Curriculum Director's Report

January 19, 2010

ADOPTIONS:

First I wish to sincerely thank the three administrators who have been assisting with the adoption process for K-12 social studies, K-12 music and HS health - David Cooke, Carol Patton and Dave Holmes, respectively. They have been a great help in assisting with the facilitation of meetings so that I can remain with my students until the completion of 4th period. Without their assistance, I would be required to obtain a half-day sub for one class period that would be over by 12:30 PM…an unnecessary expense no matter what the economic climate might be.

Social Studies CMAAC: A variety of materials have been requested from publishers and have arrived. Included in these materials are not only some that are very traditional and limit student activities to the basic read and memorize terminology, dates and events, but also a few that are more aligned with the district's Ends. Some of these not only provide students the opportunity to develop content knowledge but engage students in research, critical thinking and problem solving. Yet preliminary reviews of student texts indicate that social studies and history student texts still primarily focus on the development of content knowledge (dates, places, and events) and NOT skills which are important for continued learning.

The social studies CMAAC met Tuesday, January 19 with a focus on coming to consensus on "How do students use social studies and more specifically social studies instructional materials to better themselves for living in the 21st century?" This may lead to a diversion from the use of the traditional social studies or history texts and instead using text types of materials as resources along with technology, primary documents, online resources, simulations, activity based, and/or project based materials. The primary goal is to develop a K-12 lens for looking at social studies materials that will provide opportunities to use content to develop the skills addressed in social studies EALR 5.

Future meeting dates: TBD.

9-12 Health CMAAC:

January 7, 2010, the 9-12 Health CMAAC met for the third time. Their first task was to examine additional information obtained from the middle school teachers and other districts. In addition they reviewed a draft of the criteria to be used to review available texts provided by publishers. (Similar to the criteria used in other core curricular adoptions.)

The variety of state approved health texts available for secondary is limited. One text from Glencoe is one we presently use but ours is an older version. The initial review by the team shows promise but due to time constraints the team was unable to score more than the standards alignment portion of the content rubric. Therefore, additional time will be needed to complete the process. In addition, we will also need to consider some of the approved supplemental materials to fill the gaps identified as a concern by secondary students.

Music K-12:
Teachers met January 13, 2010 to look at the state benchmarks and how they are being addressed K-12, establishing the CBAs that will be used and determining purchases that will continue to support the K-12 program.

Materials purchases will be limited to supplemental materials to support programs already adopted at the primary and elementary and a limited number of instruments. The K-12 staff easily worked together to adjust requests and support programs across the district to keep costs at a minimum.

Community Adoption Meeting
Tonight, January 20, 2010 there will be an informational meeting for community members wishing to learn more about the process and potential materials under consideration. Although no materials have yet been identified, this meeting will provide an opportunity for members of the CMAAC committees to hear any concerns from members of the community and answer questions about the process.

OTHER:
Science Partnership Academy: As a result of the Washington State Partnership Academy in December, our regional representatives are working together to investigate how science is presently being taught in SW Washington schools K-12 and how the presently adopted kits and materials are impacting instruction. Three members of the team visited La Center middle school and elementary classrooms on Monday, January 11 and Vancouver Schools on January 13, Team members will visit Heritage High School in Evergreen January 20.

For me this provided an opportunity to look at science instruction through the lens of someone outside the district. As we moved from classroom to classroom it was evident that instructional materials play only a small part in what and how students are learning. Although FOSS kits were used in 4 of the classrooms, the look and feel of these classrooms varied tremendously. At first a person may wonder if it was due to the grade levels observed, but yet 3 of the 4 were at the primary and were all very different. In some cases, all students were doing the same activity but experimenting and recording observations using a variety of strategies. Some were choosing between content words provided by the teacher. Others were recording information using their own words. In some classrooms the noise level was high with all students talking together about what they were seeing and why. In other classrooms the teacher would ask a question and a student would respond.

One question that we may ask is whether students were learning more in one class than another…or were they just learning in different things? As we continue to engage in conversations about learning and how to assist in increasing our learning as leaders and students' abilities to learn, it will be important to not just look at textbooks or instructional materials as the answer. We know there are NO silver bullets. It takes more than a textbook. Textbooks and/or instructional materials are only tools and it will depend on how we use those tools that will determine our success. As with a carpenter, we not only need the right tools but also the skills to build a house.