

Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting Notes

Wednesday, September 23, 2009, 6:00 PM

Attending: Board Members - Ray Tai, Mary Hartnett, Ana Vander Woude, Michael Collins
Administrator - Mary Beth Currie
Absent – Barbara Duncan

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Research on Effective Homework

As discussed in previous Committee reports, the administration has been using the principle of the “essential question” for several months in both curriculum writing and professional development. As part of this initiative, teachers focus on the “essential questions” that a student must understand in the process of developing curriculum or planning for a particular lesson.

The “essential question” principle also extends to the assignment of effective homework. Along these lines, Dr. William Whitten has asked to come to Holmdel once a month to work with teachers on a research project. He would work with the high school teachers in evaluating the effect on students responses when homework questions are phrased in different ways. The thought is that better questions may develop more thoughtful, answers from students and improve learning.

Items for Approval:

Curriculum Guides – Since June 2009, the administration has been revising curriculum according to the methodology set forth in Understanding by Design - that is, the “essential question” and “enduring understanding”. They looked at what was critical to revise -- including many language arts, mathematics and social studies courses, among others. A number of new curriculum guides revised pursuant to this method were approved by the Committee for placement on the Board’s September 30th agenda.

Also approved for the September 30th agenda were a number of curriculum guides revised only to 2004 standards. This was done in order to comply with the state’s QSAC requirements. However, the administration continues to methodically review and revise our curriculum according to Holmdel’s standards using Understanding by Design. The entire curriculum list should be revised by the 2012.

Gifted and Talented Program

The Committee briefly was updated on the Gifted and Talented Program. The program which was implemented for third graders last year is meeting or exceeding every standard for such programs.

Next Meeting: 6:00pm, October 21, 2009, Central Office conference room.