



Belmond-Klemme Community School District

Curriculum and School Improvement News

~ January, 2010 Joint Statement ~

It's been a busy year at Belmond-Klemme in the curriculum and school improvement department! In total, we have more than fifty (50) people working in the area of school improvement spread out among eighteen (18) active committees. Even though we are all working under the curriculum "umbrella," fifty-plus people all meeting at different times and locations for different purposes can make coordination and communication difficult in a district our size. Detailing the work each group is doing both within and outside the district is a critical component to our district vision / mission. To that end, I have developed a system of reporting out that brings together all the various school improvement initiatives. The foundation of that system relies on regular communication through the use of "joint statements." Below is the first joint statement of 2010 and will be followed by others as we near the end of the school year. Before teachers and student leave in June, there are several significant issues impacting our 2010-2011 school year that need to be worked out. The following statement updates our progress in school improvement so far since we started in July of 2009. As always, please do not hesitate to call, stop by, or e-mail with questions or concerns. I would be happy to discuss any aspect of school improvement here at B-K!

Thank you,

Mike Thompson

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TOPICS ADDRESSED IN THIS JOINT STATEMENT:

1. District Professional Development – **page 2**
2. A follow up on B-K's Department of Education accreditation and equity visit last spring – **pages 2 & 3**
3. Information from our School Improvement Advisory Council – **page 3**
4. Details from both building leadership teams as well as progress in our district leadership team – **page 4**
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6. Jacobson Elementary & progress with "School in Need of Assistance" requirements – **page 5 & 6**
7. Iowa Core Curriculum group reports (Literacy, Math, Science, and 21st Century Skills – **page 6 & 7**
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I. 2009-2010 Professional Development

Professional development at Belmond-Klemme this year is focusing on two separate initiatives:

- A) Instructional Decision Making (IDM): Since August, all teachers have received training in how to use student data to guide their instruction. When used in cooperation together, state and local test results, classroom performance, and direct observation of students are all examples of tools we can use to make education more individualized and responsive to student need. Our work in IDM, when implemented properly, will change the way teachers teach and learners learn at B-K. Discussions concerning how we can move forward in the IDM process during 2010-2011 professional development are currently underway.
- B) Technology: After Mr. Jacobson's generous donation of Promethean Board / ActivInspire software technology last spring, the next step for B-K was to design professional development to support the use of that new technology. In doing so, two priorities were established:
1. Make the classroom more interactive for both students and teachers.
 2. Provide more diversified/ differentiated instruction for our students.

The technology-related professional development activities at B-K this year were structured around the work of educational researcher Robert Marzano and his book, "Classroom Instruction that Works."

In order to provide our teachers with the best possible training, they were divided into separate groups. At the elementary level, we established three groups based on grade level. In the Junior/Senior High, groups were established by the instructor's level of skill in technology. After receiving intense instruction over Promethean technology this past summer, each group was assigned a lead teacher trainer. The trainers work with their groups during various early dismissals as well as after school. The training is intense and follows the course syllabus established by B-K and Grandview University. Grandview is not only providing technical assistance but is also offering graduate credit for those teachers that signed up for additional training. Our goal at the end of the training is that the teachers will be able to create, present, and utilize data from interactive student responses that will assist us with our ultimate goal of increasing student achievement.

II. Update: Site Visit Compliance

After Belmond-Klemme's accreditation and equity site visit last year, the state department found several issues in need of attention. Overall, the accreditation aspect of the visit focused on Iowa code to determine if the district was following Iowa law governing how K-12 districts operate. The equity component addressed any issues the district may have with federal laws dealing with affirmative action, equal opportunity in employment, equity in programs and extra-curricular activities, and non-discrimination policies (to name a few). In a visit with the Belmond-Klemme school board earlier this year, Wilma Gajdel from the Iowa Department of Education stated,

“The issues cited in the report are a product of the last ten to twelve years. They didn’t happen overnight and therefore won’t be fixed overnight. Many issues require a look at the entire system and how B-K does business; you’ve got a great start to address the matters in the report. Now those efforts need to continue not only this year but in years to come.”

