

Middle School Language Arts Curriculum Committee
January 12, 2010 ASD Ed Center: Orange Room 3:45-5:15 PM
Beginnings: Welcome; Call to Order:
Agenda Approval; Minutes Approval (December 8, 2009):
Reports:
DCs:

* Central: Michael Warren reports - Getting ready for school-wide spelling bee, tradition to have 100. Sent someone recently to DC, they make a big deal and discuss the value of commitment to a short term process. Get kids involved, trying something new. Also trying to get kids to professional conferences. There are always conferences in town. Coming up: International Science Symposium, and Survey and Mapping Conference. Kids will go to the Symposium when two days focus on kids a bit more, but and the Survey conference is laid back and encourages student participation, so they will have a booth or do a presentation. Find ways to introduce kids to that part of the academic world. School-wide for the right reasons.

* Clark: Art LaRue reports - 7th grade teachers are being trained in My Access. Language Arts and Social Studies teachers have a "team" login enabling them to share work and resources. They have 15 carts (netbooks) ordered that have not yet arrived; currently only has one laptop cart for 3 floors. A little worried about the timing of these teachers being trained and not being able to use the resource right away.

* Goldenview: Diana Daniels reports - GV is using Skills AK to provide benchmark data and to allow them to have data that can be used at end of the year to determine if goals have been met. Reports being sent to parents with information for accessing specific modules to shore up areas of need from home. Results were not a surprise; seemed to match SBAs pretty closely.

* Gruening: Michelle Foss reports - Meeting every other week as content level groups, these are ongoing, have been great for language arts with our new curriculum. At a recent staff meeting, a science teacher shared about how they were integrating writing into science. This is a result of their integration grant.

* Hanshew: Marcia Indahl reports - Have started book room cleaning; organizing books, getting rid of many books. Already had people come take some away. Have followed the protocol for surplussing. Many are good books; some have 10-20 copies. She can send the list around again; brought to last meeting. Hoping for a beautiful book room by end of the year. They are missing having Amy there; she mentored many teachers. Also pulled out grade level planning days; once per quarter. Last year once per month, this year once per quarter. This has worked really well. They coordinate novels, talk about general LA issues, plan with their literacy partner teachers. Diana asked about the district-wide surplus process, and Martina will send out info when the next one is.

* Mears: Bronwyn Haynes reports - A lot going on "Bee-wise!" Battle of the Books, etc. very busy with those kinds of things.

* Mirror Lake: Cynde Ferris (for Margaret Barber) reports - Cleaning out the book room! Having a race to get it done first! The "Bees" are coming up as well

(i.e. Geography, Spelling, etc.) Noted that one of the titles in the "Battle of the Books" is part of the 6th grade curriculum, so sharing has become a new word for most of them! (Stepping on the Cracks)

* Romig: Keri Barter not in attendance.

* Wendler: Janene Schoenborn reports - Enrollment is the smallest it has been in 18 years. (1200 when she began, mid-500s now.) There have been conversations about adding 6th graders to their building; perhaps one full team of 6 graders. But none of the feeder schools are near capacity. There is a problem with course offerings; can't offer as many electives as before. Teachers are having to teach electives they have never taught before and this is challenging. There is a possibility that Wendler may become a music magnet school, if they decide to add 6th graders; this would attract more 6th graders.

* McLaughlin: Rhea Bowman not in attendance.

* Polaris: Heidi Postishek not in attendance.

* Girdwood: David Robinson reports - starting Ulysses next week; needs 15 more books; Michael is going to lend some to David. Reminded Mears that he still has some copies of The Outsiders to return.

* Steller: Bob Vandergriff not in attendance.

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Migrant Ed: (Leah Hathaway/Liz Howell) - not in attendance.

Gifted Ed: Brenda Fenton: HS Gifted Integration Fair here at Ed Center this Thursday night 6:30-8:30. If you have 8th graders (or any grades) who would like the opportunity to get information about what they may want to do in high school, this is a good opportunity to see options in one place and ask questions related to gifted ed. Also an upcoming meeting re: underachieving gifted students at Wendler. Opportunity for parents to get together and share ideas. Heather McIntyre (Gifted support teacher) has been busy with testing. This will slow down and she will be more available on Mondays/Tuesdays/Wednesdays to help teachers in whatever ways they need. She (Heather) recently sent an email to teachers who are teaching gifted classes; however, the focus of the program is not just to assist kids who are technically in the gifted program. She can also help support kids who may have just "missed the cut", etc. She could coach Socratic seminar, help teachers plan for differentiation. Even an extra body in computer labs, etc.

