Mercer Island School District Teaching and Learning

Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2026

Instructional Materials Committee

Facilitator: Jamie Prescott, Director of High School & Post Secondary • Secretary: Heather Ross, Teaching and Learning

Present	**Absent**
*Andreeves Ronser	Charlotte Sackett
*Karen Soine	Margaret Watson
*Heather Ross	Loan Anle
Inaya Chandrakant	Stacy Hoisington
Jamie Prescott	Katie Gallagher
Joby McGowan	Margaret Watson
Kelly Flaherty	Janise Zayas
Linnea Augustine	Alex Perry
*MaryJo Budzius	Scout Bates
Matt Steen	
Kristen Bullington	
Michelle Frisch	
Paola Sanchez	
Samantha Moseley	***non voting**
Tricia Jaffe	
Sarah Karim	
*Emily Mills	
*Julie Hovind	
*Leslie Scheurich	
*Elizabeth Holland	

The meeting was called to order at **4:08 PM** and held in person. All members present introduced themselves.
Slide Deck Presented by: Andreeves Ronser Overview of the IMC Roles and Responsibilities: Jamie Prescott

Introductions were made to the group, including presenters for the Spanish and Science Curriculum.

Senderos Spanish Textbook **and Online Curriculum for Grades 6-12– Textbook and supporting materials** For Spanish 7 (MS), Spanish 8 (MS), Spanish 1, Spanish 2, Spanish 3 and Spanish 4, – **Core Instructional Material**

Proposal submitted by the 2025-26 Spanish World Language Review Committee: Andreeves Ronser and Lara Fitzgerald
Lara Fitzgerald - Teacher, High School Level 1 and 2 Spanish, reviewed the slideshow.
Incorporation of former grammar techniques…but these resources are outdated.
Lara acknowledged the committee participants reviewing Auténtico (Realize Sendez) and Senderos

The committee would like approval of a new curriculum for IMS/MIHS Spanish courses. Spanish teachers at IMS, MIHS teacher Becca Nitz, have incorporated some of the text, and Lara Fitzgerald has suggested some activities in her classes.

Overview
Each unit has a cultural theme as well, and they liked how it is embedded into the theme and incorporated into the culture with both print and online. Autenico materials will get students off-screen time and enable them to apply real-life experiences.

Strengths of Auténtico: Native and Heritage speaking perspective, real-life communication. Spanish themes were varied and more appropriate by level. As with any curriculum, there will be some supplementation. Lara mentioned that students can find assessments online now.

The committee included Adina Rosenberg to address the accessibility for all levels of learners. The online option allows students to go online and highlight text. See slide 13 on accessibility considerations for Adina's comments.

WHY NOT SEDEROS - SLIDE 14

Had to do with visuals, Sederos uses a lot of stock images instead of Auténtico images. Seemed isolated, but does follow the guidelines set aside by ACTFL, the standard of teaching for language teaching.
Teacher Osaldo Ojedo's native speaker perspective (who has a lot of respect from students) noticed that, as far as grammar and vocab, the current curriculum, Wayside, doesn't give him enough to work with, but Auténtico provides multiple entry points.

INTEGRATION

The committee recognized that full adoption can be expensive…, to consider costs, they would like to start at Levels One and Two and anticipate a seamless transition. Teachers will have access to all four levels even if we don't have the full curriculum. Andreeves discussed accessibility and Tech Coaches' support to confirm integration. Auténtico, Level 4 becomes Realidades book. Students want to handwrite; they do not want to use digital.

Q&A -

Inaya Chandrakant - Wanted to confirm that some piloting materials are already being done in the High School and that it has been well received.
Lara Fitzgerald - Confirmed that the grammar and dictionary pieces are really exciting to review.
Inaya Chandrakant- Agreed that the dictionary is really good and fun to explore
Lara Fitzgerald - In her experience, she has seen student athletes love the application of the dictionary, and how many of her students have special interests that they can pull information from the dictionary.