An action plan to address each non-compliance was created that provided information regarding what specifically needs to be done to fix the problem, the individual responsible for addressing each matter, and a timeline set by the Department of Education (DE) outlining when documentation showing that each issue has been fixed should be sent to the DE. As the Curriculum Director, Mike Thompson was put in charge of overseeing the accreditation portion of the plan and the district Superintendent, Larry Frakes, was tasked with overseeing equity.

Next week on Friday, February 5th, Department of Education officials are coming back to B-K to check on our progress toward meeting the DE timeline and mandates. Look for a detailed report of their findings to be sent out on Monday, February 8th.

III. Belmond-Klemme’s School Improvement Advisory Council (SIAC)

All school districts in the state of Iowa are required to have an active SIAC. A SIAC is made up of teachers, students, parents, community representatives, area business owners, district administration, Area Education Agency (AEA) representation, and school board members. All stakeholders are required to meet at minimum twice annually to discuss various district issues and school improvement matters at Belmond-Klemme. This provides an opportunity for the district to receive input from the community regarding the quality of education B-K provides as well as a chance for the community to have an immediate impact on how we do business. Ultimately, the SIAC reports directly to the school board and can make recommendations concerning programs and district policy.

So far this year, topics of discussion have included student achievement, school finance, district budget issues, and general observations regarding the quality of education being provided. If anyone has an interest in serving on the SIAC, or has information to share concerning the district, feel free to contact any SIAC representative below:

2009-2010 Belmond-Klemme School Improvement Advisory Committee Members:

Teachers: David Hildebrand (General Ed., Jr./Sr. High Math) & Judy Larson (Special Education, Jacobson Elementary)

Parents / Community: Joni Worden, Deb Abel, Tony Andrews, Mark Soma, and Dan Lovgren

District Administration: Larry Frakes – Superintendent, Roy Frakes – Jr./Sr. High, & Mike Thompson – Jacobson Elementary Administration / Curriculum Director

