It's ELEMENTARY!

RANKIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM NEWSLETTER
AUGUST 2018 | ISSUE 9

START WITH *WHY*

+

Math in Practice

Using FOSS

Lights Camera Action!

Guided Reading

Inquiry in the Science Classroom

Plus Much More!

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CONTENTS

Welcome Back

The Elementary Curriculum Department would like to welcome everyone back for the 2018-2019 school year. We are very excited about working with each of you and strive to find ways to serve you better. As we embark on this journey, we will continue our focus on helping teachers provide engaging, meaningful and rigorous lessons to all students. The goal of our department is to be a partner with the schools so that together we can move this district from Great to Best.

During the 2018-19 school year, we will concentrate on the "First Things" in ELA and Math while increasing our focus on Science. The FOSS resources have been purchased for grades 3-5 and will provide the teachers with lessons and materials that support the new Mississippi Science Standards. Professional Development will be provided to all teachers in these grade levels and the Science Specialist will be available to assist with the planning and implementation of this resource. Please make sure that you check the Professional Development Calendar and sign up for sessions that pertain to your grade and content.

The Elementary Curriculum Specialists are back in the buildings working with administrators and teachers. If you have any needs, please feel free to contact us, and we will schedule a time to visit your campus. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Introducing Marcy McDonald

The elementary curriculum department would like to welcome Marcy McDonald to Rankin County School District. Marcy has been teaching 4th grade math and science for the past ten years in the Clinton Public School District. Marcy brings a wealth of knowledge and experience with her to the elementary curriculum team, and we are excited to have her joining the RCSD team!

Introducing Brian Smith

Brian Smith is a National Board Certified Teacher with a Bachelor of Science in Education and a Masters in Educational Leadership from Mississippi College. He has sixteen years of teaching experience. He is excited to begin his first year serving as a Science Curriculum Specialist for the district.

Brian believes that both knowledge of content and learning science practices are essential to scientific understanding. Not only should students learn content, but they should actively "do science." When kids know the content and the process of science, they develop real world skills of problem-solving, critical thinking, engineering which prepares them with skills needed in our global society.

Though Brian has been fortunate to achieve many of his educational goals, he is most thankful, above all, for a wonderful, supportive wife and three lovely children.

Start With Why

"My "***why***" is to be the hands and feet of Jesus to others. Teaching is my mission field."

Janelle Bond

"My ***why*** would be that I have been wanting to be a teacher ever since I was a little girl. I want to see students grow up and be amazing individuals. If I get the chance to help them in their journey in any way possible, I consider it an honor."

Lindsey Martin

"I believe that every person is created with purpose. One of my purposes is to pour into the lives of the children I`m entrusted with. When you have a purpose, you also have passion and joy for what you do, and that`s my ***why***."

