



SS

**LAS VIRGENES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
CURRICULUM COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING
October 17, 2018**

Mr. Scifres welcomed the group. He asked for the Council's participation in an introduction activity and asked the group to take a copy of the Curriculum Council Bylaws. The Council then separated into 5 groups to review the different bylaw sections. One person from each section was to report out.

Curriculum Council Bylaws Overview

Roles and Responsibilities: We had pointed out to each other that this might be a section that everyone should review because it does outline what is expected of members as they take on the role of a member in the Curriculum Council Committee. A question was raised about the role of Curriculum Council in monitoring data and assessments.

Mr. Scifres explained that there is a vast list of responsibilities mentioned in this section, however, most of it is centered around approving curriculum. An important element to serving on the Curriculum Council, in addition to data monitoring, is understanding the frameworks. This year LVUSD will have a History-Social Science adoption, the the Council will be e spending some time learning about the new frameworks. There are additional roles, data monitoring is one of them. Is it a large component of this committee? I wouldn't say it is a large component of this committee, but it is important that we do look at data. For example when we review the pilot project with math, data is certainly something we can incorporate into the presentations to see how students are performing, before we decide whether or not to approve it.

Membership: The main focus is to keep the members of the Council balanced. This would include having district representatives, members from site administration, members from each subject and grade level area, as well as a media specialist, a special education teacher, and our community members. Site representatives are chosen at the school site and community representatives are appointed by the Board of Education. Student representatives are an important part of the Council also, representing each high school.

Chairpersons: Steve coordinates a huge collaborative piece, not only with the Council, but in preparation for and thinking about, adopting curriculum. Steve also spends time at schools looking at the pilot presentations.

Proposals and Procedures:

We did have a question about the proposals. The first flow chart says prior to submission a proposal requires four signatures; both perspective high school department chairs and high school principals. Do middle schools also propose courses?

Mr. Scifres remarked that this was a good point and an area for revision. He explained that today they would be looking at a grade 6-8 addition to their core literature list, so the Council will obtain signatures from each of the middle school principals, as well as their department chairs.

Curriculum Council Vision: This section is about the vision of the council. Evaluating, researching, and then selecting curriculum. It lays out the upcoming adoptions. Last year was a K-11 ELA adoption. This year will be focused on History-Social Science. The 2019-2020 focus will Science curriculum, 2020-2021 will consider health, followed by math, and then world languages. This section also lays out the time specific requirements for submitting materials and reviewing them.

Ms. Menges noted that the bylaws seem to be written with high school in mind, not necessarily elementary.

Mr. Scifres commented that these were great points said very well. He explained the Friday before before each meeting, members will receive an agenda with back up, for their review. He asked them to make time to review these materials and encouraged members to feel free to reach out to ask any questions they may have.

The process Council members can anticipate during meetings will include:

- A brief overview of what is being proposed.
- An opportunity for the council to ask questions.
- A Council member can make a motion to propose a vote.
- Another Council member must second that motion.
- A vote will then be taken to approve or not approve the motion.

6-8 ELA Core Literature Adoption

Mr. Scifres provided background before he asked the group to begin the process of looking at the Grade 6-8 Core Literature Adoption. He explained that last year LVUSD adopted a K-11 ELA curriculum. It was an extremely heavy lift, with over 50 pilot teachers involved in the adoption and a good portion of the Curriculum Council's time was dedicated to working on this.

Grades K-5 adopted Center for the Collaborative Classroom (CCC). At the Grades 6-8 level, they looked at a lot of curriculum and were not interested in moving forward with a big box program. They decided to create (and continue to develop) a home grown, multi-resource adoption.

Grades 9-11 adopted StudySync. The reason this adoption was K-11, and did not include 12th grade is because the District is planning to remodel all of the 12th grade English classes.

With the K-5 ELA adoption, all of the core literature titles came imbedded in the adoption. This was the same with the grades 9-11 StudySync adoption. Many of the titles these students are reading, are already in the StudySync program in addition to the core literature titles that have already been adopted by the high schools. At the middle school level, they did not have this process, so additional titles are being brought to the Council for approval, today.

Since the approval of the grades 6-8 ELA adoption, we have assembled groups of English teachers and held curriculum development days to work on the curriculum. One issue that came out of those meetings was a need for additional core literature and that is what we are bringing forward for approval today.

On September 13, the group focused the entire time on looking at new titles, and on September 27, they focused on vertical articulation. The high school teachers came in to examine the high school and middle school lists, reviewed the changes that were being proposed, and discussed how these might impact the high school core literature titles.

