

Date: Friday, October 21, 2011
To: Kevin Skelly, Superintendent
From: Charles Young
Re: Educational Services Weekly



Staff Development Day: Monday's staff development efforts were well received. Elementary principals discussed the day's events with great enthusiasm during yesterday's K-5 principal's meeting. Kathleen will share highlights in her weekly. The following is a snapshot of the middle and high school efforts.

Terman & Jordan

There is excellent work taking place at these sites, centering on culturally responsive teaching, formative assessment and closing the achievement gap. Jordan used the National Equity Project as a resource and Terman used Judy Lee. Teachers discussed big issues grounded in classroom practice.

JLS

JLS spent the day building on their previous work with the developmental assets and connectedness. Discussions centered on how teachers intentionally and unintentionally shape students' experiences at school. Sharon used educational consultant Jennifer Abrams to help teachers share strategies for encouraging growth mindset, persistence and other positive character traits.

Gunn

The Gunn staff started the day in a large group setting, focusing their attention on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. The next activity included several breakout sessions for teachers to choose from with topics including educational technology, fine arts, educational theory as it related to effective instruction, connectedness and the 41 developmental assets. The afternoon was set aside for department-based professional development.

Paly

Paly's staff began with a health-related training by Linda Lenoir, then moved to a presentation from the AVID/FOS team. A good portion of the day was devoted to department-based professional development efforts, including the summer and peer observation work, and planning for next year's calendar shift to unequal semesters and finals before winter break.

All in all, a day very well spent.

Costa Rica Trip

Tuesday night's Board meeting will include an agenda item for the proposed Costa Rica trip for 5th grade students at Escondido who are enrolled in the Dual Immersion Program. In prior years, students attended El Molina Camp in Mexico; however, due to security concerns, they are requesting approval to attend a program in Campamento La Amistad at La Montana in San Ramon, Costa Rica. The trip sounds exciting and will provide a powerful, real-life experience where students can immerse themselves in the language and culture.

StarTalk

Earlier in the week I had an opportunity to meet with Duarte Silva. As you know, Duarte works at Stanford and is Director of the California Language Project. We talked about a program called STARTALK that was initiated several years ago and will continue this summer. The project focuses on providing identified students with a Pre-

Level I Mandarin language and culture immersion learning experience. The program is designed to front-load these students with the kind of preparation that will enable them to fully engage in learning Chinese and lead to a more successful academic year.

An innovative and exciting element to the program is the use of iPads. The iPads are loaded with specialized apps that are particularly well suited to the teaching of Mandarin. Because Mandarin is tonal (there are three primary tones as Duarte explained), the iPads are an excellent tool for this type of instruction as students can hear the language and tonal nuances.

The program will take place at Nixon Elementary. Exciting!

Office for Civil Rights

This week, our students and staff at [REDACTED] were taken away from the classroom and their work to address and respond to an Office for Civil Rights (OCR) complaint brought against the District on behalf of a student last year. The complaint alleged that a sixth grade student was harassed and bullied because of her disability by other students and that the school did not respond. The district addressed the complaint but OCR requested the opportunity to meet with students and staff to investigate the claim. With the leadership of [REDACTED], parents were informed and were able to dismiss their children from the interviews if desired. On Thursday, OCR investigators came to [REDACTED] and interviewed 35 students, 4 teachers, 1 counselor and 2 administrators. The staff was unable to be present during student interviews, but both our District Attorney and a CTA attorney were present with staff. [REDACTED] indicated that it went well; the day was long but the attorneys felt like it shed only a positive light on the school and our support of students. Apparently, students shared with investigators how much they liked their school. The results will be available by January.

Parent at Fairmeadow

At the last Board meeting, a parent, [REDACTED], shared a concern regarding an incident with his daughter at Fairmeadow. I talked with [REDACTED] after the meeting as a follow-up. Kevin and I have both checked in with Gary Prehn. It appears there was an altercation with [REDACTED] daughter and her friend, resulting in his daughter being slapped. We believe Gary addressed the situation appropriately and understand that part of being upset centered on wanting to meet with Gary the next day, unannounced, as Gary was running out the door to run a school-wide assembly. Gary offered [REDACTED] several other times to meet, but they did not meet with his satisfaction.

