

Present: Nancy Harriman  
Stephen Hayes  
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## **1. Penmanship Committee Recommendations**

Recommendations from the Penmanship Committee were shared. Handwriting without Tears was the top choice (73% of teachers responding to survey). It is a well-researched program and would provide a consistent approach to handwriting instruction from PreK -5<sup>th</sup> grade throughout RSU #38. Some schools already have some materials or experience with the program (24 of the 34 staff responding to the survey are using some part of the program currently). However, many respondents indicated it was important that if the program was adopted, that all classrooms have the manipulatives, consumable workbooks, and training that are needed to fully implement the program effectively.

Also, some staff have expressed a concern about implementing a handwriting program district wide in a tight budget year, if it means diverting funds from other instructional areas that might be a higher priority (like math and literacy). Given these concerns the recommendation is that the program be phased in over two years: implemented in PreK, K, 1, (manuscript) and grade 3 (cursive) in '14-'15 next year and in all grades PreK-5 the following year.

## **2. Curriculum Work in Progress:**

### **a. Mathematics, K-12**

Samples of draft curriculum materials developed collaboratively by the Math Coach, Sarah Caban, Curriculum Coordinator, Nancy Harriman, and teachers from each grade level were displayed so committee members could review them, learn about the process being used to develop them with teachers, and ask questions.

- **draft curriculum maps** (showing the common core standards and student outcomes for specific units of study in each grade)
- **unit plans** (showing the essential questions, big ideas, standards, student outcomes, instructional resources and strategies, key vocabulary, and common assessments, and
- **unit assessments** with common **standards-based rubrics** for scoring them consistently by different teachers at different district schools

The materials on display were all for a unit on numbers and operations for grades K, 5, 7, 8, and High School Algebra so committee members could see the progression of expectations for students for a specific concept up through the grades.

Learning about the standards, math involved, and types of teaching strategies that will help students become proficient in the standards is an important part of this work. Working with teams of teachers to develop the curriculum and assessments has the added benefit of professional development for teachers so they understand the mathematical demands of the new Common Core Math standards.

Teachers at all grade levels are trying out the new units and assessments this year. The goal is to have a common proficiency-based math curriculum in place for grades K-9 for the 14-15 school year. Curriculum guides will be posted on the district website as they are refined.

The literacy coach, Barbara Bourgoine and curriculum coordinator, Nancy Harriman are also working with teachers on similar documentation and tools for literacy instruction.

### **b. Transition to proficiency reporting**

Donna Wolfrom, Superintendent and Nancy Harriman, Curriculum Coordinator, reported on a conference on Proficiency-based Diplomas they attended at UMF last week with a district team from grades 6-12. Topics discussed:

State requirement that all districts transition to proficiency-based diploma system by 2018 (this year's grade 8 class)

This transition requires students to assume more ownership for their achievement – teachers' role is to teach learning strategies they need to meet standards in different subjects.

Students in K-5 who are participating in proficiency-based units of study in writing and math now in our district are very motivated to show growth on standards. How do we sustain that attitude and enthusiasm as students move up through middle and high school levels?

How will we ensure parents, students, and teachers understand the shift to proficiency-based grading?

What can we learn from the experiences/mistakes of other districts who already shifted to proficiency-based systems?

What about students who need more time to meet the standards? What kinds of alternative pathways and interventions will be needed?

Next MEETING – Date TBD based on need, perhaps April?