Danielle Polk

"Since I can remember, I`ve always wanted to be a teacher! I remember walking around my newly decorated classroom at Brandon Elementary the day before my very first day of teaching. I laugh now, but man I had no clue what I was doing like NONE...but I knew I had a passion for teaching! I kept thinking - wow I did it! I`m actually about to have my very own classroom and I`m going to change the world! Ha! It didn`t take long for me to realize that teaching is HARD , classroom management is HARD, dealing with a child that had a not so easy life at home and was disrespectful and defiant at times and you just knew would be incarcerated one day..is HARD, dealing with the perfect angel child is HARD, and the list goes on and on!! Changing the world turned into just surviving each day...but because my mentor teachers (aka my 4 school moms) and my principal didn`t give up on me...I made it! Now it was a work in progress for sure and being an educator always will be. And it took time ...LOTS of time ...like a couple of years for me to get the hang of it...but I had that support system from people that had been there. We are our students` support systems!! And they sometimes need a lot of time just like I did. We may not always see the results we were hoping for ...but if you`ve given that child their confidence back and showed them hard work is important...not always fun but important... you`ve given them a great gift! One thing I was good at ,even my first year, was compassion and being able to connect with my students. Every year on the first day I tell my students- "Look, Mrs. Penton is a terrible speller and I made my first C in math in third grade!! I know some of you feel like you aren`t a good reader or don`t understand math! And you know what...that`s ok! Rome wasn`t built in a day right?? But this year together you and I are going to work hard, not going to give up, and we are going to push through until that little lightbulb begins to slowly turn on until it`s shining bright !" Letting students see you`ve been there and you aren`t perfect and you make mistakes too and it`s ok, that`s my ***why***! I used to think well I`m the teacher I should know the answer to every science question they ask or I should know how to handle every disagreement at recess, or how to teach a child with multiple learning disabilities ... but I don`t always and that`s ok because I`m learning, working hard, and trying my best. Kids need to see that we aren`t perfect either!! That`s my ***why***. Even by third grade kids think they can`t do it or they are dumb. Half the battle is building that confidence up in that child and letting them know you don`t care what they can or can`t do...because you are there with them in the trenches helping them, and showing them that their story is not over but just beginning!! Giving them that confidence to not give up when the going gets hard...that`s success !!BUT Success is different for each student. For some, success is getting an A and that`s awesome!! To some success is finally getting back a test that they didn`t fail!! It`s baby steps sometimes just like my first year of teaching but I had my support system and I often think what if my school moms or principal had given up on me, I wouldn`t have had all the blessings over the last 14 years seeing lightbulbs start to flicker and some might shine brighter than others ...but that child now knows that Im there for them to help them and trust me..I`m not giving up and I`m not going to let them give up!! My ***why*** is that they know they have a choice and a chance to accomplish their goals in and outside of my classroom. And you know that kid, the one you knew would be in jail or living on the streets one day because he had so many things going against him ...you run into him and see him all these years later and guess what...he`s got his own small business and he`s making it and hopefully you had a hand in it! And that sweet angel kid that probably didn`t learn a thing academically from you that first year teaching ...you see them and now they are 1st year teacher and you like to think maybe you had a small hand in that too!! That`s my ***why***."

Rebecca Penton

"When I think about ***why*** I am an educator, I try to consider life beyond third grade, beyond our walls to what these students will become. It is my hope that as students learn to read, write, and, perserve, that they also learn skills to help them become successful later in life. We teach students to show text evidence, justify their answers, and solve problems in as many ways as they can. ***Why*** do we do that? Hopefully, these students grow to become educated voters who are informed about issues facing the people of their cities, states, and country. They become consensious consumers who are interested in companies making an impact not just a buck. Lastly, these students compassionate citizens who endeavor to leave the world a little bit better for having them in it. This is my ***why***, as simple as it sounds, making the world a better place student, voter, consumer, citizen at a time."

Jessica Brown

"Over the last four years, I have learned more from my students and teaching than I ever thought possible. Kindergarten is the first experience that most of our students get, I want them to develop of love for learning and school. I wake up every day, drive thirty minutes to my school, just to be there thirty minutes early. I come home at the end of the day with dirt under my nails, hair a mess, and dragging because my feet and body hurt. I don`t have the most glamourous job teaching five and six-year old`s, but I would not trade it for the world. I would take a day in the life of a teacher over any other occupation there is. I don`t do it for the money, I do it because I want to be that glimmer of hope, the smile they may never see, that shoulder to lean on, and someone who they know loves them. I didn`t choose teaching, teaching chose me."

Taylor Berry

"School was not easy for me when I was in elementary school. Reading was hard, and I hated it. I had amazing teachers that encouraged me and pushed me. They showed me that I could be successful. I knew from a young age that I wanted to be that person for someone else. I wanted to build children up and help them like my teachers helped me. I`m so thankful to be teaching in the same school district that built me!"

