

## **A Team Approach to Curriculum Renewal**

The Council Rock curriculum renewal process used to choose the new, comprehensive elementary Reading, Writing and Language Arts program was outstandingly demonstrated using a bottom-up analytical investigation committee. Renewing curriculum is critical to the district's commitment to ongoing academic improvement that supports student success.

Because Council Rock's Literacy Program had been in place since 1999, it was not well aligned to current state standards or fully meeting the needs of students. In 2009, Joy McClendon (Director of Elementary/Curriculum Services), Pat Erickson (English and Language Arts Coordinator), and representative teachers and literacy specialists from every elementary school in the district began a thorough investigative search of a variety of programs from different publishing companies. The first step in the search was to get in touch and collaborate with surrounding school districts (Centennial, Central Bucks, Pennsbury, Penridge and Neshaminy) that were also looking to put new programs in place.

During the 2009-10 school year, publishers from ten companies met with the curriculum renewal team and in the spring of 2010, the committee voted to explore four of the ten programs. In October 2010, the committee was expanded to investigate these four programs in depth. Teachers met with the publishers, were given sample materials to share with their colleagues, and were able to access components of the programs online. By spring 2010, two of the four programs were eliminated.

To allow all the elementary teachers who would eventually implement the program to participate in the final selection, sample materials were displayed in teacher lounges and principals devoted faculty and grade level meeting time to give teachers the chance to review them. Teachers were also able to take materials home for review. By the end of May 2010, teachers voted online for the most effective program. By a vote of 60% to 40%, "Journeys" was the selected program.

By this time teachers were so familiar with the program that thirty teachers volunteered to pilot the program during the 2011-12 school year. "Journeys" publisher, Harcourt/Houghton Mifflin, allowed Council Rock to pilot materials at no cost.

This curriculum renewal process, which included not only the curriculum coordinators and administrators, but also the teachers who would be using the materials daily, is very different from the top down approach that is common to other school districts. Having teachers so involved in the decision-making process takes time, but vastly increases the chances of a curriculum's success. Citizens For Education applauds all the curriculum coordinators and administrators who, instead of dictating mandated curriculum, spearheaded a team approach that will significantly benefit the district's students.

For more information about "Journeys," see article on page XX.