



Lexington Public Schools

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To: Dr. Paul B.Ash
Members of the Lexington School Committee

From: Carol A. Pilarski

Re: Summer Workshop Report

Date: September 8, 2009

I am delighted to report to you that this summer was a very busy and productive one for the district. Two hundred eighty-one (281) teachers participated in 39 summer workshops for a total of 75 days. Thanks to the continuing generosity of the Lexington Education Foundation and the support of the operating budget, significant, well-needed curricular and instructional projects that promise to promote and enhance high quality teaching with improved student learning, took place during the months of July and August. The resultant work will add enormous value to classroom instruction and curricular clarity in many programs. As you might imagine, summer is a particularly effective time of year for teachers to engage in this type of work. Faculty members are able to give their undivided attention to the topic at hand with tremendous focus and continuity. The resource of uninterrupted time, the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues for a full-day, to reflect, to discuss, to research and investigate, to create, and to write, is a professional experience that bears enormous benefits for all.

The workshops conducted this past summer centered on a variety of subject matters at all levels: elementary, middle, high school, and district-wide endeavors. The work accomplished by participating faculty members this summer will be shared during the coming weeks at building, departmental and/or team meetings so that all parties, teachers and students alike, can collectively benefit from this work. All of the workshops will have an on-going impact on the teaching and learning process.

I am eager to elaborate further on some of the highlights of the workshops listed below at this coming Tuesday's school committee meeting. For purposes of this report, however, I share with you the following information. The projects that were addressed by level included:

Elementary

- ***Embedding Reading Comprehension Strategies Throughout the Instructional Day*** (*Operating Budget & LEF*) Participants learned how to embed reading comprehension strategies, as described in *Strategies That Work* (Harvey & Goudvais, 2008), in daily reading instruction across the content areas. This workshop emphasized strategy instruction for those who are experimenting with the K-2 or 3-5 Comprehension Toolkit with a particular focus on higher order thinking skills, questioning techniques, and specific ways to help students distinguish between inference and synthesis.

- **Integrating Reading and Science: Grades 3 and 4** (Operating Budget)

In this workshop, a literacy specialist, the K-5 Science Coordinator, and grades 3 and 4 classroom teachers worked together to identify books that would support the learning of science content specific to grade level units, while facilitating the teaching of non-fiction reading skills. Titles were selected to include a variety of reading levels. Lesson guides have been written that incorporate reading strategies designed to enhance the understanding of science content.

Middle School

- **Co-Teaching Workshop** (LEF)

During this workshop, pairs of math/special education teachers who will be co-teaching during the 2009-2010 school year, discussed the philosophy and purpose of this structure in our 6-8 mathematics program, and worked on practical plans for making co-teaching successful in the new academic year. Topics during the workshop included classroom structures, how to use co-teaching to differentiate instruction, how to deal with planning time, how to deal with grading, establishing roles and responsibilities, dealing with a variety of scenarios including varying class size, IEP needs among students, student support outside class, etc.

- **Interdisciplinary Lesson Plans** (LEF)

This workshop focused on creating several interdisciplinary units for Social Studies and Language Arts using historical fiction, and writing, as well as common vocabulary, rubrics, feedback formats and lesson schedules. The focus areas designed for writing are the five paragraph essay, compare and contrast, expository writing and thesis statements.

- **Best Practices to Enhance Student Achievement in Mathematics** (Operating Budget)

Math Intervention teachers collaborated in creating a more concrete mathematics curriculum for Math Intervention strategies in the middle schools. By incorporating grade level state mathematics standards, current district curriculum math standards and math MCAS data, as well as, a variety of math resources, the team of teachers was able to create grade level math “binders” for each content area. Additionally, the group prepared suggestions and ideas for math content related projects for a variety of mathematical strands, accompanied by written student expectations, rubrics for grading, and samples of project expectations.

- **English Literacy Curriculum Using EmPOWER** (LEF)

The goal of this workshop was to align the use of EmPOWER (a vocabulary enhancing tool) with the sixth grade English Language Arts curriculum.

- **Spanish Curriculum Alignment and Common Assessment** (LEF & Operating Budget)

As a follow-up to last year’s workshop (6th grade curriculum) the group worked together to map the 7th and 8th grade curriculum. The essential skills (power standards) for each unit were identified. New Spanish textbooks were purchased for the 2009-2010 academic year and appropriate and necessary re-alignments were put in place for instructional delivery. This alignment has identified the essential skill areas appropriate for the development of common assessments and technology integration.

- **Common Assessments for 7th Grade Mathematics** (Operating Budget)

This workshop focused on the development of common assessments for 7th grade mathematics, to aid in increasing the mathematical achievement of all students. Continuing work in this area will take place through the course of this for the varying mathematics levels in the 7th grade.

