



CLASP Consulting

Curriculum Library Alignment and Sharing Project

Summer 2002

A Newsletter for Curriculum Administrators in Massachusetts

**Did you know...
Mass Networks
Education Part-
nership (MNEP)
offers Data-
Informed Decision
Making work-
shops?**

Mass Networks has organized a series of discussions about the effective use of school data for instructional decision-making. To find out more about Data Informed Instructional Decision Making, visit our web site at www.massnetworks.org/programs.

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What's new at CLASP Consulting?

As the summer winds to a close, curriculum work seems like a distant memory from last spring. Many districts, however, have been hard at work revamping their curriculum guides with the support of CLASP Consultants and the CST (Curriculum Sharing Tool). With September here, we thought it would be a great time to let everyone know what we are currently doing, what's new and what is in store for the near future.

What we are doing now

For the past nine months, CLASP Consulting has focused on helping districts translate the Massachusetts Frameworks into district-friendly language that can be used by teachers directly in their classrooms. CLASP

Consultants facilitate district curriculum teams as they develop curriculum guides for each grade level. These streamlined documents consolidate the overwhelming number of standards into grade-specific units, complete with instructional strategies, assessment tools, and resources. Many districts have expressed great enthusiasm and relief at having so much information condensed into something uniform, practical, and user-friendly.

What's new

As teacher teams move forward in developing guides that are specific to each grade level within each discipline, it can be a challenge to "grow" that work across an entire district. One of our primary goals this year will be

to help districts roll out recently revised curriculum in a systematic and self-sustaining manner. Realizing that communication is an essential component of change, CLASP Consultants guide districts as they identify critical stakeholders and articulate realistic goals in order to ensure that work takes root in meaningful and effective ways.

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Teachers at Palmer High School working on curriculum guides

Q & A: Commonly Asked Questions About CLASP

Q: I'm interested in learning more about CLASP. What should I do?

First, explore our web site (<http://www.massnetworks.org>) to see samples of curriculum work and learn more about our organization's mission. You should then call for a Needs Assessment, in which a CLASP Consultant will meet with the superintendent and/or curriculum directors to clarify your district's needs and set appropriate goals. Once an action plan and timeline have been articulated, we meet with teacher representatives and administrative personnel to begin the process of creating language aligned to the state standards that clarifies for teachers, students and parents what it is students should know and be able to do in your district (see our curriculum model on p. 4).

Q: Are public school districts the only ones who work with CLASP Consulting?

Absolutely not! While we work with many public school districts within Massachusetts, we also support private

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SPOTLIGHT: East Bridgewater Makes Curriculum Progress Public

All too often, the great work done during curriculum meetings and professional days never sees the light of day due to worries that it's not 'finished.'

Two years ago, leaders in East Bridgewater Public Schools agreed that to achieve measurable changes in student performance, they had to make a system-wide commitment to standards-based teaching and learning. This decision translated into a flurry of curriculum work as teachers worked with CLASP Consultants to begin to translate state standards into school-specific language. Meetings and professional days were fruitful and focused, resulting in prioritization of key content areas for each discipline and specific criteria for quality

lesson plans. Teachers engaged in thoughtful discussions of what quality classroom practice looks like. A curriculum document emerged that represented clear expectations for what East Bridgewater students should know and be able to do. Despite the tremendous progress that had been made, however, the work still felt "incomplete": what about specific assessment strategies? What about resources? What about rubrics? The road to a "complete" curriculum seemed endless, a perception that can sour even the most reflective and

engaged educator on the process of curriculum development. All too often, the great work done during curriculum meetings and professional days never sees the light of day due to worries that it's not "finished." Hours of laborious discussion can feel wasted.

In East Bridgewater, Carolyn Cragin, Director of Curriculum and Professional Development, didn't want to wait for the mutiny. "Even though some teachers were uncomfortable with

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...New at CLASP Consulting

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What's Coming

In the 2002-2003 school year, CLASP Consulting will be offering a range of services to assist districts as they deepen and refine their curriculum work. Looking at assessment tools and strategies will be a priority for CLASP Consulting as teachers push the use of their guides to the next level. Many districts are already working with us on **developing skill-based rubrics** that help teachers determine both criteria and proficiency levels by which to measure student performance. We also offer workshops for teachers centered around **designing authentic assessment tasks** that will provide opportunities for students to demonstrate attainment of specific skills in engaging and thought-provoking ways. Another professional development activity that we offer is a workshop

designed for teachers to **look collaboratively at student work**. We have found that examining and assessing student work in a team setting can provide teachers with a basis for real conversations about consistent expectations for students as well as determining appropriate evidence of progress in student learning. After schools have designed and refined assessment tools, CLASP Consulting can provide support and training around the **alignment of instructional strategies and textbook references, resources and materials** with desired outcomes for students.

