

West Site Council Meeting
January 14th, 2014
3:20-4:30pm, Library

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Suma Raju (SR), Teresa Pai(TP), Richard Miller, Katie Pierce(KP), Vicki Volden, Jamie Evare (JE), Jamie Adams(JA), Leslie Huie(LH), Sarah Adams, Chris Flores(CF), Hema Shah, Tina Carnevale(TC), Grandma of Aidan Ogasawara, Abby Morin(AB), Kristi Shreve(KS), Lina Butte (LB), Sherry Gavin(SG), Theo Kotseroglou(TK), Emily Sung(ES), Christy MacLean-Chu(CMC), Yanan Lui, Deb Avedon(DA)

2. Quick Comments

At the March Parent Board Meeting—Megan Medvitz will talk about “Mindfulness.” Jamie Adams thrilled with staff’s involvement thus far.

3. Minutes Approved 12/10/14.

4. Topic of Discussion: “Creative Writing” with Jamie Adams with presentations from teachers representing each grade level, Kindergarten through Fifth Grade.

Jamie Adams (JA):

The staff has decided to embark on inquiry to expose children to more opportunities with Creative Writing. Philosophically, improving writing improves Creative Writing. We have vertical staff meetings (meaning K-5 represented).

As staff it’s interactive in asking and implanting the question

“How do we offer our children to experience more creative writing?”

Today each grade is represented:

Kindergarten

Abby Morin (AM):

We have started a Writer’s workshop model...in a circle...5-10min teach writers’ craft, Story Hand. It’s not about spelling, rather to get ideas on paper.

There are 20 lessons per unit.... become editors, use tools like Open Court sound chart; Sentence starters, Site words. While they’re writing, Abby Morin conferences with the students individually.

They are writing for a purpose...they practice oral speaking skills, and parents come and celebrate writing. Abby Morin is piloting this Kindergarten program. It’s happening in the other two kinder classes also.

JA: takes a while to get all team players on the same level ...it’s an evolving process

First Grade:

Sherry Gavin (SG)

Students start journaling; parent volunteers help with spelling/writing; circle sharing every couple of days; penmanship attention, etc. I set up a bookmaking corner. With free time, the kids put materials together to make books. They use the computer to print images in lab. They decorate a title, and are dabbling in Opinion Writing ...

Second Grade:

Kristi Shreve (KS):

Journal writing—15 to 30 minutes a day after writing...first giving prompts...then turn them in to story starters... Author's Chair on Friday open to those who want to share. It's not about spelling...more to get ideas on pieces on paper. Ms.Padian writes during that time too to demonstrate...do Opinion Writing about Fairy Tales and Common Core...they say "yeah" when it's time for journals. Silent reading time often turns to writing.

JA: Celebrating Writing can come hand-in-hand with reading the writing aloud which helps with grammatical errors....often end it through reading part.

SR: I have one reluctant writer one enthusiastic...

KS: Regarding different interest levels, I just want to see the pencil moving ...having multiple projects to choose from...in past summary and expository writing...now has more freedom to write own story.

JA: Teachers always grappling with this

TC: Upper grades have used dictation...sometimes works better

Third Grade:

Chris Flores (CF):

The third grade students have started Opinion Writing. Ohlone Indians...

Pulling facts, modeling, how to allow more creativity.

Example: building a house...how would you build a house? ..so they design their own.....some like to draw first and others write first.....there is amazing detail..

Menus. Clothing... "Ohlone Hair Salon"Take it to another level...ex; how do you persuade guests to come to this Ohlone restaurant to dine from this menu? Make an I-Movie, etc.

TP: How much time is spent on writing?

CF: No set journaling time...they read, will start free writing, and on Fridays want them to share. An hour sometimes; sometimes 10-15 minutes.

JA: The teachers can integrate writing with many different activities to generate interest.

TP: At Crocker, the teachers are giving less homework, so it's very hard for parents to track their writing.

CMC: Do you think texture provides an inspiration? Can be a good strategy to go back and forth between reading and writing

JA: "Show, Not Tell" ART can be a more creative piece to help with writing.

Fourth Grade:

Lina Butte:

Drawing is one way to get them percolating...crucial before writing to have conversations, ie with partners, because helps fluidity and get out of a stuck state...can build on an idea.

Much writing done in classroom in 4th grade—little sent home—activity called RAFT (?). After finishing a novel, it gave a more creative way to give evidence and opinion, now gives them first choices of different genres.

