

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met on Wednesday, April 25, 2018 at 4:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

Committee members present: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor
Administration present: Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment and Ms. Manning, Director of Organizational Development

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Petrella would like to discuss the reconfiguration considerations and it was agreed to add that after item 8.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to add discussion of reconfiguration considerations after item 8 on the agenda.

In favor of amending the agenda, as above: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the agenda as amended.

In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes - February 22, 2018

Dr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2018 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

Curriculum Council Institute

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that after she interviewed the stakeholders, it became evident that consistency was needed across the district to write curriculum. In light of that, the Curriculum Leadership Institute was developed to train teachers and administrators to write and vet the curriculum. The Curriculum

Leadership Council and the Institute are comprised of 27 people to build capacity with the district. The Curriculum Writing Institute will begin this summer.

With the Curriculum Institute, they have had five sessions of professional learning and training in using the Understanding By Design model. All members were trained in how to write curriculum and are aware of the forms to use. She reviewed the templates with the committee members. Dr. Friedrich asked Mrs. DiMaggio to define the word “authentic” in this context and she explained that it means that it is a real-world experience, as in writing a newspaper article or redesigning a prosthetic in a science class. Dr. Taylor worried that there are necessities of learning that might not be directly considered authentic, especially in math. Mrs. DiMaggio agreed that direct instruction is also necessary, but they would then want the students to apply the concepts they learned.

Mr. Roraback summarized that the learning starts and goes along Bloom’s taxonomy, with foundations, remembering, understanding and applying. Then, it moves to evaluating and creating. Mrs. DiMaggio felt it has moved from Bloom’s to Karen Hess’ work with in-depth knowledge with far more rigor and a higher level of understanding. She gave an example of a mid-term or final exam for trigonometry that was held as stations in the gymnasium. Mr. Roraback also commented today’s students know that the information is out there for them to look up.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that Understanding By Design is a backward design model and is outcomes-based. She also explained that pacing guides were used and then reviewed an example of a social studies pacing guide for the committee. The priority standards are the ones that will be assessed.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the Curriculum Institute will continue to meet three times a year. She explained that she has asked the team leaders at the high school, the math and reading coaches, a couple of elementary teachers and three administrators to be involved in this. Dr. Taylor asked if anyone is getting paid any supplement to take part in this and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that only those taking part in the Writing Institute this summer will be paid.

Mrs. DiMaggio went on to explain that she had developed a curriculum handbook and reviewed it for the committee members. Madison Public Schools and CREC helped provide information for this handbook. She does believe that a Board policy should be developed for textbook selection and Dr. Veronesi is aware and will discuss this with the Board of Education members. Dr. Taylor stated that he did not want to be responsible for selecting a textbook and Mrs. Petrella felt that they would look at programs, not individual textbooks.

Mrs. DiMaggio stated that there needed to be a process for technology requests as well. She shared the form, process, and procedures with the committee. She would also like to see consistency throughout the grades in using technology. She reviewed the curriculum revision cycle timeline as well. She also explained that the different subjects have their own revision calendar. Teachers are required to write curriculum and that can be done during professional learning days, on separate days throughout the year or during the Curriculum Writing Institute in the summer. Dr. Taylor worries about using heavy teacher resources to develop curriculum that may already exist. Mrs. DiMaggio did explain that the district hired a consultant to write the math curriculum. She does feel, however, that teachers are much more invested in the curriculum and have a better understanding of it when they develop it themselves.

Dr. Taylor worries that since not everybody is writing the curriculum and it is on a volunteer basis, it is still hard to turn something down when asked by your superiors. He worries that the District will drive some of the best teachers out or overburden them. He thinks that the Board can consider whether it is worthwhile to support teachers monetarily and time-wise in that endeavor. Mrs. Manning stated that the additional early release days that the Board approved have been great. She also explained that other

school districts use days before and after the school year for that purpose as well. Mrs. Petrella commented that one of the best parts about teaching is creating the lesson plans.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that there will be subcommittees within the Council that will look at other people's work and provide feedback. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the principal of each school first approves technology requests and they are then forwarded to her. Mr. Moore felt that there should be some type of oversight on all the security aspects. Committee members asked Mrs. DiMaggio to put this information on the Google Drive and she agreed, reminding them that this is still a draft.

Mr. Roraback asked what protections are in place around this intellectual property and Dr. Friedrich asked what was to prevent a teacher from suing the school system for using it. Mrs. DiMaggio said that she would look into this and discuss with Dr. Veronesi. Dr. Friedrich asked if it was included in their employment contracts. Dr. Taylor suggested that the development process is open source and there is no copyright.

Kindergarten Screening

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that screening will be done for incoming kindergarteners that will allow the District to become familiar with the students and strategically place them with staff. In addition, this is an opportunity for the incoming students to meet their teachers and the staff members who will be working with them. Screening will be held at John Lyman on May 4th and Brewster will be on May 11th. The parents will still do the walkthroughs, but the students will now go through some activities. Dr. Taylor thought that that was already happening, but Mrs. DiMaggio was told this was new. Mrs. Manning explained that there had been something in place, but the model has been tweaked a bit.