Jane Clare Edwards

"Teachers were like the "princess in my fairytale" as a child - meaning they were the most intelligent, beautiful, brave and certainly among the fairest in the land. I was very intelligent, but shy and never quite felt I was enough, so I wanted to be the "princess," or heroine if you will, when I grew up to help others like me. Now, I certainly don`t feel like a princess or heroine, but I do feel responsible for our future and for leading my brilliant students to become their own personal best without let anything or anyone stop them."

Marilyn Tullos

"At the beginning of my career, I became a teacher to inspire, to teach, and to lay a foundation of a love of learning that would last a lifetime. I lost that along the way. I became frustrated and doubted my ability as a teacher. However, I am back because God continually shows me that this IS my purpose. So, I am here, doing God`s will for my life; to inspire children and foster their growth with confidence, courage, and determination."

Christy Holder

"Growing up I always knew that I wanted a profession that dealt with children; however, I didn`t always realize that specific profession would be teaching. Once in college I made a decision that forever changed my life- to become a teacher. I pray that the decision that changed my life has significant impact on the little lives that I come in contact with yearly!"

Lindsey Hudspeth

"I became a teacher because it was a natural out-pouring of the way I was gifted by my Creator. I have a desire to make a difference, to positively impact others, to be an encourager, to love those who may not be loved. Teaching and the relationships I form through teaching literally fuel me and everything I do."

Sandra Barrett

"Children are gifts from God and put on this Earth for a purpose. Teaching gives me the chance to let them know that they are loved, and their life has worth. I want to contribute to making life and future better."

Nora Sones

"I was influenced by my second-grade teacher. She was always happy, passionate and positive. After being her student, I wanted to give every child the same energy that she gave me. All children should feel their individual importance and be pushed towards their purpose."

Jzsamika Buckley

"Ever since I was a little girl I wanted to be an artist and work with children, a path which led me unexpectedly to the world of gifted education. I love working with students who have special needs on the gifted spectrum, and love to learn with them about the topics they are passionate about. My personal mission is to help my students believe in their own creativity. Creativity or creative problem solving is needed in every walk of life, and we need as much creativity as we can get to address the complex issues of today`s world."

June Woodbridge

"When it comes to ***WHY*** I became a teacher... I feel like I was led by God down this path. It was not a decision that I came to on my own. I had first decided to go into nursing when I started college. Then, I decided nursing wasn`t for me (blood and shots what was I thinking!?) and sought out graphic design. I love ART! After a semester at MSU of completing and doing well in my graphic design classes, I still felt a calling to something else. I didn`t know that it was teaching at first though, so I prayed and thought about different paths I could take. I have always loved kids and have worked at multiple daycares and after-school programs throughout my high school and college career. So, I figured maybe I should become a teacher! After signing up for my first semester of teaching classes at MSU, I felt a peace about it. I knew that was where I was meant to be. A passion grew in me and continues to grow each year for the students that are in my classes. I believe I am a good teacher. but when I think about the teachers that I remember, they are not just the ones who taught well. The teachers that MATTERED to me are the ones who taught life lessons and gave me a window into their personal lives. My goal each year is that I am not only a "good" teacher to my students, but it is that they get to know ME. That they know that I CARE about THEM. I hope one day I will be a teacher that MATTERED to them."

Brittany Schaffhauser

"I knew I wanted to be a teacher because my mom is a teacher too! Everywhere we went, people would gush over how fantastic she was at teaching and how she just loved on her students and taught them to love reading. I want to be just like her! I want children to grow and be successful in my classroom and also remember me for making an impact on them, just like my mom`s students remember her!"

