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RIDGEGRAM

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Course frameworks ensure consistency with *what's* being taught in classrooms without limiting *how*

TEAMS OF TEACHERS at Ridgefield High School are working together to develop course frameworks to ensure students are learning the same material, while still enabling teachers to maintain their unique teaching style.

Teachers from each grade level form into teams based on the subject they teach. From there, core units are identified as a map for the framework to develop. "It took us hours and many cups of coffee to create what we believed to be a final product," said Jill Houck, an English teacher. "We really had to adjust our thinking, which was difficult at first."

After the teams put together the structure last year, they went about incorporating the framework into their curriculum at the beginning of this school year. "That's when the real work started," said teacher Kim Allais.

Course frameworks are made up of four main components: Assessment, Essential Questions, Learning Target/State Standard and Classroom Examples. Assessments describe how teachers will monitor student learning:

tests, discussions, presentations or something else. Essential Questions are abstract, open-ended questions to guide student thinking

"The process really pushes you to think about what's valuable for the students to know as they continue their education."

~ Kim Allais, Ridgefield High School teacher

and class discussions such as: "Is the American justice system always fair?" or "Can we rely on religious and political leaders to make the best choices?" The Grade Level Expectation (GLE) makes up the State Standard component of the framework while the Classroom Examples section briefly describes the activities or assignments that the teacher will use in class to

help students reach the target.

An example of a course framework for English would include core units such as "Literary Elements and Comprehension." For that unit, a teacher would select a book for students to read, and use that material to teach the state standards. Every teacher demonstrates the concepts of the core unit to their students, but they get to choose the process by which this happens. In this case, teachers would get to select what book they want to use. "I experienced a bit of an epiphany when I realized I wasn't boxed in to teach a specific novel," said Houck. "It gave me a sense of freedom!"

Though developing the frameworks involved a lot of thought and hard work, the results are beginning to show. "They give us the opportunity to collaborate with other professionals to build a stronger curriculum," said Allais. "The process really pushes you to think about what's valuable for the students to know as they continue their education."



The Writer's Workshop model transforms students into authors

STUDENTS AT VIEW RIDGE Middle School are using a new model to develop both their skills and their enthusiasm in writing.

"The Writer's Workshop model focuses on the students by having them plan their writing out," said Leah Tag, the language arts teacher who implemented the workshop. Tag learned of the model at a writing seminar she participated in last summer at the University of Washington.

Students are assigned genres and timeline requirements, but the only set due dates are for the final drafts of each genre. "Basically, they have 180 days to complete seven writing assignments," said Tag. "And, believe me, to do it right they need all the time they can get."

She uses the state requirements, course curriculum and ongoing weekly writing assessments to tailor 15-minute "mini-lessons." Following each lesson, students incorporate what they learn into their own writing.

Tag finds that this new approach engages her classes. If her mini-lessons go a little long, the students will remind her that they need to write. "They groan when I stop them from writing," said Tag. "Just the other day, a student greeted me by saying, 'It's a great day to be a writer, huh, Mrs. Tag?'"

New leadership comes to South Ridge and Union Ridge

AT THE END of this school year, Ridgefield School District will say farewell to our two elementary principals as they both retire. Our new principals come to South Ridge and Union Ridge with a variety of experiences and outstanding accomplishments.

Mr. Vern Yoshioka, principal of South Ridge, will conclude a ten-year career in our school district and over 40 years in public education. "I have been extremely blessed to end my career here in Ridgefield," he said. "My favorite things have been the children, their families and the staff."

Mrs. Janice Sauve will come to South Ridge as principal. As an elementary principal in the Highland School District, Mrs. Sauve successfully led her team of elementary teachers through a challenging and high stakes learning process over the past seven years earning the Title One National Distinguished School Award; Washington Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development Significant Improvement in Student Achievement; and Washington State Title One Reading and Math Student Achievement Award. All three of these honors were awarded within the last two years! Mrs. Sauve also received National Teaching Board Certification while serving as a principal. This accomplishment speaks volumes for her commitment toward improving her practices to assist staff in meeting the needs of every student in every classroom.

Mrs. Connie Ford's retirement at the end of this school year will conclude a five-year career in our school district and an encompassing career in public education of almost 30 years. The thing she'll miss the most from working in Ridgefield will be the kids. "We have great kids here," she said. "I will miss them big time!"

