

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 6:00 PM.

Committee members present: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback

Committee members absent:

Community members present: Ms. Commins

Board members present: Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Guests present: Mrs. Stone, Principal of Cuginchaug Regional High School and Ms. Kavanaugh, CRHS Math Teacher

Mrs. Dahlheimer called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Booth made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to approve the agenda, as presented.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to amend the agenda to include an update on student achievement results before Public Comment.

In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Ms. Commins, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback.

Approval of Minutes - March 23, 2022

Mrs. Booth made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2022 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of March 23, 2022, as presented: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Ms. Commins, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback. Mrs. Caramanello abstained.

New high school courses and course of studies program

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that each year, they review the new courses and the program of studies which will be sent to the committee after the meeting.

Mrs. Stone explained that all of the new/reworked classes were offered in the program of studies for the students, but explained that they are not sure that all of the classes will run next year. She started with

related arts courses, including Social Media Marketing, Investing and Entrepreneurship. For Special Education, there is a bridge program which expands on the life skills program. Social Studies include African American, Black and Puerto Rican Latino Studies course which is state-mandated and the teacher will be trained this summer.

Mrs. Booth asked what the minimum number would be in a class and Mrs. Stone wasn't sure. The students have already picked their schedules, but the schedule is not done yet. Mrs. Stone explained that students choose alternates and may be bumped to another elective. She added that there may be ways to offer parts of a class during an independent study. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that SERC wrote the curriculum for the African American, Black and Puerto Rican Latino Studies course, so the district doesn't have a choice. They may also have the school counselors take a more active role in speaking to the different courses.

Mrs. Petrella asked if the curriculum materials are historically-based or do they also include current politics or biases and Mrs. DiMaggio felt that it focuses on different perspectives. Mrs. DiMaggio will send a list of the curriculum materials to Mrs. Petrella. Mrs. Petrella also asked about the bridge program and whether it dovetails with MTA. Mrs. Stone explained that it would be for students who are not yet eligible for MTA, but it would mirror what might happen at MTA. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that having different peer groups together is a great thing.

Mrs. Stone then went on to reports that there are several grade 12 English courses that are being reoffered. They are also offering AP Literature which will be open to juniors and seniors. Dr. Schuch added that they have to rethink the way they are programming and scheduling because there doesn't seem to be an expectation on elective teachers to actively recruit. They have also found that students may want to take a course, but are unable to due to scheduling. He hoped that there could be more opportunities for individual learning. Mrs. DiMaggio that they are looking to differentiate within a course and some courses may be combined next year. Mrs. Petrella felt that some of the grade 12 English courses could be combined as well. Dr. Schuch agreed, but felt that they needed to work with the teachers on this. Mr. Roraback felt that a competitive environment for these courses may create an environment with the bar set a little bit higher.

Mrs. Stone summarized by saying that she will send the link for the complete program of studies to everyone.

Performance tasks at the high school and middle school

Mrs. DiMaggio introduced Ms. Kavanaugh to review performance tasks. Performance tasks are to show what is happening in the classroom. A few years ago, teachers began putting performance tasks right in the curriculum. The math department at the middle school and high school have done a wonderful job with this.

Ms. Kavanaugh reviewed that the math department has been doing performance tasks since she arrived in the district 16 years ago, but they were called projects. They were always done at the end of the unit and designed to have students apply what they learned to new situations. They have since learned that that is not the best way to do it and have developed a much better way to incorporate the need to learn math. They have worked hard to revamp the tasks to be very relevant to students, to increase engagement and give them a reason to learn what the teachers want them to learn.

Students are now being presented with open-ended problems and they are encouraged to have a productive struggle and think about math from many different angles. This is being done from pre-algebra all the way up to AP calculus. They work together and independently and learn where to go for help. The teachers at Strong and Coginchaug use the same language and expectations and they have seen this improve over the last few years.

Most performance tasks try to take seven Standards of Mathematical Practice. In middle school, they are called thinking strategies for mathematicians. They look at how to solve the problems and how they can communicate their work.

Ms. Kavanaugh felt that the professional development the math department has been receiving has been great. They are looking to have the problems include how to discover a concept, gather data and analyze it, extend on something that was done in the classroom but they want it to have more than one justifiable solution and multiple layers so that it promotes critical thinking, problem-solving and skills for employment and secondary education. The district's definition of performance tasks is evolving.

Ms. Kavanaugh then gave several examples of how they use performance tasks and explained that they are using them at every level. They recently did one about buying a car and researching interest rates. Dr. Schuch felt that students need to be able to apply what they have learned to a real situation. These give the students more choice and allow them to explore a little bit more.

Mrs. Stone also mentioned that students in North Branford are designing and building a building. Dr. Schuch added that, in his last district, students redesigned the entire library/media center.

Ms. Kavanaugh added that they work hard to incorporate art into geometry and precalculus figures out how high birds need to go to get food. They have done one on opioids and other things that can put you in a dangerous situation, including insurance risk management. Trigonometry's final exam is all performance-based. She did admit that there are still a couple of units where they are still struggling to come up with these ideas.

Mr. Roraback asked if there were some students who still want to just study and get the right answers and Ms. Kavanaugh felt that students in honors level classes want that. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the buy-in must be hard for the teachers as well. Mrs. Stone added that Ms. Kavanaugh is the math team leader, a math teacher, soccer coach and basketball coach.

Dr. Schuch felt that giving just a test to learners is a disservice as they will struggle in work or in college because they get to a point where that doesn't work anymore. Mrs. Petrella felt that this is exactly what Reimagined Education is and Mrs. Dahlheimer would love for the community to know about these kinds of things.

Update on Student Achievement Results

Mrs. DiMaggio felt that the update makes more sense in the fall because Smarter Balance test results will be in as well as the NGSS results and SAT scores. She will put it all in one presentation and would like to focus on the standardized tests and not as much on the internal scores, such as iReady, which are really more for the teachers. Dr. Schuch agreed.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Ms. Commins, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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Alwaz First