

Mercer Island School District
Learning Services
4160 86th AVE SE
Mercer Island, WA 98040
206-236-3330

Meeting Notes

January 17, 2017

Instructional Materials Committee

Facilitator: Fred Rundle, Director of Learning Services • Note taker: Vanessa Adams, Learning Services

Present:

Cameron Cummings
Rebecca Hedlund
Mark Jergens-Zmuda
Kristin Kim
Anne Rubin
Jessica Weinman
Scott Weiss
Patty Weston
Brigit White

Absent:

Ahisha Avant
David Baxter
Carol Best
Andrea Dunbar
Natalie Escobar
Meghan Kelley
Amanda Mattocks
Jason Meade
Lori Otto Punke
Lisa Stewart
Rohan Tatum

The meeting was called to order at 4:09 pm.

Fred noted that several anticipated pilot updates and adoptions would come before the committee in the next few months.

Bronx Masquerade – book

Written by Nikki Grimes

Published by Penguin Young Readers Group, 2003

Proposal submitted by Whitney Swope, 8th grade Language Arts teacher, and the 8th grade Language Arts Teachers committee

Whitney Swope presented the book *Bronx Masquerade* with enthusiasm. She piloted its use with her 8th graders last spring.

This book introduced the context of Slam poetry, or spoken word poetry, to her students. Slam poetry often draws upon injustices as well as current events for content. Whitney described it as a way of writing that throws out the rules. She remarked that slam poetry has become a part of teenage culture, so it feels current to teach students to engage with poetry this way. Reading the *Bronx Masquerade* sparked their interest in this unique literary art form. Whitney shared video showing her students speaking their own poetry.

The story is set in the Bronx, New York, approximately 16 years ago. Some of the slang is unfamiliar to today's students. Whitney held a '2001-2002 history day' so they could learn about early 21st century pop culture. This helped them more readily understand the book.

The book contains an unusually large number of narrators. Whitney addressed possible concerns about lack of character development. To round out the curriculum, the class reads other books with strong character development. These include *The Fault in Our Stars* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She pointed out that there is a main protagonist in the 'Bronx', a recurring character named Tyrone. She also remarked that reading *Bronx Masquerade* is a good lead up to reading Shakespeare in high school.

Vote: Scott Weiss motioned to approve *Bronx Masquerade*, the book, as core instructional material in 8th grade Language Arts classes starting in the 2017-18 school year. Anne Rubin seconded the motion. All those present voted in favor. There were no abstentions. Fred shared that he will write a brief to present at the next board meeting. If all goes well, the recommendation will then go on the consent agenda of the February 23, 2017 board meeting.

Upcoming meetings:

Fred shared that he will send committee members an email about when the next meeting will be held.

The meeting adjourned at 4:44 pm.