Board of Education **Regional School District 13** **November 28, 2018**
Student Achievement Committee

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, November 28, 2018 at 5:00 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: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Staff present: Mrs. Aronson-Bailey, Mrs. Durkin, Mrs. Mariani, Mrs. Toti, Mrs. Heikkila, Mrs. Parness and Mrs. Lentini

Guests present: Mr. Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer, CT State Department of Education and Dr. Renee Savoie, NAEP State Coordinator, CT State Department of Education

The meeting began at 5:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Veronesi asked to move item 7 to item 6.

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

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

Approval of Minutes - October 30, 2018

The prior meeting did not have enough committee members present for a quorum therefore the committee could not make a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Moore who was present at the prior meeting asked for acknowledgement of notes as record of meeting.

Student Achievement Measures: Growth Rate/Percentage of Target Achieved: Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer, CT State Department of Education

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that the district is hoping to attain 100 percent of target achieved by 2030, but in order to do that the district would be looking at a 3 percent increase per year. Representatives from the CT State Department of Education were invited to come tonight because there are some questions around the metrics.

Mr. Gopalakrishnan explained that the Next Generation accountability system was created to give a more holistic perspective on schools and districts. AYP was only about test scores and graduation rates, with a goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2014. With the new law, it is about multiple measures. He did explain that what the state can do at their level is just a starting point for conversations at a district and they do not pretend to be the only statement about how a school or district is doing. The other important shift that happened was including growth of students, meaning not just how they do on a test but how they grow from one year to the next.

In the growth model, every student has a growth target which is expressed in scale score points. Looking at how students do, relative to their own personal target, is done in two ways, if they met the target and how close they got to their target measured against all students (average percentage of target achieved). The system also gives up to 110 percent for target achieved if the student does better than the target. This means that the district could, in fact, be at 100 percent without all students meeting their targets. Growth is weighted the heaviest in the system as they recognize that growth is important.

Mr. Moore asked how the state determines the target growth for each year and Mr. Gopalakrishnan explained that a model was developed to look at how Connecticut students grew from one year to the next at eight different points on the scale. Growth expectations differ from student to student.

Dr. Friedrich felt that any positive growth leads children to improve their performance and asked how the state picked the percentage. He felt that the state is running rabbits for the students and teachers to chase and wanted to know that the rabbits are humane and effective. He is concerned that children will have goals that are unrealistic and felt that students and teachers are being set up to fail.

Mr. Gopalakrishnan explained that the target was chosen by reviewing Connecticut's students' growth and setting the benchmark at the 60th percentile of growth achieved. They also tried to consider measurement error that is inherent in the test. Dr. Taylor asked how that is linked to other achievement metrics, like college graduation or success in business, to give a more tangible example. Mr. Gopalakrishnan stated that the 60th percentile was based on each of the eight buckets in the metric and they were reasonably confident that it not in the error margin. Looking at the state's lowest-achieving students, they felt it would take about five years for them to reach goal.

Dr. Friedrich explained that everyone doesn't have the same potential and wondered how the state could decide that everyone should reach a certain level. Mr. Gopalakrishnan explained that they are expecting all students to grow, but that is a softer approach that the old NCLB approach. He also explained that the reports given to students only include their score relative to the achievement levels.

Dr. Veronesi asked the coaches present to comment on the data in terms and Mrs. Aronson-Bailey explained that she felt that this is what teachers have been wanting for a long time. We are beginning to start to look at a model that rewards growth and looks at each individual child. We are also starting to look at high-achieving students with new rigorous targets set for them as well. Another coach felt that this is all still new and they need time to look at the data. When presenting data to students and parents, they look at the SBAC and iReady scores. She gave examples of things she does working with students and how they create small groups to help them meet their needs.

Dr. Friedrich reviewed that the district has been through one cycle of growth scores going out to parents asked if the coaches had seen any scores that were conspicuously low and the coaches explained that the reports to parents do not say whether or not the students met their target. Speaking about students at Lyman, one coach stated that she did not remember any conspicuously low scores and there had been no concerns when communicating to parents. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the numbers in the data

dashboard related to iReady are very much in line with Smarter Balanced and that iReady provides growth measures as well.

