

"engaged and interested." She worked with his teachers to modify the assignments, so that he would feel challenged.

While she spoke mainly about the need to add "a standard accelerated component into the grade school curriculum," Hack also expressed concern over the concept of eliminated honors classes at the high school level. "It's insanity," she said.

She closed by reminding the board that, "your top priority must be educating all your students, and it is no more just to ignore one group than it is another."

The board did not directly respond, but referenced Hack's comments several times throughout the discussions that followed.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Rosetta Wilson presented a report on the English Language Arts curriculum revisions. She acknowledged that the K-5 initiative needed "more focus and structure" and is continuing to evolve. This summer, as part of the goal to bring all students to grade-level proficiency, 129 incoming first, second and third grade students are participating in the Rising Stars Summer Program. The READ 180 program is geared towards 7th to 9th graders, and 65 students participated this year. All but 12 were exited, deemed successful.

"As we move forward, it will be necessary to tie up loose ends and focus on two key areas: reading comprehension and process writing," said Wilson. She added that they will continue to refine the K-10 curriculum to ensure it is teacher friendly. A non-fiction feature articles unit will replace the read/write seminar in grade seven.

As evidence that the curriculum is successful, Wilson showed a chart that measured the reading level of elementary students. At the kindergarten level,

73 percent of students were reading at grade level in September. By June, the percentage rose to 97. In second grade, the percentage rose from 71 to 90.

Referencing Hack's remarks, board member Wayne Eastman asked what is there for high-achieving students.

"There is an expectation to differentiate," Wilson replied. "We've provided teachers with a variety of materials that are above below and on grade level. We're expecting teachers to work with students."

Yet minutes later, when board member Beth Daugherty asked why advanced options are not being incorporated into sample lesson plans, Wilson contradicted herself.

"We would love to do that now, but our lessons are being developed by our teachers. Our teachers have not been trained in differentiating instruction. We are hesitant to let them put those in, without professional development."

Board member Lynne Crawford was obviously frustrated by this response.

"For nine years we've been told they are taught to differentiate lessons," she said. "Why now are we being told they can't? Why aren't the gifted and talented teachers helping?"

Wilson did not have a solid answer, but said that professional development will be offered to teachers in the 2010-2011 school year in order to start incorporating differentiated instruction.

Gleason expressed his continued concerns: "What are we doing to challenge the kids that are already doing well in L.A.?", he asked. "A lot more emphasis seems to be on reading than on writing. I'm not an educator so I don't know if that's normal, but I was struck by that."

In other business, Anthony Mazzochi was approved as Supervisor of Fine Arts K-12. A product of the South Orange-Maplewood school district, Mazzochi said he is proud to be back.

"I am so happy to be back in Maplewood, where I grew up and to be working with the students and teachers of the Maplewood-South Orange school district," he said. "I want to make sure every student gets to experience what I got to experience as a student here, the cultivating of my passions and talents. It's absolutely important in this day and age that we have every student exposed to the arts."

Mazzochi will earn \$87,161. He replaces Nick Santoro, who retired.

The board swore in student representative to the board, Seth Wolin, for his second term.

"This year I was honored to allow the board to hear student opinions on community issues," Wolin said. "I hope to have a positive impact on the district as I serve in the 2010-2011 school year."

Superintendent Brian Osborne recognized the members of the national champion Columbia High School girls' track team for their accomplishments.

In the Superintendent's report, Osborne discussed the summer school programs, and a professional development seminar that was offered to seventh grade teachers, in preparations for the de-leveling process. He added that high school schedules have already been mailed, and the CHS guidance department will be available throughout the summer to deal with any scheduling issues.

The BOE also discussed draft changes to the district goals and the capital improvement plans, though no final decisions were made. Both topics will further be discussed at the following BOE meeting.

School District Looks at Achievement Gap Progress in Test Scores

Some areas saw improvement, but the gap is still too wide, according to district officials.

By [Mary Mann](#), Patch Staff | Aug 19, 2010 7:25 pm ET | Updated Aug 31, 2010 4:36 pm ET

The South Orange-Maplewood School District continues to close the achievement gap between black and white high school students, but the progress is incremental and the gap is still too wide.

South Orange Maplewood Chief Information Officer Paul Roth presented a dissection of HSPA data by performance between black and white students at the August 16, 2010 Board of Education meeting. HSPA is the High School Proficiency Assessment. "It's a High School graduation requirement by the state," explained Roth. Students have three opportunities to pass the assessment beginning at the end of their junior year, again in the fall of their senior year, and finally in the spring of senior year.

