

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met on Wednesday, January 23, 2019 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.
Committee members absent: None.

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment, Mr. Falcone, Principal of Coginchaug Regional High School and Mrs. Melillo, Director of Guidance.

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

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

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

Approval of Minutes - November 28, 2018

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of the November 28, 2018 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of November 28, 2018, as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor.

Review PSAT Scores

Mr. Falcone explained that students are given the opportunity to take the PSATs in grades 9, 10 and 11. The test is offered in October and is different for the 9th grade than it is for the 10th and 11th grades. The 9th grade assessment is a grade 8/9 PSAT and then the 10th grade assessment is a 10/11.

Mrs. Melillo explained that there are two sections to the PSAT, evidence-based reading and writing and a mathematics section. There are four subscores measured within the reading and writing and three within the math. Those scores help to give more specific feedback on student performance and are more of what the faculty concentrates on while the students focus in on the two different scores of the PSAT.

The PSAT 8/9 has a different scoring range and the total score is from 240 to 1440. The two sections are from 120 to 720. Subscores for all PSAT are from 1 to 15 and there are benchmarks. The benchmarks

for the 8/9 are based on expected student growth toward the SAT benchmarks. Total scores increase incrementally as students grow and gain more knowledge each year.

Mr. Falcone then reviewed the grade 9 scores and explained that this is really a reflection of how the students come to Coginchaug from Strong as the test is given in the beginning of October. The score of 944 is the highest score the district's freshmen have achieved on the PSAT in the past four years and it was really given to freshmen prior to that. He reviewed the subscores in each of the different areas. Both the evidence-based reading and writing and the math scores are higher than the state and national averages. The percentage of students who met benchmark are also higher than the state and national averages. For reading and writing, the state average is 58 percent and the national average is at 57 percent. For math, the state average is 41 percent and the national average is 42 percent. Overall, the ninth grade did an amazing job. He also reminded everyone that all students in the district, of all different ability levels, take the PSAT. That is not the case in the national average.

Mrs. Melillo then went on to review the scoring guide for the PSAT/NMSQT which is the test that 11th graders take in order to qualify for a National Merit Scholarship program. The district gives that test to the 10th graders as well for practice. The scores for each section range from 160 to 760 with the total score being from 320 to 1520. Subscores are measured in the same way. There are then both 10th and 11th grade benchmarks.

Mr. Falcone showed the 10th grade scores, explaining that there has been an increase from 9th grade to 10th grade of 42 points (on a more difficult test). Averages in reading and in math are above the state and national averages as were all of the benchmark scores. In reading, the 10th grade students were at 78 percent, compared to the state at 63 percent and the national average at 63 percent. In math, the state was 39 percent and the national was 43 percent. In the area of evidence in reading and words in context, the numbers have not changed and the goal in working with the teachers is to increase these numbers. The overall goal would be to get 10s across the board.

Mr. Roraback asked if the students were aware that they would be taking the PSAT in October of their freshman year. He felt there is already a lot of apprehension going from 8th to 9th grade and wondered if they really needed one more thing. Mr. Falcone explained that the SAT is one of the biggest stressors for kids and parents, so being exposed to it earlier is better and it is just a practice. Mrs. Melillo stated that they did not find too much stress with the 9th grade as they don't put a lot of emphasis on it. Mr. Falcone also explained that the information is very useful and helps the teachers know where to focus.

Mr. Falcone then reviewed the 11th grade results and the scores have increased throughout each year. They are on track to hit the district's goal of an average score of 1100. They did move up in four out of seven subscores. The district exceeded the state average in each area and within the benchmark, but fell short of the national average in math. The national average is 45 percent and the district was at 42 percent.

Dr. Taylor noted that the subscores were improving, but the benchmarks were decreasing. Mr. Falcone stated that they are looking at how many and how far students are below the benchmark. They have found that there is a gap that needs to be filled and they are working to figure out how to move students. They are looking at whether the right sequence of classes are being offered and if all students have the opportunity to experience the algebra they need prior to taking the assessment.