MS Administration: (Lisa Zelenkov) - not in attendance.

Library: (Ann Morgester) - not in attendance.

Ed Tech: Stacy Miller reports - good news: Purchase of netbooks is on the School Board Agenda. Memo has not yet been released as to who won the bid. There will be likely be 2 carts of netbooks per middle school, with each cart having 30-32 netbooks. We currently do not have a precise timeline for receiving the netbooks. Martina will check into their use and whether they are tied to MY Access. Michael Warren asked if it would be safe to say that they would have them by next Fall. Yes, but Stacy hopes that it will be sooner than that. Janene mentioned that Ptarmigan teachers are interested in MA; she forwarded Stacy's

name to them so they can explore this with her, as they are Title I and have specific parameters they must follow.

My Access 2nd semester training is set up. There is low use across the middle school division right now. We are exploring various models to encourage and assist teachers in using the program. At Clark we are doing grade level training, training all grade level teachers at once, and it has been really positive and is working well. Martina stated that Mary Richards had mentioned to her that they had not just gone in to do a training, but rather they are forming a professional learning community that is examining the rubrics in My Access, assigning one prompt to build a learning group around the teaching of writing. Stacy also looking for willing teachers to help design prompts to fit our guides. They are headed to Goldenview soon and meeting with teams to discuss the interdisciplinary aspects. It was asked if there was any discussion about expanding to 8th grade? Stacy said at this time, focusing on what we have and supporting it technologically. But if there are teachers who are really wanting it, have them talk to Stacy. Diana points out that it works well when the whole team is able to use MA, as it is hard to complete all other curriculum and do MA. there was a reminder that using MA does not alleviate work, it just changes the nature of the teacher's work.

There was a question from Janene concerning her team science teacher who had created his own prompt, but doesn't have a password. Janene wanted to know if she could create a password and let him use it. He could use Janene's account and then both could see what students are writing. This is actually a recommendation; that a team share one teacher log in to allow all to see the students' work and to truly collaborate.

Stacy is also working with 4 different teachers who are letting her work on tech integration units with novels; creating resources that they will be sharing; all have created Moodle sites to use with students; if you have teachers who are not confident and would like some support, she would like to work with them. There are two spots left for LA Tech Integration Class taught by Stacy and Martina at Begich.

Bronwyn wanted to add that My Access is great, despite the occasional difficulties; sometimes impossible just getting lab time, and network/server difficulties really make it hard. That is the biggest reason not seeing a lot of activity. Last year she (Bronwyn) assigned My Access outside of class, but this can't be enforced. Help us now what your status is technology-wise; there is a discussion on the LA Moodle. Stacy gave them all a "heads up" that their principals were going to be in My Access administrative training on Thursday, January 14th and Thursday, January 21st.

LA/SS Integration: Mary Richards reports - last week they talked about My Access at both the Middle School and High School Social Studies meetings.

Many Social Studies teachers are excited to be trained and to use MY Access. They will need help from Language Arts teachers, since they are the experts.

SPED: (Lesia Walker) - not in attendance.

ELL: (Beth Hartley) - not in attendance.

MS LA Support: Amy Goodman reports - Cohorts meetings are the week of February 8th. Central - February 8th, Clark - February 9th, Wendler - February 10th and at the Ed Center on February 11th. Meetings will be in the library. Amy brought copies of the Mini-Lessons for Literature Circles books used in cohorts so teachers could have them in hand. One bag for each school. Includes an inventory list. These are not to be personalized; they should be turned back in and should be considered a part of the inventory for the school. They will be needed for the next cohorts. Wanted to make sure there were no more new Language Arts teachers that she was not aware of.

* MDL Online: 6th Grade: 68% activated the online textbooks; 7th Grade: 49% activated the online textbooks; 8th Grade: 75% activated the online textbook

Amy's not sure how to address this. The first step might be for chairs to ask teachers at their department meeting why they have not activated online textbooks, perhaps as an open-ended question. The district only has funding for these licenses for 6 or 7 years. It would be good to know what roadblocks would be. Michelle said that students don't remember their account information and some have double accounts and that makes it difficult; can't troubleshoot and help. Diana Daniels had talked with Mary Richards earlier this year that perhaps 8th grade should have same username and passwords for both Social Studies and Language Arts books? We did have a protocol to use for usernames and passwords, but students can put in anything (and SS still has no protocol.) Amy wanted to know if anyone had called the tech help desk with ML? Any feedback? Not really, but it would just be really nice if teachers could access a list with student passwords. Diana suggested a practice of writing them down when students create them and keeping that list in plan book. Art "confessed" that he missed some instruction at the beginning of the school year and had students use their Gaggle (email) user names and passwords. Art wondered if he needs to change their user names. This isn't necessary. This data regarding the activation and use is just for our information and for us to see whether it is being used and identify ways to ensure that kids have had one chance to see the resource and access it. May not have tech access to use it a lot in school, but kids who do have it at home have the opportunity.