While the Assessment is used as an individual measure of proficiency in English Language Arts and Math, "we also use it to gauge the achievement gap and our performance against other districts," said Roth.

South Orange-Maplewood is measured against a DFG—or District Factor Group—selected by the state as a "peer group" of districts with similar income levels to South Orange and Maplewood. Surprisingly, those towns include Berkeley Heights, Bridgewater, the Caldwells, Cedar Grove, Glen Ridge, Kinnelon, Moorestown, Montville, Montclair and New Providence, among others. "The group is put together based on income, not their diversity," said

Roth. He noted that income levels for Maplewood and South Orange are actually higher than many people think.

Overall, 78.8% of South Orange-Maplewood high school students scored proficient in Math, 10.4 percentage points lower than the DFG. But in language arts, 90.1% of South Orange-Maplewood students scored proficient—the highest percentage measured in 8 years and just 6.1% lower than the DFG. SOMSD students closed the gap with the DFG a bit in "advanced proficient" math scoring (just an 8.1% gap, with 34.6% of students scoring advanced proficient). Also, a record percentage—29.2%—of SOMSD students scored advanced proficient in language arts, although the 5.1% gap with the DFG was not the lowest of the last 8 years.

Math Audit Signals Curriculum Changes Coming

Last Monday's Board of Education meeting saw discussion of the PDK math audit and recommended changes

By [Marcia Worth](#), Patch Staff | Oct 25, 2010 1:44 am ET | Updated Oct 25, 2010 1:53 am ET

Following on critical observations made in an audit of the district's math curriculum, changes to kindergarten through grade 12 math instruction in South Orange-Maplewood public schools are certain, though not likely to be sudden.

Rosetta Wilson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, presented the district's "Response to Math Audit" at the Monday Board of Education meeting, including a timetable for implementation of changes. For most grades, the 2010-2011 school year will be one of planning and revising existing curricula.

Superintendent Brian Osborne introduced the report by reminding Board members and the public that Phi Delta Kappa International (PDK) had been engaged to conduct a "Curriculum Management Audit" of the district's math curriculum, grades K -12. The audit was conducted in the fall of 2009, and **findings were released** in June 2010. Results were presented to the Board in June, after the evening's vote on "Leveling Up."

The audit was based on data provided to PDK by the district, as well as a three-day visit by the audit team. This was a "Deficit Audit," which by definition lists problems, rather than commending achievements.

Monday night's presentations were the district response to the study, which was undertaken to better understand the racial achievement gap; to examine varied approaches and quality of instruction; and to receive objective feedback.

Introducing the results on Monday night, Osborne said, "We have quite a bit of work to do." The 169-page report, available [here](#), as summarized on Monday, found that SOMSD's math curriculum is, first, "inadequate in scope" and not "deeply aligned with New Jersey's core curriculum standards and assessments." Resources used in teaching math within the district have not all been adopted by the Board of Education, and Board policies "do not provide adequate quality control to guide sound curriculum management."

Second, teaching strategies and student work samples were not consistent, and "a commitment to all students achieving at high levels, as expressed by the superintendent and board of education, is not consistently evident."

Third, the school system can better use data to "inform curricula, instructional, and programmatic decision making," specifically as it addresses the racial achievement gap.

The full report includes photos of math classes from several district schools and quotations from teachers and other interviewed by the committee.

PDK recommendations were summarized in the following four points. (The underlines are from PDK.)

1. Develop a comprehensive multi-year implementation plan that addresses the findings and recommendation contained in curriculum management audit reports. Align district decisions and actions towards closing existing gaps in students' mathematics achievement.

2. Develop and implement a curriculum management system that establishes an aligned curriculum available to all students and supports attainment of the board's student learning goals. Design a comprehensive K-12 mathematics curriculum that is aligned vertically and horizontally and deeply aligned to state assessments.
3. Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for student and program assessment that will provide meaningful formative and summative data for decision making leading to improved student achievement. Align student and program assessment with the curriculum management system.
4. Design and implement a comprehensive professional development process that provides for coordination with the curriculum management plan and for the use of student achievement data in the evaluation of the effectiveness of professional development and efforts.

Wilson noted, "a big lesson learned" from revamping the English/Language Arts curriculum was to go slowly. Specifically, she reminded the Board that, "less is more," "plan before acting," and "communication to all stakeholders is key." Board member Wayne Eastman reiterated the latter point, inviting interested members of the public to contact him or other members of the curriculum committee.

