

**Mercer Island School District**  
**Learning Services**  
4160 86<sup>th</sup> AVE SE  
Mercer Island, WA 98040  
206-236-3330

# Meeting Notes

October 21, 2014

---

## Instructional Materials Committee

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

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 pm.

### Members present:

Larry Bencivengo  
Molly Fort  
Rebecca Hedlund  
Annie Koning  
Amanda Mattox  
Jason Mead  
Lindsay Oliveira  
Lori Otto Punke  
Denise Radow  
Nancy Rogers  
Fred Rundle  
Jessica Weinman  
Mark Zmuda

### Introduction and outline of curriculum adoption process:

Fred welcomed all new and returning members to the first IMC meeting of the school year and initiated introductions. He stated his belief that being a committee member gives a good sense of MISD curriculum from preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. He explained that this committee makes broad judgments about materials. The committee's function is to recommend, not to formally adopt.

He explained that although IMC committee members were approved by the School Board, not all committee decisions would go to the Board. He outlined the general process of curriculum review, selection and adoption and the difference between adoption of supplemental materials vs. core required materials. Supplemental materials tend to serve as enhancements to the core curriculum and will go through the IMC to ensure they align and reflect what we want in our classrooms. Core required materials are materials that all students in a particular class or grade level will be exposed to. These materials must go through the IMC committee, then eventually to the school board.

Some committee decisions, such as selection of pilot (or field test) programs, will end with the Executive Director of Learning and Technology Services, Jennifer Wright, and other decisions, such as recommendations for full core adoption, will start with Jennifer, move on to the Superintendent, Dr. Gary Plano, and end with the School Board. Fred noted that IMC meetings are honest and open for anyone to observe. If there is a problem, members are free to discuss it no matter who may be observing.

### Carrying out business of committee

Members were given handouts of Administrative Policy 2019 and examples of Procedure Form 2019P. Fred asked members to read the section entitled *Principles of Selection of Instructional Materials* and provide feedback. Lindsay mentioned cost concerns. Fred replied that although cost is an important factor, the IMC committee doesn't make decisions based on cost. Cost will be evaluated when a recommendation reaches Jennifer and/or Gary. Molly asked if current event issues might not be addressed in a timely manner if potential material has to go through all the steps via

**Mercer Island School District**  
**Learning Services**  
4160 86<sup>th</sup> AVE SE  
Mercer Island, WA 98040  
206-236-3330

# Meeting Notes

October 21, 2014

the IMC committee. Mark responded with an anecdote about a time-sensitive lesson on bullying that last year's Bridges leaders wanted to present. An advisory committee looked at it and removed questionable materials, then sent it to Jennifer for approval. This expedited process worked fine.

Lori asked a general question about procedures. Fred went through the steps outlined in Admin Policy 2019 and Admin Procedure 2019P. He also noted that when instructional materials have reached the end of their usefulness they must be discarded. They cannot be donated or sold because of the Gifts of Public Funds state law. They can be recycled. In some cases, teachers can reuse as resource material.

Fred noted that Policy 2019 and Procedure 2019P information and forms can be found on the district website at <http://www.mercerislandschools.org/policies> as well as <http://www.mercerislandschools.org/instructionalmaterials>.

## ***Travel as a Political Act* by Rick Steves**

MIHS teacher Alex Kattar teaches International Studies and AP Comparative Government. During her pilot use last year of the book *Travel as a Political Act*, Alex discovered how it benefitted her International Studies class. She described her students as a diverse group in terms of interests, abilities, and skills. Fred asked Alex what she learned during the pilot that led her to believe this book should be adopted as supplemental core material. She responded that its 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading level is accessible, the travel narrative is engaging, and it shows how broadened perspectives shape experiences. Her students did the assigned reading, participated in class discussions and applied the book's concepts.

She uses the book as part of a framework for units on the Middle East and Africa, and for global issues. Her class watches Steeves' Iran documentary, reads the Turkey and Morocco chapter, fulfills some requirements of the global issues unit by reading how Denmark or El Salvador tackles issues, then reads the chapter called "Homecoming" which explores ways of making a lasting impact upon returning from a trip.

Molly asked if the book places real emphasis on how the world is changing US community and environment, voicing concern about kids who can't afford to travel. What can those kids get out of the book if they can't afford to go to these places? Alex replied that this issue is addressed in the book and she addresses it with students by asking them to think of traveling as a political act in terms of broad concept – to recall a personal experience of their own that taught them something they didn't expect.