If you are interested in any of the services offered by CLASP Consulting, please contact Laura Christian at (617) 783-9988, X 121 or send an e-mail to lchristian@massnetworks.org. We look forward to working with you! ♦



Teachers representing all grade levels and disciplines at the Stetson School in Barre, MA have been developing rubrics for students with alternative learning needs.

Consulting and Training Fees

CLASP adheres to the Department of Education guidelines for consulting fees.

A fee of \$750 per day is charged for on-site staff consulting, facilitation or training and travel time.

An additional fee of \$750 per day covers off-site preparation, research and development of materials, communication with district members, data entry, follow-up reports and technical support.

...SPOTLIGHT

(Continued from page 2)

the idea of sharing our work in an 'incomplete state' with parents, I felt it was essential not only to showcase the high quality product of work to date, but to deliver something concrete to the community," remembers Cragin.

CLASP Consultants worked with "proficiency teams" to develop a tri-fold brochure displaying East Bridgewater's benchmarks for student learning in each discipline and grade.

The brochures, color-coded by discipline, were printed and distributed to teachers and parents early in 2002. "Our brochures have had wonderful, unanticipated consequences," says Cragin happily. "Many teachers – even those who were uncomfortable to begin with – now 'see' where we are going and are clamoring to get to work on the assessment

component. Parents, teachers and students alike all have a uniform place to turn to see what learning students are expected to demonstrate in every subject, every grade." She adds, "The beauty of doing this in the CLASP CST is



that I was able to say to the teams, 'This is a flexible and fluid tool. If there is something you feel shouldn't go public, keep it out. We can work on it until we feel comfortable with it.'" She adds that teachers ended up deciding to make almost all their work public.

There are many conversations still to be had now that East Bridgewater has made state language specific to their own students. However, making their progress public has allowed teachers to truly examine, refine, and re-examine expectations in a way that welcomes all stakeholders. Linda Kuehn, a Reading Specialist at the Central School, admits, "Like most teachers, I never looked forward to working on curriculum. But this process had a different feeling. For the first time in my career, I had a forum for a serious conversation with my colleagues about what we think students should be learning. There is tremendous ownership here because together we agreed that these benchmarks are the targets that we need to shoot for and assess." While curriculum work is never truly "complete," making each successive step public can help all members of a school community

feel invested in the final result.

To see a sample of East Bridgewater's parent brochures, go to www.massnetworks.org/programs/clasp. ♦

"For the first time in my career, I had a forum for a serious conversation with my colleagues about what we think students should be learning."

*-Linda Kuehn
Central School
E. Bridgewater, MA*

Did you know...

MNEP houses the Policy Strand of Project MEET (Massachusetts Empowering Educators with Technology)?

As the Policy provider for the Project, Mass Networks works with administrators from MEET schools to help them both support and maximize their MEET teams. Mass Networks also provides the Project MEET version of the CST, a special lesson-planning tool that is designed especially for the Project but is also compatible with the original CLASP CST. For more information, please visit www.massnetworks.org/meet.

...Q & A

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schools, charter schools, and residential facilities interested in aligning their curriculum with the State Frameworks.

Q: In what ways can I report on my curriculum once it's developed?

The CST database contains all sorts of information that you can use in a variety of ways. You can search by grade, unit, topic, or standard. You can also print a variety of reports to use with teachers, parents and students. Unit guides, reports aligning state language to district language and student learning outcomes by grade span are just a few of the possible reporting (or printing) options.

Q: Now that VES has introduced CLASP Online, what does it mean for our district?

