

Regular Board Meeting – May 20, 2008

**SUBJECT: OOJH ENCORE PROGRAM**

## **OVERVIEW**

In the spring of 2007, following the recommendations of the 2005-2006 PE/Health Learning Team, an OOJH Building Implementation Team, comprised of faculty representatives of the Physical Education and Encore (Fine/Applied Arts) teams, was formed to examine the OOJH health program instructional delivery model and its broader impact on the Encore program. This committee listed the following purposes for its work:

- Examine options for providing health instruction to students including the possibility of integrating the health class into the physical education rotation
- Examine the current Encore offerings and structure to determine if, particularly at seventh and eighth grade, there is an opportunity to offer students more choice of fine/applied arts classes
- Explore means for providing more academic support to at-risk students through an expanded RMI program
- Develop a common rationale for the importance of student participation in Encore classes (defined to include fine/applied arts, foreign language, and instrumental music)

In January, 2008, the District 68 Board of Education approved the Implementation Team's recommendations to expand and merge the OOJH health program with physical education, thereby removing the health course from the Encore rotation. This decision opened up new opportunities for enhancements to our fine/applied arts program. Currently, the following five core offerings are provided within the Encore program: Art, General Music, Family and Consumer Science, Computer Skills, and Applied Technology. With the removal of health from the Encore rotation, a new fine arts offering could be pursued.

## **ENCORE SCHEDULING CONSIDERATIONS**

During the assessment of Encore course offerings and related scheduling issues, the current nine-week, quarterly system of organizing the OOJH school year was reviewed. In years past, OOJH was organized on a trimester system. Teachers provided mid-term reports to parents every six weeks, report cards every twelve weeks (three times per year), and students rotated Encore classes every twelve weeks. During this era, grade reports were done by hand, and the time between the end of a grading period and the time parents received a written assessment report spanned well into the next trimester.

To increase the number of reporting periods for parents, OOJH moved to a quarterly system in the mid 1990s. Currently, parents receive mid-term reports every four weeks and report cards every nine weeks (four times per year). The change from trimesters to quarters at

OOJH has resulted in November parent-teacher conferences falling three weeks into the new quarter (and new classes) within the Encore rotation.

Now that we use technology to make reporting to parents more efficient, the need to retain a quarterly system was questioned as we tried to address persistent scheduling issues with Encore classes. A return to trimesters would enhance the Encore program by extending existing course offerings to twelve weeks. Additionally, returning to trimesters would resolve the incongruity between reporting periods, parent-teacher conferencing, and course rotations within Encore.

### **ENCORE PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS**

After several meetings this past spring with the OOJH Encore Team, discussions with the OOJH PTA and PTA Presidents from the K-5 schools, and through a letter soliciting OOJH parent feedback, we recommend the following changes to the OOJH Encore program, effective with the 2008-2009 school year:

- Transition the school schedule from a nine-week, quarterly grade reporting system to a twelve-week, trimester system
- Add spring parent-teacher conferences at OOJH
- Expand Encore course offerings from nine weeks to twelve weeks
- Add a Drama strand to the core Encore offerings at grades 6-8
- Assign all 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts teachers to one class of reading/math intervention at their respective grade level and team, thereby providing more personalized academic assistance to at-risk students

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The Encore Program recommendations noted above address the original purpose of the OOJH Building Implementation Team. By offering Drama as a new fine arts strand, opportunities for students to explore and expand their skills within the Encore program are achieved. Additionally, expanding the Encore classes to twelve weeks allows for greater depth of study within each fine or applied arts discipline, aligns the Encore classes with academic classes for grade reporting purposes, and allows us to utilize our existing language arts faculty to staff academic support by grade level and team for at-risk students. These program changes will provide exciting new opportunities for our students, and will serve as enhancements to the overall educational program at OOJH.