Ann-Hamilton Lloyd

MATH IN PRACTICE

by Marcy McDonald & Marcoe Walker

Math in Practice K, 1st & 2nd grades
Carmen Wood & Taylor Berry

In our session, we discussed the Math in Practice: Guide for Teachers resource. The book is used to teach students mathematics. The book is filled with instructional strategies that make classrooms interactive, engaging, and focused on the big ideas of math. One of the most helpful chapters was Chapter One that focused on asking essential questions to spur insight for the students. Another beneficial chapter, Chapter Four, gave ideas for creating "math talk" in the classroom. During the session, teachers created "Math Talk" anchor charts to help facilitate rich math discussions in the classroom and looked at sample lessons that blend the content and practice. Teachers in the session liked these lessons as an extra resource for whole and small group instruction and formative assessments such as exit slips and center activities. Teachers can register these resources online to have access to different activities and watch example lessons.

Math in Practice 3rd, 4th and 5th grades
April Clack & Amanda Downard

During breakout sessions, 3rd, 4th and 5th grade math teachers were able to explore the new resource Math in Practice. This book is a supplemental resource that teachers can use to teach or reinforce math standards. The strategies and activities included in this resource are student-centered and focus on building conceptual understanding.

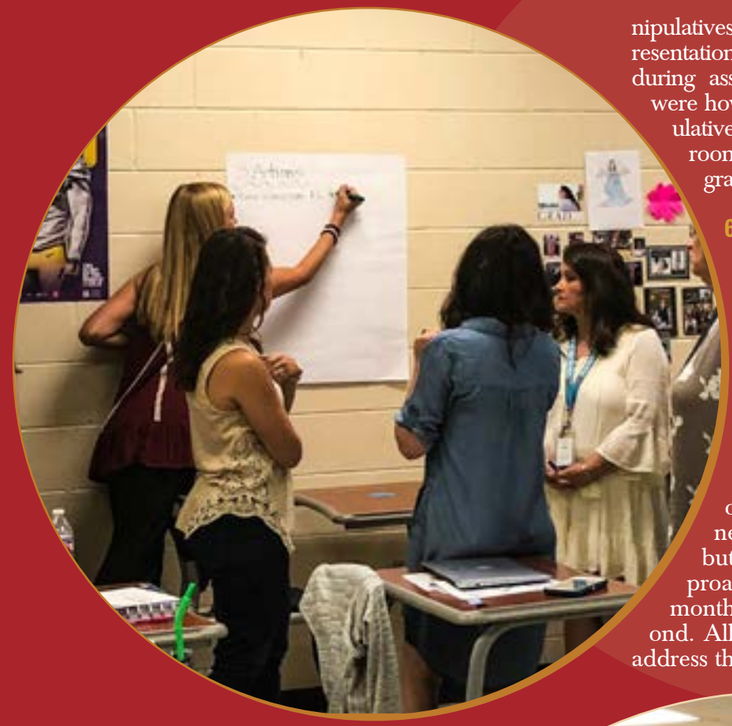
In all sessions, teachers agreed that the way we teach math has changed over the years. Instead of teaching basic facts and rote memorization, math teachers now teach for conceptual understanding. Therefore, the math classroom looks different than in the past. Math classrooms today include student facilitated discussion, writing, problem solving, and the use of manipulatives. Teachers also discusses the importance of questioning and math talk. As teachers explored the modules connected to first quarter standards, many were excited to see questioning prompts and frames to help facilitate productive math talk.

Good Questioning in Math K-2, and 3rd-5th
Mary Henry & Rachel Murphy

In this breakout session, we addressed the need for good questioning in the elementary math classroom by giving teachers easy and effective strategies to implement questioning. We explored how to change our questioning strategies from closed to open and gave teachers tools to incorporate these new practices. Teachers learned how to structure the classroom environment to cultivate inquiring minds and tencourage healthy student relationships so that they could become more effective math learners. Teachers were also shown how to utilize google forms to prepare students for more rigorous computer-based test items.

Manipulatives in the K, 1st and 2nd Grade Classroom
Sarah McClellan, Brooke Duke, & Kathleen Smith

Mathmanipulativesissuchafuntopictodiscussamongteachers! During our session, Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade teachers had amazing discussion on how to introduce manipulatives in the classroom, shared many useful ideas on storage, and



nipulatives could be taken from concrete to pictorial representations for students to be able to use manipulatives during assessments. Some things that teachers enjoyed were how to organize manipulatives, seeing what manipulatives they should be using in their grade level classroom, and the use of manipulatives with the upper grade level standards.

