

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
Core Curriculum
Secondary Education

LANGUAGE ARTS OFFICE

Meeting
of
Middle School Language Arts Curriculum Council
10 October 2005

M I N U T E S

Schools without Representation

Crystal Lake
Lauderdale Lakes
Lyons Creek

Perry
Plantation

Anita Plummer, Secondary Language Arts Curriculum Specialist, began the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Anita announced that handouts for future meetings, beginning in November, will be available via the CAB Conference. Department Chairpersons will be sent directions on how to access the conference. All handouts should be downloaded and brought to the meeting.

FCAT Writing+ Sample Test

Copies of the FCAT Writing+ sample test book and answer key were included in the folder. Chairpersons were referred to new items that will be added to the test. The new items will require students to combine sentences for logical meaning and sentence fluency.

Anita referred chairpersons to an e-mail that referenced sample test materials. These materials will be delivered to schools October 14, 2005 and will require a signature upon delivery. The shipment will include sample tests and answer keys for the 2006 FCAT Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Science, and Writing+ Assessments.

Schools should use their discretion on how they will use these materials. They can be used to demonstrate what the format of the test looks like, but authentic practice should be embedded in the daily instruction of curriculum.

Minutes, Page 2 Continued

Core Curriculum Issues

Anita received a call from a parent who was concerned with what was presented to her at her child's school Open House. The parent complained that students' instructions would be limited to grammar in isolation and FCAT practice workbooks. She was also led to believe that students are only expected to read one novel, and that there was no classroom library.

Anita asked the chairpersons to remind teachers to focus on teaching the standards and integrating the language arts curriculum to meet the benchmarks. Teachers have the discretion to go beyond the core works and teach additional novels through a variety of strategies such as reader's theatre and literature circles. Grammar mini-lessons should be taught and students should be given an opportunity to apply the skills in their writing. Chairpersons were also encouraged to call Jim Kane if they have not received all of the novels they were entitled to have with the literature adoption. Schools were given two novels per textbook

purchased. Therefore, classroom libraries should not be an issue.

Another opportunity to build classroom libraries school-wide is with Townsend Press, a company that is giving schools the opportunity to purchase books for \$1.00 per book plus free online study guides. Thirty-four different titles are available. Chairs were asked to share the e-mail referencing the information with other teachers and the reading coach at their school.

Discussion ensued about the mini assessments students are required to take. Several teachers have taken the assessment and feel that the questions are not truly aligned to the FCAT Specifications for Reading. The idea of testing students too often is frustrating many students and can affect their true performance.

It was also suggested that the AIP process for recording scores for writing be streamlined. Teachers are required to go through repeated steps to complete the forms. For example, each time a score is recorded, the teacher has to enter the date the assessment was taken. Anita will meet with Bob Elwell to see what can be done in the future.

Literary Fair Coordinators' Meeting

A Literary Fair Coordinators' meeting was held at New River Middle School on October 5, 2005. Coordinators met to discuss guidelines and requirements for the 2006 fair.

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The following schools were represented: Bair, Crystal Lake, Dandy, Falcon Cove, Forest Glen, Glades, Indian Ridge, New River, Perry, Pines, Pioneer, Rickards, Seagul, Silver Lakes, Silver Trail, Westglades, and Westpine.

The Literary Fair Handbook will be sent to Literary Fair Coordinators and Language Arts Department Chairpersons will receive a copy via e-mail.

Writing Contests

The following writing contests are available to middle school students:

1 Kids Love a Mystery

The Kids Love a Mystery contest is a short story writing competition. Teachers should submit no more than three stories per class by pony to Mary Meillier, Magnet Programs Office, 4th floor, K.C. Wright Building, 600 S.E. 3rd Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale. The deadline is October 28, 2005. All participants will be invited to the awards ceremony at Dillard High School on Friday, November 18, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. The winners will receive Eddie Award certificates, publication in a short story anthology, and \$25.00 gift certificates.

2 Letters About Literature

The Letters About Literature and Writing Contest, sponsored by the Florida Center for the Book, requires the students to reflect on a fiction or nonfiction book, short story, poem, or speech (not song lyrics), explore any strong feelings it evoked, and respond to certain questions that help the student explain his/her reactions. Then write a personal letter to the author (not an essay or research paper). The deadline for this contest is December 1, 2005. If there are any questions, teachers can contact Tara Zimmerman at 954-357-7386.

SFWP Fall Conference

South Florida Writing Project is sponsoring its 7th Annual Fall Conference Saturday, November 5, 2005. The conference will begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. Sixteen sessions covering the writing process for

teachers of grade kindergarten through university will be presented. The conference will be held at Nova Southeastern University, 6100 Griffin Road, Davie. The cost of the conference is \$55.00 and teachers can receive nine inservice points. To register, call Synobie Hanna at 800-986-3223, ext. 8602 or 954-262-8602.

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Handouts

“Tapping the potential of teacher read-alouds in middle schools”

“A reluctant writer’s entry into a community of writers”

“It would be fun to do again: Multigenre responses to literature”

Sunshine State Standards Tested on FCAT (Grades 6-8)

FCAT Handbook (download instructions)