Mrs. DiMaggio went through the four different stations that will be included in the screening, including read aloud, dramatic play station, tag writing and gross motor skills and mathematics. Each station will take approximately eight minutes. Parents will be separate from the children during the screening process. All incoming kindergarten students were invited. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that this is not meant to red flag students or tell parents that their child is not ready for kindergarten and is more for the district to take a look at the children and provide resources to the parents.

Mr. Roraback stated that Mrs. DiMaggio had mentioned placement and wondered how that would be done. She explained that the goal is heterogeneous placement to be sure everybody has the right opportunities. Mr. Roraback asked if they considered the higher-achieving kindergarten students helping the lesser-achieving students and she felt that that would be hard to tell who is high achieving or low achieving by one visit during this screening.

Mrs. DiMaggio did not feel it was the teachers' or the District's place to advise parents on holding their child back from kindergarten. Materials will be provided to suggest what children should be able to do when they enter kindergarten. Connecticut state law says children must be five years of age by December 31st. Mrs. Manning stated that the kindergarten teachers want to be able to start the year with as much information as possible.

Dr. Taylor asked if the District has ever entertained doing IQ tests to establish baselines and looking at that data long-term. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that a lot of districts have moved away from that and a lot of the gifted programs are no longer available. A parent can ask for a PPT and request testing to be done, but then there is no program for what is done with that information from there. Teachers differentiate for their students in the classroom to support all levels of students. Dr. Taylor thought there was a state law regarding a plan for gifted students and Mrs. DiMaggio felt that students on the brighter end will be challenged by the new curriculum.

Student Achievement Report

Mrs. DiMaggio then went on to review the fall to Winter scores and explained that there has not been tremendous growth nor have the scores gone down much in math. She summarized this data is from STAR and they are not happy with STAR. The District is now piloting iReady and the teachers love it. The teachers have a hard time interpreting the data from STAR. A lot of schools in Connecticut are moving to iReady.

Moving to the interim assessment block scores, Mrs. DiMaggio explained that these are provided by the State for free and mirror the Smarter Balanced Assessments. She explained there was growth from the fall to the winter and reviewed the numbers with the committee members. Dr. Taylor expressed that data is meaningless without comparisons. Dr. Friedrich felt that the comparison here is that they have learned something and Dr. Taylor agreed.

Mrs. DiMaggio also reported that SBAC testing will be held next week in three of the schools and the following week at Strong School. The results will be available this summer.

Mrs. DiMaggio summarized that the District is doing well and that what is seen in sixth through eighth grade is pretty typical. She mentioned that those students sometimes find it hard to buy into this testing. Mrs. Petrella stated that she felt that it could be a percentage of the grade in the individual classes. It was generally agreed that reading scores are usually good and that the math scores are a bit depressed.

Mrs. DiMaggio also explained that the teachers give students Fountas and Pinnell for writing that looks at decoding, fluency and comprehension and showed the difference between the scores before and after the workshop model was put in place. There has been unbelievable growth. Dr. Friedrich noted that kindergarten is performing at the same level, no matter the model, but each cohort has a jump off from there.

Reconfiguration Considerations

Mrs. Petrella wanted to discuss the academic piece of the reconfiguration and asked how much the Student Achievement Committee should be involved in looking at those options for programming.

Mr. Moore explained that Dr. Taylor had a slide on that for tonight's meeting showing where the strategic visioning process is integrated over the next two years into deciding what the courses will be like. Mrs. Petrella felt that it wasn't necessarily just the teaching, but things like start times and daily structure should be considered as well. Mr. Moore explained that Dr. Veronesi had a three-hour session yesterday on strategic visioning and they are at the basic stages.

Dr. Friedrich felt that the Student Achievement Committee would need to work on this, but should also resign themselves to the fact that the process will be imperfect. Mrs. Petrella also felt that one size doesn't fit all children. Dr. Friedrich summarized that they are hearing from parents that the two existing programs are different, with different experiences, and that some kids really need one and not the other.

Mr. Moore stated that the next strategic visioning meeting is set for May 15th and hoped that committee members could attend. Dr. Taylor would not want the building configuration to limit options within the programmatic part. He did feel that the strategic visioning process is taking much longer than he had hoped and are nowhere near the end result. Dr. Taylor felt that the question for the Board is whether they are willing to jump and make a building choice, knowing that they don't yet know if that choice will align with the results of strategic visioning. He felt it might be worth waiting a year to make the right decision.

Dr. Taylor also felt that strategic visioning does not belong in the Utilization Committee, but belongs with Student Achievement. Mrs. Petrella would also like to have the program in place before making a decision on buildings. Dr. Taylor felt that people care very little about the buildings and far more about the programs. He believes that economics have made people understand that a school has got to close. Mrs. Petrella also noted that she did not care for all of the animosity in the discussions and Mr. Moore felt that some of that is shifting away now.

Mr. Roraback's choice for the perfect program, that Howard Kelley always described, would be ID-related, creative with open classrooms in the early years where it is very positive, but more structure applied in sixth grade and on. Dr. Taylor agreed that there is general consensus that the programs should meld together at about sixth grade. Mr. Roraback feels that grouping develops in the elementary level, creates a little bit of a cultural divide in the middle school level and he feels that is very unhealthy.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
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