



To: Emily Parks, Superintendent
From: Steve Ouellette, Director of Technology, Learning and Innovation
Allison Borchers, Assistant Superintendent
Date: December 7, 2018
Re: Opportunities for student-centered learning

The initial success of the 3rd grade coding special, combined with the district's priority to *expand and invest in programs and practices that provide authentic, student-centered learning*, has resulted in an effort to identify ways for students in grades 4 and 5 to participate in similar learning experiences. At the same time, the elementary library media specialists have been experimenting with makerspaces, a hands-on, inquiry-based model of instruction that produces a very similar learning dynamic as the coding special.

It seemed like a natural fit to bring these two departments together to discuss collaboration options to accomplish this goal. During the November 7th early release day, the K - 8 Instructional Technology Coaches (ITCs) and library media specialists met for this very purpose. It was clear from this meeting that a collaboration between the ITCs and library media specialists during library special time in grade 4 represents a good first step. Essentially, this effort will allow us to capitalize on the momentum from last year's third grade coding special with an eye towards a further expansion into grade 5 the following year. Under this scenario, all students will arrive at Thurston equipped with a computational, algorithmic, and problem-solving skill set that will serve them well, especially as they progress through the middle school computer science and engineering curriculum.

Ultimately, we are also interested in embedding coding/makerspace experiences in the core subject areas, a step that aligns directly with the district's priority stated above. We are eying curriculum time next summer to develop PD for elementary staff so teachers themselves can engage in a hands-on inquiry type learning experience and think about how to apply this to their own classroom. Our work next summer may also be used to create activities, lessons and units of study that will support teachers in this effort.