Student Representation: Justin Meyer & Dana Christensen

AEA Representation: Stacie Stokes, School Consultant, AEA 267

Belmond-Klemme School Board Representation: Jim Swenson & Sue Berkland

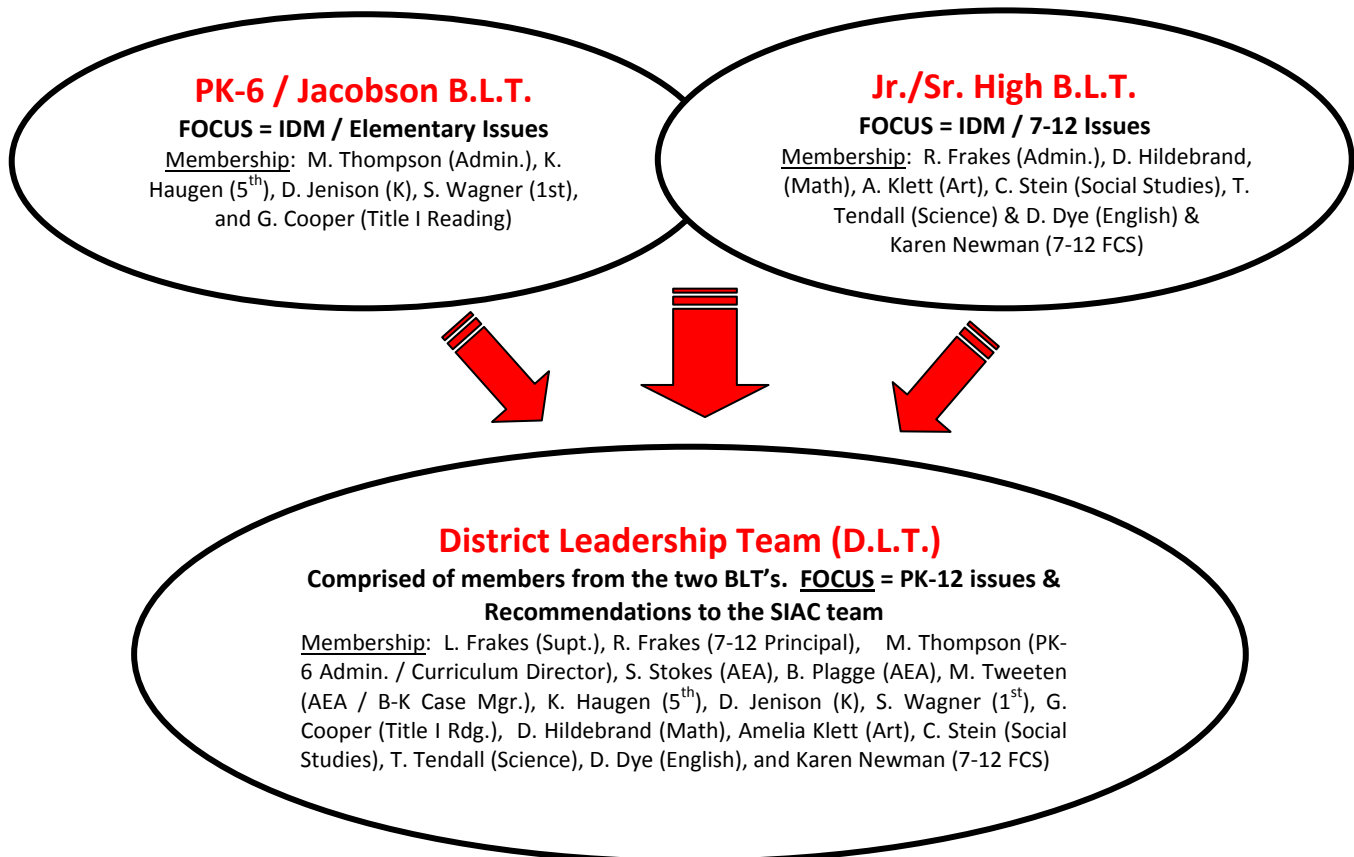
IV. Building and District Leadership Teams – Purpose and Function

There are two attendance centers in the Belmond-Klemme CSD – Richard O. Jacobson Elementary and the Jr./Sr. High School. Each center has its own independent building leadership team (BLT) made up from teachers working in that building. Typically teams meet and discuss issues specific to their facility that often include professional development, rules/policies affecting both teachers and students, and various other “big picture” issues. Many times, our BLT members serve on other functioning district committees both as building representatives but also as content / grade level advisors. Often times they are the “ambassadors” for reaching out to the full staff and are the first individuals that district administration often goes to when discussing a district issue. Service on a BLT is completely voluntary and is open to any teacher.

Occasionally, we bring both BLT’s together to discuss a district wide issue. Doing so allows the consultation of a *district* leadership team (DLT). Currently the main issue our DLT has been working on has been implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum, or ICC (see an explanation of what the Iowa Core Curriculum is and how it impacts students at B-K in the Iowa Core section on pages 6 & 7).

Recently the team spent Wednesday, January 13th writing the initial self study for the ICC implementation plan. The self study provided us with a realistic snapshot of where we are at as a district when it comes to merging the broad components of the ICC with our local curriculum here at B-K. Our goal is that by July 1, 2010, we will have a functioning K-12 plan detailing how B-K will fully implement the ICC over the course of the next four years.

Building and District Leadership Team Representation – 2009-2010



V. Data Analysis through Swift Knowledge at Belmond-Klemme

Using data as a basis for making decisions has been a part of the business world for a long time. Just like any private institution, school district's have no shortage of raw data: state and district test scores, individual classroom grades, attendance, office referrals, school budget, state generated taxing and funding formulas, etc. etc. The amount of data that a school district generates annually requiring analysis is substantial.

