

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

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To the awesome Language Arts Department of Pacific Beach Middle School:

It has been six months since I had the privilege of visiting your innovative school. As a language arts teacher and head of our department, I was especially interested in the structure of your units and the key questions that drive your focus. To say I was impressed is an understatement. I returned to my school full of ideas that I gathered from your program. Your generous willingness to share units that are a result of your diligent work has been greatly appreciated and helpful.

As our district has begun the shift to Common Core, it seemed that the structure of your Scope and Sequence lent itself to that transition. Additionally, we have been doing a book study of "Readicide" by Gallagher and many of your philosophies are supported by this work. So upon my return, I began to share what I saw in your program and began to challenge my team to think along similar lines. This is a challenge for them to transition from skill drill and textbooks. The idea of digging deeper and utilizing a novel as the tool each quarter has begun to catch on here. The idea of utilizing your questions: "How does this impact me, my family, my community, my world?" has initiated a lot of conversation and reflection.

I can't thank you enough for the spark you shared that has ignited a fire here in our Language Arts Department at Thomas Jefferson Middle School across the country in Decatur, Illinois.

Sincerely,

Sonya Long