



Holyoke School District Re-1J

Office of the Superintendent

Memorandum

To: **Leadership Team**
From: Bret Miles, Superintendent
Date: 11-12-12
RE: **Curriculum Discussion**

At our last Leadership Team meeting, we discussed using the State Model Curriculum as the basis for our District Curriculum as there were several advantages including spending our time on planning, teaching and assessing rather than writing curriculum. While there was agreement among the group to consider this options we still had a few questions. After reviewing with CDE, I have answers to some of our questions and feel more confident about this than before. Also, it appears that 10 of our 12 BOCES districts are likely to be using the State Model Curriculum as well.

What will be ready in December?

There will be a year's outline for every content area and every grade level by December 31, 2012. We will have a year-at-a-glance page and a two page unit overview for each unit. The unit overview contains the standards, essential questions, academic vocabulary, and the knowledge and skills expected from students.

Will there still be room for teacher creativity?

No question, YES! The unit overview will set the order of the units and specifically outline the outcomes (skills/knowledge). However, after that each teacher will determine how to get the students to those ends. Successful units from the past will still be viable options.

What additional support will be provided?

By next fall, there will be more supports in place. CDE has plans to build out each unit overview into a full-blown unit with ideas for resources, instructional strategies and assessments. By August of 2013, all grade levels and content areas will have some of these full-blown units available. These will be optional resources for teachers to use. The District would have no interest in requiring these units to be used by everyone, but rather have them available for those who want them. It is conceivable that a new teacher or a struggling teacher may be directed to use pre-planned units, but it will certainly not be a matter of practice district wide.

Will the State Model Curriculum documents be aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards and the Common Core?

The entire process of creating this curriculum has been aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards, which in the areas of reading and math especially are basically the Common Core. The curriculum writing has followed specific protocols to ensure a careful alignment. It is reasonable to expect that the curriculum will be as close to the State Standards as anyone else's work.

Next State Assessments

At this time, CDE is working on writing test items for the new, unnamed, assessment. The same people who are leading the model curriculum efforts are also on assessment item writing teams. This will increase the likelihood that the skills and knowledge listed in the curriculum are what is tested on the next State assessment. With Colorado part of the PARCC consortium, a group of states creating an assessment for the Common Core Standards, it is reasonable to believe that some of Colorado's next assessments will be these national tests. Again, having a curriculum that is based on the Common Core standards certainly seems to be an advantage to any district.

BOCES Direction

At this time, it seems that a large majority of the NE BOCES districts will be looking to the State Model for their District curriculum. This could provide numerous benefits to teachers including:

- Unprecedented collaboration among teachers in Northeastern Colorado which is possible when teachers are expecting the same expectations at roughly the same time,
- The development of formative and summative classroom level assessments that can be used to track students' progress and fulfill SB191 requirements for teacher evaluations,
- A collection of resources from many teachers in the area housed on DREAM,
- Pooled resources which could bring in high quality professional development without increasing costs,
- The ability to get new students up to speed who moved in from other BOCES schools where it is most likely that they have already covered similar content so far in the school year, and
- Then end of multi-year long curriculum work and an ability to focus on planning, teaching, and assessing in the classroom.

I wanted to avoid the perception that I am trying to sell the district on one approach to curriculum. I am fine with sticking with our existing work if it is the will of the teachers understanding what it will take to revise our current work. However, after being here in the district for a little while now, I do feel confident that the majority of teachers want out of the curriculum writing business so they can focus on teaching. This clearly gives us that option. Please know, that I am trying to provide more information about the State Model, not sell it to you. It just seems like every time I learn more about it, the more I think it is a good option for us. On Wednesday, let's visit more about this. I would like to make this decision and move on as quickly as we can, knowing that we need to be sure that each LT member is comfortable with this and is ready to talk about it with staff. See you on Wednesday.