With those lessons in mind, Wilson explained that the current school year "will be used for collecting data and creating a cohesive plan of action." During this year, supervisors will develop plans; Wilson will present an update to the Board in April.

Wilson noted additional considerations. To raise the performance of underachieving students, she will consider limiting class sizes for developmental math classes, especially Level 2 Algebra. Seth Wolin, Student Representative to the Board of Education spoke in support of this proposal.

In addition, Wilson proposes scheduling Level 2 classes earlier in the day, but not period 1. Mandated participation in supplemental math classes for grades 6 – 8 (Project Ahead, which is now optional) was also listed.

Board member Richard Laine asked if it would be possible to begin implementing changes this year. In addition, Board member Lynne Crawford asked if an interim update would be possible, sometime before the scheduled April meeting.

Both could occur, said Wilson, though the first implementation of any changes is scheduled for grades 3 – 12 in the coming 2011-12 school year. By 2013-14, all grades from K – 12 should see changes in math curriculum and instruction.

Education

Why can't an N.J. man's daughter take AP calculus?

Correction: An earlier version of this column incorrectly referred to the number of AP exams with passing scores at each school. Blake's students passed 660 AP exams across all subjects and Columbia's students passed 524 AP exams across all subjects. The column incorrectly attributed those numbers only to AP calculus.

By Jay Mathews April 14, 2014

Walter Fields's 15-year-old daughter is a sophomore at Columbia High School in Maplewood, N.J. She scored advanced proficient on state math tests in middle school and received an A in algebra in eighth grade.

For reasons that mystify Fields and his wife, their daughter was not recommended for the ninth-grade geometry course that would keep her on the track to Advanced Placement calculus her senior year. Only when they contacted the principal and the math department chair was she placed in that advanced course. The geometry teacher encouraged her dream to become an engineer. She had a B most of the year but slipped to a C because of the demands of lettering in basketball and track, her father said.

Now she is in a fix. Her Algebra 2 teacher made clear on Parents Night, her father said, that "she did not like school sports and suggested students needed to choose between being involved in a sport and being enrolled in her course." The teacher has proved to be, her father said, very discouraging. His daughter has struggled.

"The teacher's response to our questions regarding our daughter's performance was 'she just doesn't seem to get it,'" Fields said. "When we pressed the teacher she curtly suggested that maybe this wasn't the right class for our daughter." Her geometry teacher was apparently so alarmed that she told Fields's daughter to come see her if she needed help. Fields and his wife are well-educated African Americans. He thinks Columbia High is hindering his daughter's progress because of her race. He and other parents are preparing to file a lawsuit on that issue. Fifty-six percent of Columbia students are black, but just 14.4 percent of AP calculus students in the 2011-12 school year were of that race. Seventy-three percent were white.

Race is probably a factor, but there is more to it. Consider the difference between Columbia's AP program and those of Washington area high schools with similar demographics. In the latest Washington Post America's Most Challenging High Schools list, Columbia had a rating of 1.487, the ratio of the number of AP tests to the number of graduating seniors last year. The AP participation ratio for Blake High School in Montgomery County was 59 percent higher, even though its 29 percent portion of low-income students was similar to Columbia's 23 percent. Blacks are the largest ethnic group in both schools.

Why can't an N.J. man's daughter take AP calculus? - The Washingto... <http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/why-cant-his-daughte...>

Columbia's AP exam passing rate is 85 percent. Blake's is 64 percent. Like many U.S. schools, Columbia restricts access to AP. That produces very high passing rates. Fewer average students are allowed to stretch themselves in an AP course, despite research suggesting that **even students who flunk AP exams do better in college because of the experience.**

Nearly every public school in the Washington area has opened its AP courses to all students. Fields's daughter would have no trouble getting into AP calculus at Blake, and she would find teachers at every level eager to help her. At her school, according to her father, she has a teacher who apparently doesn't care how much she might learn in calculus and prefers to deny her that challenge. She is taking AP history and will take AP English, but her dreams of a career in science or engineering require more math.

South Orange-Maplewood school Superintendent Brian G. Osborne seems interested in his schools becoming more like Blake.

"We recognize the need to encourage all students who want to work hard to take AP classes," Osborne said. "The high passage rate of 85 percent does indicate that we need to do more to increase access, eliminate barriers and encourage students. Open access to AP courses is one strategy under active consideration."

