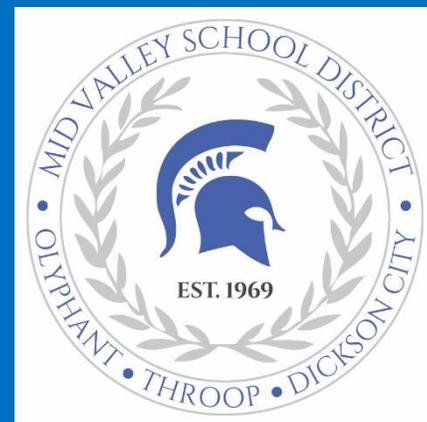




MID VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT – A LEARNING COMMUNITY DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE

CURRICULUM NEWS



JANUARY 2016

Spartan University

Teaching is both an art and a science, and teachers, just as other professionals, can refine their skills and continue on their path as lifelong learners by participating in professional development activities.

In the October 2015 faculty survey, teachers expressed interest in a variety of professional development topics. Teachers also expressed an interest in earning additional Act 48 hours.

As a result, in order to meet the evolving professional learning needs of our school community, members of the administrative team and faculty have volunteered to form the Mid

Valley School District's new **Professional Development Committee**. We are pleased to announce the establishment of **Spartan University**, a collaborative effort to offer a variety of workshops and mini-courses intended to promote professional learning and continue Mid Valley's tradition of academic excellence. Some of the workshops are listed below.

- ESL: Meeting the Needs of ELLs in General Education Classrooms
- How to Use SmartBoards to Promote Student Engagement
- Google Mail (Gmail)
- Learn How to Use Sapphire Effectively
- Analyzing Student Data to Drive Instruction

- Effective Teaching Practices: Increasing Student Engagement
- Google Calendar

Teachers are invited to register for these optional Act 48 workshops and are also encouraged to join the Professional Development Committee. Teachers who facilitate workshops are also eligible for additional Act 48 hours spent developing the workshops.

Please refer to the **Spartan University Course Catalog** and register online using the google link next to each workshop description. If you have any questions, please contact one of the workshop facilitators listed in the course catalog.

If you don't see a workshop for you, contact Mr. Antonetti so we can work together to make it happen.

Homework: Best Practices

Research on homework assignments shows they can have a positive or negative impact on students and learning depending on how they are designed and implemented.

Over the coming months, the administrative team will be discussing and refining homework guidelines based on the school district's homework policy.

The negative effects of homework are well documented, and research studies show that homework offers little benefit to elementary students (Cooper et al., 2006). However, "the goal shouldn't be to eliminate



homework, but to make it authentic, meaningful, and engaging" (Darling-Hammond & Ifill-Lynch, 2006). "In fact, when homework is properly utilized by teachers, it produces an effect on learning three times as large as the effect of socioeconomic status" (Redding, 2000). Homework assignments that are graded, for example, can positively impact learning more than non-graded homework assignments.

Teachers who routinely assign homework should ask themselves, "**How can we transform homework so that it is engaging, relevant, and supports learning?**"

Mr. Antonetti will be sharing information about homework (and assessments) in the coming months and will be inviting teachers to be part of the discussion.

What is *Curriculum News*?

Thank you for reading the first issue of Mid Valley School District's *Curriculum News* newsletter.

Curriculum News seeks to celebrate and support teachers by providing important information about all aspects of curriculum, instruction, and assessment affecting our learning community. In addition to policy and curriculum updates, the newsletter will feature interviews with teachers and students as well as lesson highlights from K – 12 teachers.

Teachers and administrators are invited to contribute articles and assist with the publication of this newsletter. Please contact Mr. Antonetti (antonettie@mvsd.us) if you want to join this adventure.

"THE BEST PART ABOUT TEACHING IS THAT IT MATTERS. THE HARDEST PART OF TEACHING IS THAT EVERY MOMENT MATTERS, EVERY DAY." -TODD WHITAKER