I have since talked with [REDACTED] and he's very pleased with the response from the school site. He appreciates the team effort around implementing Steps to Respect and everyone working together in a concerted effort to continue providing a safe and supportive learning environment at Fairmeadow.

Have a terrific weekend!

Elementary Education – *Kathleen Meagher* Powerful Day of Professional Learning

I wish the kids and parents could have gone to school last Monday. They would have been impressed.

Even though no students were present, the campuses were abuzz with learning. Listening in on the conversations was enlightening and demonstrated that our efforts toward increasing teacher leadership and teacher collaboration are beginning to become a part of our culture. What a powerful step toward positively impacting learning for our students!

Principals structured a day of learning that directly met the needs of their individual staffs. In alignment with what we know about effective professional learning, our principals planned days collaboratively with their leadership teams and empowered their teachers to lead their staff through the selected learning activities. They carefully and

deliberately crafted the content and thoughtfully planned and orchestrated its presentation. It was wonderful to see the day being led by so many teacher leaders.

Topics including technology, implementing effective reading programs, team building and social emotional learning were touched on at a variety of sites. The topic that each school addressed on this day was the RtI² Process and what it will look like at the elementary level. Each school developed its own approach that enabled teachers to see this process as a support to them and their students. Teachers engaged in rich discussions about the best practices present everyday in their classrooms (Tier One strategies) and the instructional practices used to ensure strategic and intentional support for students who are struggling (Tier Two).

So what did I see on my visits to schools that day? Teachers discussing what best practices look like in their classrooms. Teachers working together across grade levels reviewing instructional strategies that worked well to support a student in the past and brainstorming new ideas that might be needed now. Teachers analyzing data to gain insights into a student's strengths and areas for growth and supporting each other as they plan next steps. Teachers evaluating the effectiveness of interventions they have used in the past and considering new approaches that might be considered in the future.

Our teachers are amazingly talented, skilled and caring individuals. Yet, out of a genuine concern to ensure that every child succeeds, they can at times advocate for a more restrictive level of support as opposed to carefully thinking about ways to provide strategic support for a child within the classroom setting. Making our classroom walls permeable and sharing ideas within and across grade levels raises the level of practice higher for everyone. Having the time and the structure to engage in these kinds of conversation is key. This was precisely what happened on Monday.

After engaging in "Collaborative Conversations" at one site, teachers commented, "Having all of the teachers together who had the student we were discussing was really helpful. We talked about ideas and strategies that worked in the previous years. Super helpful! Love it!" Another said, "I liked this. It was such a teambuilding activity."

As Clay Roberts said on Wednesday, "We need to fill our teachers up so they don't eat the kids." Monday was a day to fill them up. Not with lots of new information, but with time to learn about one another and appreciate what each brings to the learning community. They were provided with a structure to engage in productive collaborative conversations that filled their toolkits with ideas and strategies to address the specific needs of individual students in their classrooms. It allowed them to begin to see that, as a school community, we all "own" each and every child, and we owe it to our students and each other to work as a team if we truly want to positively impact their lives.

Special Education – *Holly Wade*

There are many things going on in the division at this time. The school site teams are doing a great job of supporting students and being creative with programs and mindful of the use of resources.

Some Updates from our Schools:

Greendell

The preschool is thriving. I was able to spend some time there on Thursday and observed in one of our classrooms and at recess time. The inclusion model is working very well, and our students with special education identified needs are benefiting from learning alongside their non-disabled peers. In our specialized academic instruction classroom, I observed students and teachers engaged in learning, having fun and enjoying their work together. The preschool team and their transition has been a tremendous success; the implementation of new service models and the student growth in such a short time is truly remarkable. Kudos to Sharon Keplinger, a wonderful leader and a true professional who has really made our special education team, families and students a welcome part of the community at Preschool Family.

Read 180

The news from school sites about this program has been very positive. Teachers are embracing the curriculum and appreciating the value of a tool that is engaging for students, effective and provides immediate feedback on student gains. We have approximately 145 kids (at last count) benefiting from this resource across all five secondary sites. These are students in both general and special education. Our teachers continue to hone their skills and meet to address system-wide successes and challenges. Nicole Smeriglio Snyder at JLS has the leadership role for system rollout and ongoing issues, while she continues to be one of our staff teaching with this curriculum. Damian Huertas and Judy Argumedo continue to support from the District level as our work expands and we finalize district practice. I will hope to bring some mid-year data to the Board for your information.

