

VALLEY STREAM UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT THIRTY

October 20, 2011

Dear Valley Stream 30 Community,

New Writing Program

Last week, I wrote about the new higher learning standards your children are experiencing now and the preparations that school districts are making to meet the demands of the new Common Core curriculum. One way Valley Stream 30 is working to extend student learning and increase performance is through the use of a new writing program called *SIM*. The letters stand for *Strategic Instruction Model*. This year, the program will consist of three components, Fundamentals in the Sentence Writing Strategy, Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy and Paragraph Writing Strategy. As we are beginning the program this year, students in the older grades will begin at the start of the program and work their way up to the paragraph writing. Younger students, such as our kindergarten students, will focus on targeted aspects and then will build upon their learning each year, meeting the benchmarks set for that grade level.

In sentence writing, students learn the basics to write a variety of sentences including simple, compound, complex and compound complex sentences. In paragraph writing, students learn to write well-organized paragraphs that include topic sentences, rich details and clincher sentences.

The SIM writing program aligns effectively with the Common Core Standards. For example, in kindergarten the Common Core Standards expectation is that students use frequently-occurring nouns and verbs in their writing. The SIM Writing program in kindergarten teaches noun and verb banks. Capitalizing the first word in a sentence and recognizing and naming end punctuation are also requirements of the Common Core Standards in kindergarten, both of which are included in the SIM Writing component which teaches the five requirements of a sentence.

In Grade 5, the Common Core Standards expectation beginning next school year is that students can explain the function of conjunctions, prepositions and interjections, in general, and their function in particular sentences. These learning benchmarks are taught in the parts of speech lessons in SIM which are elements of the Fundamentals in Sentence Writing and Proficiency in Sentence Writing lessons.

In Grade 6, students, according to Common Core Standards to be implemented next school year, examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts and information through the selection, organization and analysis of relevant content. In the SIM Writing program, these topics are included in the paragraph diagram writing component of SIM, utilizing the paragraph writing strategy.

All K - 6 teachers this year are invested in extensive professional development experiences that provide them with the necessary training to effectively teach this writing program. A staff developer from The University of Kansas, where the SIM program was developed, meets regularly with staff, modeling in the classroom, observing lessons and leading workshop activities.

The District will be working with the three elementary PTAs to schedule a workshop for parents on this exciting and rigorous writing program that will prepare our students and lay a strong foundation for the strong performance on high school Regents exams that New York State Education Department research has correlated with college and career readiness.

Upcoming Events

October 24, 2011

7:00 p.m., VS 30 Board of Education Appreciation/Recognition, Shaw Avenue Library
Hosted by Forest Road PTA and students

8:00 p.m., VS 30 Board of Education Business Meeting, Shaw Avenue Library

Have a Good Weekend

As always, please contact me at 516-285-9881, x222 or email ekanas@vs30.org with comments and suggestions on the topic of this newsletter or with suggestions or questions on other topics.

Sincerely,



Elaine Kanas, Ed.D.