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CURRICULUM COUNCIL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 3:31 pm at the Las Virgenes Unified School District Office, 4111 Las Virgenes Road, Calabasas, California.

Mastery Based Grading

Mr. Gleason gave a presentation about grading to encourage discussion and a new thought process on student grades. He posed a question to the Curriculum Council: what is the purpose of a grade?

Tom Gusky & Douglas Reeves say that a gradebook cannot serve more than one purpose. Councilmembers were given two documents to review with a partner.

Six possible values of grades were given on the first handout: 1) To communicate information about students' achievement in school to parents and others. 2) To provide information about students for self-evaluation. 3) To select, identify, or group students for certain educational pathways. 4) To provide incentives for students to learn. 5) To evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs. 6) To provide evidence of students' lack of effort or inappropriate responsibility.

Participants were asked to consider which values our grading system currently reflect and which values it would ideally reflect.

Mr. Robbins stated that ideally, grades would communicate information about student achievement and provide information for self-evaluation. The belief is that grades put students on a path. Mr. Gleason added that grades are used as a currency of motivation. Other participants believe that the GPA is used as a tool of value. It is a motivator. Ms. Berry commented that she uses her gradebook to provide evidence of students' lack of effort when communicating with parents. Mr. Morrison said it depends on the grade level. For second grade grades are used to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs within a group of students with diverse academic capabilities.

Tom Gusky has stated, “Percentage grades give the illusion of precision to imprecise and often highly subjective judgments of students' performance.” Mr. Gleason asked the Curriculum Council members to consider where in our lives, outside of school, are we averaged? For example, basketball ability and driving ability are not averaged. Why do we average academic grades?

The second document gave sample scores for seven students and showed how the average score, median score, and deleting lowest score scenarios would result in different final course grades. Members collaborated with partners to discuss their philosophy on if all students should receive the same grade.

Mr. Gleason reminded the Curriculum Council that this exercise is a values conversation. There is no right or wrong answer to the question.

Ms. Willig commented that when the grade trend is moving upward, a student deserves a better grade as positive reinforcement. She said it is her responsibility to understand why a downward trend is happening. The gradebook tells a story. Mr. Novack asked if a zero score is a result of cheating or not turning in the assignment. He would need more information on why the student got a zero in the grade book. The backstory is important. Ms. Berry stated that the student would have received an incomplete grade, not a zero, if he/she had been out sick. Ms. Hoppe commented that zeros are given for plagiarism. The zero could be an ethical judgement. If it's about mastery, an alternative assignment and punishment might be more appropriate. Ms. Doucedame commented that once a student has cheated, it indicates that data on student is no longer reliable. They may have been cheating for much longer. She believes it should impact the grade. Mr. Liu stated that every system has its pros and cons. Students should know what they are being graded on. This is how employees are evaluated in business.

Mr. Gleason asked the Curriculum Council to consider average temperatures. If one day was forgotten and a zero was recorded, the average would be inaccurate. A zero on 4 point rubric is the equivalent of a -6 on a 100 point rubric. The current 100 point rubric has 60 points as non-passing. The group was asked to Imagine a flipped rubric where there would be a 40 point range for an A :

100-40 A
39-30 B
29-20 C
19-10 D
9-0 F

Curriculum Council members discussed this information. Ms. Doucedame reported that in Canada 80-100 is the range for an A and that in France 10/20 would be considered a passing grade. However, exams are much more difficult and rigorous. She asked if a student receives a zero: does the grade show the behavior in class or the mastery of material? Ms. Childress added that when students have too many missing assignments, they give up. It doesn’t show mastery.

Mr. Gleason commented that the goal is to evaluate students as fairly as possible. The current grading existing model has existed for many years. A change to grading would take time.

Next Generation Science Standards: Essential Shifts

Mike Robbins, Nancy Jobsz, and Ryan Bergstrom were invited to present three new courses to the Curriculum Council Committee to consider for adoption.

Mr. Scifres shared the recent adoptions in LVUSD:

- 2015-2016 - K-12 math curriculum adoption
- 2017-2018 - K-12 language arts curriculum adoption
- 2018-2019 - K-12 social studies curriculum adoption

Mr. Scifres shared that K-12 science course updates and adoptions are being considered for 2019-2020. Because of Next Generation Science Standards, science courses have undergone significant changes. Proposed updates to existing courses will be to course titles, format, and content. Classes are currently lecture and task based. The new classes will be formatted so that students will plan, conduct, and investigate data. Students will learn and discover before the conclusions are present to them. The goal for the new courses will be for students to experience joy in science. Science will be a fun class for all grade levels, including high school. An NGSS shift will be from a discipline-specific model to a three or four course model. Concepts will be reiterated in all four years of high school rather than standing alone.

The Curriculum Council was asked to review three possible courses:

1. Biology: The Living Earth
2. Honors Biology: The Living Earth
3. Physics in the Universe

At this point, there are no proposed changes to the chemistry courses being offered.

The greatest change will be to offer physics to younger high school students. Traditionally, physics has been a senior level class. It will now be introduced in the freshman or sophomore year. Physics being introduced earlier in high school will allow students to take technology and engineering classes. Research shows that students who are exposed to physics at the freshman/sophomore level are more prepared for a STEM career.