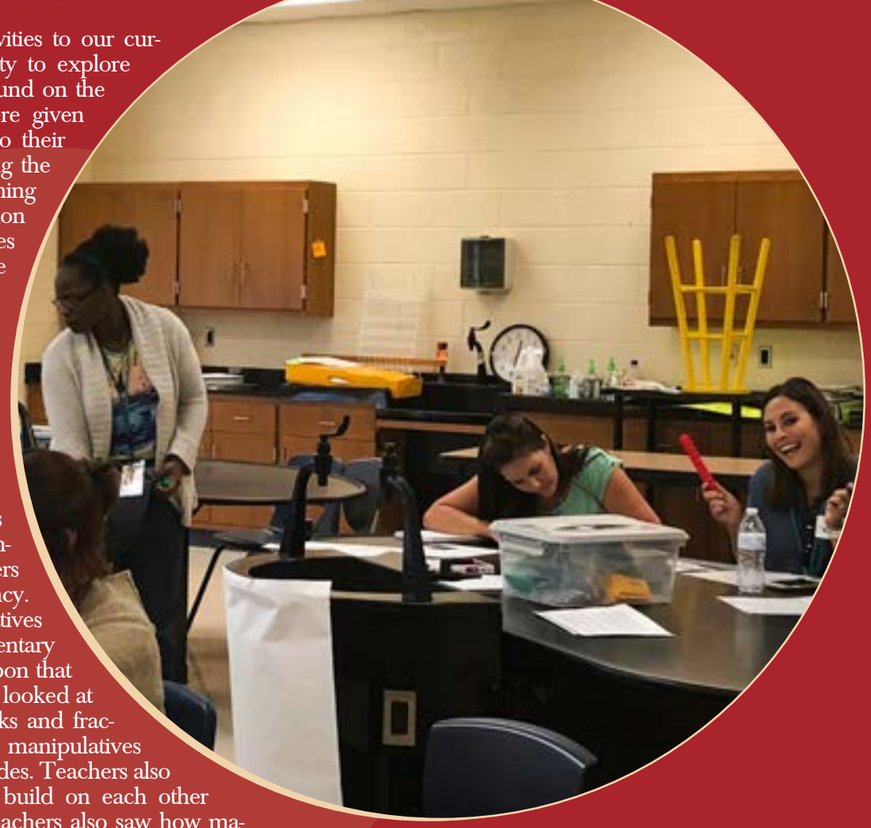
6th Grade Math: Best Practices
Brian Morrow

In this breakout session, we focused on the topics of what are best practices, what do best practices look like in your classroom, and how do we improve upon our practices daily, weekly, and monthly. The discussions allowed us to take a deeper look into how we teach and if the methods we are currently using considered best practices. We found that our best practices aren`t centered around a generic definition or a set of unchangeable rules, but rather a student-centered, standards-based approach that evolves with our students daily, weekly, monthly, hourly, minute by minute, second by second. All teachers agreed that our best practices must address the individual students in our classes. ■

discussed aligning engaging activities to our curriculum. We had the opportunity to explore the district approved websites found on the pacing guides, and teachers were given activities they could take back to their classroom and begin using during the first nine weeks of school. Learning from each other through discussion of all topics with manipulatives was a very beneficial aspect of the trainings!