Sarah Karim - Does the presentation material move away from stock photos and higher levels in Spanish, and how does it elevate certain cultures? (not just a typical Mexican, Spaniard-looking person)
Lara Fitzgerald - Confirmed that Sarah was looking for clarification of all races being played out in photos?
Sarah Karim - Namely, the heritage and difference of peoples. Rather, a higher-level question is: Does the lower level teach the generic version of how to address others, or does it cover the history of how the language has spread?
Andreeve Ronser - The periodicals show different cultures to students.
Sarah Karim - How the culture's pictorial represents the Spanish language.
Lara Fitzgerald - This material does have updated current events and cultural experiences. She acknowledged that she doesn't have the answer for the Spanish pictorial.
Inaya Chandrakant - As a current student, she agreed that the representation is correct. Teachers are very conscious of different countries and the indigenous aspects of the language.
Jamie Prescott - Reaffirmed that with every adoption, there are three rubrics that representatives have to complete for Diversity, Equity, and Bias.
Inaya Chandrakant- Her experience has been that teachers have helped students look at different ways that people say different words.
Linnea Augustine- Taught English in China; teaching a language requires a lot of practice; the cultural part is really important in retaining the language through practice.
Lara Fitzgerald - More memorable when you weave culture into the language.

Kristin Bullington - Could you address the copyright change, the publication date of 2018, and whether these purchases or if the online version update, are consistent with the book?
Lara Fitzgerald - Right now, the supplementation that is being done and is expected with any curriculum adoption change will address the inconsistencies. Her final thought was that she didn't like listening to the activities as much and that the HS AP teacher is a fan of this Auténtico material.

***KnowAtom* Science Curriculum Designed for the Washington State K-12 Science Learning Standards (NGSS)**
Elementary Science Curriculum - MaryJo Budzius
Thank you to the committee and all who were present in the review committee. See first slide.

Material Description - Julie Hovind

If I had to sum up the Curriculum in a single word “exciting”. The current curriculum has been stymied by the digital content. KnowAtom is a student-centric curriculum, and as early as 3rd grade, students are talking about atoms when discussing magnets. There is plenty of scaffolding in trimester-based units. The workbook is useful for mastery, allowing students to figure out things together using critical thinking. It offers real-world anchored, interesting, and stretchable. Teachers all have to be scientists, no real way to fake this, but once you gain familiarity, it’s applicable and transferable. It also aligns with NGSS/Wa standards. Science is difficult to align with the current curriculum; this curriculum is instructionally prioritized with student voice and collaboration, excellent structured reading claims, evidence, and reasoning. Transferable across all of our content.

Whole class model of being shown an image that sparks questions and discussing the science process. Joy for science in lifelong learning by building relationship-based content. It was the most rigorous one we saw out there. See Big Picture Slide

MaryJo Budzius - Looked at seven curriculum options and kept coming back to KnowAtom. The intent to normalize “not knowing, buy making a prediction and being wrong, is part of the process.

Education Materials - Karen Lauritzen

A lot of background work in choosing the options. Discussed as a group what we were looking for, including reading specialists, came down to be science and inquiry-based by kids, not teachers. Driven by questioning, the feasibility is contained. An appropriate level of technology is a tool. Fit with our current implementation. The first ones were reading-heavy, disguised as science…it was fun activities, and not having the opportunity to explore.

KnowAtom checked all the boxes and met the diverse needs of the committee.

Why Pilot- Leslie Scheurich

Prefer to Pilot in the Fall, as Spring is not the best time for teachers, but recommend the pilot to be mindful of the cost of full adoption and to gather student and teacher perspectives. Is this as exciting as they believe it to be, and can it be seamlessly seen and implemented in the classroom? For the final decision, we will have some data-driven results. Did students have hands on, can it be applied to a higher-level thinking question? With more PD, there will be a shift in thinking. We need to ensure staff receive training so it is delivered with fidelity.

Partnering with KnowAtom on board. Instructional coaches to support at schools. PD would be available during the pilot. After we pilot, teacher feedback and student feedback. Include a follow-up survey?

Readability - Karen Soine

Challenging student readers and designing the conditions so that students can engage in this complex thinking. Models become more complex. In order to have students access this, there are built-in supports, concept maps, which allow them to see how concepts fit together. There are a lot of “wow’s” and “wonders”. For example, what is interesting and wonder about an image.

Picture a thinking walk, but more complex: columns for what page, what I noticed, object, action, properties. This material asks students to think like a scientist. From the online hubs, they can access nonfiction text. Reading aloud, shared annotation, and visual anchoring before and during text. The goal in reading any of these is to launch the learning.

Q&A -

Paola Sanchez - I’m excited about hands-on work, but in my personal experience, getting the materials has been challenging…what does that look like, are the kits complete, or do teachers need to source?.
Julie Hovind - Kits can be launched and cross over to include a student station, but there are storage constraints. The teaching manual provides warnings on what's coming next for preparation. Stations are set up, but they won’t use all the materials. Potential materials, students choose what they would need.
Paola Sanchez Are there engineering items in the curriculum?

