

HERMITAGE

Hermitage among 10 model school districts

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by Joe Pinchot, *Herald Staff Writer*



Hermitage School District is one of 10 Pennsylvania school districts chosen as an SAS Model District, a three-year program to implement what state officials believe are better ways of teaching students.

The district will receive \$25,000 a year for three years to implement the Standards Aligned System, and will have access to assistance from the state Department of Education and education consultants. “It’s really exciting for us,” said Hermitage Director of Curriculum Brian Schaller. “It’s an opportunity to push forward with our professional development initiative.”

The research-based SAS program wants to provide schools a common framework for school enhancement and improvement, and identify strategies and resources for teachers to use, according to the SAS on-line help desk. The goal is to improve student achievement by setting clear standards – the descriptions of what students should know and be able to do – providing a fair assessment process of how things are going, and creating an intervention program to make sure students get the help they need to meet or exceed the standards.

The Department of Education wants feedback on SAS and how to integrate it into professional development, Schaller said. The district has begun an all-grades review of its curriculum. For the first year of the program, districts develop and implement a plan to improve student performance. “Next year, they’ll layer on other districts and we’ll act as a mentor to new districts,” Schaller said. In the third year, the model districts will assess themselves for plan strengths and weaknesses.

Hermitage has a six-member team of administrators and teachers, and will work with a representative from Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV, Grove City. State officials said intermediate units will play a key role in spreading SAS to other schools. Hermitage officials attended a three-day training program in October, and will attend a second session Dec. 4-7. Another conference will be held in May. At some point, Hermitage will host SAS training, although it has not been scheduled, Schaller said.