

LEARN

LEARN is a newsletter to highlighting student and teacher learning at PGMS.



TEACHERS CREATE HIGH QUALITY ASSESSMENTS

Teacher Teams Revise and Create Assessments to Improve Quality.

Teachers have been busy this quarter designing high quality assessments that are focused on improving high levels of thinking. The Common Core standards (see page 2 for more on the Common Core Standards) are increasing the level of rigor at all grade levels. Our teachers are preparing students for these new standards by fine tuning assessments to focus on: rigorous questioning, higher order thinking strategies, focused constructive response questions, and guided feedback to students. Teachers had professional development on how to design higher order thinking questions and then

implemented their learning into designing Common Formative Assessments. Teachers collaborated and analyzed each other's Common Formative Assessments. The teachers used a checklist to examine the multiple choice and constructive response questions on areas such as format, clarity, and rigor.

Students typically take these assessments online so teachers analyze the data quickly, adjust instruction, provide intervention and enrichment, and give feedback to students.



Common Formative Assessment
This 7th grade student is taking an online CFA (Common Formative Assessment) designed by PGMS Teacher teams.

Common Core Standards

Common Core Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. These standards are designed to challenge students at high levels of learning, reflect real world experiences, and provide students with the skills to be successful in college and careers. The Common Core Standards are intended to equip students to be prepared for the global economy.

Pennsylvania has adopted the Common Core standards similar to over 40 other states. These standards in Math, English, Writing, and Reading are:

- Aligned with college and work expectations

- Clear, understandable, and consistent.
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills.
- Built upon strengths and lessons of current state standards.
- Evidence based.

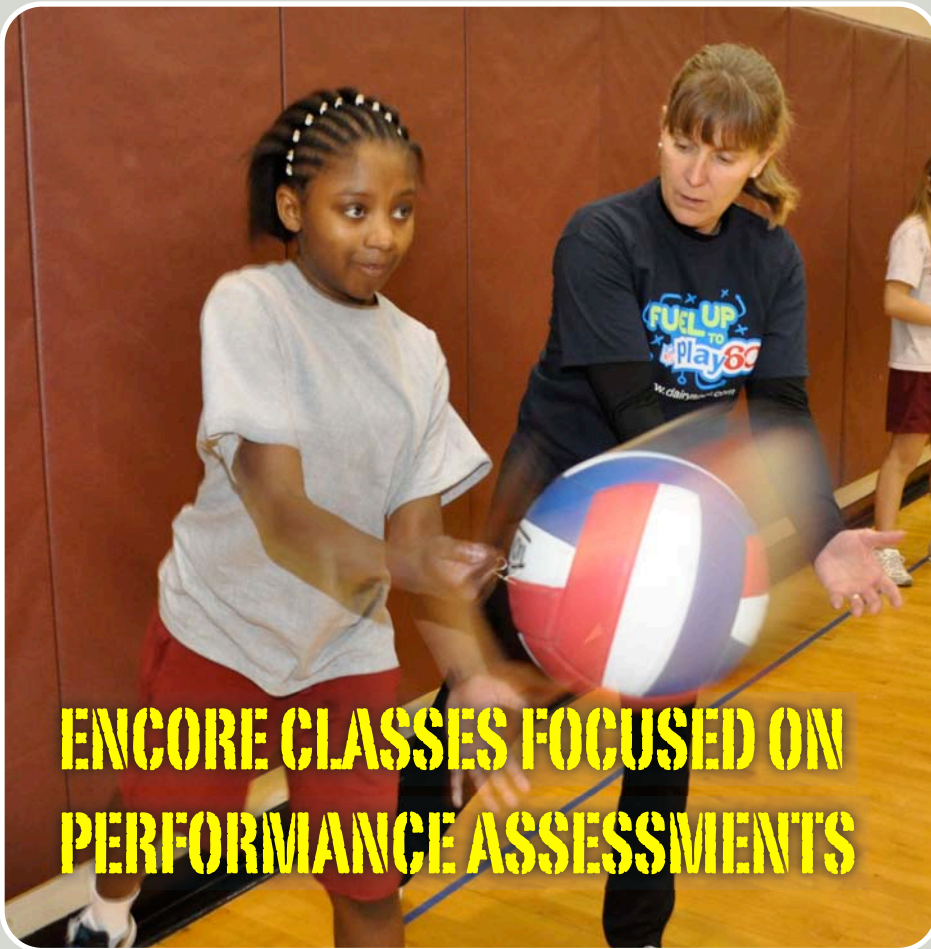
Our teachers are working to align Pottsgrove's curriculum to the Common Core Standards. We are finding that these standards will challenge our students at all levels of learning and prepare them for high school and beyond. Common Core Standards are rigorous and require focused attention toward Math, Writing, English, and Reading.