The students have Choices. Example: ...a Role ...a Chief writing to a Legend...Octopus/Devilfish/Tiger...how the Tiger got its stripes...some wrote letters, legends, obituaries...in story a character died, found in newspaper. End goal—they knew they needed to present.

Teacher is in author's chair.... The kids can be nervous, but they also talk about 'risk taking'. ...at the end, ask other students to give a compliment and ask a question. All kids shared. Giving choice to be creative.

For the more shy kids...maybe video-taping can help build skills for presentation.

JA: Talk about reading Literature to kids and talk about how that writing aids creative writing.

TP: What about the genre of cartoon stories (graphic novels)? Have had hard time finding quality books these days since most fall under stock, simplistic or snarky adventures or graphic novels.

LH: I practice Mom's choice; then Kids choice

CF: Hardy Boys for my son(s) at home.....

DA: Need More Book for Boys

5th Grade

Tina Carnevale (TC):

5th Grade has been structured to prepare for Crocker. Will have Crocker teacher come in to talk with 5th grade staff about preparing for 6th grade. Most choose to write about what happened over weekend and with friends...not as much time in 5th grade....wrote about creating their own Time Capsule. They gave comments back in Time Capsule.

As a team, we are incorporating more creative writing in various topics....American Revolution, same with Core literature, could do comic or song, an extra chapter. Love the comics because goes with drawing...give chart of options....they are new to Google Docs. Constant immediate feedback whether editing, options, etc. to know someone is reading their writing.

JA: Writing in general is connecting and being heard. Poetry is surging again. The 5 minute poems, memorization of poetry, etc. Expect to see more of that pollinating in near future. Now's your chance to input. Will break down in to vertical groups. ...

LH: Besides journal writing, does West have a rubric for K-5?

JA: We have a district-wide rubric for writing...

CF: All opinion writing right now, we can track through the years.

TP: what was rationale behind Opinion Writing? Why did Common Core decide to focus on that?

TP: Expository writing more helpful isn't it?

KS: Still doing Expository...incorporating mammal and dinosaur reports

JA: more reflective writing...how preserve, collaborate,

CF: in I-Lab, there's cross-pollination...

KS: will send home a piece with kids, they read and talk about and come back and discuss.

LB: In 4th grade there's math, lots of reading and writing ...the kids need to be able to deconstruct and express. Writing with open response is new to them.

KP: Now with a 6th grader, need to be able to write of self, science, history. Kids excel when engaged in what they LOVE. Incredible to be more risk-taking, flows, speak up, have opinion.....KP advices to just 'chip away' where the little pieces add up. Prompting helps... emphasize what writing about...example: Her son used to like guns...now he's going to town on middle age weapons, etc. free to go, can re-design for future....as a parent, try not to overly influence the child's interest.

JA: Suggestion to get kids writing in journals at night. Never peek (!). Will be doing it in middle school.

JA: The more language they read, the more they will express.

SR: It's phenomenal that the kids are starting at Kindergarten with original thought writing to presentation.....they will only know this path for their future—thank you staff!

TP: praises the teachers at West for guiding kids of all types to make their presentations.

ES: After her son (Brandon) started reading Diary of a Wimpy Kid, he started writing his own journal ...then Charley and Chocolate Factory & Roahl Dahl books, the Magic School Bus series, then started writing more colorfully with more dialogue....he writes in a style that he reads. She believes it is important to expose kids to variety of literature. Don't know what is being read in class.

AM: The Kindergarten started doing Author Studies---started with Mo Willems, then Jan Brett where the author is telling a parallel story with illustrations, etc.

SR: Anyway to celebrate the writings like is done in sports? Awards/honoring good work, etc.?

AM: Abby will take one from each unit to publish and distribute at the end of the year.

JA: The staff can talk about this...Open House is an obvious venue for a Celebration of academic achievement, instead of an award. There is a variety of levels and at different ages... it's very personal.

DA: I know teachers have websites....maybe expose student blogs...can talk about this. She has a kid who loves to write but hates to share. Boys do better with keyboarding than writing in general.

JA: FYI--- West has a self-generated Glee Club of mostly .5th graders...organic...

KS: At her kids school, every child chooses one thing and celebrates at the end of year.

JA...maybe there can be a Celebration for Parents Day.

LB: Blogging is a great way to express for some, especially those who aren't as comfortable speaking.

5. Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting February 18th topic is "Programming/Coding"

Interpreted by Sarah Adams