

Collaborative Curriculum Design Testimonials

Tina Hiatt: 5th Grade CCD Team Member

As a fifth grade teacher having taught in SRCS for the past 27 years, I relished the idea of being part of a collaborative group of teachers who would initiate the writing of standards-based, integrated units of study for the district. Our fifth grade group of teachers, composed of the most dedicated professionals you could imagine, set upon a journey that tied us together for several years. Our group may have been one of the only groups that stayed together throughout the entire journey. Each one of us brought our own experiences, expertise and frame of reference to the group when we collaborated.

We spent endless hours creating, what we believe, is a unique version of a fifth grade year, tied together with clever and motivating essential questions to guide the students. Each unit of study, a combination of not only literacy standards, but extremely interactive activities that allow students at SRCS the opportunity to engage with their learning in a way that doesn't happen solely using curriculum workbooks and textbooks. We scavenged every resource we had experience with, as well as researched new experiences, that would specifically integrate science and social studies with literacy.

The units evolved into something much greater and much more elaborate than we could have imagined. As we wrote the units we taught them and then discussed what worked and what we adjusted for our own student populations. We engaged in the very discussions that we wanted our students to engage in. We were excited to teach and excited to share our work with our staff at our sites. And I believe that is when we realized that what we had created was not just an experience for our students, but an experience for ourselves. Towards the end of the process I realized the significance of this experience for me personally.

Thank you SRCS for allowing your teachers to come together professionally and create. You honored us and you honored our time and there is much to be proud of in this work. I believe this work will need revisiting and revising, and like every class brings a new lens to our teaching, so will this work. I am hopeful that because of the success of the elementary units of study, the district will find more ways to bring elementary staff together, through professional development, to continue a collaborative process of

talking about our student's needs and our student's work. Thank you for this great experience, that was not only personally fulfilling to me, but loved by my students. Trusting teachers to do this work and collaborate in this particular way was my first experience in this district in 27 years. I am hopeful that these types of experiences will continue in SRCS. Let us continue to promote this work (and actively allow feedback opportunities and revision) with all of our teachers and principals so that the collaborative efforts of these units stay alive in every school.

Kim Solomon: Kinder Academy CCD Team Member

I wanted to share a couple of things that I have noticed this year with my class. First, I have more second language learners this year and I really see the benefits of the vocabulary section and the showcase. I have watched my one student who did not speak English at the start of the year go from just modeling what the other students say to now sharing her own ideas. It has been really great. I have also learned that teaching at a distance is very hard, but that the CCD units are helping me to continue many of the great topics they cover. I was finding that I was needing items from my classroom which is not allowed. When I went to do one of my CCD units I realized everything I need is one the site. It has really helped. Lastly, I have seen my class take more interest in science and social studies.

Julia Cooper: Principal, Helen Lehman Elementary School

As the principal of Helen Lehman Elementary School, I have found observing the CCD units to be especially rewarding. These units utilize best teaching practices and strategies, as well as connecting several of our curricula in meaningful ways. For instance, before spring break, I had the pleasure to watch a fourth-grade class engaged in the study of the Earth's Patterns (4th grade, CCD Unit 4). In this particular activity, students watched an engaging clip from Mystery Science that showed historical examples of mudslides, explored what leads to a mudslide, and what strategies can be used to help prevent one. Throughout the lesson, students engaged in individual, pair, and whole-group conversations and were ultimately asked to solve a real-world issue (how to save a house that is situated in a mudslide zone). Students were thoroughly

engaged and truth be told, I was reluctant to leave even after an hour, because, I too, was so curious as to what the students' solutions would be.

This is not an isolated event, whether the students are studying bizarre weather, fragile ecosystems, citizenship, or ancient civilizations, students are engaged in meaningful work that is both student-centered and applicable to the world they live in today. The fact that these engaging units were created by our very own teachers, who know and love their students best, is especially gratifying.

Anne West: 3rd Grade Teacher *(transcribed from a video statement)*

“The CCD units are really well-written. I really appreciate how the people that wrote the lessons are teachers themselves and they really understood what we needed. And there are plenty of supplies. You could go in any unit and find things you could pick and choose from because there is so much. You can’t do it all, but you can pick and choose it to get to that final assessment and what you're working for. And then those final assessments are fantastic whether the kids are writing a persuasive speech for what a citizen can do or whether they are creating a Native American village or thinking about where their own people came from, their own heritage and how that is represented now in Sonoma County. Just, I really appreciate the CDD units and I think it helps me to be a better teacher.”

Cynthia Spigarelli: 3rd Grade Teacher *(transcribed from a video statement)*

“One thing I love and the students love is that it is about learning something real that they can really sink their teeth into and feel like they are learning something. When they go home and their parents ask them, “What did you learn in school today?”, they have an answer. “I learned about those parts of a flower that help them survive, or I learned about the branches of government.” Another thing I love about the CCD units is that I can incorporate literature, writing, art, performance and especially the end of unit projects, the presentation pieces where students can create a product that relates to the theme and then present it to their classmates. And, that is especially rewarding, a skill they need for the future. Another thing I really like about the CCD units is that they are

content driven. They are especially good for our second language learners because learning English Language through content is a research proven method for learning language.”

Angelica Moreno: 1st Grade Teacher *(transcribed from a video statement)*

“Our CCD units have helped us zone in and focus on our ELA standards and get a better understanding of how to use those in the different disciplines.

Using our Inquiry Focus as a guide really helps me – and the students – and also displaying or posting those essential learning outcomes for the kids so they have a better understanding of what our goal is and where we are heading with those.

I can think of some examples that really stand out of the different units we have used that really stand out. Unit 2, the Earth’s Place in the Universe, we have taken our moon charts home and the kids have shared those with our families so those have been wonderful to let the parents get a better understanding of how we are using them in the classroom as well.

And the Keep Out Boxes ---in Unit 4, Nature’s Super Powers---- are always a success for the kids. They work in teams, as best as they can in First Grade. Those have all been a success.

And the links, and the book titles, and the great bank of knowledge our CCD team has created for us really help facilitate when we need those resources to plug into all the different areas. So they have been wonderful.”