The graduation requirement for math is now three, rather than two years (this began for freshman last year). Having exposure to physics earlier in a student's high school coursework will help to support the new math requirement.

The new pathway for students would be:

- 9th grade - a choice between Physics in Universe or Biology: The Living Earth
- 10th grade - the course not taken in 9th grade
- 11th and 12 grades: Chemistry, Environmental Science, Forensics, Physiology, AP coursework

Curriculum Council members were asked to consider whether course changes would impact the master schedule at each high school. These courses will not change the master schedule as

they are replacing existing courses. No new courses are being introduced. Teachers are currently piloting curriculum for the classes. When courses are adopted, the curriculum that is being piloted will need to match the vision for science courses in LVUSD.

Physics in the Universe

Mr. Bergstrom introduced the Physics in the Universe course to the Curriculum Council. Physics is considered a foundational course for the study of all sciences and provides a platform to be more successful in other science courses. This hands-on conceptual lab course is designed with an engineering focus, utilizing algebra-based math. The course will be very interactive and exploratory. For example: a bridge project where students will work collaboratively in a group to design a bridge model that stays within a given budget. Currently, 8th grade science is a combination of chemistry and physics. Physics will provide an integration of many topics in science. This a college-preparatory level course.

Mr. Scifres explained that at every meeting, the Curriculum Council has the opportunity to discuss proposed courses, then vote.

Question: Because industries such as engineering require calculus, how will junior and senior level classes will be impacted by a non-calculus physics course?

Answer: There are currently two physics classes at the high school level. The current introductory level physics class is not calculus-based. The only course at Calabasas High School requiring calculus is AP Physics C. The proposed course algebra-based to offer a more hands-on experience. Students may move up to an AP course in their junior or senior year. Agoura's AP Physics courses are algebra-based. The current physics course was structured to be post-Algebra 2. This course is a science geared towards algebra students. This course is designed to be fun and inquiry-based science.and would be replacing freshman level conceptual physics.

Mr. Roberts motioned to vote to approve the Physics in the Universe Course. Mr. Novack seconded the motion. The Curriculum Council voted in favor of approving the Physics in the Universe course.

Biology: The Living Earth

Ms. Jobsz introduced Biology: The Living Earth to the Curriculum Council. This course is designed as an inquiry-based alternative to College Preparatory Biology to adapt to NGSS. Students will be better informed about topics that come up in everyday society. New California Science Test (CAST) test covers biology that includes earth science. Topics to be covered will include: ecosystems, energy cycles, photosynthesis, evolution, inheritance of traits, structure function and growth, and ecosystem stability. Students will explore pH values (blood is neutral, stomach has high stomach acid) by testing household solutions such as ammonia and shampoo, etc. Another example of planned labs for students includes the study of excess CO_2 in the oceans and the impact on marine life and their ability to produce shells. The course is designed as a more interesting approach for students to approach topics. Biology has

historically been a freshman course. By having both the introductory level physics and biology offered to younger students, they have a better opportunity to find a topic that interests them.

Question: Why are the lab sections more dynamic for the Honors Biology: The Living Earth course?

Answer: The current CP BIology and Honors Biology courses have many of the same labs. Honors goes much more in depth and uses additional resources to supplement, such as articles.

Ms. Doucedame motioned to vote to approve the Biology: The Living Earth Course. Ms. Kowalski seconded the motion. The Curriculum Council voted in favor of approving the Biology: The Living Earth course.

Mr. Scifres reported Honors Physics in the Universe is being considered to replace the current senior physics course. There was a concern about the impact of the change on the master schedule. Because of this, the course has not been brought to Curriculum Council for consideration. Because there are options in schedule (IB, AP Capstone, and Advanced Placement) diluting master schedule could cause a hinderance. There needs to be more of a conversation before this course can be brought to the Curriculum Council. There is a meeting scheduled on 12/10 with science teachers and administrators to determine whether the course will be brought to Curriculum Council in the future.

Biology Honors: The Living Earth

Mr. Scifres reported that the current Honors Biology has 240 students combined at both high schools, which shows strong enrollment.

Ms. Jobsz presented Honors Biology: The Living Earth. The class covers the same topics as CP Biology, at a much more in-depth level. NGSS standards will be tested on the CAST and PSAT tests. A proposed project is students designing a water filtration system and researching water filtration systems in cities and in space In addition, students also build 3D models to illustrate human impacts on biomes worldwide including habitat destruction and global warming.

Question: Is the current advanced biology (Honors at Agoura High School/AP at Calabasas High School) being revamped?

Answer: Yes, we are currently revamping and updating. For example, rather than teaching terms for water properties in a lecture, students are shown photographs of water and then asked to describe them. The terms are reinforced after the exploration of the concepts.

Ms. Jorns motioned to approve the Honors Biology: The Living Earth Course. Ms. Kowalski seconded the motion. The Curriculum Council voted in favor of approving the Honors Biology: The Living Earth course.

The meeting adjourned at 4:36 pm.