HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON UFSD

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OFFICE OF
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION
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Dear Hastings Community,

It is hard to imagine that it has been about one year since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Over the past twelve months, our Hastings educators have completely redesigned their instructional approaches, reprioritized elements of the curriculum, adopted new instructional technologies, participated in professional learning to support a blended learning environment where digital technology is leveraged for instruction, met new and rapidly changing mandates from the State, delved more deeply into culturally responsive pedagogies, and engaged together completely differently as instructional teams to ensure rigorous instruction for all students. When I take a moment to reflect on all of the changes that have occurred within such a short period of time, I am awed. It is my continued pleasure to work alongside such dedicated educators.

Maya Angelou, American poet and civil rights activist, reminds us, "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud." This past year has been a journey of many bright spots, with people stepping up to support one another. One of the areas of professional work with administrators and teachers where this has occurred is within the context of the K-12 Mathematics Committee. To honor the work of this group and the learning environment they have created for each other, it is my pleasure to spotlight our journey in this month's newsletter.

Following is the yellow jacket "buzz" from the office of Curriculum and Instruction.

SPOTLIGHT EDITION: K-12 Mathematics Committee

Committee Membership

The K-12 Mathematics Committee is a vertical group of 20 participants. We are 8 teachers of mathematics, 1 science teacher and 1 STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) teacher who work in an interdisciplinary way with mathematics, 1 mathematics interventionist, 3 special education teachers from across the three buildings, 1 Teacher of English as a New Language, a building level administrator from each school, and 2 district-level administrators, including me.

Thought Partners

I would like to recognize and thank some key thought partners for the work with this committee, including Cathy Williams, Co-Founder and Executive Director of YouCubed, out of Stanford University, our wonderful mathematics department chairperson, Greg Stephens, who has helped to guide the work of the committee and has dedicated a tremendous amount of time in addition to his high level of expertise in mathematics, and the members of the committee, who have been a regular influence on the design of our sessions through their ongoing feedback.

Our Purpose: Coherence and Inquiry

Coherence:

With regard to coherence, we have been working to create a shared, researched-based, aspirational vision of mathematics, which continues to be shaped by the work we are doing. On a practical level, we have been exploring approaches to promote student-centered learning.

Inquiry :

Inquiry is a powerful form of professional learning which recognizes the expertise of educators to examine leadership, teaching, and learning while serving as critical friends to each other. An inquiry can occur in a variety of different forms, including examining lessons, analyzing student work, engaging together in a lesson study, learning walks, and more. In all cases, it requires vulnerability and a willingness to question beliefs, behaviors and results. Inquiry requires expertise in working with data, which as a group we have been working together on through the use of artifacts and protocols.

Our Committee Sessions

Sessions 1 & 2:
Our early work as a group involved setting norms for how we would work together, learning about mathematics research, experiencing mathematics together as learners, and starting to unpack the Standards for Mathematical practice. We read articles and began exploring our beliefs and values around mathematics. We engaged around key concepts from the research, including how all students can learn to high levels, student beliefs about themselves as learners, the importance of mistakes and productive struggle, dissociating mathematics from speed, and teacher beliefs and messaging to students.

Sessions 3 & 4:
During sessions 3 and 4, we worked with the Standards for Mathematical Practice more deeply. These Standards were emphasized in our work for a variety of different reasons. First, they are a critical component of the NYS Next Generation Mathematics Learning Standards. Second, as a district, we have been exploring skills and dispositions that students need to be successful and these standards add to the narrative. Third, these standards are applicable across grades K-12. When we consider coherence around approaches to promote mathematics learning, the practices provide a strong through line across the grades. Fourth, the Standards for Mathematical Practice support a process-oriented approach to mathematics learning. When we consider the skills students need to be successful within the discipline of mathematics, across other content areas, and in life, the practices are consistently relevant. During sessions 3 and 4, committee members led the learning of the group through "teach backs" around one of the standards, which they worked on together in small groups across buildings between committee sessions.

Sessions 5 & 6:
During sessions 5 & 6, we began a collaborative inquiry process where we started to investigate instruction. In the first inquiry session, we explored artifacts (lessons, work samples, etc.) that illustrated teaching the various Standards for Mathematical Practice and then considered opportunities to enhance student learning around them. This happened in building based groups. In the next session, which took place in cross-building groups, we worked with a "looking at data" protocol to deepen our analysis of data.

Session 7:
Our most recent inquiry session as a committee involved the use of a consultancy protocol. In a consultancy protocol, the team acts as consultants to each other. We analyzed artifacts, explored problems of practice related to teaching and learning, and suggested next steps to support each other in working to support our students.

I have been extremely impressed by the caliber of our mathematics committee and the commitment to continuous improvement in mathematics, even throughout the pandemic.

NEXT STEPS IN THE AREA OF MATHEMATICS

Looking ahead, we will be exploring, and potentially changing, our 6-12 Mathematics course progressions. This exploration will take into account the challenges and barriers that have been reported around progressing through to higher level mathematics courses and supporting access. We will be sure to update and engage the community as this work progresses and before any changes are made.

We will also be exploring resources and adopting one at the middle school level that is aligned to the shared vision we have been creating. This will support student-centered practice as well as coherence.

WE CONTINUE TO REMAIN INTERESTED IN YOUR FEEDBACK IN SUPPORT OF OUR COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO REACH OUT TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AS WE NAVIGATE THE PANDEMIC TOGETHER.

BEST REGARDS,

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