

January 9, 2017

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT ON PLTW

Dear HUUSD Board Members-

I have received a few emails from board colleagues asking for a bit more information regarding Project Lead the Way (PLTW) to inform budgeting. The GATEWAY budget can be shared again with a bit more explanation about what the budget covers, breaking it down a bit more (PD, materials, equipment), and about how we are paying for the PD (grants) if that would be helpful. It is important to reflect upon how curriculum decisions are made, which we covered in our early training with VSBA attorney, Nicole Mace. At this point in the timeline, the board's role is to determine whether or not we can afford to invest in these science materials. This is phase III of the science curriculum implementation and expenditure request. In looking PreK-12, we already have implemented the K-5 and 9-12 pieces. Gateway will complete the process by covering the revision/upgrades for 6-8. Sheila Soule, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, will be on hand to answer any questions you may have. The WWSU has a very collaborative and thorough process for developing and deciding upon curricula, programs and materials that includes teachers and administrators. It is not the role of the board to determine or "approve" what curriculum, program or materials we implement in our classrooms to best meet the federal and state standards. This process has been at work in WWSU since 2013.

I am also including in this report our WWSU LTEE Newsletter so that you can start to gain a clearer picture of how we work and decide together how best provide coherent and aligned instruction to all our students.

I look forward to seeing you and continuing our work together at our HUUSD Board meeting ON Wednesday.

Best regards,
Brigid

(From WWSU LTEE Newsletter)

Here is further explanation about decision making regarding PLTW:

When Vermont adopted the newest national science standards (Next Generation Science Standards- NGSS) in 2013 we had several challenges to implementation. Foremost, our staff was working through the implementation of a new mathematics curriculum, and a new literacy curriculum both with many accompanying required assessments. Staff was unavailable to take on another new curriculum. The NGSS standards require in-depth training for all teachers because they are so drastically different from prior standards.

The Administrative Team made a deliberate decision to slow down the process of implementing the new standards and started working on solving the professional development dilemma. At this time, there were only a few teachers/professional development providers in the State knowledgeable enough to provide the training. They were teaching a state level course and about eight of our staff members were able to take the course. But, we could not require all staff to take the course as it met during the school day/school year. We did try to hire the same lead teachers to teach a course in our own Supervisory Union during the summer, but they were at capacity and could not provide exclusive training. We did hire these lead trainers to come provide a two-day introductory session to the standards for all staff and both early-release (inservice days) were snowed out (Jan and Feb 2014).

Meanwhile the agency of VT was aware of the significant challenges school systems were facing with these training needs, so they began to sponsor a new web-based training system called NGSX. This program would require training for only some teachers who could then support their colleagues in schools using training

modules. We tried for some time to entice some of our own teachers (who had taken the course) to become lead teachers for our own staff by using this statewide training platform, but no one was interested.

The swift passing of ACT 77 took our focus away from NGSS during school year 2014-2015. During this school year a subset of the administrative team attended a 14-day training that occurred throughout the months of Dec-June. A reframing of our leadership and action plan followed.

In Fall of 2015 we became aware of the offerings through Project Lead the Way (PLTW). PLTW is both a training system and a curriculum/program in one. The program almost completely addresses all NGSS standards including the Engineering and Design components. In January of 2016, Administrators and teachers attended a PLTW conference in New Hampshire to learn more about this program. We were interested and impressed. Our new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program at HUHS had already committed to using the Engineering Strand at the HS level. The admin team made the decision to implement "Launch"- the K-5 version of the program in the Fall of 2016 but wait until 2017 to implement the middle-level "Gateway" portion because of the additional costs. Gateway is the last of the three prongs. PLTW is highly regarded throughout Vermont as being state of the art and nearly fully aligned with the NGSS standards. As with any curricula, gap analysis will occur through implementation and supplemental units will be developed. Pacing guides will also be further developed in further improve consistent implementation.