

Curriculum and Instruction

Professional Development

I had sent out an e-mail to principals and coaches asking what kind of training they felt was still needed for them and their staff. I have taken that list and scheduled a few PD's from that. Teachers and coaches have had AIMSweb training for Utilizing Data and Getting started with Benchmarking. Later this month they will have training in Progress Monitoring. We have included math teachers in each of these trainings. BMS and BHS continues to receive training in READ 180 and Systems 44. These are out intervention programs for our Tier 3 students. Building testing coordinators attending the ASSIST conference, our state testing conference. Each coordinator attended sessions that were relevant to their building needs and questions. We are still currently awaiting to see if the Department of Education will approve Montana's testing waiver. In the meantime, the OPI has shortened the SBAC test considerably.

Our coaches and administrators were also able to attend the Plain Talk conference on-line. I would like to share one with you. Brandy Bremner discusses what she went to and why. Thanks Brandy!

How Phonemic Proficiency Contributes to Reading Proficiency- David Kilpatrick

Phonological Awareness: The Missing Piece-Alisa VanHekken

Teaching Reading in Light of our Understanding of Orthographic Mapping- David Kilpatrick-

Kicking Things Up a Notch: Incorporating Advanced Phonological Awareness into Reading Instruction- Jennifer Hasser

How Do We Know if Our Instruction is Working?-Kristin Anderson

Beyond Buzzwords: Using the Science of Reading for Impact in 2021- Carolyn Strom

The Knowledge Gap: What it is and How to Narrow It- Natalie Wexler

On day 1, I selected sessions that would firm up my knowledge in the area of Phonological Awareness and Phonics. Working with PK, K, and 1st grades, our daily instructional focus is centered on the teaching of these foundational skills. I can't say that I really learned anything new, but the sessions were validating. In the last few years we have studied and implemented a Science of Reading approach to teaching, (without referring to it as such). We've added supplemental phonemic awareness instruction, adjusted instructional routines, and implemented an enhanced focus on an explicit systematic phonics lesson. These adjustments have been made based on National Reading Panel reports, reading research, and the works of authors like David Kilpatrick, all of which are driving forces behind the relatively new term "Science of Reading". These sessions were validating in the respect that they proved we're on the right path by implementing practices supported by reading research.

The second day, I chose sessions that would expose me to areas outside of foundational skills of reading. The most thought provoking session of Day 2, for me, was The Knowledge Gap session. In this session, my focus was shifted from decoding and phonological awareness to vocabulary and comprehension. Natalie Wexler presented on the importance of building content knowledge as a means to achieving a greater impact on reading comprehension. To sum up this session, she basically said that kids are better readers and writers when they have extensive background knowledge, language, vocabulary, and experiences with a topic. She said the focus should be on the content knowledge of a text rather than the reading skill or strategy. I came away with motivation to build our informational text read-aloud libraries to align with and strengthen curriculum themes as well as offering more opportunities to build content knowledge and experiences. Other ideas that this session inspired me to look at include; how to incorporate more content vocabulary, use of graphic organizers, discussion focused on the story content, and informational writing.

District Committees

The Attendance committee had met several times during the month of January to establish a uniform attendance process. They have also worked hard to get students re-enrolled.

Our Social studies committee has met for the first time. Much thanks to Morgan Kujala for chairing this committee.

Science, Wellness and SBE will be meeting in the coming weeks.

Assessments

WIDA testing will continue to be completed for the ELL students until the end of February. The NAEP will not be done at the colonies or the middle school this year as we are still remote. Depending on the window for the Youth Risk Behavior Survey we may still be able to participate in the survey.