

Monday Focus

September 24, 2007

Teacher of the Month—Carolyn Klein! Congratulations to Carolyn, environmental science teacher, who was nominated by her co-teacher **Colleen Stavinoha**. Colleen said of Carolyn, “I have always admired her devotion to her students and her work ethic. Since I’ve had the pleasure of co-teaching with her the past 3 weeks, I am in total awe of her.” She went on to describe Carolyn as being “energetic” and “positive in the classroom” every day. Carolyn was also praised for the way in which she checks for her students’ learning and circles back for re-teaching or reinforcement. Carolyn is not only a great teacher, but also serves as the science director. This is Carolyn’s eighth year at Westside where she has built the environmental science program into one of the top in the state.

Silent Reading Time One of the most powerful tools available to a teacher is silent sustained reading (SSR). One of the areas of focus for us this year is improving our students’ reading skills. That can only happen if students are reading. A goal this year is to have each student read ten minutes twice a week in each class. This reading can be a close reading of the text with a literacy strategy attached (one of various note-taking strategies would be appropriate). If nothing else, a guiding question followed by reading does wonders. Though you might feel this is “wasted” time, try it and see if your student’s comprehension doesn’t increase with more time on task.

Walk-Throughs, Walk-Throughs Everywhere Some of you have commented about the frequency of walk-throughs this year. We are trying to get an early start to the process so that we can better gauge what Westside is doing in terms of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction. We will be starting a new type of WT next week as **directors** will be conducting anonymous WT’s of teachers’ classrooms. These walk-throughs will not have teachers’ names attached, but instead only name the teacher’s department. The walk-through will have four categories of observation: evidence of positive climate, evidence of best practices, what the teacher was doing, and what the students were doing. Each category will have a number of possible boxes to check for the observer. A copy of the observation will be left with the teacher. The other copy will be brought back for a no-names discussion by directors and me. The goal is to give the team a better idea about what is working well and where we could focus our energy for growth.

Comings and Goings Please help me welcome **Carla Roberson** to our team. Carla is taking **Lauren Smith-Marti’s** place in the East 1 English position. Lauren is taking an extended maternity leave. Carla is joining us from Revere MS where she also taught English. Special thanks go to **Rob MacGregor** and **Tracy Golden-Cole** for yeoman’s work in keeping the classroom up-to-speed in a teacher’s absence the first four weeks. **Roxanne Diaz** has left for Fort Bend ISD where she will be a middle-school counselor. We are looking for her replacement, whom we intend to hire by the middle of next week. The CTE department will be involved in the hiring process, so if you know someone, please let **Yolande McCall** or **Noelle Stockman** know.

Showing the Love I would like to thank **Andrea Barras** and **Rita Lopez** for their work to acknowledge birthdays and significant events with cards and notices from the main office. This type of work is important to staff morale and the work sometimes goes un-thanked—though never un-noticed.

Curriculum Team Foci Yes, I used the word foci in print. Linguistic purist may want to pillory me for suggesting that it is possible to have more than one focus. But for the our CT’s it is necessary for us to have our eyes on more than one ball. CT’s must start with their core purpose: improving student learning. This is done by team planning, work on assessments, and the examination of teacher practice. These practices must be built into the meeting schedule as different types of meetings, each its own topic of the day. Though this purpose alone would be worthy of our time and energy, it is not enough. Simultaneously, we must also look at the processes that guide our work. All CT work should be aimed at building teacher leadership and strengthening teacher voice. Ask your CT this question on Thursday, “What practices does our team use that build teacher efficacy?”

Who have you thanked this week?

Calendar of Events

- Tue Sept 25** **Fire Drill, TBA**
Make sure to have taken roll and to take your attendance sheets with you. Keep your Red Folder. Review procedures with all classes, if you haven't already done so.
- FR/JV Volleyball vs. Chavez, WHS Gym, 5 PM**
- Wed Sept 26** **SDMC/FAC Meetings, Principal's Conference Rm., 3:30 PM**
- Varsity Volleyball vs. Lee, Butler Fieldhouse, 6:30 PM**
- Thur Sept 27** **ASPIRE Training, 3 Sessions, Mandatory Attendance**
This is the District's new initiative. It is imperative that all staff attend so that we can all be informed about our part in the system.
Curriculum teams should attend as a group, then work together around their meeting.
Check your e-mail for your assigned times.
Check with Anne-Elise Richards if you have questions.
Next Thursday is a Department/CT meeting
- Curriculum Team Meetings, Dept. Rooms, 7:45 AM – 9:15 AM**
Ask the CT the Focus Question.
Start working on your Benchmarks. These need to be typed into Campus On-Line so that results can be disaggregated. See Helen for help on COL.
- Fri Sept 28** **FR Football vs. Milby, WHS, 4:30 PM**
- Varsity Volleyball vs. Sam Houston, Delmar Fieldhouse, 8 PM**
- LESSON PLANS POSTED ONLINE**
If you have problems, see a technology teacher in your small school or see Helen.
- Sat Sept 29** **Varsity Football vs. Milby, Butler Stadium, 7:30 PM**