High School

- **Revisiting Writing Elective/Curriculum** (LEF)

The “Revisiting Writing Elective/Curriculum” workshop examined the current structure of our curriculum in an effort to ensure increased student engagement in all aspects of the creative writing process. The primary focus was to consider the ways in which we can balance the need for self-directed creative time while continuing to provide students with scaffolding, effective modeling, and immersion in various writing genres.

- **Emphasizing Voice and Rhetoric in Sophomore Literature and Composition II** (LEF)

Sophomore English teachers reviewed and revised the Literature & Composition II curriculum, including articulation of essential standards and goals for the course. Teachers revised course goals to emphasize the intuition of voice and rhetoric in student writing and reviewed assessment strategies (formative and summative) to achieve course goals. Teachers will continue to develop a cumulative and common final assessment that will serve as the Literature & Composition II course final exam/project.

- **10th Grade Social Studies Curriculum Revision to Support Learning for all Students** (LEF)

This Social Studies group continued its work to meet the system’s goals of improving the use of technology and addressing the needs of all students, especially English Language Learners and those considered “at-risk.” This workshop supported the goals of the district through the use of common assessments; improved functioning of the 10th grade Professional Learning Community, and the expanded use of technology.

- **Sophomore Year Programming** (LEF)

This workshop continued the work done during the summer of 2008 to revise and enhance the programming for sophomore students. The participants researched Career Day programs currently being implemented in other high schools in an effort to adapt a comparable program to meet the needs of LHS students. The participants reached out to potential presenters/panelists, and worked on the logistics involved in planning the event for the 2009-2010 school year.

- **Rewriting of the Italian I Curriculum Integrating ACTIV boards** (LEF)

This workshop focused on rewriting the Italian I curriculum integrating the use of ACTIV boards. Flipcharts and activities to be used in the Italian I curriculum were developed. These measures will ensure that all three sections of Italian I classes are at the same level, using comparable activities and materials to provide programmatic consistency and coherency.

District-Wide

- **OASIS Library Automation Webinar Workshop** (LEF)

This two day workshop provided K-12 librarians with training via webinar from our automation provider as well as the opportunity for hands-on experience that can better serve our library users.

- **Mandarin Curriculum Articulation Planning** (LEF)

With growing numbers of students enrolling in our Mandarin classes, this workshop addressed the curriculum alignment and the articulation by instituting a vehicle for common assessment at the two middle schools to better equip middle school students for Mandarin placement, and to ease their transition into the high school curriculum.

Curriculum Reviews

- Three curriculum review committees worked over the summer to continue and/or conclude the work of the three-year process. The Mathematics review committee in its third and final year conducted five workshops to help bring its work to closure. The Science/Technology/Engineering review team, in its second year, was involved in ten workshop activities, while the P.E./Wellness committee centered its time on the training of K-5 teachers for the district's first year of implementation of the newly developed Diversity Curriculum.

Conclusion

As you can see from the funding sources noted on each of the above workshops, a great number of them were supported by the Lexington Education Foundation. Our thanks, again, to them, for their untiring commitment to our educational mission. Without them, we could not have completed the outstanding work that has been outlined above.

The ultimate goal of the district in providing for essential Professional Development (P.D.) opportunities for faculty is to support this effort through the operating budget. This has been difficult and quite limited in recent times, due to fiscal constraints, but it, nevertheless, continues to be something we cannot overlook as critical to our teachers' and students' success. Research has strongly concluded something that we have been aware of for quite some time, that is, that there is an explicit link between high quality professional development and increased student achievement.

Over the course of the next 24 months we will have a tremendous opportunity to improve our program by utilizing a portion of the ARRA stimulus money to support us as we work to establish an embedded professional development program that can be sustained over subsequent years. To that end, a Professional Development Committee has been established by Superintendent Ash. The charge of this committee is to create a core P.D. program for our faculty that focuses on the district's mission of ***Equity & Excellence for ALL***. . . a program fixed on improving student performance at every level with a specific focus on reducing the achievement gap. . . a program that is centered on increasing our collaborative efforts, as educators, through the application of principles inherent in Professional Learning Communities while targeting and providing specific training in the development and identification of tiered intervention instructional models and strategies; collecting data to inform individual student instruction; integrating expanding technologies as educational tools in each classroom; encouraging increased interdisciplinary curricular goals, and so much more. Our work, no doubt, will be challenging, but promises to be fulfilling and exciting.

The P.D. Committee has already met for three full-days over the summer. They have collected research, exchanged ideas and "best thinking" in how to deliver a program that will meet and align itself with school and district goals. If ever any one district can rise to meet this challenge, it is the Lexington Public Schools! You will learn more about the work of this group at an upcoming school committee meeting from P.D. Committee Chairperson, Ms. Joanne Hennessy.

I look forward to seeing you on Tuesday evening to answer any questions you might have.