

Louisa-Muscatine Board Approves Science, Reading Curricula

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LETTS, Iowa — The Louisa-Muscatine school board on Monday approved the purchase of a new science curriculum for junior high students. The curriculum, known as STEMscopes, has a strong digital component, including online assessments and e-books, with supplemental print materials. It will cost the district \$14,344 and will provide materials for seventh and eighth grade science classes.

Background: The Iowa Board of Education approved the new science standards in August 2015. Since then, several curriculums conforming to the new science standards have come out. The Louisa-Muscatine district is in the process of purchasing curriculums that conform to the new standards. In previous meetings, the board approved the purchase of a new high school science curriculum, but decided to wait on science curriculums for the lower grades because of cost and because the standards for the lower grades may change in the coming months.

Conversation: Stephanie Gilkerson, who teaches science at the junior high, said she was involved with selecting the new curriculum. The new curriculum was built to fit Iowa's new science standards "from the ground up." No other curriculums she looked at were as adapted to the new standards.

Board President Scott Wilson asked about the cost of replenishing consumable materials, such as kits that students use in the hands-on activities.

Curriculum director Amy Lantigua said the district will have to purchase a single kit each year for less than \$1,000 per year. The cost will come from the district's curriculum budget, she said.

Wilson also wanted to know if the emphasis on hands-on activities will change student performance on state science test, but Gilkerson said the curriculum allows her to customize lessons to include some of the knowledge-based questions students might be asked in the state assessment.

Next step: The curriculum will be adopted next year. The district will consider a similar digital-first curriculum for the elementary school and for sixth grade if STEMscopes proves to be effective.

Preschool reading curriculum

The board approved the purchase of a more rigorous pre-reading curriculum for the preschool. The district will pay \$10,308 for the new curriculum, called World of Wonders.

Background: Following the decision to expand the district's preschool to full-day, district officials said there was a need for a more intensive curriculum. The curriculum comes from the same company that provides the reading curriculum for the elementary school and it covers letter recognition, letter sounds and other pre-reading skills.

Conversation: Amy Lantigua, curriculum directors at L-M, said the curriculum covers social studies, science and mathematical concepts in addition to teaching pre-reading skills.

Wilson asked if the new curriculum has a cost per student. Lantigua said the district is paying per-student for a six-year subscription for online activities. To accommodate potential influx of students, she said the district will buy more subscriptions than there are students.

Next step: The curriculum will be adopted next year.

In other business, the board approved the purchase of a new marketing curriculum for the high school, with a focus on sports and entertainment. The curriculum will cost \$1,244.

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