

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met on Thursday, February 28, 2019 at 5:15 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

Committee members present: Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Guidet, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback

Committee members absent: Mrs. Caramanello and Dr. Taylor

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment and Mr. Sadinsky, Principal of Strong School

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 5:20 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Guidet, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback.

Approval of Minutes - January 23, 2018

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2018 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of January 23, 2018, as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Guidet, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback.

Feedback from 2/15 Professional Learning

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the over-arching focus for February 15th was using technology to enhance instruction within the classroom. There were several workshops and the high school teachers chose which they wanted to take part in. At the elementary and middle school level, there wasn't as much choice because they really focused in on exploring i-Ready Central, the Tool Box, the data reports and Data Dashboard.

They received positive feedback about these workshops and Mrs. DiMaggio shared several of the teachers' thoughts. They were also asked about the presenters and facilitators and the feedback was positive in that area. The teachers look forward to analyzing the data. Mrs. DiMaggio had felt that it would be a great day loaded with all kinds of technology opportunities for teachers, but she later realized that the district is doing this right by embedding professional learning that speaks to what the teachers are doing and giving them support. They have found teachers going to the coaches, technology teacher and STEAM coordinator more now.

Dr. Veronesi also invited the committee members to attend the full-day Professional Learning that is scheduled for next Friday, March 8. Workshops will be held at both Strong and Coginchaug. An outside consultant will be there for math at the elementary level. Teachers will have some guided choices, but there are also some mandatory sessions.

Dr. Friedrich asked if they thought there has been difference in PLCs and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that PLCs have been transformed and are all involved in data cycles this year. The coaches are working with the teachers to analyze the data and implement the strategies that will help support the instruction. Mr. Sadinsky stated that he was in the room with the Strong School math and ELA teachers and the access that they have to data has changed their conversation with kids and parents.

Dr. Friedrich asked what sort of changes might be seen in the behavior of the teachers in the lower grades who went through the professional learning day. Mrs. DiMaggio felt that data literacy for the teachers is increasing and they have a better understanding of how to look at the data. Dr. Friedrich asked how they would detect that it has actually succeeded and Mrs. DiMaggio shared that that would be through scores. She also noted that the PLC conversations on instruction are deep and teachers are becoming more confident in their craft. She reminded everyone that the elementary level has been hit with a lot of new and she sees nothing but positive.

Dr. Veronesi added that she talked to teachers after the workshops and she felt that the teachers are looking at the data sets and understand it. They can now analyze student performance data, talk with colleagues about patterns and develop interventions. Mrs. DiMaggio noted that action plans have been developed to help meet the students reach the established standards. The teachers are being challenged to improve the scores.

Mr. Sadinsky stated that they are also administering some of the interim assessment blocks for the SBAC and the eighth-grade math teachers found an area that needs improvement and on Mondays and Wednesdays, they give five minutes of SBAC-type questions based on the outcome of that data and then, on Fridays, there's an entrance or an exit ticket following up on that. Ms. Guidet asked if the i-Ready has similar questions to the SBAC and if it tests math and reading only. Mrs. DiMaggio confirmed that it is strictly math and reading, with no writing included. Writing is more formative and is not standardized. Ms. Guidet was concerned about the writing and felt that it was a weakness. She teaches in Hamden and finds that grammar is out the window.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that they are using the Word Study curriculum, which includes phonics and spelling. They have adapted the Foundations program and have Teachers' College. At the elementary level, they have Readers' Workshop, but not Writers' Workshop yet. At the six through eight, there is Writers' Workshop. Mrs. DiMaggio felt this was a wonderful resource, but was not the district's curriculum and so they are writing curriculum right now for K-8 in ELA, using Teachers' College as a resource. They are also embedding grammar within that curriculum. Mrs. DiMaggio also noted that the ELA scores in the high school are extremely high. Ms. Guidet is worried that it has not hit the high school yet.

Dr. Veronesi would like to speak directly with Ms. Guidet to hear her concerns about writing and suggested putting writing as an agenda item so that the Student Achievement Committee can explore that.

Mrs. Petrella asked if there had been any comments about suggestions or issues and Mrs. DiMaggio stated that some folks felt the sessions were too short. Otherwise, the feedback was really extremely positive.

Curriculum Night Invitation

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that they would really love the committee members attend the curriculum night. Teachers, coaches, interventionists and a lot of student volunteers from the high school have put a lot of work into it. It will be from 5:30 to 7:00 PM, at the high school and is for grades K through 5. The idea is to encourage families to learn what the children are doing in the classroom and do some activities with them.

Mrs. Petrella felt that the more relevant the professional development is to what is being done in the classroom, the much better it is. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that that is the direction they're going in and building the capacity of the district's staff which produces an incredible impact.

Enrichment Think Tank

Mr. Sadinsky stated that they have a few students who are really accelerated readers and writers and he has been communicating with them, their parents and their teachers. They love to write creatively and are not finding enough challenge. They are working to pilot a program to help these students extend their opportunity and extend their learning. Mr. Sadinsky has been coordinating with Mrs. DiMaggio, Strong's literacy coach and a few teachers as well as the English department chair at the high school to look at ways that these students can be supported.

