

Welcome to a new school year! For those who have not met me, I am the Advanced Learning (AL) Specialist at Randall and Muir Elementary Schools. I wanted to share a brief overview of my role, and of Advanced Learning activities at Randall and Muir this year.

I monitor district assessments and information from classroom teachers throughout the year to help identify advanced learning needs, and communicate with staff and parents around these needs. If indicated, I sometimes conduct further assessment with prior parent permission. I work with classroom and specials teachers to identify advanced learning needs in the areas of creativity, leadership, and the arts, which are still newer areas of AL focus. I also work toward closing the “excellence gap” by scrutinizing our AL identifications in relation to our school demographics and working with school staff on talent development.

Students typically work on academics in the classroom with classroom teachers. The district literacy and math resources are designed to build foundational skills while offering opportunities for more in-depth thinking for a wide range of learners. I am also available to work with teachers and teams as requested to provide resources, strategies, and problem-solving related to advanced learning when needed. I usually don't work directly with students on core academic subjects except in the rare case that middle-school level math instruction is required. I occasionally work within classrooms to support teachers with short-term activities.

There are some Advanced Learning activities that are open to any interested students within a grade level such as Math Fest for 4th and 5th graders or writing contests for grades 3-5. These activities or events typically have a school-based piece for all interested kids, with the opportunity for exceptional work to reach a district-wide level. We aim for activities accessible to all, meeting students at their own level of challenge. These are publicized through the PTO and classroom newsletters as they come up.

Here is one opportunity for you: The AL department is seeking wider parent participation in the Advanced Learning Advisory Committee to help guide our work to reach more students across all demographics. Your child does not have to be identified as an “advanced learner” to participate. If you are interested in more information about the workings of AL in our district, or have input on the direction of advanced learning, I encourage you to attend any or all of these meetings. The dates are 9/20, 10/18, 11/8, 12/13, 1/24, 2/7, 3/14, and 5/23. Locations and times are being finalized. Information will be posted on the AL website, and I try to get reminders out in PTO and classroom newsletters as well.

Muir and Randall are both excellent schools with dedicated staff, and I look forward to another great year with these schools and your children!

All the best,

Kimi Ishikawa, Advanced Learning Specialist

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