

RBTA Board Talk

May 25, 2010



HM Language Arts

Denine Hollow/Madison, Anne Collingwood/Lincoln, Monica Joyce/Tulita RBTA comment on the elimination of the Houghton Mifflin Elementary Language Arts consumable textbooks for the school year 2010-2011.

(Minute 11:25 Board Videocast <http://www.rbusd.org/boevideoarchives>)

When looking at all the consumable textbooks for the elementary level, why would you choose to allow the elimination of the Houghton Mifflin Language Arts consumable – which is a major tool for preparing all students for the 21st century and their future by supporting them as they learn to read?

Learning how to read is a sequential, skill based activity that takes lots of practice. When you are 5 or 6, having the time to practice and think about the skill or the response to literature or how to blend or read site words automatically is vital to actually integrating those skills into daily life. There is nothing more thrilling than listening to young students reading classroom books and either blending new words so they can understand the sentence or applying a newly learned reading skills so they can understand the context of the literature and doing so all on their own.

One of the core values stated in the district's Strategic Plan is *to Provide programs and instruction that prepare students for the second half of the 21st century*. We would say being able to read well and comprehend what one reads is pretty vital to that core value. So supporting the teaching of reading by supplying the appropriate tools –HM Language Arts consumable textbook - is equally important.

When HM Language Arts was adopted in RB 5 years ago, all teachers were mandated by the district to stick to the program, not deviate at all and use the HM materials supplied. We were told not to use supplemental materials or materials of our own creation. Over and over we were told that the reason everyone needed to use the same components and consumables for HM, was for the consistency of program delivery.

Since then test scores have gone up district wide due in part to the systematic approach to teaching language arts that the HM reading program emphasizes. Teachers are not just pulling random worksheets to teach reading now but are using consumable materials that support the process of learning to read.

How will you ensure consistency of program delivery to every elementary student without giving us direction on how to bridge the gap - the huge hole in daily practice with the elimination of the HM elementary Language Arts consumable?

As an aside, if you felt the need to eliminate part of the consumable piece for whatever reason, why not get teacher input since they are the ones who use the materials daily with all the students?

Furloughs and the Budget

Read by Kathy Tillotson, RUHS teacher

(Minute 16:48 Board Videocast <http://www.rbusd.org/boevideoarchives>)

RBTA has been getting questions from the community asking why RBTA is not endorsing furlough/no pay days to save teacher jobs. There is no guarantee that furlough days would save any teacher jobs in the district. There is nothing to keep the district from taking furlough/no pay days and then continuing the layoff—or instituting a summer layoff, which could be done, after the any furlough/no pay days were agreed to.

The District has the reserves to maintain the current level of teacher staffing, but clearly you are choosing reserves over people- teachers and students. The projected deficits that have been disclosed can be covered for one more year by using some (.6%) of the 3.8% reserve and by using the \$200,000+ that the district will receive from the early retirement settlement (PARS). The district has other options that could create unexpected revenue such as a shortened administrator work year.

We are talking at the bargaining table about a teacher incentive plan for using fewer sick leave days which would save money spent on subs throughout the district- an idea brought to the frontline by a classroom teacher.

RBTA feels strongly that it is teachers who make the greatest impact on the lives of students.

The District doesn't have to do either of these to save teacher jobs. You just need to be willing to spend a bit some of the reserves.