

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met on Wednesday, April 24, 2019 at 5:30 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

Committee members present: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella (arrived late), Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor

Committee members absent: Mrs. Caramanello and Ms. Guidet

Administration present: Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Dr. Friedrich called the meeting to order at 5:34 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

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

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

Approval of Minutes - March 27, 2019

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to approve the minutes of the March 27, 2019 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of March 27, 2019, as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor.

K-5 Elementary Report Card Revision

Mrs. DiMaggio reported that they have been in the process of revising the report cards for grades K-5 to align them to the new Common Core, NGSS, science and social studies standards. All priority standards have been identified and will go to Jen Anderson, in the IT department, to be put into the system. Rubrics are also being aligned to the standards and they will be online for parents to see. She reviewed an example with the committee members. By the end of the year, most students should meet standard and it will be rare for a child to exceed the standard. In the case of a child exceeding standards, the teacher will put an asterisk next to the grade and comment in the section below. Mrs. DiMaggio felt that most students would be in the 3 and 4, with a small number of students exceeding. She explained that the standards are meant to be end-of-year goals.

Dr. Friedrich summarized that the expectation would be for the majority of students to be 3s and 4s at the end of the year and Dr. Taylor added that they would start out at 1s and 2s. Mr. Roraback felt that it

would be valuable for the students as well to be able to monitor their growth. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that they have noticed growth in the iReady data as well.

Dr. Taylor asked who the report card is directed at, the student or the parent. Mrs. DiMaggio felt that it was to help the students, but when they are younger it's really for the parent. Dr. Friedrich asked if there was a pattern of scores dropping at the beginning of each year and then recovering. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that the current report card is not really aligned to the standards, but she believes that that is what's happening.

Communication will be key with these new report cards. It will be rolled out to all of the staff at the beginning of the year and sent to parents as well.

Dr. Taylor asked if there was a rubric to put people into the exceeding category and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that that would be done with comments. Dr. Taylor felt that there was no guide to tell the teachers that there should be an asterisk. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that that would be very clearly communicated to the teachers. Dr. Taylor is a little concerned that there is no category for exceeds because kids have an intuitive awareness of where they are and where they should be. He felt it would be frustrating if he was a student. Dr. Friedrich agreed that they should think about having a category for that. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that there was a huge committee that worked on this and they went back and forth with that. Dr. Friedrich felt that was part of nurturing students who are exceptional.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the way the Common Core standards are written and meant to move through the system is that students are supposed to meet the goal by the end of the year and that is a big accomplishment. She felt it would be a rarity that a child will exceed the goal because there is so much involved. Dr. Taylor felt that more rigorous standards may create a serious messaging issue because parents won't understand why their kids are not meeting the goals. Dr. Friedrich felt that it would send that message to the teachers and school system as well and that the state is setting it up that way.

Dr. Friedrich asked what Mrs. DiMaggio hoped for as a median score for the district and she hoped for a 3. Mr. Moore asked what happens if, at the end of the first marking period, the students all get 2s but may be at the 4 level for that particular period. Dr. Friedrich was afraid it would be telling people that they are doing a lousy job in the beginning of the year. Mrs. DiMaggio added that the rubrics will also be posted for the parents to see so they will get more information.

Dr. Taylor does like the focus on skill sets as opposed to tests, but worries about the blowback that will come from this. Mr. Moore does feel that the report card itself is very easy to read. Mrs. DiMaggio felt that it was less suggestive as well and felt that the purpose of the report card is to report on what the child really knows.

Mrs. Petrella agreed that the learning in the elementary grades is a progressive thing, but the same skills are being assessed in each marking period. Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed some of the language used and that the teacher will know how to apply that.

Dr. Friedrich suggested that they look at the scores and consider the impact that will have on the parents and students when it looks like they are doing well in one year and not in the next. Mrs. DiMaggio felt that they could explain that to the parents. Dr. Friedrich added that they could just advance the numeric goal for each of the grading periods and they will end up with a grade at the end of the year that will allow students and their parents to feel a bit better about the beginning of the year. Dr. Taylor felt that that would be a significant change from what is currently done and parents and students are used to this now.

Mrs. Petrella felt that this approach is far better than anything she's ever seen with the amount of detail provided. She did feel that the comments will be key in explaining things as well as parent-teacher conferences. Dr. Friedrich stated that Mrs. Heckler had given the board a presentation in the past about how varied the children are coming into first grade and, by the end of the year, they had all progressed.

Mr. Moore asked what would be done with art, music and physical education and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that it would be similar. She then went on to explain the science goals and noted that these are in draft form and they will be looking at them over the summer to make sure the language is similar. Mrs. Petrella noted that this is more subjective than the ELA.

Mrs. DiMaggio showed the committee the revised assessment calendar and explained that there is an overall district calendar and one for each grade level. There are also protocols for each assessment benchmark.

Grade Reform

Mrs. DiMaggio reported that they have started to take a look at grading practices in the district and looking at consistency across different classrooms. They started with the book, *Rethinking Grading*, which was purchased for all of the administrators and coaches. Mrs. DiMaggio came up with discussion questions and they have met approximately six times so far. A group will be working on this over the summer and will look at the board's homework policy and investigate some other policies as well. They will survey staff about grading, looking mostly at Memorial, Strong and Coginchaug. Principals will have discussions about grading in staff meetings.

