

MIDDLE SCHOOL SCIENCE MEETING
MINUTES
5/18/09

This is the last meeting for 08-09 school year. Meeting began with review of agenda and handouts.

Ken Wesson, neuro-brain scientist (handout):

- LASER sponsored training by Ken Wesson in February. Training included three sessions targeted for administrators, teachers and the community.
- His work stresses the importance of getting hand-on lessons before children learn to read. This gives them a topic of interest to read and write about, and then an interest in experiencing further what they have read about.

WSTA Conference - several staff members attended the conference. Sharing from the event:

- New standards are very clear and informative.
- Training attended included Systems, Foldables, Developing Essential Questions, Worm Farms, and Darwin's Wife (a dramatic, interactive performance).
- Lots of interaction time.
- Our district was well represented at the conference.
- It was very relevant and timely.
- Next year conference will be in Mukilteo.

Paige Keeley, President of WSTA and former Maine teacher – Science Probe:

- Vicki Horton handed out an activity to the members, and asked us to make a hypothesis based on the information we were given
- Based on further information being revealed, we discussed our misconceptions
- Vicki learned to use CTS books and set up inquiry based on student's misconceptions
- Jacob Baker used this type of activity in his classroom and it really got the kids attention, and sparked their interest to learn more.

Anchors, national level work:

- Part of the John Glenn Center for Science Education
- NSTA Science Anchors will be addressing challenges in science education and create a national vision
- Are working on developing learning progressions; a graphic model of what should be taught when and the implications.
- The work is based on learning standards.
- Washington state standards are being pushed to the national level.

High School Science Standard Committee:

- Linda Smith is serving on the committee and has learned how to evaluate curriculum based on standards
- All curriculum had to be read at least three times

- Then spent 2-4 hours to evaluate each curriculum by each of the strands

Dept of Education update:

- 30+ Governors and Chief State Education Officers are meeting to look at national standards. If adopted there will be impact to state standards and programs. We don't know what the impact would be, or how long it will take. This may impact how we move forward.

Professional Development update:

- 1st – 4th grade teachers were trained in inquiry in May by Vicki Horton and Jean Schuna. May 6th was 1st and 2nd, and May 13th was 3rd and 4th.
- At the trainings, they talked about the process and set up, and provided activities for the teachers to experience. Teachers were very excited. Their only concern is how to do it all. They want more training and information.
- These trainings will continue to be offered in the fall.
- CHS and OHS had Craig Gabler come and do a training for high school level. It was a good beginning. Craig will return to do a second training.

Sub-committee work:

- Linda Smith and Heidi Kirk are looking at curriculum and new standards
- There will be money to purchase Physics books.
- Testing at high school level will be end-of-course tests.
- Middle schools have been working together looking at standards, scope and sequence and kit programs.
- Districts with similar demographics using kits at middle school are performing higher than us. (Kits being used include FOSS, NSCT and Sea Pup). The middle school group is still conflicted as to whether it would be best to teach one domain per grade level, or all three at each level. They feel they may need to look at kits before they can decide on this. Curriculum decision will also be based on OSPI list.

Lisa Dennis-Perez:

- EETAC framework (Environmental Education in Thurston County) – focus on leveraging resources to use in schools and in working on environmental education plan.
- 12 people will be on a sub-committee to connect informal educators in schools and in working on standards
- Heidi Kirk, Jodi Boe, Chris Sogn, Heather Hamilton, Nancy Hooper, and Peggy Butler have all volunteered. Would like to have one more 4th or 5th grade teacher.
- If you are interested in working on this environmental education program over summer please let Lisa know.
- Will be paid at curriculum rate, and will be 2-3 days worth of work

Barbara Soots:

- Working with UC Davis

- Brought and handed out CDs for high school people – National Science Foundation virtual labs

Budget update (handout):

- We hope to know budget in June or July.
- Vicki Horton will be funded by two grants, and will be able to broaden her involvement in other schools next year.
- LASER and Seattle Science Center have taken big hits from the state budget cuts. One impact of this is that OSD will have to help fund trainings that were previously fully-funded by LASER.

Next year:

- We will be looking at 6th grade through Chemistry curriculum.
- Over the summer we will order samples of OSPI listed materials.
- We will use the AIMS process in looking at this curriculum. We will pre-screen from OSPI's list, and have Vicky Lamaro come to help facilitate.

Professional Development discussion – Debbi Hardy handed out PD 5th Year Plan and asked committee to break into level groups (elementary & secondary) to look at plan and prioritize for next year.

Elementary group:

- More work with standards – review
- CTS - use for aligning kits
- Finish up inquiry training

Secondary group:

- Matching standards – to terminology, teaching, curriculum
- CTS – useful especially for middle school
- Science notebooking

Celebrations across the district (sharing):

- Frank Wilson expressed his thanks to all for being on the Science Task Force
- Pam Finn – wrote out an inquiry using radish/carrot growth and charting of growth. TESC student came to help, and the students planted the plants in the school garden.
- Roosevelt is having their 2nd annual Science Fair. They also need judges. Suggestion made to check with high schools for student help.
- Linda Smith – there has been an increase in the number of students interested in and applying for AP science at OHS.
- Vicki Horton – MMS is working on a science fair for next year. RMS is doing their 2nd year of a science fair.
- Michael Dempster – News of the telescope repair has increased the level of student interest at Lincoln Options.