

**Eastford Elementary School
Curriculum Committee Minutes
Wednesday, July 19, 2023
9:00 AM (hybrid)**

- I. Call To Order: 9:08 a.m. with attendees: A. Minor, L. Barlow, M. Dill, J. Salsich, C. McCombe, D. Leake.

- II. Requests for approval of new novels
 - a. White Bird: A Wonder Story, R. J. Palacio (for use with grades 5 or 6)
 - I. Discussion: Mr. Salsich is aiming for 1 graphic novel for imagery at each grade level and shared experiences related back to Portrait of Learner attributes. Mrs. McCombe added that the graphic novels genre is highly motivating for students and explained the Unit of Study mentor text philosophy. This book would allow students to explore multiple books by the same author. The novel, Wonder, by R. J. Palacio has already been Board approved.
 - b. The War That Saved My Life, Kimberly Brubaker Bradley (for use with grades 5 or 6)
 - I. Discussion: Mr. Salsich summarized the text and universal use in schools across the country. This is not a new publication, and it offers an opportunity for collaboration and integration with WWII social studies content. There is a sequel for additional consideration. Dr. Leake wondered what the approach would be if families had concerns about the content in this book, or any book. Mr. Salsich welcomes the chance to discuss with families about texts but could find alternative texts, should the families still feel unsettled.
 - c. Fighting Words, Kimberly Brubaker Bradley (for use with grades 7 or 8)
 - I. Discussion: Mr. Salsich provided summary of the text, including the implied sexual abuse that is at the core of the text, and how the two characters respond to events in their lives. Mr. Salsich included the importance of reading multiple texts by the same author for craft analysis. Mrs. Barlow added that the book provides a safe adult, safe environment and platform for student discussion and it allows students to connect with the text on a variety of levels. Mr. Minor has not read the book but asked questions to clarify the descriptiveness of the abuse. The committee believes the text will dovetail with Second Step units and Child Protection Units. Dr. Leake suggested that Ms. Murana be available to work with Mr. Salsich during the text teaching and discussions to address individual student reactions.

- d. Discussion: Mr. Salsich has all copies (or will have at the time of instruction) so the school does not need to purchase additional copies. The committee is recommending all three texts to the Board of Education for consideration.

III. Overview of recommended science materials for grades K-8

a. Mystery Science (K-5)

- I. Discussion: Mrs. McCombe reported teachers piloted this resource this past school year. Discovery Ed was the previously approved program, but the updated NGSS standards have a strong focus on engineering and exploration that is not a significant component of Discovery Ed. Mrs. Barlow has used Mystery Science as a teacher, and reported the program is comprehensively grounded in good Science. Both teachers and students seem to like it. Dr. Leake added that kits and consumable materials are provided, which is key to its success. Mr. Minor is wondering about the budget for replenishing consumables.

b. KnowAtom (6-8)

- I. Mr. Minor wondered if Mystery Science extended to middle school; it does not. Dr. Leake explained that Mrs. Mead thoroughly researched potential programs and felt two programs best fit Eastford's needs. KnowAtom is developmentally appropriate for grades 6-8 and will provide a step-up in rigor as students prepare to move on to high school textbooks and curricular materials.

- c. Discussion: The Curriculum Committee recommends approval of both Mystery Science for grades K-5 and KnowAtom for grades 6-8. The budget in following years will need to allow for replenishment materials for both programs. Both programs have digital and hands-on components.

IV. Update on Strategic School Improvement Plan (as time allows)

Revised for 2023-2026

- a. No time for this discussion.

V. Adjournment 10:09 a.m

Notes taken by Megan Dill and Minutes submitted by Carole McCombe