Curriculum Director's Report

May 14, 2009

CURRICULUM:

1. **Instructional Materials Committee**: The final 2008-09 IMC meeting will be held May 21. Instructional materials for consideration are Spanish, mathematics and AP Civics. After reviewing materials and information submitted, a recommendation for approval will be made for the May 26 school board meeting.

2. **Music Review/Evaluation**: After meeting on Friday, April 24, staff began gathering additional information to use in the process of developing a vision and belief statement for music education in La Center. A committee of students, parents and staff will use the information gathered this fall as they continue their work on the music adoption process.

3. **Math Adoption Update**: After reviewing texts both recommended by the state and updated versions of materials presently being used, committee members identified challenges with all materials presented. Some materials were much stronger in the use of direct instruction providing little if any opportunity to access student's prior knowledge or for students to develop problem solving and critical thinking. Others were much stronger in applying mathematics to everyday situations and developing problem solving, but would need some supplementation for additional computation practice.

   Teams carefully considered not only how well the available materials supported the state standards but also the challenges of effectively implementing the various materials reviewed. What do teachers need to know? What do teachers already know? What materials are available to make the math program more comprehensive? What supports are available to parents? Are there opportunities for differentiating instruction? What are those components? Do they really differentiate or is it more of the same?

   Considering the programs that most closely aligned with the Washington State standards, the team was most concerned about the fact that all programs recommended by OSPI limited students' opportunities to think about mathematics and engage in higher order thinking. In most cases, it treated the student as an empty vessel to be filled with facts and procedures. In addition the recommended programs limited the students' opportunity to use alternative strategies to solve problems and used vocabulary unique to the publisher. Along with these concerns the accessibility to supplemental programs available to support each of the materials revealed that materials available for computation and algorithms were more readily available than those designed to develop problem solving, critical thinking and connections with real life applications.

   After considering all elements of the rubric and the concerns of parents and community, the team discussed the pros and cons of adopting new materials versus updating presently used materials. As with any change, new instructional materials would require additional time to become familiar with the best means to use the materials. What are the gaps? How do we use these materials to assess where students progress? What do the assessments really tell us? What opportunities are available to support students who have already mastered concepts? What alternate strategies are available for struggling students? What are the potential misconceptions and how are they addressed? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the materials? New materials always bring more questions. Some that may easily be answered but more that take additional time and resources away from actual instruction.

So if there are no significant benefits to adopting new materials, why purchase new? Why not update to a new version of the materials already being used? It would be less costly since the manipulative materials would be the same or nearly the same and it would require less teacher training. It would also allow more time to evaluate the instructional practices and options for addressing presently known gaps and /or weaknesses. In addition staff would be able to use lessons learned from their previous experiences with the materials to more easily identify potential adjustments in instruction or interventions.

With all things considered committee members did not feel any of the other instructional materials available significantly out scored the updated versions of presently used materials with the exception of Core Plus 2 at the high school. Therefore both elementary and the middle school are presently considering recommending the updated versions of *Investigations* and *Connected Math.* Yet, a final decision is contingent on the results of grade level team surveys and the review of one additional text for middle school which has NOT yet arrived.

4. **Adoption Procedures**: This year has definitely set a new standard for the definition of community and parent input into the adoption process. Over the past 10 years, with each new adoption, we have continued to alter our process to use more research-based decisions and to engage more parents and community. We no longer look at materials superficially, but instead identify set criteria that align with what research tells us about teaching and learning. We look at what we are expected to teach students and how the materials will support those objectives.

   Yet, we still struggle in getting adequate input from a broad range of stakeholders. For mathematics, we tried adding online surveys, email communications, additional community forums, school board linkage meetings and even had parents on the evaluation team. Although this has increased participation and communication with the community, considering the number of surveys completed and the small percentage of parents and community members involved (less than 10%) I wonder how much of the picture we have. It leaves me with questions. Who are we including and/or excluding from the process? How can we involve more? Who do we involve more? How much are they involved?

   We know that students will achieve more with home involvement. In addition, communication between school and home is essential. Although instructional materials are only a small piece of the school experience, we also realize that it may be one of the only connections between home and school. Therefore we will continue to adjust and develop our procedures so that we can access adequate data to make the best decisions possible to continue moving all students forward in their learning.

   To meet this challenge, the administrative team will be looking more closely at how we will engage parents, community and students in future adoptions of instructional materials.

ASSESSMENT:

1. **Collection of Evidence Results:** A COE is a set of classroom work samples compiled by the student with the help of a teacher. This option may be used for meeting the math, reading and/or writing standard once a student has taken the WASL once and not met standard. Students use specific classroom work samples developed under a teacher's supervision and must follow state guidelines. Of the 17 math collection of evidence submissions, 16 met standard. Any submission close to but not meeting standard may be augmented and resubmitted and as a result we will have one augmented COE submitted by the June 5 deadline.