Africa and Asia are not addressed in the book so she supplements that absence in her last two units. She is also piloting *Travel as a Political Act* as an e-book and some students can help with peer teaching in that regard. Amanda asked about chapter 7- "Europe: Not Hard on Drugs or Soft on Drugs... but Smart on Drugs". Alex responded that she sees the chapter as Europe's approach to a social issue and allows students access to it. Students' familiarity with Chapter 7 helps during the US government and Policy unit when Initiative 502 is brought up. Denise asked how well students did with the pilot e-book version—was the additional functionality helpful? Alex replied that ELL students found the word definition and image internet search functions helpful. She commended the e-book's bookmark and note making capabilities and discovered that they helped students write papers. She does, however, want to make sure the MIHS library has several copies of the print version of the book for students who are overwhelmed by the options of e-books.

Matthew asked about the 2009 publishing date of the book. Is the subject matter still relevant today? Alex replied that the theme of the book underscores the value of person-to-person experiences in comprehending the world. Some issues in the book are still current; other current events come to her class in different ways. *Travel as a Political Act* gives those issues background.

**Mercer Island School District**  
**Learning Services**  
4160 86<sup>th</sup> AVE SE  
Mercer Island, WA 98040  
206-236-3330

# Meeting Notes

October 21, 2014

Molly stated that she likes the book and thinks its message is critical, especially for 12<sup>th</sup> graders. David agreed and stated that the book conveys the important message that until you experience a different environment you don't really know what it's like. Alex remarked that it shows the human side of areas of world conflict. Mark asked if class discussions were consistently positive or were any kids uncomfortable? Alex replied that she does not force debate or sharing but offers a variety of options so students have freedom to discuss what they are comfortable with. Annie noted that the book might be useful for other grade-level social studies classes. Would the approval process for those grades be easier? Fred said yes. Denise asked about student reactions last year. Alex said the data she collected indicated that in general her students really liked the book.

Fred asked for a motion to accept *Travel as a Political Act* for the next level of adoption as core supplemental material. Matthew motioned to accept; Nancy seconded. Fred asked if any further discussion was needed. Lindsay complimented Alex on her detailed presentation. David remarked he wishes he could audit Alex's class. Lori agreed. Amanda voiced concern about the drugs chapter but was otherwise in favor. All voted in favor; there were no abstentions.

## ***We The People***

MIHS Social Studies Department Chair Dave Willecke presented a request to field test the civics textbook *We The People* for potential core material adoption and eventual use in 12<sup>th</sup> grade to fulfill the new Washington State Civics requirement for 2016.

Dave described the work of the high school social studies team in creating a brand new course called Civics. This team met last year to begin shaping the new course. They created a list of units and expectations. Some of the criteria used to evaluate potential textbooks included online support, engagement, and reading level. They compared 14 different civics books in common circulation. It was a very involved process but they really wanted to find the right book and in the end the choices boiled down to two. They had International Studies students review them as well. *We The People* was the preferred choice.

Fred asked for feedback from the committee. Larry noted that the readability analysis indicated college level. Was this a concern? Dave replied that they found the book very readable especially in comparison to the 13 other books. He stated that those readability indexes are nationalized, our students are capable, and the book is targeted at the high school level.

Matthew asked about some low scores on the women and minority reports. Dave didn't know specific reasons the evaluators chose the slightly lower scores but stated that the team was vigilant against bias and decided the book wasn't biased even though it contains controversial issues. When it does address controversial issues there are distinctions but mostly it's a textbook conveying political science knowledge. They found it to be exemplary in terms of balancing races and genders etc.

David Hoffman asked if a semester was enough time to work through the book—had they considered other ways besides this textbook to meet state requirements? Dave said they looked at online resources but found they weren't as robust as desired. It's a struggle not to have a core textbook in class for reference, background, and glossary materials. Jason shared his background using earlier editions of *We The People*, which he studied from as a high school student. He would recommend it. Dave said that, graphically, the book was very well done. He feels that the book is more than just a study of the government but shows high school students how to become citizens.

Denise asked about online support for the book. Dave replied that it is limited. The social studies team is looking at other resources to remain up to date because civics books go out of date quickly. Rebecca asked if an audio version is

**Mercer Island School District**  
**Learning Services**  
4160 86<sup>th</sup> AVE SE  
Mercer Island, WA 98040  
206-236-3330

# Meeting Notes

October 21, 2014

available. Amanda replied that a very expensive app has audio capability but shared her opinion that it's monotonous. David feels the audio app is better than nothing if you really want it. He stated that great thought went into the book and associated resources were considered ancillary. Fred noted that we have a license with a company that provides materials for students who need different functionalities.

Amanda motioned to approve as field test; Lindsay seconded; there was no other discussion. All voted in favor; there was no opposition.

Fred asked for feedback on convenient meeting dates for the rest of the year. He will email recommended dates for the next three meetings and ask for feedback from members.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.