Curriculum Director's Report

November 11, 2009

The month of November is always extremely busy not only because of the two holidays, but the additional gearing up of school is over and staff members are beginning to identify more specific needs of their students. This brings out lots of questions and discussion about available resources. Therefore, most of my time when I am not teaching has been spent meeting with individual teachers and support staff to identify additional supplemental materials and resources to assist in meeting students' needs.

In addition, this is my sixth and final year working with the National Academy of Curriculum Leadership that requires me to be gone for a week in November. Although it creates more of a challenge for me, I have a great substitute who has previous experience teaching 6th grade in La Center. So my students should be fine.

ADOPTIONS:

Social Studies CMAAC:
Met on October 28, 2009.

9-12 Health CMAAC:
November 3, 2009, identified members of the 9-12 Health CMAAC met in the high school conference room to begin looking at the state recommended requirements for health education, the state legislative guidelines for sex education, and students concerns about the content presently being taught.

As a result of the discussion, it was decided that we needed additional information about what is now being taught in 5-12 not only in our district but also in surrounding districts. We have started to gather that information and will have preliminary results out to the committee prior to the Thanksgiving holidays.

Regional Science Think Tank:
Thursday, November 12, I will be attending a Science Think Tank Meeting at ESD 112 along with middle school science teacher, Laurie Cripe, high school science teacher, Amy Neiman and Mark Mansell. The purpose of this "think tank" will not only be to discuss and prioritize regional common issues, but also to identify specific steps that we can take together as a region to address our challenges.

La Center over the years has been a leader in working to provide high quality science instruction for all children and ESD 112 has continued to work to support our efforts along with other districts in the region. Yet, it has been 17 years since we started the process and a lot has changed in those 17 years. Therefore this will provide us an

excellent opportunity to re-energize our efforts and hopefully address some of the new challenges we face.

Some of the challenges that have been expressed across the region and that we also face here in La Center are:

* Time spent on science is low (overshadowed by math and reading at elementary)
* Need to move beyond the mechanical use of science kits
* Ongoing professional development is needed to improve pedagogical content knowledge
* How (and why) to integrate science with other subject areas?
* Teaching for understanding, not just WASL scores
* Strengthening the teaching of science big ideas across grade levels
* Support for more teacher collaboration time
* Improving the relevancy and impact of professional development activities
* How to better link classrooms to real world applications of science
* Using formative assessments to improve student understanding
* Building community/parent support for science
* Keeping students motivated and intellectually engaged

As you read these, you may wonder if some of these challenges cross over into other content areas, such as social studies and health. I would say, yes. Some of these even cross over into math and language arts.

The regional science consortium, SMERC, has continued to work with several different groups independently—curriculum directors, science liaison teachers, kit trainers, etc.—but this meeting will provide an opportunity for teachers, principals, and administrators with a broad representation of both grade level and district demographics, to meet together as a region to begin looking at some of these challenges.

The goal for this meeting will be to inform the development of a regional plan of action for science that will guide regional activities over the coming years, providing valuable direction for our local science advocacy work and professional development offerings, as well as recommendations regarding the focus of potential new grant opportunities in the region. Yet my hope is that this will also assist us as a district to continue to develop resources to support students and staff in their learning and in meeting district Ends.