A: In a nutshell, CLASP Online offers a tool set; CLASP Consulting offers on-site facilitation and unit development using a variety of tools, including the CST and CLASP Online. Currently, the on-line version allows districts to create and share student learning objectives along with assessment, instructional strategies and textbook resources that align to each individual standard. The offline CST has the added feature of being able to take student learning objectives and organize them into units. We have found through our work with districts that most standards (or learning objectives) are not assessed or even instructed independently but rather are taught collectively and assessed at the end of units or courses. VES and CLASP Online are planning to have both a unit building component and lesson plan component built in the coming year. Both CLASP Consulting and CLASP Online will support districts through the process of migrating data online so it can be shared and updated regularly. While we will continue using the CST with districts until these online components are up and running, we are excited about making the eventual transition to an online Curriculum Sharing Tool. ♦



CLASP Consulting

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A Newsletter for Curriculum Administrators in Massachusetts

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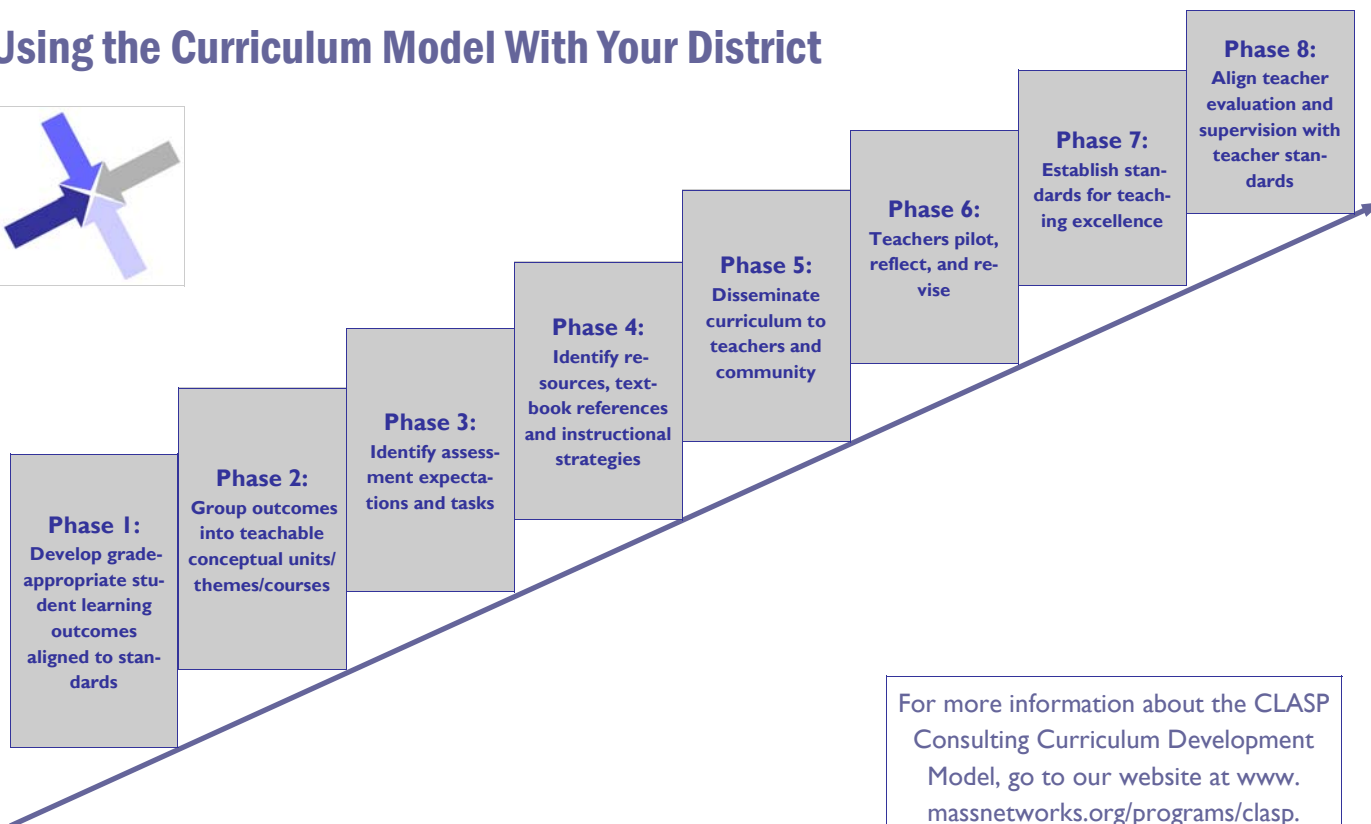
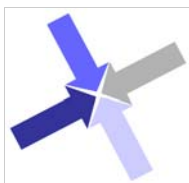
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We're on the web!

www.massnetworks.org/programs/clasp

Using the Curriculum Model With Your District



For more information about the CLASP Consulting Curriculum Development Model, go to our website at www.massnetworks.org/programs/clasp.