Training/Professional Development

Monday, the instructional aides were offered another training to sharpen their skills to support students in classrooms. We had some site level teams, and trained roughly 70 people in a morning and afternoon session. The feedback was positive and I think our aides are feeling valued as important members of their teams. Site specific trainings have also been done at Terman, Gunn and the Post-Secondary Program in the last few weeks to clarify roles and responsibilities.

Instructional Staff

Our aides in schools are a constant source of discussion. I find that many of the conversations I have with folks stem from this question of aides - *Can we have more? Are you cutting staff? And the ultimate, Are you trying to save money?* We are rich in resources and provide a high level of adult support to students in classrooms and in our schools. Last spring we asked teams to implement the SCC Special Circumstances Instructional Aide rubric to determine the need and specific use of instructional staff each time they held an IEP with a student who has this service. We have continued that practice this year and are asking teams to be critical about assigning staff and to use the rubric to assist families in understanding the decision-making in this area. We are making progress, but we have some habits to break. We are hoping to gain some more ground on this challenge this year.

Steering Committee

This week the Special Education steering committee met to discuss goals for the year and alignment with the district strategic goals. It was a great conversation! We reviewed CST data and our performance from last year, and we agreed on the importance of learning more about the scores and linking that to instructional practices across the district. We hypothesized some scenarios and all believe that this focus will allow for quality improvements in classroom instruction and lead to improved scores and participation on spring assessments. I was inspired by their interest in kids, their motivation to delve in to this and their leadership!

Psychologist Meeting

The group had a meaningful discussion of best practices and we reviewed case management for site level teams. Several quality assurance measures are in place now and their site leadership is helping to bring our case management practices to a consistent level across the District. The psychologists have expanded their roles with our RtI work, behavior support and mental health efforts and they are a valuable part of our special education work as well. I appreciate their dedication and value their presence in our schools supporting students and staff.

Mental Health

We continue to iron out details of support for our 100 students with mental health services on their IEPs. It is an arduous task at this time as information and practice, funding clarification and roles are still to be defined. We are working with the SELPA and district staff to support our students and families through this transition. By 2012-13 we, like all other districts, will need to provide in-house support for these students and their families. We are working intentionally to build that capacity.

Barron Park Inclusion

While our efforts across the district to expand our collaborative and inclusive practices continue to grow, we have highlighted our training and support at Barron Park as they have taken on the task of meaningfully including students with autism in general education classes. With the leadership of Magdalena and Ana Reyes, 10 students are fully included across grade levels. We continue to meet and discuss successes and challenges, and hone their abilities to work as a team while increasing communication and clarification of resources. They have a website to launch on the BP school page and I will forward that to the Board when it is complete. I was happy to see (but not see) a student in teacher Nick Foote's class participating alongside his peers in a most natural and meaningful way. The students have embraced their peers and are all learning. The message is clear - we all learn better when we learn together, and by sharpening our swords (as Kevin says) and thinking about instruction for all, there is true benefit to everyone. Really amazing work.

Project Search

We met again this week with our partners preparing for a Fall 2012 launch of a Project Search Demonstration site. Our business partner (LPCH) and agency partner (HOPE), along with district staff and neighboring districts, discussed roles and responsibilities and timelines on Monday. This internship opportunity seeks to identify 12 students with disabilities to participate in meaningful work training in a variety of departments at Lucile Packard over the course of the year. This model has wonderful post-internship outcomes for employment of about 62-73% in the industry. It is in sharp contrast to our current efforts to prepare students for employment at this time. We are very excited to be working on this partnership combining some of our finest community resources and our students - a magical combination!

Damian Huertas – Special Education Coordinator

The LGBTQQ committee held its first business meeting for the 2011-12 school year in October. The group discussed and reviewed the past year's meetings and identified some projects for the upcoming school year. The committee will explore and prioritize those projects. The committee was represented by various staff (administrators and teaching staff) and community members. The committee is also interested in community outreach projects and is looking towards NIOS (*Not In Our Schools*) week for the spring of 2012 and how they can help support the schools.