



HNH Steering Committee

Karen Carlson
Chris Dransoff
Diane Fanning
Cheryl Hagerty
Heidi Hann
Kim Hefner
Michelle Kasper
Gia Kunkel
Deb Lunsford
Erin Moroni
Barb Oczkowicz
Julie Odum
Ann Riebock
Carol Van Gorp
Emmah Welsh
Ron Williamson
Julie Worthen

Many others—teachers, staff members and parents—are involved in Hadley New Horizons. The Steering Committee's role is to unify HNH work and guide communication related to it.

**Questions?
Email them to
horizons@d41.org**

MISSION: The purpose of Hadley Junior High School is to prepare our students intellectually and emotionally for their high school years and the future by providing a safe and supportive learning environment that meets the unique needs of our adolescent learners, while developing respectful relationships among students, staff, families and community.

Message from Chris Dransoff: Summer progress

This is the 4th issue of *HNHnews*, and I hope it can convey the vigorous work that is underway this summer on Hadley New Horizons. Hadley families probably have paid keener attention to this project than other D41 families, but *HNHnews* is intended to help all of us stay informed about this organizational improvement effort. In June, we held an informational forum to help parents learn about this work, and we intend to schedule another one in the fall. Other ways to stay informed are to visit www.d41.org and click on the HNH logo to read past issues of *HNHnews*, email horizons@d41.org with questions or comments, or contact me directly. News about HNH is often included in D41 E-News, to which you can subscribe on www.d41.org. Finally, consider becoming involved as HNH volunteer opportunities arise.

Thank you—Christopher Dransoff, Principal of Hadley

Defining HNH: some brief history

Hadley New Horizons is an improvement effort that began in the summer of 2007. District 41 is a continuous improvement organization, meaning we regularly analyze how we are doing and look for ways to improve. Random acts of improvement are discouraged in favor of systemic approaches based on research, implemented by plan and measured by design so we can tell if we've improved. HNH started when our research told us that we needed to review our Exploratory program; further research indicated needs in other areas as well. The first thing we did was develop our Mission Statement (above); this is our beacon of light drawing us forward toward a common goal of excellence for our kids.

HNH timeline: *December a target date*

Over the past year, staff members and parents have been working in study groups facilitated by middle school expert Dr. Ron Williamson to create recommendations for improvement. These go to the HNH Steering Committee, which then seeks feedback from stakeholders. It may also ask for more data or suggest changes to the recommendations. Most recommendations will be for implementation in the 2009-2010 school year, meaning they should be ready by December of 2008, going to the BOE for discussion or action by January of 2009. Work will continue through and beyond implementation, as we assess results and make adjustments consistent with a continuous improvement approach.

Summer work: curriculum writing, band/orchestra scheduling

From Pre-Kindergarten on, D41 is strengthening its curriculum and instruction through tighter alignment to Illinois Academic Standards, focus on articulation with the high school, better assessment of student learning and professional development for teachers. HNH aligns with districtwide efforts, yet is specific to the unique needs of middle-level learners. These young people are turning into responsible adolescents who need challenge, who crave diverse academic, social and emotional learning opportunities, and who seek meaningful, healthy relationships with adults whom they expect to guide, mentor, challenge and support them. Many teachers are working on HNH over the summer; below is an overview of the work:

- **Academic Support and Guided Study for 2008-2009:** This summer, curricula are being developed for courses which will be offered in place of Large Group this year. The courses are similar in their intent to boost academic performance, but aimed at different needs. Academic Support courses in reading and math will be provided to eligible students who are not mastering the material as determined by testing and teacher recommendation. Guided Study will provide a learning opportunity that is more structured than Large Group for students who are not eligible for Academic Support.
- **Additional course offerings for 2009-2010:** An evaluation of Hadley's Exploratory program revealed the need to give students more choice and more compelling courses that are tightly aligned to state learning standards. Exploratory is a rotation of courses providing exposure to the arts, life skills and other non-core curriculum areas. Last spring, surveys were sent to students and parents to learn what subjects interested them. These responses were reviewed by the steering committee and now curriculum-development work is underway for the courses for which there was significant interest. Some of these new courses will be in place of the current Exploratory offerings, while others are designed as extensions to the core curriculum.
- **Band and Orchestra for 2009-2010:** A committee is making progress on creating a schedule for the instrumental music programs that allows students to receive instrumental instruction as part of their regular school day; currently, they are being pulled from other classes for their music classes. The goal is to treat instrumental music as a regular class while maintaining our commitment to a quality, ability-based instructional program. The committee includes the Hadley Band and Orchestra teachers.

Status of other HNH work: schedules and study groups

- **Adjust start/dismissal times:** Results of a parent survey regarding shifting the school day one-half hour earlier were inconclusive and split, and more study will be done to see if this idea merits continued attention. The purpose would be to allow students to participate in athletic competitions without having to leave school early and to allow expanded after-school opportunities for students.
- **New schedule at Hadley:** Streamlining may be proposed to allow greater instructional time for math, reduce the time spent in passing period and allow for some potential blocking of time in other content areas. This year, there will be greater consistency in implementing the Language Arts Block. In May, the BOE approved installation of six more portable classrooms at Hadley; this space will provide more scheduling options and help ensure that students have their 90 minutes of Language Arts with the same teacher in the same room. Math will be treated separately from the academic teams this year for greater flexibility in scheduling and to allow teachers to better meet the range of math learning needs.
- **Zero-hour option:** Students who elect instrumental music and foreign language experience schedule constraints. The idea of a before-school scheduling option is under study as a way to provide those students more flexibility. Other scheduling approaches are also under study that may accomplish the same thing within the regular school day.
- **Study group parent volunteers needed:** The Respectful Relationships group started its work at the end of the last school year. In the fall, we'll launch two more study groups—Effective (teacher) Teaming and Home-School Communications, and we are seeking parent volunteers for the latter group. Parent volunteers are full partners in all facets of the work—the research, recommendation design, and followup. If you're interested in learning more about this rewarding volunteer opportunity, please contact Principal Chris Dransoff or email horizons@d41.org.
- **Our consultant:** HNH has had the support of Dr. Ron Williamson, and in July, the BOE approved a continuation of his work for the coming year. A nationally-known expert, university professor, former administrator and noted author, Ron has experience with many middle-level schools across the country and has been a valued partner and resource.

The HNH Steering Committee is committed to sharing information as the work unfolds and to inviting your input and questions so that we can work together to make HNH a successful and systemic improvement effort.