Manipulatives in the 3rd-5th Grade Classroom
Kylie Evans & Corrine Mann

In our breakout session, we looked at how manipulatives can help students better understand math concepts. Manipulatives help make abstract thoughts concrete. One major focus teachers need to think about is consistency. If teachers start using manipulatives in the early grades, upper elementary students can benefit and build upon that learning. In this training, teachers looked at manipulatives like base ten blocks and fraction tiles and learned how these manipulatives could be used throughout the grades. Teachers also discovered how math concepts build on each other from 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade. Teachers also saw how ma-



Using FOSS to Improve Science Instruction

by Brian Smith

With the recent adoption of 2018 MS CCRS Science, science teachers everywhere are revamping lessons to meet the content and performance expectations of the new standards. Fortunately, our district has provided FOSS resources to ease this transition process. What is FOSS? FOSS (Full Option Science System) is a research-based science curriculum for elementary grades developed at the Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley. To aid planning and instruction, FOSS provides instructional methods, such as focus questions to guide inquiry, digital technologies, multisensory strategies, as well as strategies to integrate literacy. I found it helpful that each investigation guide provides a science background section that helps the teacher review the content and summarize the core ideas before planning the investigation. Also included is a teacher resource book filled with strategies to incorporate science centered language development, which I think the 3rd and 4th grade teachers will find advantageous for teaching their grade level specific ELA standards. Writing components are also incorporated in FOSS lessons. While using the science notebooks, students record data, analyze data, and then communicate what they have learned about a particular phenomena. Utilizing these researched based instructional methods will really help science teachers improve their teaching methods, as well as students' understanding of science.

Many times science concepts are taught in isolation and students have trouble seeing the relationships that are present throughout science. One of the benefits of teaching with FOSS is the content is organized in a way that students can see how science concepts are connected throughout each investigation. FOSS investigations are tailored for learning progressions that investigate the core ideas of science, increasing in complexity over time, broadening students' understanding of the cross-cutting concepts in science. And as students see these connections of how scientific knowledge is gathered, they in turn are equipped with knowledge needed to begin their own investigations and constructing their own explanations of the natural world, which demonstrates the highest form of learning.

With the use of FOSS resources and guided investigations, our students will use science and engineering practices to make predictions, test ideas, and construct explanations about the natural world. One of the things I'm most excited about with using FOSS is that our students have the opportunity to conduct investigations with live specimen, demonstrating science and engineering practices as they deepen their understanding of living systems and the structures of life. 3rd graders will study crayfish and dissect owl pellets, while 4th graders investigate mealworms and pill bug habitats within their environments investigation module. In the FOSS Living Systems module, 5th grade students create redworm habitats to observe how compost worms interact with litter, deepening their knowledge about the roles of organisms within ecosystems. These are just samples of the types of investigations that our students will explore this year. Not only will students enjoy these investigation, but their understanding of science will soar. ≠

