

**LAS VIRGENES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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**LAS VIRGENES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
CURRICULUM COUNCIL MEETING**

May 26, 2022

**Present:** Emily Austin, Susana Baird, Bella Bernt, Melissa Brennan, Marnie Davis, Karrie DeMarco, Carina Diana, Dana Dickson, Marlene Didierjean, Dr. Clara Finneran, Dr. Ryan Gleason, Jessica Guenther, Lisa Hatfield, Michelle Hayashida, Christina Heredia, Jeannie Hoffman, Tina Johnson, Laura Kintz, Kelly Lampert, Leslie Martinez, Pam McDonald, Linda Menges, Darci Miller, Courtney Peoples, David Rivas, Michael Robkin, Allison Stein, Lesli Stein, Ashley Wenter, Emily Wigger

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 pm by Dr. Finneran.

*UTK (Universal Transitional Kindergarten) Curriculum Pilot Information*

Ms. Kintz presented a summary of the UTK Curriculum Pilot to the Council. Staff are looking for a comprehensive program, with developmentally-informed practices that will include teaching the California Preschool Learning Foundations and work toward the Kindergarten Content Standards. The TK Curriculum Adoption Committee has decided to pilot the two following curricula and will keep the Council updated on how these pilots are progressing during the 2022-23 school year:

- *Creative Curriculum*
- *Three Cheers for PreK*

*Sources of Strength Program Proposed Adoption*

Sources of Strength is a suicide prevention program that has been well researched and is being utilized in many schools across the country. Dr. Gleason presented the Council with a summary of mental health data, collected this year, which indicates that although the District has been proactive in implementing multiple levels of mental health support for

students, it appears that more and more need continues to emerge. He suggested this could be a positive indication that we have successfully streamlined access and the processes for students to feel more comfortable to reach out for support, however, we want to continue to implement new ways to reach as many students as possible. He shared an overview of Sources of Strength and the vision of this would be implemented in LVUSD. Questions were asked and answered about the program, such as how LVUSD will monitor its success, and a request was made that data continue to be brought back to the Council as the program is rolled out and becomes available. If approved by the Council and the Board, LVUSD will launch this in fall, 2022. Teachers Gerald Pickett (AHS) and Kristen Lapiner (CHS) have committed to being key support persons for this program which has been vetted and presented to additional committees, including Pathways and Safety/Wellness Committees.

**Approval of Sources of Strength**

**Motion to Approve: Emily Wigger**

**Second: Marnie Davis**

**Approved Unanimously**

*High School Leadership Curriculum Proposed Adoption for the ASB (Associated Student Body) Leadership Classes*

Dr. Finneran introduced AHS Assistant Principal Ashley Wenter to share about the proposed high school leadership curriculum adoption on behalf of CHS and AHS. Ms. Wenter explained that high schools have recognized the need to broaden their ASB leadership curriculum and create experiences for students that can teach them the principles of collaboration, school management, fiscal considerations, and more. By expanding the curriculum in leadership classes, they will provide students with the skills to help them lead change and more successfully reach all students on their campuses. Student representative Bella Bernt expressed support, and added that by providing this type of instruction, they will more effectively focus on different topics each week or month, expanding their knowledge to become better leaders and to better represent the students on their campuses. This curriculum will address these needs, and create spaces where students can be mentored, and learn to be successful and confident leaders.

**Approval of the High School Leadership Curriculum for ASB Classes**

**Motion to Approve: Melissa Brennan**

**Second: Dana Dickson**

**Approved Unanimously**

*6th-12th Grade ELA (English Language Arts) Core Book List Proposed Additions*

Dr. Finneran shared background relevant to the request to update the core 6th-12th grade ELA book lists. For the past several years, the District has been engaged in conversations with

stakeholders about the values driving the District’s work, and staff proposed and the Board adopted Social Justice Standards as well as a policy on equity. Approximately \$250,000 was spent on expanding school library and classroom library collections to reflect the Social Justice Standards, and staff have continued working with the Standards and have received ongoing training. LVUSD recognizes it serves a diverse community, and we send our students into an even more diverse, interconnected world. Since the diversity of our student population may not mirror the worlds they may enter or work in, the more bridges, windows, and mirrors we’re able to provide to our students, the better. Having books that reflect not only the experiences of our students, but the experiences of others, will increase empathy, understanding, and enable our students to be more prepared to contribute to the world at large.