Mrs. Angela Freeman will come to Union



TOP: Angela Freeman, new principal of Union Ridge. BOTTOM: Janice Sauve, new principal of South Ridge.

Ridge as principal. Mrs. Freeman has served as an assistant principal in the Evergreen School District over the past five years, and brings outstanding instructional knowledge and leadership qualities to our school district. Mrs. Freeman has been instrumental in developing and implementing a highly successful program in mathematics at Evergreen School District to identify outperforming fourth graders and have them accelerate their math skills by learning sixth grade math as fifth graders.

"I am confident that Mrs. Sauve and Mrs. Freeman will provide exceptional leadership for students, staff and parents," said Superintendent Art Edgerly.

Leadership training empowers fifth graders

STUDENTS AT UNION RIDGE who exhibit leadership skills received the opportunity to hone their abilities through a special Leadership Group offered by Principal Connie Ford and Counselor Tim Suenkel.

Ford and Suenkel decided that a Leadership Group might give students the extra attention they need to excel. "Students who are natural-born leaders can really benefit from a little extra guidance," said Ford. "By nurturing their leadership behaviors, they can go on to have really positive effects for their class."

The participants in the group were chosen by their teachers. "Connie and I asked the fifth grade teachers to each nominate two students who demonstrated leadership skills," said Suenkel.

"We wanted students who would benefit from a group where they could learn strategies that apply to everyday life." Six students were selected: Aliasha Ball, Autumn Bochart, Brittney Davenport, Brady Lewis, Trenton Serface and Spencer Sudmeier.

The group focused on four main topics: Defining Leadership, Personality Styles, Conflict Resolution and Developing an Action Plan for Leadership.

During the **Defining Leadership** section, students chose someone they felt was a good leader. Then, they identified the traits that helped to make that person an effective leader. Students learned that most people have a preferential style of leadership whether it be task-oriented or relationship-focused, and also learned that



leaders can change their style depending on the situation. Students took a survey to determine if their own personal leadership style was relationship-oriented or task-oriented.

In **Personality Styles**, students identified their personality using a model of personality identification called True Colors. The different personality types are broken down into different colors, with each color

representing a different personality approach. "True Colors distills the elaborate concepts of personality theory into a user-friendly, practical tool used to foster healthy productive relationships," said Suenkel.

During **Conflict Resolution**, students learned a problem-solving model and applied what they have learned about personality styles to help them become more effective at conflict resolution. Taking turns, two students acted out conflicts being resolved by different color types while the others tried to guess which colors' traits were represented.

For the final section, **Developing an Action Plan**, students created a plan covering how to apply what they have learned. They focused on four areas of life: career and education;

home and family; hobbies and recreation; and community service. Each student received a large piece of poster board and instructions to create a collage of images representing each of the four areas.

"The students were really engaged throughout the entire class," said Ford. "We plan to continue forming groups like these to help students know what it means to be a leader and how to become a better one."

Ridgefield High School makes the grade

RIDGEFIELD HIGH SCHOOL finished its certification to retain its accreditation with the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS) on May 11. The accreditation process, which takes over a year, requires an exhaustive look at almost every aspect of the school.

Starting in August and continuing over the course of the school year, the staff at Ridgefield High School administered a self-evaluation using instruments approved by the accreditation committee. The staff met to perform evaluation exercises, compile a profile of the school's mission and core values and implement school improvement plans.

Following the year-long self-assessment process, a Site Visitation Team, made up of peer professionals invited by Principal Tony VanderMaas, scrutinized the high school

focusing on three separate sections: Teaching & Learning Standards, Support Standards and School Improvement.

"The process of accreditation helps us to crystallize our goals and plans for the future," said VanderMaas. "It is an honor to have so many respected professionals invest their time to review Ridgefield High School."

During their visit, the team made classroom observations and interviewed students and staff asking guiding questions prepared in advance. Following the observations and interviews, they met to develop commendations and recommendations for the school that they presented later that afternoon.

The Site Visitation Team's report was submitted along with an annual report prepared by the principal to the NAAS accreditation

commission who evaluated the submission. Based on the evaluations made by the accreditation committee, schools are issued one of four classifications: Approved, Advised, Warned or Dropped.

