



Planning for the education of today's learners for tomorrow's world.

C & I Planning With Teacher Input

Assistant Superintendent Louise Dardis

The Curriculum & Instruction (C & I) Department began talking in October 2011 and planning in earnest in December 2011 for the 2012-13 school year. Planning for a school year begins with a review of the Strategic Plan to guide and focus our thinking on what is critical, what is important, and what is a need versus a want. This planning also involves input from multiple sources, both internally with and externally from the C & I department; i.e., elementary/secondary/English Language Learners/Reading/ Special Education coordinators, elementary/secondary instructional coaches, technology integrationists, assessment director, district and building administrators, business manager, elementary/secondary committee members' feedback, assessment and standardized test results, state/federal regulations, five year district curriculum plan, etc. The end result of these multiple sources of input is a curriculum and instruction plan working in congruence with the professional development plan, at both the individual building and the district levels, to meet the needs of all learners.

Why am I writing about how a plan is developed by the C & I department? To demonstrate the complexity we all face in the strategic process of engaging and educating students to their individual potentials, engaging and training staff to ensure rich educational experiences, and developing curriculum in order to successfully meet the needs of all students as we prepare them to be college and career ready upon graduation. The coordination of efforts is a loose-tight model with a **(continued on page 2)**

Secondary Curriculum Update

Molly J. Bestge, Secondary Curriculum Coordinator

Greetings from the Secondary (6-12) Curriculum Department! I am adjusting well to my new role as the Secondary Curriculum Coordinator, but want you to know that my heart is with you—in the classroom. In all that I do at the district office and as I work in all of our secondary schools, I have you, our educators, and the students you serve at the forefront of my thoughts as I help to plan for the future of the Secondary Curriculum in West Fargo. Nonetheless, I have been very BUSY the last few weeks.

Here are the important items that all staff should be aware of from the Secondary Curriculum standpoint:

Multi-year Secondary Curriculum Plan--Louise and I have constructed a multi-year plan for Secondary Curriculum. The plan includes timeframes and goals for each discipline. These goals will be shared with disciplines as time progresses.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)--The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are "driving our bus" right now, and extensive work is being done to prepare our curriculum for new North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA) for ELA and Math in the Spring of 2014. The current NDSA will be administered this fall, but next year, the new NDSA (either the test from the PARCC or Smarter Balanced Testing Consortia) will be administered in the Spring. We will know more about what the assessment may look like after the election in November, as the new Superintendent of Public Instruction will be making that choice shortly after he/she is elected. **(continued on page 3)**



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C & I Planning With Teacher Input

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changing balance of participation and directedness dependent upon circumstances. This same loose-tight model is similar to teachers' instruction and guided practice in the classroom, which is also dependent upon a myriad of circumstances with students.

How does this relate to teachers and C & I? District-wide committees have been initiated to provide input and feedback on district processes and procedures in related to curriculum, staff development, school improvement plans, etc. Please watch for periodic reports and updates, or a report from a building committee member to keep you informed. The Curriculum & Instruction Department needs your input as the practitioners that provide the instruction on the curriculum in order that all students learn to their greatest potential and graduate college- and career-ready.



The POWER of “DO” Messages

Kim McVicar, Instructional Coach

One of my favorite things about being an Instructional Coach is that I get to ‘learn from Masters’ on a daily basis. My frequent visits to classrooms in different buildings provide an opportunity to watch great teachers and kids take turns teaching and learning. In the first few weeks of school, I observed that in classrooms exhibiting a high level of engagement and self-directed learning, there is something universal. In these classrooms, teachers are very explicit about what they want the students to DO.