Check out more on the Common Core Standards by going to www.corestandards.org



COMMON CORE





ENCORE CLASSES FOCUSED ON PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

Encore Classes Design Performance Assessments

PGMS Encore teachers have been working on designing rigorous and engaging Performance Assessments.



Performance Assessment

Above: Physical Education teachers (left to right, Mrs. Eaton, Mr. Engstrom, Mr. Doubek of the Lead and Learn Center, Mr. Polli)

Teachers Hone Their Performance Assessment Skills

Encore classes focus on performance based learning. These classes include subjects such as Physical Education, Art, Library, Computers, Health, Technical Education, Computers, and Music. Students need to demonstrate ability through performing a certain task or assignment. For example, in Art, students perform by drawing, and in Physical Education students are assessed by their ability to run the mile, hit a volleyball (above), or complete circuit training. Teachers from the Encore department have been focusing on designing challenging performance assessments which clearly articulate a student's ability to perform the task. Recently, the Encore teachers received Professional Development on unwrapping standards, creating curriculum, and in designing high quality performance

"They don't give you a multiple choice test to see if you are doing your job"

assessments. These performance assessments include: rubrics to evaluate whether a student met the criteria for success, real life activities which demonstrate competency, and teacher observation to evaluate success. Sometimes the assessments are also called Authentic Assessments. It's authentic in the sense that it's real. Grant Wiggins, author and expert on assessment, shares, "If you go into the work place, they don't give you a multiple choice test to see if you are doing your job, they have a performance assessment as they say in business."

Our Encore teachers are leading the way with Performance Assessments. They will be mentors to our Core teachers as they work on designing Performance Assessments for their students.



Art Performance Assessment - 7th graders:
Michael Neeson & Kieran Reed

"Performance Assessments provide engaging learning experiences for all students. These assessments, or interactive learning experiences, represent a comprehensive model that includes standards, assessment, data analysis, instruction, and as an outcome – increased student learning. Performance assessments are an engaging way to involve the learner in the assessment process."

Author and educator, Lisa Almedia

8TH GRADER ENTERS 2011 GOOGLE SCIENCE FAIR

Student Spotlight (A feature written by a student about learning at PGMS)



My name is Elizabeth Driehaus, and I am an eighth grade student at Pottsgrove Middle School. I have already taken all of the Science and Math classes available at the Middle School, so I go to the High School to take Algebra 2, but this year my Science class will be entering the Google Science Fair. The Google Science Fair is

an international online science competition for students ages 13-18 that requires them to submit a question, do research, and perform experiments. For my Science project, I am going to be working with Dr. Frank Song, the Director of Hematology and Oncology at the Pottstown Memorial Medical Center to research questions and problems related to brain cancer and brain tumors. I am very excited to be participating in this worldwide competition, and I look forward to expanding my academic horizons.



"I am excited about this worldwide competition"



Future Scientist at PGMS

8th grade student, Liz Driehaus, has entered the 2011 Google Science Fair. She has decided to focus her study on cancer research.

Left: Liz in a science lab

Above: Liz working with Mrs. Frasca.