Our 6-12th grade English teachers developed a checklist based on multiple other checklists (from the American Libraries Association and other school districts) in order to have criteria whereby they could evaluate additions to the 6-12 core book list. The proposed short list of additional books would be added to the already existing core book list that has over 200 books on it. The District would like this process to continue once or twice per year in order to continue to supplement and update our core book lists. The 6-12 Grade Core Book Adoption Committee presented a thoughtful and thorough recap of their efforts, including numerous meetings, many conversations, and reading and evaluating the books. There were a few questions and comments from Council members, such as questions regarding the concepts of “diversity” and “representation.” The Book Adoption Committee members clarified that the entire core book list is intended to include authors of various races, ethnicities and backgrounds as well as characters and plots that vary, providing opportunities for students to see both themselves and others. Additionally, the Committee members explained that there are statewide ELA standards that they teach, and that they consistently consider the standards while vetting materials. Several Curriculum Council members explained that they supported the book additions and their alignment with the District’s values and recent work around the Social Justice Standards.

**Approval of the 6th-12th Grade ELA Core Book List Proposed Additions**

**Motion to Approve: Christina Heredia**

**Second: Karrie DeMarco**

**Approved Unanimously**

Dr. Finneran briefly elaborated on the LVUSD process for pilot and curriculum adoptions. She explained that every 5-7 years, the District works with state guidance when frameworks have been disseminated, and when the books that align with those frameworks and have been state approved, become available. At that time, the District considers that curricula. However, this state process has become more and more delayed, so LVUSD has become increasingly innovative and self-sufficient in an effort to keep our adoption processes timely and current.

*6th-12th Grade Foreign Language Pilot Information*

The World Language curriculum needs to be updated, given that it has not been adopted in over

six years. Our Spanish curriculum (Que Chevere) was last adopted in 2015 and Version 1 is being discontinued. Teachers met multiple times regarding new materials and would like to pilot two programs, Vista and Carnegie Learning, for one year. This curriculum will benefit students in grades 6 through 12 in our world language programs, which have increasing numbers of students.

#### *Digital Movie Making Middle School Course Reintroduced*

Ms. Baird presented this course to the Committee. It is a middle school course focused on digital production which was utilized approximately 6 years ago for a few years. ACS would like to re-engage this course. It will be a feeder to our high school program and prepare students for the Broadcast Production pathway at CHS. Digital Movie Making will allow students to experience all facets of digital movie creations. They will learn how to work with lighting, cameras, and software editing. Students will partake in content creation, including script writing, reporting, videography, coding, and learn the computer skills to understand what goes into creating digital projects.

#### *Competition Class Middle School Proposed Pilot Project*

Dr. Finneran presented the middle school competition class pilot item which will be a course offered as an elective next year for grades 6-8 at AEW. Middle school staff have witnessed a resurgence of interest from students for a course that prepares and encourages them in competitions. Inspired by the award-winning *Odyssey of the Mind* lunch club, this class will span grades 6-8, and promote teamwork and cross-age bonding in a fun, educational way. Examples of these competitions may include: *Odyssey of the Mind*, *Mathletes*, and *Speech and Debate*. There are various curricula resources available, including a few books recommended by *Odyssey of the Mind*, as well as materials from *The New York Times* and NPR, some of which include lesson plans. This pilot does not require a vote from the Council, but in alignment with Curriculum Council bylaws, the District will keep the Council apprised on how the pilot is progressing during the upcoming year.

Dr. Finneran thanked the Council for their time and participation this year. She reported that the agenda items that were voted on will go to the Board for approval on June 14. She shared that over 20 persons have applied to fill the upcoming community member vacancies on the Council, and that they would be finalized this summer, replacing those members who have completed their 2 years of service. Ms. Menges and Ms. Stein thanked the members for their time on the Council in service of students.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 pm.