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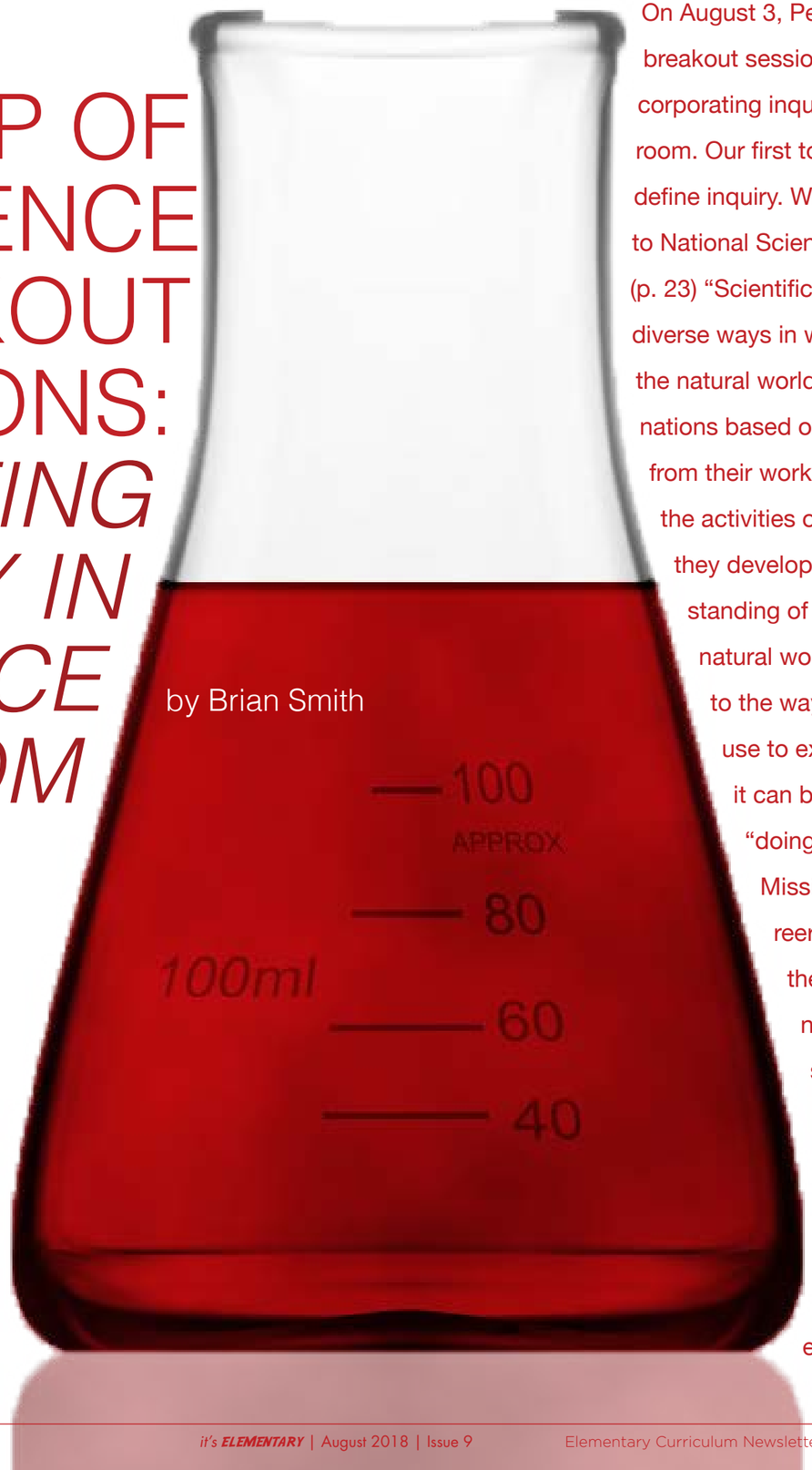
RECAP OF SCIENCE BREAKOUT SESSIONS: *INCORPORATING INQUIRY IN THE SCIENCE CLASSROOM*

by Brian Smith



On August 3, Pete Hynum and I led a breakout session with the focus of incorporating inquiry in the science classroom. Our first topic was to discuss and define inquiry. What is Inquiry? According to National Science Education Standards, (p. 23) "Scientific inquiry refers to the diverse ways in which scientists study the natural world and propose explanations based on the evidence derived from their work. Inquiry also refers to the activities of students in which they develop knowledge and understanding of how scientists study the natural world." So, inquiry refers to the ways or methods scientists use to explain science content; it can be described as students "doing science". In the 2018 Mississippi College and Career Standards for Science, the inquiry processes are now included with the science and engineering practices (SEPs). Inquiry verbs and SEPs are woven throughout the standards. The SEPs include these eight science practices:

- **» Ask questions and define problems**
- **» Develop and use models**
- **» Plan and conduct investigations**
- **» Analyze and interpret data**
- **» Use mathematical and computational thinking**
- **» Construct explanations and design solutions**
- **» Engage in scientific argument from evidence**
- **» Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information**

