Curriculum Update

April 2026

Quick Updates

- STEAM Showcase, International Week, 5th grade play
- Greyson Brooks took 3rd place in the Congressional Art Competition (*Over 100 students from 25 school districts submitted artwork to this event held at Montserrat College.)*
- State Math Pathways Roundtable
- Arts Community Partnership: 1623 Studios MERSD Documentary Films



Grey's artwork titled: *Between Worlds*

Grant Award



Essex, Memorial, and the Middle School have been awarded a competitive grant through the one8 Foundation to support our expansion and enhancement of our History/SS curriculum.

The grant (totaling $**34,900**) will be distributed over 3 years and will cover all curriculum materials and professional development for our staff grades 3-7.

Investigating History is a History and Social Studies curriculum that is comprehensive, inclusive to all students, and aligned to Massachusetts state standards. It embodies the rigor of inquiry-based learning, challenging both teachers and students to develop greater skills.

one8 Applied Learning Hub

Investigating History

Full District PD Day



March 16th MERSD Professional Learning Day

Innovative Instruction: Bridging Theory and Practice

Agenda

Starting at 7:45am	*Coffee, Tea, & breakfast foods available in cafeteria*
8:00am	Keynote: Jeffrey C. Riley
9:45am	Session #1
11:30am	Mini-Session
12:15pm	*Lunch in cafeteria*
1:15pm	Session #2
2:45pm	Reflection & Feedback

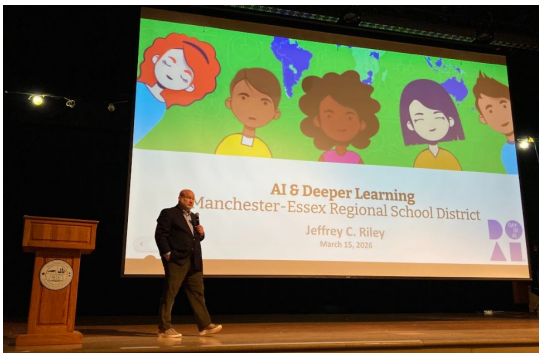
Keynote

“Jeffrey Riley was very engaging and connected to the audience well. Thank you to our MERSD faculty members who presented. Thank you for the opportunity to learn today.”

“Jeff Riley's keynote speech was amazing!”

“Really enjoyed Mr. Riley's speech at the beginning of the day. It did inspire me to deepen relationships with students.”

“The keynote speaker, Jeff Riley, was inspiring. He made me laugh and cry. It was the perfect kick-off to a wonderful day of learning. Teacher truly are superheroes!”



Sessions

From Hooks to Anchors: Driving Student Sensemaking Dr. TJ McKenna

The Neuroscience of Math and Teaching with Dot Patterns Rebecca Lord

Making Sense of Fractions Hana McGowan

Lesson Design Using the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines Ruth Templeton (CAST)

Identifying Anxiety and Supporting Effective Regulation Julie B. Cullen

Speaking and Thinking - Increase Equity of Voice for Increased Student Learning Julia Hendrix

Building Relational Trust, Connection, and Community Through Play Howard Moody

The Sensemaking Spark Dr. TJ McKenna

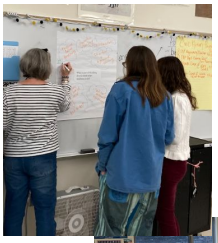
Thinking Routines: Making Student Thinking Visible! Joan McWhorter

Teaching Combining Integers Rebecca Lord

Counting Collections in the Elementary Classroom Hana McGowan

Small Shifts, Stronger SEL Kim Provost









Sessions







Bring Your Students into the Curriculum Julia Hendrix

Introduction to Parent Square Cami Molinare & Ian Menchini

AI Productivity: Tips you can Actually Use Chris Dwyer & Matt Tangney

Applying Universal Design for Learning to a Problem of Practice Ruth Templeton (CAST)

Making the Shift: Supporting Authentic Sensemaking Dr. TJ McKenna

Teaching Number Stories: Effective Word Problem Instruction Rebecca Lord

Finding Focus: Unlocking Engagement through Executive Function Dr. Kristi Graber & Laurie Hagelman

Beyond the Basics: Leveled-Up Everyday EdTech Chris Dwyer

Re-Introduction to EdPuzzle Matt Tangney

Maintaining Rigor through Scaffolding Andie Pinner

Restorative Communication – The Language of Connection Howard Moody





T.J. McKenna • 3rd+
Building AI supports for education at scale | Program ...
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Spent the day at Manchester-Essex Regional School District and it did not disappoint. Three sessions, incredible teachers, and a group that reflects what great professional learning looks like: elementary, middle, and high school science teachers alongside civics teachers, special educators, math teachers, reading specialists, speech therapists, and music teachers. All of us thinking together about sensemaking.

When a speech therapist and a high school chemistry teacher are in the same conversation about how students make sense of the world, something real happens. That's by design.

Grateful for the warm welcome and the genuine engagement. These are exactly the kinds of rooms I love being in!

The "Takeaway": Share one specific strategy or tool you are excited to implement in your classroom.

