Teaching and Learning

Common Core Work Continues

SCUSD teachers from 19 participating schools (Cohort B) completed an exciting year-long professional learning journey focused on learning the newly adopted California Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (ELA). Over the course of the 2011-12 school year, teachers deepened their understanding of the standards by collaboratively examining what the new standards require students to know, understand and be able to do.

Teachers grew in their ability to develop performance-based tasks aligned to the Common Core Standards and create instructional plans and units of study to guide their teaching through collaborating with their grade level colleagues from other schools. Each month they engaged in on-going analysis of student work and witnessed improvements in their students’ reading and writing. The final Cohort meeting for the 2011-12 school year was on Wednesday. Teachers were asked to reflect on the year of learning the ELA Common Core Standards by responding to the prompt, “I used to think.../Now I think...” Below are a few representative samples of statements teachers made to describe the tremendous impact the year of professional learning had on their teaching and on student learning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I used to think...</th>
<th>Now I think...</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before I thought I would not have “time” to teach more in-depth units and before I thought, “Oh no, another binder to put on the shelf!”</td>
<td>Now little bells are going off! Now I am finally getting and understanding how valuable in-depth learning can be. Now I understand that provocative topics can be so engaging and the students are learning so much more.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not sure what to expect.</td>
<td>This is a lot of work, however, well worth it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I thought C.C.S [Common Core Standards] weren’t “doable.”</td>
<td>My students are writing on a level I never would have believed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I thought that all there was to the CC [Common Core] was that we had new specific things to teach.</td>
<td>I realize that this is an entirely new way of “facilitating” learning that utilizes writing as a medium for critical thinking.</td>
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Student Health Initiatives Piloted at Peter Burnett

Fifty students from Peter Burnett Elementary School have been participating in a pilot program called BOKS (Build Our Kids Success). The program provides physical activity in the morning three days a week to wake up young brains and bodies. BOKS is an initiative of the Reebok Foundation. Each session ends with an easy-to-follow nutrition tip. Students are then walked over to the cafeteria where they can serve themselves breakfast at a new breakfast bar provided by SCUSD Nutrition Services with funds from the local nonprofit Fresh Producers. The bar features many healthy options such as fresh fruit, yogurt, granola and banana muffins. The morning message from the BOKS curriculum is also carried into students’ Physical Education classes and reinforced by the after-school program. On Wednesday, Kings’ star player Isaiah Thomas came to Peter Burnett and worked out with the kids in the BOKS program. He also ate breakfast with them and promoted healthy eating and living. The program will end on June 8. The goal is to bring this free program to more schools in the fall.

Operations

SCUSD’s Work with LGBTQ Students Recognized

SCUSD support services administrator Lawrence Shweky received an award on May 22 to recognize his work in supporting LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) students in our schools. The award was presented by Equality Action NOW, a local civil rights organization, at an event celebrating the Third Annual Harvey Milk Day at Mulvaney’s B&L Restaurant. Other awardees included California Senator Mark Leno, who sponsored the bill that created Harvey Milk Day in California.

Surplus Teachers Fair

In an effort to better match openings with available personnel, certificated staff on the surplus list attended the district’s Surplus Teachers Fair on Wednesday. Principals discussed their vacant positions with these certificated employees who are weighing their options for placement next year. Both SCUSD Human Resource staffers and representatives of the Sacramento City Teachers Association were on hand to answer questions.

Community Engagement

Youth Media Forum

The 3rd Annual Youth Media Forum for Social Change brought together nearly 100 students from across Sacramento and the Bay Area to showcase their talents in developing media projects that impact their communities. This event was hosted on May 11 at the offices of Sacramento Press and was streamed live on TV and online through our partnership with Access Sacramento.

Teachers and students from around the world were invited to participate online. For the first time, John F. Kennedy High School joined the live “streaming” television program as a virtual studio. Middle-school students from Will C. Wood also demonstrated their “Youth Block Reports” project.
Thirteen other video projects and their young creators were featured and discussed. All youth participants received special “The Story is You – My Voice Counts” T-shirts thanking them for their participation. More than 80 SCUSD youth and mentors were in attendance and many more watched the “live” stream of the event.

**Lao Educational Conference**

On Wednesday, SCUSD Youth Engagement Services Unit partnered with the Lao American Advancement Organization to host the Sixth Annual Lao Educational Conference at the UC Davis Conference Center. Approximately 100 SCUSD 6th – 12th grade students engaged in a full day of informative workshops detailing college and career pathways, exposure to Lao culture through literature, arts and entertainment and interaction with adult mentors and professionals from the Lao community. Volunteers and presenters included individuals from the UC Davis Southeast Asian Furthering Education (SAFE), UC Davis Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP), Hmong/Mien/Lao Community Action Network (HMLCAN) and SCUSD Youth Development.

**Community Quality Review at Peter Burnett, William Land**

As the fifth milestone of the Welcoming Schools initiative, the Community Quality Review (CQR), the Office of School, Family and Community Partnerships (SFCP) completed this milestone at Peter Burnett Elementary School on Tuesday, May 22, and at William Land Elementary School on Thursday, May 24. The review team for Peter Burnett consisted of two staff member from SFCP, and two parents while the review team for William Land consisted of two staff members from SFCP and one parent.

The CQR process is a focus group discussion with the school’s parents, leadership team, teachers, community partners and groups of students. The review team explored in its discussions the following four domains with the groups: School Environment, Culture and Context for Learning; Family Understanding and Engagement; Community Partnerships and Understanding; and Leadership. From these discussions, the review team will prepare a Community Quality Review report to provide feedback to the school informing them of their areas of strengths and areas for improvement.

**Coalition for Community Schools Forum**

Four district staff attended the Coalition for Community Schools National Forum from May 9 – 12 at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in San Francisco, thanks to funding from The California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities Initiative. With more than 1,000 participants in attendance from the United States and Canada, the conference offered a hands-on opportunity for participants to visit numerous K-12 schools in the Bay Area that exemplify the community school model. District staff also attended workshops on best practices in the areas of planning and implementing community schools, sustainability issues, restorative justice, welcoming schools, school-based health and wellness centers, family and community engagement, youth advocacy, after school programming and many other exciting topics.