Dr. Friedrich did agree that growth was the way to measure things. Mrs. Petrella asked if the targets are being revised as more data is gathered and Mr. Gopalakrishnan explained that they would be well-advised to continue to study the effectiveness of what they are doing. In the case of growth, three years of data have been accumulated and they are not yet close to hitting the targets so they are not looking to decrease or increase the targets at this point. He explained that the targets were set and 40 percent of students were already meeting the targets. He also reminded everyone that the district has two schools of distinction and that the district is doing well.

Mr. Gopalakrishnan also reviewed that the state had convened a panel of 16 schools that had higher growth over a few years and asked them what they were doing. They learned that they look at other ways to help the students. Dr. Veronesi stated that District 13 is seeing improvement in student learning and student performance in many ways and asked what the coaches felt was working. One coach stated that students are able to talk about math more and learn from each other. She felt that the math workshop gave them an instructional strategy and better resources and benchmarks have helped.

Mr. Roraback asked what reaction the coaches got from high-achieving students and there were comments about the students getting a little mad sometimes. Mr. Roraback stated that they hear that students are not being challenged. One coach stated that there are definitely kids who are offended that they have to think and to accept that there are multiple paths to a solution. Mrs. Lentini shared a story of a student who questioned why he had to think and not just memorize.

Dr. Veronesi asked for the coaches' perspective on the PLC data teams and whether they see correlation with student learning outcomes. A coach told a story about kids slurring over words and how they discussed a plan to help with that while still reading books of different levels.

Mr. Moore asked why the coaches felt the students were enjoying math and they felt that they're moving, thinking and talking and not having to sit and listen anymore. They have a lot more practice and are learning more from each other. The students also have a much better understanding of what is expected of them.

Dr. Veronesi also noted that she hears that kids love to learn how things work which is what is happening in math and science now. A coach also noted that 60-minute blocks of math have been huge, with the time being split between receiving information, manipulatives and station work.

Mr. Gopalakrishnan agreed that it is not one thing that contributes to growth, but a combination of things. He also noted that the test items make it clear what the standards are really expecting. He has also heard that coaches and paraprofessionals are key and several districts hold specific professional development for their paraprofessionals. The culture of the schools is also very important. Capacity-building in a district is also essential.

Dr. Veronesi asked Mr. Gopalakrishnan to talk about the DRG and DRG comparisons. Mr. Gopalakrishnan explained that the state does not report out data by DRGs anymore because the measurements are charting progress against yourself and your own improvement. Dr. Taylor explained that the district is struggling to understand how they are advancing and succeeding with regard to other districts. He doesn't see how you can evaluate the district's performance without comparing it to something else. Dr. Taylor felt that the DRG was nice and is a little disappointed that the state dropped that.

Mr. Gopalakrishnan explained that comparisons in the DRGs led to complacency, but he did understand Dr. Taylor's point. Again, he stated that the district does have two schools of distinction which is a status that only about 10 percent of the state's schools have. Obviously, individual districts can compare themselves to other districts, in their DRG or in others.

Mr. Moore asked how the SAT factors into growth and Mr. Gopalakrishnan explained that the SAT doesn't factor into growth. He also explained that feedback has told them they needed to switch away from Smarter Balanced and move toward SAT which has become more of a standards-aligned test. Dr. Taylor likes that it is a much more holistic approach going forward, but asked why the state made a decision to weight high needs and the entire school the same on the levels of achievement and growth achieved. Mr. Gopalakrishnan stated that the high-needs students have historically under-achieved and under-performed and it has been possible to not focus on them. This decision was made in consultation with many stakeholders and was specifically done to help change that.

Dr. Veronesi asked if that focus has made a change at the classroom level in District 13 and many of the staff feel that that has always been the focus. They do feel that the growth conversation has shifted the focus on high-achieving students. They would like to see more professional learning for special ed teachers. They also feel that teachers want more time with these students and not have them out of the room as much. Teachers focus on the individual students and want to demonstrate that every student has made growth. The workshop model has also helped to engage the students and create goals.