Dr. Friedrich noted that the math benchmark scores dropped, but there is no corresponding drop in the subscores. Mr. Falcone explained that a separation is created as the material gets more difficult and that

gap is what needs to be bridged. He also explained that individual student results do show areas of need. Dr. Veronesi explained how they have looked at those scores and what interventions they are working on. There was discussion about having algebra classes two years in a row.

Mrs. Melillo summarized that the district performed higher than the state average in evidence-based reading and writing as well as math in all three grade levels. The district performed higher than the national average in evidence-based reading and writing in all three grade levels and higher than the national average in two out of the three grade levels in math. Both the sophomore and junior classes had an overall increase of 42 points from last year to this year. The sophomore and junior classes also increase their math and evidence-based reading and writing average total scores from the fall of 2017. The junior class subscores increased by one point in four out of seven categories and the freshman average scores were higher than the previous two years of freshmen taking the exam.

Mrs. DiMaggio went on to review next steps. The teachers completed a data analysis of the overall 9th, 10th and 11th grade PSAT results at the January faculty meeting. Departments have analyzed individual student PSAT results in January department meetings. Individual teacher/department actions plans have been created based on the student data analysis and have been turned in to administration. They are also tracking to see what courses the students have taken in math and what their grades were. Juniors will take the SAT on March 27th and will share a post-assessment. The test results will come in in May and a complete analysis will be done and brought to the Student Achievement Committee and present to the Board.

Dr. Taylor asked what the current benchmark score is for a National Merit semifinalist and how many students per year does the district have that fall above those scores. Mrs. Melillo felt that the score changes every year and thought that the district has had a few semifinalists.

Dr. Friedrich asked if the distributions of the raw scores has been looked at and if there was anything informative about the student population. Mr. Falcone stated that it was really the teachers that do that, but within the 9th, 10th and 11th grade scores there are consistent results with regard to who meets and doesn't meet the benchmarks. Dr. Friedrich asked if there was any correlation with programmatic history for the students and Mr. Falcone stated that that work is being done. Dr. Veronesi commented that the administration, team leaders and teachers are looking at all of these questions. Dr. Taylor felt that the students get separated out into three groups and he wondered whether the middle group was being left out in the process.

Mr. Falcone stated that the SAT is very heavy on algebra, with geometry being only about 10 percent of the actual assessment. They have taken steps to be allow for algebra I being a one-and-a-half year track, followed by algebra II for one-and-a-half years for those students who require it. Otherwise, it is algebra I followed by geometry, then by algebra II. Mrs. Melillo stated they are also looking at intervention services. Dr. Friedrich asked if the individual student scores translate through to the SBAC scores. Mr. Falcone also explained that the high school offers an SAT prep class to students who would achieve the greatest growth in the first semester of the junior year. Dr. Taylor asked if they knew how many students were taking ancillary prep classes and Mr. Falcone explained that they offer an SAT boot camp the weekend before the SAT. Dr. Taylor felt that all students need some type of prep for the SAT. Mrs. DiMaggio also commented that a high percentage of students utilize Khan Academy. Dr. Taylor asked if the high school has thought about recommending early testing for students who are identified in sixth or seventh grade and stated that there are many programs available.

Mrs. Petrella commented that college isn't for all students and asked how those students are helped. Mr. Falcone stated that they are proposing new courses for next year that align to exactly that. Mr. Roraback stated that more and more students are questioning whether college is necessary or not and there are many families in the community that are struggling. Mr. Falcone felt that the Career Center is key to this issue. Dr. Friedrich felt that they should track the statistics of how many kids go to trade school as a positive.

STEAMing High School

A. New High School Graduation Requirements

Mr. Falcone explained that the junior class was supposed to be the first group that went through the changes to the graduation requirements, but that has been pushed off by the state over time based on the fact that not all districts were ready. He reviewed a document showing the current state graduation requirements and the current Coginchaug Regional High School graduation requirements. Currently, the state requirement is a minimum of 20 credits and Coginchaug is a minimum of 26 credits. The main difference is in the number of electives and PE and health credits that students are required to have.