Sounds simple, right? One would think so, but as an educator (and a parent), we often spend more time with the “Don’t” messages: Don’t run in the hallway. Don’t talk out of turn. Don’t poke your friend with your pencil. Sometimes we feel like a broken record, reminding our students over and over that they should NOT do this or they should NOT do that and we feel exhausted by the end of the day. A simple way to begin to reverse this pattern is to focus on what we want our students to DO. This is the basic hallmark of explicit instruction. Tell our students how we want them to conduct themselves in our classroom and genuinely, authentically reinforce this with praise when appropriate. Describe to our students what we want a particular project or assignment to look like, better yet, provide an exemplary example. Display clear, concise, action-oriented objectives so at the end of the class period, students can self-assess to see if they met the standard for the day.

The power of words and modeling is often overlooked, but there is a fair amount of evidence to suggest that whatever we ‘put into the universe’, whether it is positive or negative, is what the mind imagines. According to this theory then, if I focus only on the things that I DON’T want my students to do, I am actually reinforcing that.

Consider a test I recently came across:

"Don't think about an elephant. And don't think about the color of his sneakers. And don't wonder what color his toenails are painted. Now, raise your hand if you're not thinking of an elephant with painted toenails wearing sneakers."

Did you think about an elephant with painted toenails? I did. Words are powerful. Explicitly tell students what you want them to do, instead of reinforcing the “don’t messages”. Authentically deliver positive reinforcement when they follow your instructions and you are sure to see more of what you want from them!

Secondary Curriculum Update

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FlipBooks from *Align, Assess, Achieve*—I am working on getting the appropriate Common Core State Standards (CCSS) FlipBooks from *Align, Assess, Achieve* to all core secondary teachers as fast as I can. With the FlipBooks will come a little bit of instruction from me about how to use them. I promise you that this is a resource that you will find very valuable in your planning for the Common Core.

Use these “I Can” Statements--The “I Can” statements within the *Align, Assess, Achieve* FlipBooks are the statements that the district wants you to use in your unit/ lesson development. They are very robust learning targets which can guide your instruction. I am working on creating grids for 6-12 ELA with the standards and “I Can” statements and will move to the other disciplines as my time allows.

English Language Arts—We have a big job ahead of us this year! All grade levels will complete the writing of four Common Core Units with Common Assessment by the end of the school year. I am meeting 7 times throughout the school year with the ELA teachers at each grade level for ½ day work times to accomplish this goal. We began the work the week of September 17, and we look forward to our first District ELA Committee meeting where teachers from across the district will provide feedback on the written units to the team of teachers who wrote them in hopes that we can create even more robust units that meet the needs of our 21st Century Learners. As work continues on the curriculum, we continue to grow in our understanding of these new standards.

Math—I am currently meeting with the Math teachers in grades 6-9 to begin the process of aligning curriculum to the Common Core State Standards. We began the work the week of September 10th, and after meeting, set some clear goals about how we want to move the work forward faster than the district had anticipated. We will meet several more times throughout the year to complete this work. Grades 10-12 teachers, please know that you are “on my radar” for alignment, but your alignment may not happen as fast as the 6-9 needs to. I will communicate with you more as more concrete plans are made. Until we align, as Mrs. Ripley shared with you this fall at your vertical meeting, “keep doing what you’re doing!”

Science—We are currently waiting for the next draft of the *NEXT Generation Science Standards (NGSS)* to be released. We are anticipating it in late Octo-

ber, early November. After they have been released, Kim McVicar will be contacting science teachers to schedule meetings to work on realigning the curriculum to those standards.

Secondary Scheduling Committee—Louise and I are currently working with the administration at the secondary level to begin planning for the schedules at the two middle schools and two high schools for next school year. We have formed a committee of teachers and administrators that will be meeting weekly to tackle this issue and create plans that work best for the students of the West Fargo Secondary Schools. We look forward to working with you if you are serving on the committee. Please know that the perspective that you bring to the committee is important to the process. Along with the scheduling, we will be making plans for staffing at the four buildings vs. two buildings. More information will come on that as the year progresses. Be patient.

