

10 schools collaborate for student achievement

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Holyoke Re-1J is one of 10 school districts involved in Consortium Team Time to cooperatively leverage resources to support teachers and kids.

The Northeast Consortium for Student Achievement and Growth has six scheduled inservice sessions on Mondays during the 2013-14 school year. Holyoke Superintendent Bret Miles reported on the consortium activity at the Nov. 5 Re-1J board meeting.

The organizational structure begins with the BOCES Superintendents' Advisory Committee consensus. That branches down to coordinator Kendra Anderson, a steering committee and all principals and superintendents. Miles serves as chair of the steering committee, which includes one representative per district. Holyoke Elementary School art teacher Christina Martinez designed a windmill logo for the CTT group. The nine windmill blades highlight the following buzz words: expect, educate, expose, engage, enhance, embrace, expand, empower and elevate.

CTT's purpose is to collectively implement the new Colorado Academic Standards and improve instruction through collaboration and alignment.

Participating school districts include Akron, Buffalo, Frenchman, Haxtun, Holyoke, Julesburg, Lone Star (voluntary), Platte Valley, Otis and Wray.



CTT participants have agreed that all schools will do the following:

—utilize the same curriculum document setting the order of units and an approximate pacing of the units.

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—commit to the outcomes stated in the curriculum document and work together to form consortium-wide assessments to measure attainment of the standards.

—have flexibility in the use of materials and daily lesson planning.

—participate in the professional learning communities at a central location and house curriculum documents, educational resources and common assessments on the DREAM website.

—participate in a shared cost structure for resources identified by the Superintendents' Advisory Committee.

Participants believe that quality consortium team time will benefit teachers, principals, students and communities.

The process of P.E. teachers working through their standards this year has been very positive and supported the push for collaboration.

CTT will expose all teachers to new and valuable strategies.

Principals with no experience in some grades or content areas can still find ways to support teachers and connect them with the support they desire through CTT.

Miles also pointed out that data elevates all conversations about strategies, resources and curriculum. This is a real benefit for CTT principals.

Participating districts believe quality CTT will improve student performance as all students will have equal access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

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Twenty-three groups are going at the same time during the Monday inservice meetings. They are facilitated by principals, superintendents, BOCES leaders and other key personnel.

The 23 small groups include preschool, kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade, 4th grade, 5th grade, 6th grade, 7-12 language arts, 7-12 math, 7-12 science, 7-12 social studies, K-12 art, K-12 music, K-12 interventionists, physical education, world language, special education, social/emotional special education, business education, family and consumer sciences, agricultural education and counselors.

CTT is currently in the "Assessment Created Collaboratively" cycle. Miles said that at the upcoming Dec. 2 inservice, full unit assessments will be ready.

The cycle continues with "Student Work Completed," "Results Analyzed Collaboratively," "Strategies Shared" and on to "Next Unit Reviewed."

CTT uses the DuFour Model of Professional Learning Communities. It is built around three critical questions:

1. What do we want students to know and be able to do?
2. How will we know when students have learned it?
3. How will we respond when students need remediation or enrichment?

CTT groups look at readiness, endurance, leverage and accountability to decide what is essential.

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They then unwrap the process by circling the verbs, underlining the nouns and double-underlining prepositional phrases. They can also add other implied targets.

For building a quality assessment, the CTT groups evaluate five question areas to determine the validity of their work.

Teachers will collect their own data and house information on a DREAM site.

The site is set to accomplish four goals: easy access to sample curriculum units with the option to re-order, one go-to location for resources, resource building and resource sharing.

CTT inservices have been held Sept. 30 and Oct. 28, and the first assessments will be finished for the Dec. 2 meetings. Assessments will then be administered before the holiday break, with data due back in early January 2014.

When CTT meets Jan. 27, 2014, data will be reviewed and work on the next assessments will begin. The review/assessment cycle will continue on Feb. 24, 2014, and at least three assessments will be created for the April 28, 2014, meeting.

The final CTT target for 2013-14 notes that on May 28, 2014, PK-12 skills will be aligned.

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