Kelly Flaherty, did you see a current teacher learning or implementation? Twig, Foss, and KnowAtom.

MaryJo Budzius - KnowAtom mentioned that without kids, having the idea of classroom implementation wouldn't be appropriate. They saw an implementation with another curriculum and realized that KnowAtom was right; the material fell flat.

* KnowAtom is not being used on the West Coast or nearby. Our district is situated well for this curriculum.

Kelly Flaherty - What are they supplying that teachers need to gather?
Maryjo Budzius - Of course, at a cost, they will provide us with everything, and it is not a cheap curriculum… a pilot would help determine which of the nine units we need and can use. Instructional strategy in the content.

Michelle Frisch - Questioned the setup and implementation. Recognizing kindergarten is a little different beast.
MaryJo Budzius - KnowAtom recognizes this.
Michelle Frisch - Asking a lot of kindergarten, basic science

MaryJo Budzius - Expectation is a ½-hour lesson three days a week. Modeling the unit design, not a lesson. Intro a strategy in the morning. Mini share from morning routine. Flexible, reading, thinking, and Socratic dialogue. Trying to connect meaning and thematically, experientially.

Michele Fisch - Can the material be woven and aligned with Benchmark?
Routines set up might make the benchmark, as long as they don't conflict.

Sarah Karim - budget ramifications on a pilot…Funding. Science, talking about STEM…how do other parts of the curriculum, like math, fit into this, or other elements of the curriculum?
Leslie - Lessons use data collection, which involves pulling math skills, math is all over the process of hands-on, analyzing data. Same skillset. Seeing how other students share their ideas and think differently is an important part of their learning. How does this cross into social studies?

Linnea - Observing that kids don't really want kids telling us what they are learning, appreciated that the social skills, negotiation, and collaborative learning are part of building these skills.
Inaya - Liked that the curriculum uses a lot of simple explanations. Appreciated the way that things are worded. By not doing much hands-on work, students are losing interest. Recognizing that elementary kids have short attention spans with reading, but with hands-on they will be more invested.

Tricia Jaffe- Does KnowAtom help with readiness for middle school?
MaryJo Budzius - Jessica Warnick, science teacher at IMS, reviewed the material, and if we go to KnowAtom, we would also take a look at the middle school version as well. Some of the 5th-grade experiments are being conducted at the middle school.
Emily Mills- We would need to push the level in middle school. Teachers are already doing beyond the curriculum.

Stacy Hoisington - Curious about the assessment and appreciative of the leveling and vertical alignment, finding what might work best would be not considering all 9 levels offered by KnowAtom.

Paola Sanchez- I have concerns about the curriculum and the accessibility for some students who aren't able to read. How is this addressed? We have many non-English-speaking students.
Julie Hovind - Implementation is challenging, and we would be leaning on a digitally robust curriculum. There are a lot of pictures to go over with the class, and the Professional Development coaches mentioned that they had some strategies.

Kelly Flaherty - Why were looking at a change in the science curriculum?
MaryJo Budzius - This year, we are done with the TCI's Contract, we can reinvest in TCI, but some things to wrestle with are in consideration of a teacher's workload. The Pilot would be a complete unit. We asked teachers to take a survey to solidify the parameters of a pilot.

Kelly Flaherty What happens if we don't choose all units? Does the next grade suffer?
MaryJo Budzius Rep said they think this may be a problem that we would need to address.

Michelle Frisch - What is the rigor we are talking about? What they are doing together is the rigor. The booklet is the structure that helps them.

Michelle Frisch - Bouncing off the math, heavy verbally, and with gains in small groups. Consistently having students in level 1 English. Students are crying because they can't access the language. Support for Kindergarten is immersion. How is this helping with MLL?.

Kristin Bullington - Is it possible to pull the costs for Twig and Foss for comparative analysis?

VOTE:
Jamie Prescott - Moved to adopt the Spanish Pilot
Joby McGowan motioned to approve the incorporation of the Pilot Program.
Matt Steen - seconded
Approved - Unanimous
Abstention - None
Not Approved - None

Jamie Prescott - Moved to adopt the K-5 Science Pilot
Kelly Flaherty Science approval
Kristin Bullington - Seconded
Approved- Unanimous
Abstention - One
Not Approved - None

Jamie recognized the commitments of Kelly Flaherty and Tricia Jaffe to the IMC and MIHS senior Inaya Chandrakant as they all roll off the committee next year. She also announced that Mary Jo Budzius will be the committee chair starting with the 26-27 school year and thanked everyone for their time.

The meeting adjourned at 5:46 PM.