Elementary Board Report

We continue to have a positive start to the school year. Conferences are going great. Many teachers have made the choice to try conference variations in order to better communicate and collaborate to meet our students' needs. Our communications have also unfortunately included letters home sharing how we continue to strive to meet AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) in areas such as math at the fourth grade (though we did make over a 20 percent gain in fourth grade students meeting benchmark in math). With this in mind, and in an effort to support you in communicating with our community, I thought it best to share some of the many positive efforts being made which will further support our students in meeting benchmark in math.

Investigations 2 Adoption Investigations 2 was chosen as our core curriculum in part because it continued with the original strengths of Investigations in the area of conceptual understanding and strengthened such areas of need as facts practice. No one math program has shown to meet all students' needs and we are aware of this. We spent a great deal of time last year collaborating and learning to effectively implement the program while working to strengthen areas of need. We continue to do so this year. I have found in my research that when a new math program is implemented, there is a slight drop in overall test scores and then a consistent rise after year one. This pattern should continue for us.

Power Standards At least two representatives from each grade level team worked this summer to create math power standards and document for teams how they can utilize these standards. With elementary grade levels often having 30-40 state standards to make sure every student meets can be very challenging. We know that every standard is not equal in importance to students' school year, next school year, life, or even for state assessments. We are also very limited on how much time we have to support our students in their learning. Power standards (8-15 core standards) are basically created from our longer list of state standards to help our teachers know where to focus and emphasize their efforts, while still hitting the rest of the state's. Documents were created to help each teacher understand where they may spend more time, less time, or even delete portions of lessons which may not fully support our students in their learning. Power Standards will have a positive impact on student learning in math.

Data Analyzing & Modifications/Changes Colleen Wing, Christine Matzdorff, and Jana Carder put in a great deal of time compiling student math data and analyzing it for patterns which will help us make effective modifications and changes to our math learning, as well better understand which efforts are worthy of continuing. I meet with Colleen regularly to do the same. She is quite impressive in her abilities to interpret data and realize pertinent patterns. We share this data with grade level teams. Our data analysis has driven impressive realizations and effective change.

Math Club I have shared quite a bit regarding our Math Club's impressive data-driven efforts to improve student learning in math. We started with some core parameters, such as our starting year of change and the parameter that nothing should remain the same, and have honed into an effective math support team. Some critical changes include such things as only serving students outside their scheduled math time so they do not get further behind and they get extra math. We also do not use the same math materials as students use in their homerooms. All is striving to accelerate students up to grade level and out of Math Club.

Common Assessments All kindergarten and first grade teachers were trained and have implemented the use of our highly researched math common assessment interviews for each student three times during the year. Each teacher also has the accompanying intervention kit full of specific activities and strategies to support students not meeting benchmark in any category. Common assessments have made a positive impact on student learning and have changed how our teachers look at and communicate about math. Our goal is to finalize and implement versions for second and third grades by mid year this year.

Xtra Math A Microsoft engineer created and has allowed us to freely use this effective web-based math facts practice program that can be used at school as well as home. Its use has helped to strengthen our math facts accuracy and efficiency.

SuccessMaker I have spoken of this many times. It has shown to give individualized support for each student enrolled and close gaps when needed. An interesting data trend was shown when the vast majority of students improving from the WASL to the MSP were those students who participated in the SuccessMaker program. Now, to lessen the impact on students' school days, we are working to implement a web-based SuccessMaker so that students can work from home outside school hours.

ALEKS We researched this highly regarded web-based program about two years ago and found that it could very effectively support our students who are ahead in math and need further challenge. A second grade student has just started using it and will help us to understand its potential. Our belief is that we will want to soon enroll more students and challenge them in their math learning.

Online Support Our parents have shared that they wanted online math support. We have provided links to our website which take students and parents to student handbooks and various math sites for activities and further understanding. Parents have shared positive feedback regarding these links. Our intent is to continue improving our website.

Vertical Teaming Last year, we started getting K-6 grade level teams together to realize patterns of need for our students who have moved up so that we can make changes for future students. We will continue these efforts for the 2010-2011 school year.

Spring Kindergarten Assessment and Standards Communication We have made the change to assessing incoming kindergarteners in the Spring and any new students after that in August. The Spring assessment helps parents to understand where students need to be at the start of the school year while still having time to work toward standards. The assessments also help us to better place students in the best learning environments and choose students for Summer kindergarten class.

Summer Kindergarten Our data patterns show that students who enter school behind the norm in learning areas tend to stay behind through their elementary career. Summer kindergarten is in part to help those kindergarteners needing acceleration so that they can start their school career at benchmark in areas such as math. Recent data has shown students attending have had much better starts than in the past.

All Day, Tuition-Based Kindergarten As mentioned, we want to help our students to have the best start possible to their school career. Students being given twice as much

learning time has shown positive results. We have already started experiencing positives, but need to carefully monitor over the course of the school year.

Expert/Team Teaching Model We spoke of this at length at the recent Community/Board linkage. Simply stated, expert model teaching can and has led to impressive communication, collaboration, teachers teaching where they are passionate, and teachers being more focused on their learning areas and better able to differentiate for student needs.

Monthly Themes I wrote about this in the last Board report. Our monthly themes effort started as we worked to better understand our math patterns and needs. Many of our core math needs focused around such areas as the need for perseverance, goal setting, collaboration, and problem solving. Our chosen themes for each month were designed to better support our students in math, as well as other curricular and life areas.

I could go into much more detail as to why each of the mentioned efforts was chosen and will show to be effective, but this should give a basic understanding of what is happening. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.