Dr. Veronesi summarized that the changes that are being implemented are creating different students with different guarantees. One of the coaches also felt that student engagement is at an all-time high. They also felt that a consistent curriculum has been a big help. Teamwork and openness was also mentioned as key.

Dr. Friedrich had to leave the meeting at this point and the committee took a quick break.

Strategic Planning: Next Steps and Timeline: Kathy Veronesi/Cori DiMaggio

Dr. Veronesi explained that the next steps will be to work with the Center for School Change on what they call the "portrait of the graduate." Isobel Stevenson will be at the Board of Education meeting for a presentation on January 9, 2019 and will work with the administrative team in January. Dr. Veronesi was also contacted by Bonnie Koba, from the HOT School program at the state, and was invited to work on a 15-person team to help with what comes next.

Dr. Stevenson, from the Center for School Change, will talk more specifically about the "portrait of the graduate" work, but she did state that the work can take anywhere from a year to two years. This work will be to determine what skills and attributes a student will have when they leave the district. This will help to describe the "guarantee" that will be offered to the students.

Once that is completed, you then work to build the capacity of the school leaders and the teachers. You would then move on to what the experience needs to look like for the students. This work is also coordinated with instructional rounds. Dr. Veronesi feels that this is the next frontier for District 13 and the model has already been tested at Lyman and throughout the district.

Mr. Moore wondered how you decide what the portrait of the graduate is and Dr. Veronesi explained that it is generalized. Dr. Taylor felt that it was about the underlying skill sets. Dr. Veronesi stated that her goal would be to be ready to implement program changes in a year's time. She also mentioned that the project-based learning model will be the first thing to be implemented. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that it will not be to the extreme and she gave an example of a project that the social studies teachers will be

working on related to China. Mrs. Parness mentioned that Greenwich has an Innovation Lab which is basically a school within a school.

Dr. Veronesi would like the district to try to find a way to have a design team in-residence possibly made up of teachers who do not carry a full class load. Dr. Taylor agreed that there would need to be resources dedicated if a district-wide curriculum change was to happen. Mrs. Petrella hoped that a timeline would be assigned to this. Dr. Veronesi thought that maybe freeing up someone who is close to retirement would be easier, but Mr. Moore and Dr. Taylor felt that it may be better to do this with younger, more radically-thinking people. Dr. Veronesi stated that it would be critical to have someone on the team who understands how the program at Lyman School came to be. Mrs. DiMaggio felt that it really wasn't about their age, but more their skill level and mind set.

Dr. Taylor felt that the correct budget will be necessary and asked if part-time work on this would be enough. He thought it would be a full-time job for at least one person, if not two, for a year. Dr. Veronesi thought that one person would be dedicated to the effort, but two or three teachers would work part-time on the team.

Mrs. Petrella asked about the school hours and how that fits into this plan. Dr. Veronesi reviewed that the Board had previously said that when the district restructures, school start and end times will be part of the discussions. She agreed that the schedule needs to be looked at in this process.

Dr. Veronesi had to leave the meeting at this point.

STEAM Programming (PreK-12) - Brenda Parness

Brenda Parness shared the mission statement that was developed by the STEAM Council in the district. They are working to intentionally integrate science, technology, engineering, arts and math and find avenues for them to come together, rather than be taught in silos.

Mrs. Parness went on to review that preschool has STEAM time every day. Wee Engineers is the program being introduced in preschool and was created by the Boston Museum of Science. It also integrates social, emotional, physical, cognitive and language domains and they focus on solving real-world problems.

The elementary art teachers are including a lot of art and science integration, including transparency, states of matter and balance and motion. This is also happening at the middle and high school levels as well.