Continuing Business

Core Text Expansion: There is a list in the packet of the document that has suggested titles. The Ad Hoc group put it together. Ann Morgester will speak with her librarians this week to see if they have any suggested titles (Mary Richards also). Diana ask if The Book Thief is a suggested title for high school? Said it would be fantastic for gifted, but too much for most kids. Martina is

working on a timeline in terms of where we are headed from here. If anyone is interested in being part of this process, please let her know. It will involve reading and providing input. She would encourage them to talk to folks at their schools, have them look at the list and encourage them to read and give us feedback.

Gates MacGinitie: Martina doesn't think we have gotten any boxes. Reminded them that they need to box them and send them our way. Also, Amy's professional resources will be added to the LA department Library Thing book list.

Inventory: Martina did receive some, but they need to get their inventory to her. Everything they have in common plus core novels. Needs to get a feel for language arts materials that they have at their school. Amy has all data on new text books, so DCs don't need to count and add that to their templates. Marcia thought it would be easier for Martina to send them a template that asks them to list what they probably have. Martina and Amy will pull that together.

MY Access - There is a flyer in their packet. One last chance for this My Access Class because it starts tomorrow. Participants will receive a subsidized credit.

New Business

Achieve 3000: Seats for reading support/ELL teachers. Let Martina know if there are any teachers who would like to use Achieve 3000 and did not receive her email.

6th Grade Pacing Calendar: On Moodle

Janene's Question: A question was raised at the last meeting concerning teachers using materials (books) that are not in our curriculum guide. We all have times when we might use a story that is not in our anthology because it may be good for teaching a particular concept. Wasn't sure how to address it if there are teachers who use materials that are not part of the online guide.

Diana commented that we have spent the money on MDL, so we should be using it. There are plenty of stories in that book to choose from when teaching a particular concept (don't need to teach everything in the book). She felt that to have teachers veer away from that will put us back to where we were.

Marcie agreed.

Janene agrees, but teachers stick to the guide with concepts in the guide but use their own materials like old text books, magazines, materials from their files, but the reality is that everyone is doing it, so we need to know how to address it.

Are we saying if you find a good poem and it isn't in our text book then you can't use it?

David uses the anthology himself, but points out that it says that in the curriculum guide, it is suggested reading. He feels that everyone who is teaching language arts is and English major and is qualified to pick quality materials.

Martina reminded that it is a "guide" not a "commandment." She hesitates to say that we would tell teachers they cannot ever use something they find that seems to be a good resource, but also feels that we have an anthology that we adopted for continuity to build common lessons and understandings. Teachers should use common sense. We made a decision to use this text book.

Michael said if you draw lines very clearly, you will have to draw them everywhere; it gets tricky. The guide gives us something to fall back on when faced with liability. If we are going to be clear we are going to have to follow through on many levels. He talks about a lot of things in his classroom that aren't scripted in the book or guide. But be prepared to follow through on the statement. Diana said the vast majority of your curriculum should be coming from that guide, instead of choosing not to teach it because you don't like it, etc. Everyone agreed. It would be helpful to use language like "vast majority" should be coming from the guide, rather than just drawing lines.

Art stated that he has new staff and a new school; he counsels them that if you follow the guide you have coverage. If you don't follow it, then you don't have coverage. (This is true to some extent.) He is having issues with reading teachers because he is observing teachers using things in their reading class that he doesn't know what it is. He would like some focus on that. He has Social Studies teachers who moved down from high school who are teaching reading intervention classes. They have Bridges to Literature in the classroom, but are teaching anything they choose.

Marcia stated that maybe we need training again. Said that reading teachers should not be using the Anthology, but should be using Bridges to Literature. She wanted to know if there will be any additional training.

For the Good of the Order/Further Announcements...

IN THE FOLDER

Agenda

Minutes (December 8, 2009)

MY Access Writing Class Flyer (Last chance!)

Suggested titles for text expansion; so far

Wordle: Why teach novels?

MY Access: End of Prompt Reflection/Using Reports to Make Instructional Decisions

Info: Twenty-First National African American Read-In Chain

Next Meeting: February 16, 2010, Orange Room