“I am excited to share one of the Thinking Routine's from Project Zero that I learned from Joan McWhorter's session.”

“I really liked so many of the hands on math strategies I worked with today. They each encouraged inquiry thinking and leading kids to ask questions rather than teacher focused talking. I am excited to use the manipulatives we used today as well as the template frames.”

“Some concrete tools to interrupt anxiety cycle by engaging the brain with a cognitive task”

“I'm excited to implement protocols to make a more student centered, exploratory classroom.”

“I am excited to use Google Notebook to create materials in order to facilitate use of UDL in my lesson planning.”

“An anchor in exploring phenomena based instruction is this idea of a "reservoir" in which students can come back to in their long-term memory when making sense of their learning across multiple explorations/lessons.”

“Authentic sensemaking - encouraging curiosity by not always answering directly.”

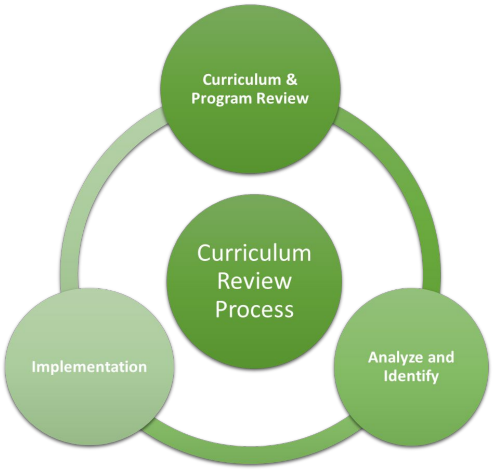
Kudos to our MERSD staff presenters!!!

- **Chris Dwyer**, MERSD Digital Learning Specialist
- **Hana McGowan**, MERSD Elementary Math Instructional Coach
- **Joan McWhorter,** MERSD 8th Grade Civics Teacher
- **Dr. Ian Menchini,** MERSD Data Analyst
- **Cami Molinare**, MERSD Director of Athletics
- **Andie Pinner**, MERSD Multilingual Education Educator & Coordinator
- **Kim Provost**, EES Principal; K-8 SEL/RULER Coordinator
- **Matt Tangney**, MERSD Digital Learning Specialist

Curriculum Review Status Update

Curriculum Review Essential Questions

- What do students need to know and be able to do?
- What does research say about teaching and learning in this discipline?
- Is the curriculum meeting the needs of all learners? How do we know?



Curriculum Review for Continuous Improvement

	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Curriculum & Program Review Analyze & Identify	Comprehensive Health/PE/SEL Mathematics English (6-12) English as a Second Language	Comprehensive Health/PE/SEL Mathematics Digital Literacy/Computer Science	Digital Literacy/Computer Science Literacy (preK-5)
Implement Program Review Recommendations, Field Testing	History/Social Sciences Arts Science, Technology, Engineering	English (6-12) Arts Science, Technology, Engineering English as a Second Language	Comprehensive Health/PE/SEL Mathematics English (6-12)
Implementation	World Language ELA & Lit (K-5)	World Language History/Social Sciences	History/Social Sciences Arts Science, Technology, Engineering English as a Second Language

Curriculum & Program Review: Analyze & Identify

Curriculum/Program Review	Status
Comprehensive Health/PE/SEL	Vertical Standards Alignment Review Review of current research/publications from the field Vertical Scope & Sequence development Identification of gaps & needs
Mathematics (preK-12)	Data Collection Vision development Review of current research/publications from the field Analysis of Data
English (6-12)	Data Collection Vision development Review of current research/publications from the field Analysis of Data
English as a Second Language	Data Collection Field Testing Curriculum Options

Implement Program Review Recommendations, Field Testing

Curriculum/Program Review	Status
History/Social Sciences	Completed field testing, moving forward to implementation: ● K-2: iCivics/Private i History Detectives ● 3-7: Investigating History ● 8: DKP ● 9-12: Curriculum alignment & mapping, integration of Genocide Education
Arts	Vertical Scope & Sequence development Curriculum Unit Mapping 6-12: Course additions/expansions

Implement Program Review Recommendations, Field Testing

Curriculum/Program Review	Status
Science, Technology, Engineering	Completed analysis: ● K-2: implementation of Mystery Science ● 3-5: Curriculum Revisions of Know Atom ● 6-8: Review of published/reviewed resources, planning field testing ● 6-8: Course restructure: embed engineering into STE courses, shift MS engineering to dedicated Digital Literacy/Computer Science (DLCS) ● 9-12: Focused PD around phenomena-based instruction, Revision of curriculum units with anchoring phenomenon ● 9-12: Course additions/expansions

Implementation

Curriculum/Program Review	Status
World Language	Department participation in state organization PD (MAFLA) Implementation of curriculum resource: *Adios Textbook* Implementation of: DESE's Curriculum Alignment Guide for Unit Planning Revisions: Unit Assessments
ELA & Lit (K-5)	Curriculum Scope & Sequence: articulated & consistent cross-district Implementation: Phonemic Awareness Supplemental curriculum (g.K-1) Ongoing implementation & alignment of Wonders 2020