Brewster and Lyman both have Makerspace rotations through their allied arts enrichment rotations. This foster creativity and perseverance, exploring and self-awareness as learners, allows for a broad range of hands-on experiences and offers voice and choice in what the students are doing. Mrs. Parness showed some examples of work being done at Brewster and Lyman. STEAM also introduces computer science in addition to engineering at a young age.

Maker Space is now being moved into curricular areas as well. Due to space limitations, there is no one space for Makerspace, so they are looking to get portable Makerspace carts. This is being piloted in Brewster in grade 1 and at Lyman, grades 1/2. In ELA, they are building something and then writing about what they built. She showed some examples of a school in Minnesota that has portable carts and stressed that it wasn't really about the carts, but about empowering the students to create, collaborate and explore. Mrs. Parness also mentioned that a lot of these items are stored on shelves in the libraries and they would like to get them off the shelves and build some lessons around them.

Mrs. Parness shared that learning and memory are wired in the limbic system and teachers say that students can't learn if they're not excited about learning or in a place where you're not happy. Kids are excited to work with their hands and that could open new avenues for learning the content.

Moving on to after-school STEAM camps, they will continue to provide opportunities for engineering and technology. They worked on understanding circuitry and designing and launching rockets.

The current project at Strong School came out of the curriculum writing project over the summer and includes monitoring water at Allyn Brook Park. They work collaboratively with DEEP, the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers as well as Laura Francis on the Sustainable Connecticut Initiative. The students are also looking at the Durham Meadows Superfund site and how it is impacting the water. They will earn points toward certification by holding meetings or making presentations where they will talk about how to protect the waterways.

Strong will also move into First Robotics. Last year, Mrs. Hurlbert did an app development and a robotics after-school program that the kids loved. This year, First Robotics, an international program, will be introduced and the students will participate in Lego robotics. In this program, there is an annual challenge and a real-world connection to careers. Mrs. DiMaggio also mentioned that a stipend for Mrs. Hurlbert will be added into this year's budget. Teamwork skills are judged in this program.

Mrs. Parness showed the robot that was created for the coding and robotics class at the high school next semester. The students will build them from the ground up and learn about the coding. Merwin Funds were received to support the purchase of the materials for the course. Mrs. Parness will facilitate a meeting at the high school between the anatomy and physiology teacher and the district's occupational and physical therapists to design a project together to create assistive devices for student clients in the district. This type of thing will eventually be written into the curriculum as a performance task.

Mrs. Parness showed examples of the Innovation Lab in Greenwich. The classes are co-taught and the students learn by doing. She explained that Brian Falcone has some ideas of what this might look like here in the district.

Mrs. Parness also explained that they have included Project Lead The Way, a set of courses for both engineering and computer science, into the budget for next year. They have also applied for a grant from Lockheed Martin for this. Mrs. DiMaggio has also applied for a title IV grant to increase STEM access to females. Mr. Moore again mentioned that there are quite a few female engineers around town that would probably be very happy to come in and talk to the students. Teachers will require two weeks of training during the summer for these courses.

Mrs. Parness had copies of the STEAM strategic plan that she distributed to the committee members.

Dr. Taylor asked if the thought would be to teach computer science early to help integrate with other classes going forward. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the computer science classes being proposed are introductory classes and will be an elective for students in ninth grade. There will hopefully be higher level classes offered after that.

Mr. Moore had to leave the meeting at this point.

Dr. Taylor asked what the plan was for professional learning for this and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that she put money in the budget to continue to build capacity within the district, including conferences, but still bring in a couple of specialists/consultants. There will also continue to be point persons in each of

the buildings. She has also encouraged the coaches to start to build the excitement and capacity with the teachers.

Dr. Taylor also asked about the Makerspace carts and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the carts would be a time saver with regard to scheduling inside a classroom. Mrs. Parness felt that the teachers would access it more if it was within their classroom. Mrs. Petrella asked about specific skills and Mrs. Parness stated that sewing machines are actually on the Makerspace carts. Mrs. DiMaggio has spoken to Mr. Falcone about different ideas and Haddam-Killingworth has many classes in Project Lead The Way, including woodworking, electronics, computer science and engineering.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First