Primary Board Report

A Learning Community Works and Celebrates Together

As we all know, we are lucky to live in such a great learning community. Last night was another reminder. We held our How Can We Help You In Math? –Meeting (also known as Math Community Support meeting). Parents, community members, and staff worked together in the K-8 library to improve on staff ideas and create new ones in order to help support our students in math outside of school. Great questions were brought up and wonderful ideas were discussed. All involved marked three tally marks next to ideas they thought were most needed/critical to happen. These ideas and feedback will be taken to our Thursday Math Leadership Team meeting so that we can start work on making effective math support outside school a reality. I am excited to see how these impact our children and families.

One popular idea was that of having parent support available online. As mentioned in my previous report, Sharon Bussler had been working to create user-friendly student handbook links available on our website. I am happy to say that these links have been available and used for over two weeks now. We have already received positive feedback regarding these links. Feedback was also given at last night's meeting on how we can best advertise these links, how we can improve upon those available, and how we may be able to improve parent access to computers.

With all the hard work going on in our learning community, it seems natural there should be some celebrations. As mentioned previously, we have made changes to our Student of the Month celebrations in an effort to make them more meaningful and accessible for all involved. We have been pleased with the positive feedback shared by community members. In an effort to help us make our Student of the Month more meaningful, Josh Soske and family are providing a hearty, warm breakfast for students at our December 3 celebration. They are also helping us understand how to potentially continue the breakfasts economically and with minimal staff impact. I look forward to experiencing students' and families' feelings as we celebrate together.

Our staff has also worked to create and set up for a staff celebration on November 20. We are working together to provide food for a feast. This is not just a "get a couple of cookies together" kind of get-together. We will have two whole turkeys, all the trimmings, all kinds of desserts, and drinks. It should be a great time. I just hope the sleepy effects of eating turkey do not kick in until after our math professional development opportunity.

Capacity, Collaboration, Contemplation

These are three areas we are focusing many of our staff efforts this year. You may notice that mentioned efforts can often fall under more than one area.

Capacity

We need to develop our staff capacity to effectively support our students in their math learning. One recent effort to help in this area is that of our participating in a book study.

Staff has requested master copies of the effective resources shared in the books. Colleen Johnson, our effective learning coach, has worked to purchase binders and materials, make copies, and put it all together in binders for each staff member. She is also working to prepare for another staff request from the book study, a Make and Take. We will be participating in the Make and Take in January, where teachers work together to make activities and games for each other that they can then take to their classrooms for students.

We are in our first implementation year with our math program, Investigations 2. Our Math Leadership Team worked last year to choose the most effective program we could so that we could effectively support our students in their math learning. Now that we are in our implementation faze, our roles need to change. Math Leadership will be meeting on November 19 to discuss and make decisions on such things as how we will redesign our roles to best support our students and teachers in their math learning.

Collaboration

We are much more effective and our students benefit when we work together. Collaboration has been a great focus of ours. One recent collaboration effort is that of vertical teaming on math (grade level teams working together to support one-another). As you know, our fifth grade teachers recently worked with our middle school teachers to discuss such things as how elementary students are entering middle school in math. What were their strengths/opportunities for growth? All K-5 teams will do the same on November 20. Each grade level team worked yesterday at our staff meetings to individually to discuss strengths and opportunities for growth of their incoming students. Discussions between grade level teams will take place on the 20th so that teams can best understand where to continue their efforts and where to consider strengthening so that students will enter the next grade best prepared to be successful in learning math.

We may have a large focus in math this year, but we do not want to lose the growth we have experienced in literacy learning. Colleen Johnson is working to plan for team meetings to provide time for work to keep our effective philosophy and beliefs in the area of literacy and improve upon our efforts.

Contemplation

We have limited resources of such things as people, money, space, and time and need to be thoughtful in all we do. Our November 20 early release will provide the opportunity to continue our grade level math lesson work to process prior to implementing and evaluate after efforts have been made and learned from. All of this will be recorded on unit templates we have created so that math lessons and experiences can be utilized and improved upon in coming years.