**Vision of Success: Establishing Supportive Systems**

At the end of the 19-20 school year, the leadership team met to evaluate the master schedule and make necessary changes to support students in unfinished learning. They reworked the schedule to ensure that every student had daily core ELA instruction and core time for foundational skills instruction in the early grades. They also carved out an additional intervention block for students who demonstrate a need for additional foundational skills and fluency practice based on beginning-of-year assessments. Acknowledging the potential for a remote/virtual start to the school year, leaders created an alternative draft schedule that would preserve core ELA instructional time for students and reserve common planning time for ELA teachers.

The team also scheduled weekly common planning time for the ELA team throughout the school year and created a summer planning calendar to begin addressing unfinished learning through intentional planning. The team crafted agenda items for the ELA department that prioritized intellectual preparation and internalization of units. Leaders knew that a deep understanding of the content and instructional materials would equip teachers to support students with diverse needs upon the return to school. They tentatively decided that June’s planning sessions to unit preparation, and July’s planning sessions would focus on lesson internalization and collaborative planning for virtual delivery of lessons (in case this need arises).

With the schedule in place and this planning time carved out, the team then thought about how to communicate this vision and plan to their teachers. As a follow up to sharing the vision, the team sent an email outlining a schedule of key dates for the next two weeks, including their first common planning virtual meeting on June 10. In preparation for this June 10 meeting, the leadership team assigned the following prework to the ELA team:

1. Preview Unit 1 to summarize the unit goals
2. Read all the texts in your first unit, determine the big ideas of each, and determine what might be challenging about each text for students
3. Review and complete the end of unit task to internalize what students must know and be able to do by the end of the unit

Teachers then independently completed their prework, and on June 10 the middle school ELA department met virtually. The goal of this virtual meeting was to determine the knowledge gaps students at each grade level would have entering this school year. The 8th grade team, who start the year teaching Lorraine Hansberry’s play *A Raisin in the Sun,* reviewed the missed unit from Grade 7 and realized that they must build knowledge on students’ understanding of African culture and the concept of assimilation in order for students to grasp the play’s deeper messages and themes. The 7th grade team referenced their last unit of the 19-20 SY and suggested a series of pictures and the poem “For My People,” written in 1942, by Margaret Walker, which highlights themes of equality, freedom and perseverance for African Americans. The 8th grade team recorded these knowledge supports in a planning tool to analyze later.

Finally, the teachers worked together to create an alternative plan for if school started virtually. The 8th grade teachers decided to look into how to share knowledge-building pictures and freely available supplemental texts with families to read at home using Seesaw, the school’s family communication system. All teachers also committed to engaging in group planning time remotely at 2:00 on Thursdays in the coming school year because they knew that none of them would be working with students at that time, based on the schedule the leadership team had shared previously.

Teachers left the meeting with the following action items:

1. Plan scaffolds to support all students in accessing the grade-level texts and content
2. Bring your completed plan for Unit 1 to common planning on June 17, 2020

One important question that arose from this planning was how much time will it take to implement these supports, and where can teachers find that time. The 7th grade team thought they could leverage the flex days that existed in their unit currently. The 8th grade team felt that more time would be required to build essential knowledge in this first unit, and they started brainstorming how they can use homeroom or intervention time to support this.