With the change in graduation requirements for the class of 2023, the State will require a 25-credit minimum, including nine credits of humanities. They also changed those requirements to include nine credits of STEM. They have also included a mastery-based diploma assessment. District 13 has a lot of these things in place already. Mr. Falcone explained that they know what colleges are looking for on a transcript and felt that the appropriate number of English credits is four, social studies at three-and-a-half, three credits in math and three credits in science. Biology will remain as a requirement of the State. Students would also have three electives in STEM and this led them to realizing that more STEM opportunities need to be offered. As a district, the focus has been on STEAM, but the state is asking for STEM.

District 13 currently offers PE and health in quarters each year and they would look to keep that in place. The credit in world language would remain intact. Four elective credits would be maintained, keeping the district at the 26-credit minimum. A one-credit senior Capstone project is being piloted this year and 50 hours of community service would provide a half-credit as well. Mr. Falcone explained that they will be meeting with the teachers tomorrow about the Capstone project. Dr. Veronesi explained that the Student Achievement Committee could make a recommendation to the full Board to accept the proposed graduation requirements.

Mr. Falcone reviewed the Capstone projects, including the Career Center, a teaching and learning experience, business experience through DECA, Campus Unification and Making a Difference.

Mr. Moore asked about mastery-based diploma assessment and Mr. Falcone explained that it's basically a senior Capstone project that incorporates what the expectations are for a student to leave Coginchaug. Mr. Falcone also pointed out that one credit toward the graduation requirement can be earned in middle school (most likely a world language or algebra).

B. 2019-2020 Proposed High School Course Offerings

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed the district's STEAM mission statement and explained that they are looking to introduce engineering and robotics and manufacturing and innovation at the high school next year. Courses being offered next year will include an AP computer science principles course, a robotics class, mobile app development, the Coginchaug Design and Build Studio and an Innovation lab. Dr.

Friedrich asked if this was basically Maker Space and Dr. Veronesi explained that that was only being done at Brewster right now and they are looking to bring that to the high school. She also explained how Plainville schools do their Maker Space.

Mrs. Petrella mentioned restructuring the school day, with possibly staggering the starting time of staff, which would allow for students to have more time after the academic day. Mrs. DiMaggio mentioned that these opportunities could also be provided after school. Mr. Falcone also mentioned that sometimes classes are offered, but not enough students enroll.

Mrs. DiMaggio went on to mention that there will be an integrated wood shop which would include students of all different abilities. Through Project Lead the Way, an introduction to engineering and design will be offered. Ocean Exploration will be offered that will concentrate on using a remotely-operated vehicle. The Senior Field Experience will deal with science and technology.

Mr. Falcone also proposed a list of new offerings, including an entrepreneurship class and running a unified school store. In PE and health, they are looking at a mindfulness class, called Put it on Pause, which would look at meditation techniques. Students have asked for a dance fitness class and in history and social studies, they hope to offer the Year That Rocked the World (1968). Mr. Falcone stated that the grades in these classes are not the concern as it is much more about the experience and the learning opportunity.

Dr. Taylor asked about the strategy for staffing and resource allocation for these new courses. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that the new teacher being hired for technology at the high school will be provided with professional learning. They also have some thoughts about who will teach the engineering course as well. Dr. Veronesi stated that this will all be discussed in administrators' meetings. Dr. Friedrich also suggested that the administration look to the community for advisors to the faculty.

Dr. Taylor asked if there was any thought to making some of these classes a requirement as opposed to an elective. Mr. Falcone hoped to make the least number of classes as possible be required so that the students have more flexibility and choice which may mean some classes are held on a quarterly basis. Dr. Veronesi believes that electives have become much more complementary to what is required.

Project-Based Learning

Dr. Veronesi explained that through Strategic Visioning and Strategic Coherence planning, the project-based learning design has come to the forefront. They have chosen the Buck Institute as the resource and expertise on this. Dr. Veronesi explained that this is a more deliberate and serious way to deliver the guarantee of the district's mission.

Mrs. DiMaggio played a short video for the committee members that designed the essential elements of project-based learning. Mrs. DiMaggio and Dr. Veronesi explained how the process of project-based learning was evident in the development of Curriculum Night. Curriculum Night will be on March 7th and will highlight what is taught in science, technology, art and mathematics. This year, ELA will be incorporated as well. It also provides an opportunity for families to learn with their children. Next year, teachers at the middle and high school levels will receive professional learning in Project-based Learning.