Columbia and Blake are nearly identical in size. Blake's open door last year produced 660 students with passing scores on AP exams across all subjects. Columbia's restricted-access policy yielded 524. If we as a nation want and need more students in science, math and engineering courses, doesn't it make sense to encourage more students to challenge themselves in those subjects?

Jay Mathews is an education columnist and blogger for the Washington Post, his employer for 40 years.

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Black Students Contest Idea That Maplewood, South Orange Are 'Stigma Free'

By [villagegreennj](#) ⌚ Oct-27-2016

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In the Columbia High School auditorium on Saturday, October 22, several African American students took to the microphone to talk about incidents large and small in which they felt profiled or intimidated by local police.



One girl spoke of being stopped in the park several years ago with two male friends after some nearby robberies had been committed. She said

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“Because you always carry your phone receipt with you, right?” she asked sarcastically.



Another student talked about being told by a Maplewood Police officer to clear off the sidewalk outside of Underhill Field after a recent CHS football game. The young man said that he repeatedly told the officer that he needed to remain in that spot because he was being picked up and that was where he had been told to wait. Finally, according to the student, the officer drew his gun; the student then left.

(In response to a follow-up email, the student's teacher, TJ Whitaker, said that he did not believe the student had reported the incident to Maplewood Police Internal Affairs as yet.)

“I'm scared for my male friends, my brother,” said one girl.

“In a stigma-free town, how is that possible?” asked another student.

The students spoke of their experiences at a rally in the CHS auditorium on Saturday as part of the [National Day of Protest](#). The local rally was organized by CHS English Language Arts teacher TJ Whitaker, founder of the [MAPSO Freedom School](#) and the MAC Scholars, a CHS club for high-achieving African-American students.

On a raw and blustery Saturday, the rally, originally intended as an outdoor march that would have culminated in a protest at the Maplewood Police Headquarters, was relatively small and quiet. Whitaker periodically asked those assembled to stand and repeat some chants to get the energy in the room up, and he gently chided those who did not show up: “Justice is not dependent on the weather. ... In the old days, they marched in whatever it was.”

truth but also as a rebuke to the [#NotInOurTwoTowns event held at SOMS on July 12](#), which he called a "sham."

Whitaker criticized the #NotInOurTwoTowns event for ending with police coming to the stage at South Orange Middle School and being applauded by the audience. He contended that the event did not deal with the issues of racial profiling that he and the students gathered on October 22 at CHS say are commonplace in Maplewood and South Orange.

"We have to ask the tough questions that make people feel uncomfortable," said Whitaker.

In particular, Whitaker has been working to keep the spotlight on allegations of [racial profiling](#) by police in the two towns, particularly an event that took place on [July 5 in which students allege they were herded toward Irvington](#) after the fireworks in Maplewood Memorial Park and were not allowed to return to their homes in Maplewood and South Orange.

The incident is under investigation by [Maplewood Police Internal Affairs](#).

At the rally, Whitaker questioned why Maplewood Police Chief Robert Cimino remains in his position during the investigation; Whitaker alleges that Cimino is implicated in the investigation.

In August, as the investigation came to light, Chief Cimino issued the following statement to Village Green: "The Maplewood Police Department considers all allegations of police misconduct to be extremely important and investigates all such allegations in accordance with the NJ Attorney Generals Internal Affairs Guidelines. On July 5th, Maplewood Police officers responded to various reports of disorderly conduct, fighting, the failure of large crowds to disperse and various other violations of the law. Several arrests were made on that date. The Internal Affairs Unit of the Maplewood Police Department is currently conducting an investigation into allegations regarding police activities on the date of July 5, 2016. Upon the conclusion of the the investigation the results of the investigation will be disseminated according to the NJ Attorney Generals Internal Affairs Guidelines."

the Township will have no comment with regard to any incidents being investigated. Nevertheless, the Township Committee is fully supportive of thorough and timely investigations. Additionally the Township Committee is willing to discuss any of the concerns of the students and their adult advisers."

Meanwhile, on October 22, Whitaker rallied with representatives of student groups including the MAC Scholars, the Black Students Union, the MLK Association and Diversity Rocks, the parent group Strength for Their Journey, Peoples Organization for Progress, Karen Weiland of the South Orange-Maplewood School District Parenting Center and Ike Onyema of the East Orange Campus High School.

"When you raise your voice," said Whitaker, "you create the space for your righteous teachers and board members to make change."

Contact information for Maplewood Mayor Vic DeLuca and members of the Township Committee can be found [here](#). Maplewood Police can be contacted at 973.762.3400.

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