Some of the more important data schools need to pay attention to are their student test scores. Under current federal legislation, district-wide exams like the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) not only play a role in a student's future entrance into college, they are also used by state and federal officials as the sole factor in determining the effectiveness of a school. Like it or not, high stakes testing is a reality in the K-12 world.

To assist in the analysis of data, our district (like most) has multiple years of ITBS and ITED data stored electronically in a state database called "Swift Knowledge." Swift Knowledge is a web-based system that can be used to sift through, pull together, and organize data in a variety of ways. This data can then be more efficiently analyzed based upon student groups and subgroups to inform classroom instruction.

The district 'Swift Knowledge' team members include Kyle Kriz (7-12 Science), Kyle Weis (7-12 Science), Judy Larson (Elementary Special Education), Trish Morris (Technology Director), Marcia Tweeten (AEA 267), Connie Suntken (6th Grade), and Mike Thompson (Curriculum / Admin.).

The purpose of the 'Swift Knowledge' team is to perform statistic analysis of district testing data. At this time we are pulling together and analyzing the past three years of ITBS / ITED (1st – 12th grade) data and are about three fourths complete. This data has and will continue to be important as we work through the Instructional Decision-Making process. This process requires teachers to look at our early data for use in determining which students are in need of more specialized instruction.

The next steps for our team include wrapping up the final tabulations, data sorting, and continuing with the analysis portion of the data. As 2010 ITBS/ITED data becomes available, it too will be included in our annual review as will other assessment sources.

VI. Progress Toward Meeting School in Need of Assistance (SINA) Goals

Back in September of 2009, a note was mailed home to every household in Jacobson Elementary informing parents of Jacobson's "School in Need of Assistance" status stemming from low ITBS scores. Since that time, a number of activities have taken place at Jacobson to address SINA requirements:

- A team of teachers have been working since early September looking at every aspect of the education we provide at Belmond-Klemme. Teaching strategies, student assessments, data analysis, and time spent on math and reading instruction have been, and continue to be, our main focus.

- We have developed a two year plan consisting of various actions and activities designed to improve instruction. The plan is currently in its final stages of completion and will soon be submitted to the Department of Education for approval. Once final approval has been given, the plan will be shared with the full staff, community, and school board.
- The SINA team that designed the action plan will play an integral role in developing professional development next year. Quality professional development and student achievement have always gone hand in hand.
- Current SINA Team Membership: Jennifer Tenold (Kindergarten), Lavon Tanner (1st Grade), Marcia Burt (2nd Grade), Joleen Smith (3rd Grade), Chris Mallen (4th Grade), Krista Dickman (5th Grade), and Ruth Johnson (6th Grade), Marcia Tweeten (AEA / B-K Case Mgr.), Deb Zebill (AEA), Stacie Stokes (AEA), and Mike Thompson (Admin. / Curriculum).

VII. The Iowa Core Curriculum

Students at Belmond-Klemme and in Iowa deserve an education that helps them succeed in today's technology rich, global economy. The Iowa Core Curriculum (also known as Model Core Curriculum) assists Iowa schools in delivering that education.

It does so by helping teachers take learning to a deeper level and by focusing on a well-researched set of essential concepts and skills in literacy, math, science, social studies, and 21st century learning skills (civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills). The Core Curriculum is not course-based, but rather is a student-based approach that supports high expectations for all students.

Passed by the Iowa legislature and signed into law by Governor Chet Culver in spring 2008, the Iowa Core Curriculum builds on our state's long history of community leadership in education and relies on partners across the state for implementation in high schools by 2012 and in elementary and middle schools by 2014.

Belmond-Klemme has created ICC teacher committees for each ICC area (literacy, math, science, social studies, and 21st century learning skills). The following details their work in each group:

LITERACY: (Kendra Haugen – 5th Grade & Wendy Niccum – Junior High English)

The ICC literacy group has been meeting once per month. Every other month our meetings switch from full days at Clear Lake with the AEA, to internet webinars back in Belmond. This way we are not out of the district as often. There are many members of our group from various school districts in the area including K-12 teachers and administrators. This class focuses on the "Characteristics of Effective Instruction within the context of literacy as defined in the Iowa Core Curriculum."