A school is classified as "Approved" when it meets or exceeds the standards of the NAAS. If the school has made no observable effort to execute the improvement plan, it may be classified as "Advised." A school classified as "Warned" is not substantially in compliance with one or more standards. A school will be "Dropped" from membership after two consecutive "Warned" classifications.

"The process can be exhausting, but the analysis and feedback provides priceless insight into where we are and where we're headed as a school," said VanderMaas.

200 students + 4 tests + 1 assistant principal = HSPE Assessment Coordination

EVERY YEAR, RIDGEFIELD High School administers assessment tests to over 200 students that make up the tenth grade class. This year, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) introduced a new assessment test named the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE).

The HSPE replaces the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) with the goal of measuring student proficiencies in reading, writing, math, and science.

Students in the classes of 2010-2012 must pass the reading and writing assessment to be eligible to graduate. Starting with the class of 2013, graduates will be required to pass all four parts of the test: reading, writing, math, and science.

A major reason for the redesign of the assessment test was to reduce the amount of class time required to administer it. The reading, math and science sections now take just one day each instead of two as they did with the WASL. However, for this school year, the writing section will still take two days.

Managing the administration of the HSPE

to an entire student grade is no small task. Assistant Principal Nathan Plummer must coordinate each aspect of the test.

Planning starts weeks before the test will be administered. The teachers of each subject determine in which classrooms students will take the test. Some students are comfortable taking the test in a different classroom than where their class is taught while others would prefer to stay in their home classroom. "We make every effort to ensure that students stay in the environment where they feel the most capable," said Plummer.

Breaks are scheduled throughout the testing process to relieve both the teachers and the students. The school booster club funds snacks prepared by Chartwells in order to keep students' minds sharp. "We are so grateful to our booster club," said Plummer. "They go out of their way to make sure our kids are well-nourished and can focus on the tasks at hand."

Security is a top priority. At the end of testing each day, the tests are collected into 14 large boxes and sealed. Each teacher counts their tests and confirms that the number of

tests matches the number of students. At a time designated in advance, the teacher takes the tests to the library where Plummer inventories each test with the teacher, one at a time.

Plummer collects the boxes in his office where he verifies for a second time that every student who took the test has one in the box. He sends the boxes to the district office where one of the district secretaries confirms Plummer's work, and checks each identification form for accuracy and correctness.

The tests are then sent via certified overnight mail to the State offices. The next step of the process is reconciliation; the State and the district need to confirm that their databases match making sure that any name changes or other identifying information has been properly submitted and processed. The state only allows for 5% of a class to be absent, so the school must account for each student's test.

"The process both important and intense," said Plummer. "We need to know how our students are doing and where they need improvement."

The Rebel Den teaches business savvy to students

STUDENTS AT VIEW RIDGE Middle School learned about what it takes to run a business first-hand in an Entrepreneurship Class offered for the first time this year.

When Principal Chris Griffith asked Debbie Adams to teach an entrepreneurship class, he went to the right person. "I was transferred to the middle school this year after teaching career classes at the high school for 12 years," she said. "I felt that creating a store would make the experience more authentic, even if it couldn't accept real money." Principal Griffith contributed a donation from the booster club to stock the store.

All students are required to work one shift each trimester as a part of the course with the option to work more shifts for extra points. During the shift, 2-3 students are exposed to a variety of real-world experience including handling sales, customer service and basic marketing promotion. Each semester, the class elects a manager and an assistant manager.

Before opening the store, the 8th grade

students from the first semester ran a survey of the student body to see if students would support the store and come up with a name. The art class held a competition to design the Rebel Buck used as currency in the store.

In addition to working in the store, the course focuses on the concepts of entrepreneurship: basic economics, such as scarcity, competition, supply, and demand; market research, including target audience, pricing, advertising; and business management skills such as inventory control and handling employees. Jennifer Weber, a manager of the West Coast Bank branch located in Salmon Creek, visited the class once a week for seven weeks each semester to share real-world experiences with the class.

One of the assignments this semester was for students to conduct interviews with a local business owner in the community. "I am always amazed at what students come up with," said Adams. "One interviewed a mall kiosk owner and found out more about the hot dog industry than any of us ever knew!"

