

Educator task force outlines areas of emphasis for the new school year

Following more than a year of tremendous changes in education that included new curriculum, a new way of testing students, and specific guidelines on spending state money for student success, Chino Valley Unified School District teachers and administrators asked “where are we going to head in light of all these changes?”

The result was the creation of a 15-member Teaching and Learning Task Force to provide clarity to all staff regarding focus areas for the 2015-2016 school year, assure alignment of professional development, and assure professional development support for areas of emphasis.

The task force, looking at what other districts are emphasizing, and using feedback from Chino Valley teachers who took surveys last spring, developed the following areas of emphasis at both the elementary and secondary (junior high and high school) levels:

- Students, teachers, site administrators and district office personnel will form positive relationships with students, staff, colleagues, parents and community members through collaboration and transparency
- Use of the four Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity)
- Students will demonstrate appropriate behavior in all settings
- Common Core updates will be taught in English Language Arts and Math
- Students and teachers will use the district’s new Office 365, including email, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint

In addition, elementary students will receive feedback about their assessments, and secondary students (junior high and high school) will work on the Next Generation Science Standards.

The Task Force has also created an action plan for the areas of emphasize, detailing what students, teachers, site administrators, and the district office will do towards those goals. The plan also provides dates for professional development toward the goals.

The Task Force said that indicators of success for students on the Common Core updates would include effectively answering text-dependent questions, completing performance tasks, and providing evidence from text in a variety of subject areas.

Task Force members, who gave a presentation on the goals at the Sept. 3 Board of Education meeting, said they will continue to refine the areas of emphasis and indicators of success, and use that for a basis for the 2016-2017 school year.

Many of the Task Force members commended district officials for giving educators the opportunity to talk about goals for the school year.

“It’s an exciting time in our district to be heard,” Eagle Canyon Elementary School teacher Helene Everhart, one of the Task Force members, said.

Dickson Elementary School Principal Bob Whale, another Task Force member, said communication throughout the district is key to the success of the plan. “The single biggest problem with

communication is the illusion that it is taking place,” Whale said, quoting the late Nobel Prize-winning playwright George Bernard Shaw.

Whale said he has enjoyed the “synergy of the process.”

Special Education teacher Denise Deloria said the Task Force is also working on developing a communication plan for parents to get their input on areas of emphasis.

Board member James Na and student board representative Shweta Shah asked that the Task Force consider adding an emphasis on character-building in the plan.

Trustee Andrew Cruz said input on the plan is needed from all school site staff members: teachers, nutrition services, clerical, bus drivers, and custodial.

Board member Sylvia Orozco said she was glad to hear the Task Force members speak at the Sept. 3 meeting and to see that “everyone is on board.”

“I believe that this group is going to do great things,” she said.

Chino Hills City Councilman Art Bennett, who represents the city at school board meetings, commended the Task Force for its work.

“Hearing the report, tells me the district is doing things like a successful business,” Chino Hills City Councilman Art Bennett said. “Chino Valley Unified School District is clearly one of the best school districts around.”

Other Task Force members are: Deputy Superintendent Norm Enfield, who facilitates the meetings; teachers Stephanie Farmakis (Rolling Ridge Elementary), Heather Lord (English language arts, Don Lugo High), Bei Collins (math, Ayala High), Kelly Larned (science, Magnolia Junior High); Associated Chino Teachers President Todd Hancock; principals Sharyn MacCharles (Townsend Junior High), Felix Melendez (Chino High); Dan Sosa, Director of Elementary Curriculum; Don Jones, Director of Secondary Curriculum; Grace Lee, Director of Professional Development; and consultants Joel Shapiro and Joann Merrick of Pivot Learning Partners.