The largest majority of our time has been spent on "Write to Learn" strategies. These strategies focus on using various forms of writing to enhance the learning in the classroom. Students are asked to write short, focused responses to various prompts. These prompts are used by the classroom teacher

to make instructional decisions regarding a student's ability to comprehend any given subject. This type of assignment gives a deeper look into a student's level of understanding of a topic as opposed to a standard multiple choice type question. They allow all students to respond at their level which gives the teacher a better chance to see what knowledge has been retained.

MATH (Jim Meyer – 5th Grade & Josh Wessels – Junior High Math)

SCIENCE: (Paula Jenison – 4th Grade & Teresa Tendall – Junior High Science)

We have been working on characteristics of effective instruction in mathematics and science through the use of problem based instructional tasks (math) and inquiry-based learning (science). Each month in Clear Lake we work on a new task and discuss what strategies we have used in the classroom as well as methods to improve instruction. The idea is to use real life situations or problems relevant to the student's life. This will hopefully allow students to understand how the application of both math and science skills in their everyday lives does have a purpose.

21st Century Skills: (Diana Mennenga – Jr./Sr. High & Theresa Reiter – Teacher Librarian)

The goal of this training is to help schools transition into the 21st century in regards to technology literacy as well as to how to teach students the essential concepts and skills needed to be successful in school, work, and life. The title of the coursework is "Shift Control" and is being presented in part by Dr. Scott McLeod from the Center for the Advanced Study of Technology Leadership in Education at Iowa State University.

One theme highlighted in the course is how many schools across the country are currently training students for simple routine tasks, many of which are being phased out in the United States. Automation and outsourcing to foreign countries are issues across many job markets. Work that requires more abstract thinking and greater skills in technology are jobs currently in high demand.

VIII. Race to the Top!

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 was a federal economic stimulus package enacted in February 2009. A portion of these funds were allocated for education. This included \$4.35 billion for the *Race to the Top Fund*, a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform. Additionally, states that establish priorities around achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in education reform could be in line for additional dollars.

Iowa has completed its application for the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top grant. The Iowa Department of Education submitted the grant application by the Tuesday, January 19, 2010 deadline. The U.S. Department of Education has said it will announce in April which of the 41 states that applied in the first application round will receive funding.

Belmond-Klemme has applied for Race to the Top dollars with the Iowa Department of Education, although not every school in Iowa did. Approximately 40% of Iowa school districts

declined to apply citing a lack of information from state and federal education officials. Schools that did apply needed to receive approval from the district's teachers union as well as the local school board. Look for more information in May regarding B-K's application and the rules regarding how Race to the Top dollars can be spent.

IX. The Microsoft Settlement

The Iowa School Microsoft Settlement program is the result of the 2007 settlement of a class-action lawsuit brought by Iowa consumers and businesses concerning certain Microsoft software. According to the settlement, Iowa schools would receive a portion of the funds not claimed by consumers. The value of the funds will be distributed through vouchers for software and hardware products to eligible schools. Based on free/reduced lunch rates, approximately 75 percent of Iowa's public school buildings will be eligible to participate in the program. Belmond-Klemme's portion of the Microsoft settlement (based on building enrollment) is \$132,672.29.

In order to take advantage of the funds available from the Microsoft settlement, the district must create a four year plan for the funds and complete a draft application (due May, 2010) outlining the linkage of the district's plan for the funds to support the implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum. We must include within this plan an outcome for the investment based on student goals and teacher quality (professional development).

Any dollars received are split – 50% must be spent towards hardware and 50% towards software including a percentage for building level professional development. Hardware, software and any other items must be approved by a claims administrator. Eligible items can be located on the Department of Education settlement page.