

Franklin City Schools: Curriculum Council Meeting
Nov. 7, 2007

In attendance: Steve Buerschen, Jo Ann Feltner, Dee Sellers, Dan Darragh, David Gregory, Patty Frazee, Meagan Engle, Michelle Cash, Paula Ruppert, Beth Callahan, Tom Pecor, Robyn Donisi, Lisa Insenga, Jim McFarland, Sherry Terrill, Peggy Darragh-Jeromos

I. Mrs. Feltner mentioned the Ruby Payne “Understanding Poverty” in-service that the district staff had attended. One example she cited was parents’ reluctance to attend parent-teacher conferences because they find the atmosphere and academic language intimidating.

II. Dr. Buerschen shared examples of district curriculum guides. He showed an example of the state’s Academic Content Standards and how they work. He emphasized that these are the “what” that is to be taught. From them, the district’s course of study is developed, which is the “how” for teaching the material.

III. The group discussed an article about a literacy initiative used by a South Carolina town designed to get more young people to read. Dr. Sellers pointed out that 33% of our nation’s population is aliterate—they never read. The group discussed extensively how to get youngsters to read.

Ms. Insenga mentioned the difficulty the library has getting participants in its summer reading program, particularly older students. Mr. McFarland and Mr. Gregory mentioned that some FHS Honors classes require students to read over the summer, but some of them do not even when it’s a course requirement.

Dr. B asked the district’s literacy committee, headed by Dr. Sellers, plus Ms. Insenga, to develop a proposal for a program that would be a start at getting more of our students to read.

IV. The group discussed how Monroe City Schools is identifying and encouraging more students to take the PSAT, which gets them in the running for National Merit scholarships. Dr. B said that Franklin could use Iowa test scores to identify students. Monroe pays the test fee for students who score at a high enough level. The group agreed that the fees were not a large amount of money and that this would be a worthwhile program to adopt. Dr. B asked the high school counselors, plus Ms. Darragh-Jeromos, to look into this. Mr. Gregory would be the group’s advisor.

V. The council discussed a report prepared in 2005 by several district staff members about the viability of year round school. Some districts adopt year-round calendars to ease overcrowding; others find that parents and students prefer this schedule. Mrs. Frazee said she had attended a school that adopted a year-round plan, and that after the initial adjustment it was very popular. She said that this type of calendar requires a lot of public education to make them aware of it.

The group asked if there were any conclusive data showing that a year-round calendar boosted student achievement. As of 2005, there was not.

After much discussion, the group recommended that the school board should review the study and discuss the viability of piloting a year-round calendar for our district in one elementary building, then undertake a public awareness campaign and survey the public to see if there is interest. Mr. McFarland noted that teachers would want to weigh in on this idea, also.

The group emphasized that if a pilot were undertaken, it should last for several years, at least, in order to have enough time to really assess its results.

Next meeting: Feb. 5, 2008, 3 p.m.