Once the unit they are working on is completed, these students will be in their language arts classroom as well as step out of the classroom for further opportunities that will be based on standards. Mr. Sadinsky stated that they know that there are a lot more students who have not been identified who require further enrichment and that led to the creation of the Enrichment Think Tank. That is made up of the language arts teacher, social studies teachers, literacy coach, STEAM coordinator, the school counselor, the library media specialist, the Latin teacher, Mrs. DiMaggio and Mr. Sadinsky. They are beginning to generate ideas, but are not at a full plan stage yet.

The Enrichment Think Tank started with the objective of looking to provide students with enrichment opportunities that challenge them beyond the curriculum. Common themes were choice and voice. Mr. Sadinsky reviewed several types of choices that will be offered within a framework and criteria. They hope to tap into the students' leadership skills. Currently, students are doing argument writing and creating podcasts. Mrs. DiMaggio added that that project contains collaboration and integration between social studies and English language arts and the students have choice. Mr. Sadinsky felt that a lot of work still needs to be done, but the group is enthusiastic and is looking forward to their next meeting. They will be looking at ways to identify additional students as well.

Mrs. Petrella felt that this sounds like a good model and both she and Ms. Guidet added that they would like to sit in on that group as they both worked with literature circles. Dr. Veronesi noted that students and parents have asked for something different. The group is working on the immediate plan, but also on a strategic plan for enrichment. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that they will do some research on enrichment models and visit other schools as well as focus groups with students. Mrs. DiMaggio also mentioned that extended opportunities are already being provided to students through clubs and activities, but they are

looking to identify other enrichment opportunities. She stated that they want to get away from the old gifted and talented pull-out model and be able to provide enrichment to all students.

Dr. Veronesi asked Ms. Guidet to explain what she does in Hamden and Ms. Guidet explained that they have the gifted and talented pull-out model which is the top 5 percent of the grade levels. They have the program in fifth and sixth grade and are hoping to expand that to the middle school as well. They also have an enrichment program where teachers go to the different schools and work with third and fourth graders. They are always tweaking their identification model because they want to get as many kids as possible. Ms. Guidet explained that, for the enrichment sessions, she goes to the schools for four different sessions in the school year and students rotate in and out of the group each time, with a maximum of 10. Teachers can nominate students who have achieved 80 percent and she has a different group each time. She described several of the programs she has done with the students and explained that they are focused only on language arts at this point. As far as arts, they do not have any programs presently, but students are identified, but don't necessarily need to be served, per state law.

Mr. Sadinsky will continue to meet with the Think Tank throughout the year and report back to the Board. Mrs. DiMaggio described a project that first graders were working on building the Three Little Pigs' fourth house. Mr. Moore asked if Mr. Sadinsky would have the current group present to the Board before the end of the year and he will encourage that.

Dr. Veronesi would like to focus the enrichment on STEAM, but not exclude students who excel at other subjects. Mr. Roraback asked how this group got started and Mr. Sadinsky explained that the initial conversations came from a parent but have since moved on to the kids after he approached them.

Process for Vetting RSD13 Text

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that there have been some issues with a couple of articles and books that parents felt were inappropriate. There is a whole library of articles through Teachers' College that can be assigned to students and one of the lines in an article was very graphic and inappropriate to the point where Mrs. DiMaggio contacted Teachers' College and asked them to remove it which they did. She has talked with the coaches and library media specialists to think about how to divide and conquer some of the readings and perhaps put something out to parents prior to a unit to let them know what choices are available. She mentioned that there are classics and other books out there that some people take offense to and she does not want to censor information.

Mr. Moore noted that he looked at the list of Nutmeg books at RJ Julia and some of them are pretty tough for a 13-year-old and he could see where some parents could get upset. There was discussion about how difficult it is for students to watch the news and other programming. It was generally agreed that the best way to do this would be to put it in the hands of parents.

Mrs. DiMaggio summarized that they are in the process of vetting the process at this point.

i-Ready Data

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed some of the reports that the teachers get from i-Ready, including a diagnostic report, a growth report and a predictability report. She showed data to the committee members from the different schools.

Dr. Friedrich asked if the test given at the beginning of the grade is different than in the middle and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that it was and if the students are doing well, the test gets harder.

Dr. Veronesi noted that you can also see the results by teacher and Mrs. DiMaggio added that it can also be drilled down to individual students.

Mrs. Petrella would be interested to see if the grade 2 students who have a high percentage now continue to have a high percentage as third graders.

Mrs. DiMaggio went on to review the predictability report which shows the percent of students are likely to be proficient on the Smarter Balance by the end of the year. They have developed action plans based on this data.

Mrs. Petrella asked how the comparisons of teachers are actually conveyed to the teachers and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the teachers can see their results themselves. The principals and the coaches and interventionists are the only ones that can see the whole-school results.

Mrs. DiMaggio stated that the teachers currently have data chats with students and they are hoping to have data walls next year, not including student names. Mrs. Petrella asked if students ever get to see where they are compared to other students. Mrs. DiMaggio thought that the data walls would do that for them.

Public Comment

None.

Mrs. Petrella stated that the next meeting is on Wednesday, March 27th at 4:00 PM, but she may not be able to make it.

Adjournment

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Guidet, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
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