The focus when considering new core literature titles will be from three different lenses:

1. More modern titles
2. High interest titles
3. Culturally diverse titles that will bring in elements of Student 360 and incorporate all perspectives; making certain all voices are heard.

Mr. Scifres introduced Marnie Davis and Rich Lopez to talk about the high school process. Marnie explained that they wanted the middle schools to see the high schools texts. They listed everything that was available with their new adoption, StudySync, and added their already board approved core literature list. They made a few changes, delineated what each were using, then collaborated and combined the sets of books they had. The StudySync curriculum is digital, so the high schools want to make sure to keep and use the titles they already have. The common understanding and purpose is that we have standards we are teaching. How we teach them can change. There is a lot of teacher choice built into the program with a lot of choices of titles to use. The more titles available on our list, the better.

They asked Steve how the District might facilitate bringing in new books, when they become available.

Steve replied that the District will have to explore this more and the discussions will need to involve Cabinet, principals, etc.

Rich Lopez added that teachers are teaching core skills and it is possible to teach a skill through multiple sources, so the more opportunities they have to engage the students with relevant titles, the greater the opportunities they have to reach our students and engage them.

Grades 6-8 Core Literature Titles

Pam McDonnell provided an overview of the middle school process. When elementary schools adopted their curriculum they received a lot of titles and one of them included Tuck Everlasting, which for a long time had been a key piece of 6th grade literature. They decided it would be better to let the elementary schools have that title and the 6th grade teachers have been looking for a replacement.

Pam reiterated that they want to find a way to work with everyone to streamline the process and make it less laborious to add titles, because they foresee multiple changes forthcoming in their core literature collection. A book may go out of style or they may need a book for a different group with a different reading level. They are bringing all of the titles on the sixth and seventh grade lists forward for approval. All the piloting has already been done. For 8th grade, they would like to add *All American Boys*, which is a slightly toned down version of *The Hate You Give* and more appropriate for middle school, on the same topic. And *Shames*, which connects with US History and Hiroshima. Also, *One True Way*, *Restart* and *Taking Sides* (which has already been approved; we are just moving it to the 8th grade list).

Monette Thomas shared that she is teaching all 8th grade this year and realizing there is a very diverse population sitting in front of them. The team wants to look at books that would hit upon multiple students and not just that archetype.

All American Boys, talks about police brutality, and although kids might not be as exposed to it in this community, we think it is important to consider what is happening outside of Calabasas.

One True Way is a book about LGBTQ. With Student 360 and the District's efforts trying to support this population, we felt this would be a good way to introduce the topic to the 8th grade honors students.

Restart is a book about bullying. We are having students being bullied, and think it important to address this head on in the classroom, but also make it engaging. *Taking Sides* is about a Mexican American boy. Although we may not see a lot of this in our classrooms, we still have that represented. It would be nice to incorporate these types of books to make sure everyone understands that we want to learn about them; we want to connect both inside and outside of the classroom.

Pam added that they are also making an effort to make sure that titles are not all geared toward girls. These books have both themes. She shared that she hears a lot of talk about reading levels, but it is not always about the reading level. It's about the content behind the level. A 5th grade reading level book, can be totally inappropriate for a 5th grader. We may need to put it in the hands of an 8th grader with guidance. This is the case with a lot of the core literature but it's also with classroom libraries. It is difficult to take the common core literature list and say this is what the state says students should be reading because it falls within this lexile level. This is not taking into consideration in the least, what is in the book. This is what we have been doing.

A council member commented that it's nice to hear what was said about reading levels, as parents if you have a child that has a high reading level, it is hard to find a book that has relevant content.

Pam explained that sometimes they can do that with informational texts, such as Newsela, which is another reason why they've chosen a hybrid program.

Jody Dugandzic from Lindero Canyon shared that over the summer their group met and developed 220 titles for classroom libraries. They all have the same titles and they all have wonderfully diverse, high interest titles that the students cannot wait to get their hands on.

For literature circles, they have books where students can choose a book they are interested in within their proper reading level. They have been using some of their core literature books for literature circles, also. As much as they like kids to read contemporary texts, it is nice to expose them to classic literature also.

Question: If it is difficult with this process, is it difficult to get new books on the list? And are there books that you opted not to include for any reason?

Answer: I think that is why we want to have a process already in place to add new books. We tried to select diverse titles to hit upon multiple groups and not just one focus area. It is still new. We will try it out hopefully, with your vote this year, and will see how it goes.

Rich Lopez shared that as far as the high school goes, StudySync has an enormous list of texts and they are constantly adding new ones, so high schools will have access to all of those. It will be about adjusting as new titles come out.

Question: I noticed that some of the books you chose were for honors students. How did you select whether these titles would be for honors students or college prep students?