NEW Secondary Curriculum SharePoint Site COMING SOON!—I am working on building a NEW Secondary Curriculum SharePoint Site that will house ALL of the Secondary Curriculum and resource materials in one spot! Kurt Wolf, our West Fargo SharePoint guru, and I have met several times working on the construction. I anticipate that we should have it done within the next month. When it is finished, I will send an email out letting you know it’s ready. Then I am going to need YOU to help load the content! I have to “approve” everything that goes on the site, so please know in advance that everything you post will show as “pending.” I look forward to “trailblazing” this “value-added” type of site for our curriculum initiatives. Just FYI—Kathy’s old “How” to the “What” to Teach site is still available. I will be pushing some of those resources over to the new site, too!

A “guaranteed and viable” curriculum is the foundation to the learning that happens in West Fargo Public Schools. Thank you in advance for the work you are doing to implement 21st Century curriculum with “fidelity and integrity.” I appreciate all that you do for the students of West Fargo Public Schools. Please let me know if you have any curriculum questions.



The ELL Department Welcomes New Staff

Nicole Manson, District ELL Coordinator

The school year of 2012 has started off with a number of staffing changes in the ELL Department. To begin with, I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Nicole Manson and I'm the ELL Coordinator for West Fargo Public Schools. This is the start of my 6th year in West Fargo. Prior to working as the coordinator, I taught sheltered instruction ELL/English language arts classes at The Sheyenne 9th Grade Center. Prior to that, I taught 2nd grade in Grand Forks, ND, which is my hometown. Throughout my 5 years in West Fargo, we have experienced continual growth in the ELL Program. Not only has the program grown in the number of students who are ELL but also in the number of staff we have providing ELL services. We are very excited to announce that our position of **Parent Outreach Liaison** was approved as a continuing position by the West Fargo School Board in the spring of 2012. Stacey King, our Parent Outreach Liaison, came to West Fargo in August from Lutheran Social Services (LSS). While at LSS, Stacey worked with New American families as the Family Strengthening Specialist. Fortunately for WF, Stacey has worked with a number of *our* New American Families and comes with vast knowledge about service agencies & providers as well as having experience meeting the needs of New American adults and children. As the Parent Outreach Liaison, Stacey's main responsibility is to help our New American students be successful in school. One way we feel our POL can increase student success, is by connecting parents to the school. Many cultures do not recognize how important parental involvement can be in the success of a child. Through home visits and identifying needed support, Stacey has continued to connect with many more of our New American families and we are optimistic that this essential support position will not only increase student success but strengthen our ELL Program.

In addition to our Parent Outreach Liaison, we also have 5 new ELL Teachers this school year. With the opening of Freedom Elementary and Judy Riley moving from her ELL teaching position at South Elementary to Freedom, we hired Tara Karsky as the new ELL Teacher at South. At Cheney Middle School, we hired 2 new ELL Teachers: Logyn Blickenstaff & Sarah Fredricks. At our secondary Immersion Center at Sheyenne, we hired Katherine "Kit" Anderson. Lastly, we hired Dakota Breen as an English language arts/ ELL teacher. Along with hiring new ELL Teachers, we had a few current ELL Teachers move to different ELL positions within the district. Ceara Melicher moved from ELL at Eastwood to ELL at Westside. Amber Swenson moved from ELL at CMS to ELL at Eastwood and Judy Riley added Aurora ELL to her responsi-

ties. Katie Erickson, who was formerly at Aurora part-time, is now at Osgood all day and also teaches our Kindergarten Newcomer Program. Heidi Knudsen and Jen Grund are still with our Elementary Newcomer Program but the program has moved from LE Berger to Westside.

While we have experienced a number of staffing changes in the ELL Program, our school year is off to a strong start with new English language development materials and new English Language Development Standards to learn about and implement. Additional information about the West Fargo Public Schools' ELL Program can be found on the Intranet at the following link:

<https://www.west-fargo.k12.nd.us/intranet/curriculum/ell/ELLHandbook.pdf>

Please join me in welcoming the new ELL Staff to West Fargo Public Schools.

