teach subjects, we teach students about subjects. So I would like to close with this. Even though public education can seem very complicated, take the opportunity to evaluate, adapt, assess, be willing to change and yes sometimes take constructive review. But never forget to take the opportunity to make a difference in a child's life.

Bryan Hix
Lowrey School

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

December 11th

Closing the Opportunity Gap
Free Professional Development

December 24th-25th

OSDE Office Closed - Winter Break

January 1st

OSDE Office Closed - New Year's Day

We hope everyone has a safe and restful Winter break!!!