Answer: With the LGBTQ book in particular, I think that seeing the level of maturity in my college prep classes vs. the level of maturity in my honors classes, I wanted to bring this topic to a group that I felt would be able to handle it, share their experiences, and really have good open dialogue about the conversation. Same thing with *All American Boys*. I wanted the level of conversation to be high especially when I am piloting a book. There are certain topics that my college prep classes would not be able to handle.

Question: These are very highly discussed topics though, so wouldn't you think that even non-honors students should have the same kind of discussions, maybe in a different type of format?

Answer: These are still available within our classroom library to read independently, but we are talking about teaching them to the class as a formal core literature book, which is a different conversation. It doesn't mean that we will not bring them down to the college prep level after we've experimented with them. We also do differentiate our titles. We have a difference between what we teach in honors and what we teach in college prep.

Christine Hoppe shared that she appreciates the thoughtfulness put into the book lists in all areas, from the exposure to different cultural experiences, to the sensitivity that maybe not all students are at the same levels in their awareness, interactions, or their abilities to reflect on their identities. She empathized with what it must feel like for a group of professionals who have good judgement to want the flexibility to be responsive in the classroom and pick books that will be meaningful to students in a timely manner. She mentioned that when directing/instructing the text or controlling the conversation, conversations can be so meaningful. But if you're giving that text as independent reading where you don't have that control, she

sees more problems arising and asked the teachers if they thought they could control the conversation and address that?

Pam responded: It can be challenging in middle school. Because we are piloting these books, I want to see where the conversations will go. The way the piloting process is done, we only use 1 class set, so we have to choose the best class to do the pilot with, and then after we decide if we truly like the book, that would be when we would determine if we could differentiate for different levels.

Question: Is there any type of parent communication that goes home for some of the books that have heavy content?

Answer: Yes, teachers will be sending a letter home prior to the start of the book.

Question: Have you run into issues with parents not wanting their students to read the books?

Answer: We have had parents opt out but not so much with core literature. It hasn't been a big issue.

Question: If a parent did have a problem with it, what would you do?

Answer: We would give them another option.

Lisa Hatfield shared that she is not hearing the conversation that Fedra raised, "Why can't everybody read this book?" We are in a place where a lot of people surrounding us are caboshing the reading of books. Speaking from the history perspective, part of the frameworks is the kind of cultural diversity in LGBTQ. Both fiction and non-fiction give us a place to jump in. In a time when we are being told more and more that we can't, the fact that we are sitting in a group that wants to bring diversity and all different communities together. I applaud you for bringing those titles here.

Question: You said something that piqued my interest. You said we are teaching a skill and the content was somewhat irrelevant?

Answer: Not the content, the vessel. What we are going by is the standards. The standards say that our students in 9th and 10th grade have to be able to identify a theme across several different types of literature. So the books teach a skill, not necessarily the content.

Question: Since a lot of these titles deal with history, has there been communication with the history department to make sure the timelines line up?

Answer: We try to do cross-curricular as much as we can. We try to find common topics but we can't always align the timelines, however, there are aspects of American History that we can talk about when reading those texts.

Ms. Stein commented: I just want to thank you for the last couple of years. This whole process has been so rewarding. To hear the thought going into this process, and that you have been talking to other grade levels and schools. I think that there is a moral imperative to teach these books and subjects, that are difficult subjects. I commend you for doing this. My question as asked by Kendra Napier, is the parent

communication piece. Watching our nextdoor neighbors who are very stern and not being accepting. I know that you will be sensitive with your communication and again, thank you for offering alternatives.

Approval of the 6-8 Core Literature List

Motion to Approve: Jason Rosenthal

Second: Kendra Napier

Approved Unanimously

Mr. Scifres stated the process of Curriculum Council approvals is not to result in curriculum approval. The Council's job is to review, and then approve to be sent to the Board of Education for final approval. Mr. Scifres explained the Council will spend a small portion of the next meeting reviewing the frameworks, which will get the group ready to potentially make a decision on an adoption. He said potentially, because there is a great possibility that the group will say they did not enjoy the pilot and will not move forward.

The high schools are piloting two curriculums for the History-Social Science Adoption. Other current projects we will be considering are:

- Dreambox Pilot: Math Intervention program for grades 6-8
- K-5 ELA: Two different projects. Although we just adopted a curriculum, we are finding some holes, so these programs are being piloted to potentially fill in these spots:
 - Heggerty (TK-1)
 - Freckle Digital Component for grades 3-5
- 12th Grade English Senior Options
- CTE - Deepening of Pathways; Culinary Arts III

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05pm.