After defining inquiry and observing how inquiry is developed within the MS CCRS Science framework, Pete and I modeled how to use inquiry and SEPs while teaching science content. We discussed the importance of teachers developing good questions to drive science instruction. By asking quality questions, teachers help their students increase motivation, develop critical thinking skills, and focus their thinking on the most important concepts. We also emphasized that teachers should provide opportunities for students to ask and develop questions during lessons. Many times, teachers are caught in the rut of being the only person in the room that asks questions. When students have the opportunity to investigate their own scientific questions, the quality of instruction and the level of learning soars. To give teachers some techniques to help their students with questioning, we modeled teaching strategies that provide opportunities for students to generate questions. We shared how to use "science mysteries" as a means of guiding students with developing questions that could be used to solve and explore a scientific phenomenon.

Building off this idea of letting students ask and define problems, teachers participated in a design and engineering challenge, "Balloon Thrust." They formed groups and designed a system using balloons, straws, fishing line, and string to decrease the effects of friction on the motion of an object (P.5.6.6). After participating in the design challenge, each teacher demonstrated each component of the engineering and design process, and now had an engineering and design lesson that they could take back and present to their students.

I enjoyed working with science teachers during these breakout sessions, and I`m excited to have the opportunity to continue building relationships throughout the school year. ■

GUIDED READING

by Mindy Stevens

Teachers and students in classrooms across our district have been engaged in high quality classroom-based literacy instruction with the implementation of the new Fountas and Pinnell Classroom collections. Fountas and Pinnell Classroom is a cohesive approach to literacy instruction designed to support whole group, small-group, and independent learning opportunities. Through Interactive Read Aloud, Shared Reading, and Guided Reading, students are engaged in authentic, meaningful learning experiences and grow as thoughtful users of literacy.

This year third grade classrooms will be receiving The Fountas & Pinnell Classroom Guided Reading Collection that includes hundreds of new, original titles of various text levels. Guided Reading is implemented in a small group setting where teaching is responsive to individual students` strengths and needs. As children read in small groups, the teacher provides explicit teaching and support for fluently reading and comprehending increasingly challenging texts. We are excited to be receiving this resource for our third-grade students across the district. ■

LIGHTS CAMERA ACTION!

by Stephanie Cotnam

Are you ready to become a movie star? Yes, you read that correctly…a movie star! As 21st Century teachers our roles are constantly evolving with the ever changing tide of the technology movement. One area that we need to embrace is videography. Video opens many doors in the field of education. Recordings can be used for student tutorials, direction stations, reflection and growth, welcome videos, personal messages and so much more in the classroom. Now you can become a movie star of sorts in your own classroom.

Work is busy! I am constantly looking for ways to clone myself so that I can be in more than one place at a time. One way that I can clone myself is through video recording. If I want to train on a topic, I can quickly use Quicktime on my Macbook to make you all a tutorial video. While I can't be next to each and everyone of you, I can provide a way for you to have my assistance virtually. You can do this for your students too!

Self-recording and video collection has become even easier with the advent of robots to assist in the process. Recently, we have begun using Swivl, which is a robot that allows the teacher to wear a wireless microphone that emits a signal. This signal is then followed by the Swivl. Swivl will hold an iPad or iPhone and 360° to take in the lesson, interaction and student discussions. The device even comes with 2 additional remote microphones that can be used to hear students in the back and off to the sides.

A few RCSD schools have begun using the Swivl. We are hearing great things from teachers and administrators about this process. Self-reflection and analysis can truly help you grow as an educator. So, do not worry if your hair is not perfect or you do not have on your favorite outfit. Step out of the safety zone and create a video recording.

TECH TIPS TO REMEMBER:

- Shutdown your computer weekly, or restart your computer after you have used your computer at home to resync. (Click the apple in the upper left corner to shutdown or restart)
- Please put in Work Orders on the Help Desk Page. Emails reach one person, while work orders reach our whole staff.
- tMake sure that your use of technology matches the lesson, content and standards. Technology is not a replacement for excellent teaching. ■

RANKIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

GREAT TO BEST