Dr. Taylor asked how far this will be taken and if it will be in every classroom. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that part of the curriculum is being written to include at least two project-based tasks. The curriculum is always tied back to the standards as well. Right now, it is teacher-based project-designed learning but it

will eventually be personalized to the students. Mrs. DiMaggio also stated that she will not approve curriculum documents if project-based learning is not included.

Mrs. DiMaggio emphasized that the district wants students to have meaningful and long-lasting learning. This adds voice, choice and personalization. It currently exists mostly in science and technology. The oceanography class with the ROV would be considered a project-based class. At Strong School, curriculum was written for the technology innovation class and the students are working with DEEP and looking at the Durham Meadows Superfund site. In the Backstage course, students design theaters and staging construction. In anatomy, students are developing a project that can help students within the district. They are creating devices to help students who have occupational therapy issues.

Dr. Veronesi did state that there are clearly tenets of project-based learning that are clearly missing in the district. The assemblies at John Lyman are a good example of this type of learning. Mrs. DiMaggio hopes to start this approach at the middle and high school level.

Dr. Taylor asked about resources and if there would be anything in this year's budget. Dr. Veronesi stated that there will be a big ask for the administrative team for high-level, national professional development. Mrs. DiMaggio mentioned a project-based learning conference that will be held in California or taking courses at Harvard.

Strategic Visioning Update

Dr. Veronesi explained that they have identified the work on the Portrait of the Graduate and Isobel Stevenson suggested that they begin that work with the administrative team. The team met with her and part of their discussion centered on the outcomes that have been identified through NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges). Mrs. Melillo explained that the Portrait of the Graduate will be required in the NEASC 2020 standards. NEASC is the accrediting body for high schools and the district will have their next NEASC visit is 2023.

Dr. Veronesi added that they did not want to create a document or outcomes that is in opposition to NEASC or to what parents and teachers had identified globally in the Strategic Visioning process. She also felt that the district has really heard the priorities of the people in this process. A few key areas have already been identified including: connection, collaboration, and contribution; voice, choice, and impact; innovation, creativity, and movement; observation, inquiry and awareness. Through the NEASC process analysis and interpretation, collaboration and communication, and awareness of audience.

On Friday, the administrative team will begin the crosswalk of that work and the identification and communication of the existing foundations. They will meet again with Isobel from the Center for School Change and identify a meeting schedule, with the hopes to have a document complete in October or November that identifies the Portrait of the Graduate. Community members, staff, parents, students and Board of Education will be invited to participate in the process. They have already received quite a few emails from interested parents.

In addition to the Portrait of the Graduate work, they will also begin to build the School Design teams that will bring the "vision to life" as far as the practices within the new grade level reconfiguration. Work on the completion of the Ed Specs will begin in February. There is a proposal for some very basic classroom additions, but there is a section in the Ed Specs for future considerations for building planning, e.g., outdoor activity areas. This work will begin at the end of this year and continue through the 2019-2020 school year.

Dr. Veronesi would also like to have the team visit other schools, such as magnet schools, preK-2 schools and 3-5 schools. They would also like to develop some innovative communication avenues which could be a great project for students. Dr. Veronesi also explained that there is a critical mass of people who do not want to see the HOT school programming go away, but the new programming could in fact be described as a HOT approach or framework. She also explained that the Colchester superintendent will come to meet with her on Monday morning and Bonnie Koba, the HOT school director at the state department of education, will join them to help develop an approach to enhance and sustain the programming over time.

The administrative team, along with some staff members, will do a learning walk at Lyman School to see what's happening there with an integrated curriculum and HOT school practices. Bonnie Koba also stated that people resources are better than print resources, so they will hold a think tank with some visiting artists. Dr. Veronesi summarized the immediate and most important next steps, including the status, the vision and the plan, the HOT/ID program, Maker Space at the elementary schools, STEAM programming, well-being, socio-emotional learning, international and local partnerships and the district's work in equity.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First