Teaching and Learning Update January 2014

Curriculum/ Materials Adoption- We have completed all of the parent/community reviews of math materials at each level, primary, intermediate, middle and high school. I will be presenting the final selections to the IMC committee in early February with the goal of having them in front of the board for the February workshop. The MS and HS have decided on "Explorations in Common Core" by Holt. This is a traditional series at the HS level of Algebra 1, Geometry then Algebra II. The materials leading up to this series are simply called 6th, 7th and 8th grade math. We will continue to offer Algebra 1 at the MS to challenge those advanced students. I'm waiting on the complete feedback from the parents who were involved in the K-5 review before we make the final decisions at those grade levels. I expect this to happen within the next week.

There where two additional outcomes from our work of evaluating materials. We were able to have great conversations about differentiation of instruction at the 6-12 level and how we both challenge our best math students and how we support our struggling students.
From these conversations came the proposal to create an "honors" track beginning in the 8th grade with the Algebra 1 material and continuing it through Geometry and Algebra II. How these students would be identified and selected is still being discussed. This will allow us to challenge those "hi-cap" type students that are to be our future engineers and other professional types. The other outcome was a proposal to create an Algebra A/B class. This class would give struggling students two years to master the one-year of learning objectives in Algebra 1. In year one they would receive .5 elective credit and .5 math credit. This would be the same the second year. This type of structure is being used in a couple of districts around us currently with good success. The extra time allows the learning environment to slow down and focus on true mastery as well as time to go back and fill any holes students might have from previous learning opportunities.

On another front, we will be "slowing down" our science adoption to take an additional year to complete the work. This is due to the lagging adoption of the "New Generation Science Standards" (NGSS). As the adoption of these new standards by many states has slowed down or paused, the publishers in turn have not developed new materials in a timely manner that support the alignment of these standards. For that reason it is incumbent upon us to slow down as well so that we have the best materials possible for review and adoption. We will spend the extra year to further develop our staff's mastery of these new standards at every grade level.

Professional Development- We are just finishing up our "Making Thinking Visible" book study and I want to once again thank Ms. Sawyer and Ms. Skufca for leading this learning opportunity. They did a wonderful job! During the last meeting, this coming week, we will be forming small groups of teachers that will work together as "PLC's" (professional learning communities) moving forward to use these routines in their classrooms and share their successes and ah ha's with other groups and individuals across the district.

ELL- Nothing new here outside of our enrollment is holding steady at 29 which ties our all time high.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)- I had an opportunity along with Mark, Laurie K. and Peter Rosenkranz to listen to semester end student presentations from Mr. Neiman's

classes. It was a real treat and the students did a wonderful job of presenting what they had learned throughout the first half of the year. Good job Mr. Neiman.

Title I/LAP- We are just completing our mid-year student assessments and we will have the data available for review in the next week or so. This is always very exciting as we get to see the effects of our work with these students and make adjustments where necessary.

Over the next couple of month's we will begin planning for a very vibrant and expanded summer school!

Highly Capable- Our elementary chess club started Thursday 1/23 and we had 62 students sign up for after school chess! Mrs. Sawyer and Echo Boyle, a parent volunteer, have done a wonderful job promoting this activity for our students. Math is Cool continues to move along with a new grade level beginning about every 3 weeks. We are currently starting the 5th grade group. Thank you to Mr. Holland for his continued dedication and work with this program.

Testing/Assessment- Having just completed the Math and Biology EOC retakes at the high school the next assessments will be the reading and writing HSPE's in March.

Home School Academy- With first semester finishing I will have a recap for you in the next board report in February. Briefly, our 9-12 students are struggling to maintain adequate work levels, the K-8 group is doing well and we are registering a few new students for second semester that will replace a couple of the departing 9-12 students for which the program was not successful. That said enrollment remains both steady and satisfactory for the time being. I look forward to late spring when I can begin marketing this "established" program to our broader community and continue to increase enrollment.

Dave.