

Curriculum Forum Overview January 29th Meeting

The meeting began with introductions and the recommitment to our goals and expectations.

Teachers then spoke of the science articulation between 5th - 6th grade levels and 8th - 9th grade levels. They reported that the K-12 science program maintains a continuum and is seamless. Teachers said students leaving 5th grade are ready and prepared for 6th grade curriculum, and 8th graders are ready for the 9th grade curriculum. This is a tribute to the work that was done during the adoption.

At the elementary level, the FOSS program was shared with examples of how the program provided scientific experiences that supported scientific method and a love for science. The forum viewed a balance unit that demonstrated the exercises and the assessment for teachers to use. A parent wondered about how the instruction worked for the variety of learners in each classroom. It was confirmed that the structure of the program worked well for all students to participate and learn.

Middle school and high school department lead teachers facilitated the conversation for grade levels 6-12. The middle school teachers are still transitioning with the new materials, and adjusting their instruction and assessments. Teachers are happy with the new materials and the program is moving forward. The core discussion landed on the transition from 8th to 9th grade, Physical Science vs. Biology. It was clear that the Physical Science classes at each grade have been adjusted to better serve the students who take 9th grade Physical Science class. The area of concern was around students who were opting out of 9th grade Physical Science to take the 10th grade Biology class. The middle school science teachers were bombarded this year with inquiries from parents as to why their students were not recommended for the Biology class.

We discovered that parents did not receive the letter that usually goes out to 8th grade parents about the 9th grade science program. This letter went out in the previous years and helped parents understand the choice between Physical Science and Biology. The letter will go out this month and will hopefully help parents gain clarity as to the proper placement for their students.

The high school shared some data on how students performed in Biology classes and then on to the Honors Chemistry classes. These were preliminary numbers that gave an overview of how the younger students were doing in this pathway. We also discussed how math can dictate which science classes students are prepared to take. Finally, in this discussion was the realization that many students in Honors Chemistry, who are not the younger ones, were not performing well. This observation came at the end of the meeting.

The last segment of the meeting was devoted to the Site Councils. Each Site Council gave a report on the work they are doing. The elementary sites are discussing writing, math and interim housing. The middle school is discussing math, science, school climate, homework, professional development in differentiated instruction and GATE. The high school is looking at math data and continuing with the math textbook adoption.

We ended the meeting with announcing the District's plan to develop a K-12 process for future textbook adoptions. The administration is currently preparing the criteria for textbook adoption that can be used K-12. Teachers will be weighing in and giving input to the plan and criteria. We plan to have a document to share with Curriculum Forum at the May meeting. The goal is to be ready for the Language Arts adoption in the 2009-10 school year.

The next meeting is March 26th at 7:00 PM in the PMS multipurpose room.