They are starting to talk about having a no zero policy because a zero is really hard to recover from. Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that the purpose of grading is to look at where the students are performing and what knowledge they have. When a zero is thrown in, the average goes down. A no zero policy would include having opportunities to make up work. They would also provide formative assessments and instead of averaging grades, they may take a look at the most current grade in a particular standard. She explained that the grade for an assignment at the end of completion is the true evaluation of what the students know.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that to do true standards-based grading practices, they will need to look at the schedules and give people time to teach everything that they need to teach.

Mr. Moore asked what habits of mind means and Mrs. DiMaggio gave examples of responsibility, grit, perseverance and the core ethical values.

Mrs. Petrella asked if the testing scores could be addressed with a pre-test and a post-test on each unit and Mrs. DiMaggio agreed and stated that the post-test is the summative test. They will also do continuous formative assessments.

Mr. Moore asked what they will do with a teacher who is giving a test on something the students have not even learned yet and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that that is what they are trying to avoid. She added that some of that would be giving the teachers permission to slow down. She stresses that working with the students is more beneficial than plowing through a curriculum. Mrs. Petrella felt that that was why assessment was so important so that the teachers know what the students know.

Mrs. Petrella stated that she always looked at homework as a responsibility though it was never really a lot and homework was counted at a lower percentage of their grade. She is concerned that responsibility is lacking in society today. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that they discussed the responsibility piece and that becomes a habit of mind which is also graded. She reviewed that the purpose of homework is to practice

what they've learned and if students aren't doing the homework, chances are they are not going to do as well. They have talked about not grading homework as it is supposed to be practice.

Mr. Roraback asked what the incentive would be for doing homework if there was no grade and Mrs. DiMaggio stated they had talked about that as well. They are considering making it a very low percentage of the grade because it is not really reflective of the students' true learning. Dr. Taylor felt homework was an extension of the learning environment and not just as practice. He agreed that it builds character and responsibility and felt it should be even more important. He does worry about a homework policy where it becomes a small fraction because the kids will ultimately not do it. Dr. Friedrich added that they may think if they add a second sport, they can get into a different school and they would rather be doing two sports than doing homework.

Mrs. DiMaggio felt that if it was an extension of learning, that is a different situation. If it is practice and the student chooses not to do that, that will perhaps ultimately affect their grade. Dr. Friedrich also noted that teaching now is not just sitting in class and people telling you things. Dr. Taylor agreed, but felt that the content is learned in the classroom.

Mrs. DiMaggio summarized that they are looking at purposeful and meaningful homework and what is graded and what is not graded. If homework is practice, it should not be graded. If it is an extension of the classroom or a flipped classroom, that would be graded. Mrs. Petrella wondered how the kids would distinguish between the two and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the teachers will explain that. Mrs. DiMaggio also explained that they have discussed how this would affect the students once they get to college. Mrs. DiMaggio will send Dr. Taylor some recommendations on readings about this subject.

Mr. Roraback asked what percent of the grade is currently for homework and Mrs. DiMaggio stated that at her former middle school, they had decided that homework would be counted as 10 percent. She felt that they need to look at the culture of the district and of the building and, as the district moves to more project-based learning, the students will need to do some of the work on their own.

Preliminary Summer School Plans

Mrs. DiMaggio stated that, if the budget passes, there will be a summer school program for general ed students that is targeted to tier 2 intervention students. Currently, 40 students have been identified in grades K-3 and they will hire four teachers and a coordinator or two to run the program. It will go from July 8th to August 1st and will be at Brewster School from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. She will send letters out to parents to let them know their children is being considered and hopes that the parents will be interested. Mrs. DiMaggio reported that she had coordinated a summer school program for middle school students in another district and it was very successful. That program was run with student teachers, with teachers mentoring them.

Mrs. Petrella asked if there was a summer program for students who need the credit and Mrs. DiMaggio stated that the high school does work on that.

Mrs. DiMaggio added that she hoped that the summer program will help prevent a summer slide for the students and will extend it to other students as well. Mrs. Petrella asked if transportation will be provided and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that she is meeting with the special ed department tomorrow to see if transportation can be offered if the parents pay. The families will not have to pay for summer school, just the transportation if it's needed.

SBAC Schedules and Samples

Mrs. DiMaggio shared the SBAC and NGSS schedule with the committee. The first day of testing starts on Tuesday with the ELA test at all three schools. She showed the committee members some samples of test items and demonstrated how the test works.

Dr. Friedrich stated this is exactly why school districts need to have robust IT departments. Mrs. DiMaggio works closely with IT to stagger testing times to make sure bandwidth is available.

Portrait of a Graduate

On April 27th, there will be a thought exchange question which is a way of virtually reaching out to Guiding Coalition members (clergy, park and rec staff, students, Board of Ed members, teachers, etc.) that Dr. Veronesi negotiated for a tenth of the price. On May 23rd, there will be a dinner and organizational meeting from 5:45 to 7:00 PM. In June, there will be a full day of Guiding Coalition meeting to analyze the thought exchange feedback, identify themes, cross-reference with strategic visioning outcomes and create a draft summary document. Over the summer, there will be a couple of virtual meetings to create the Portrait of the Graduate, with a follow-up thought exchange share in the Fall and student focus groups.

Mrs. DiMaggio then shared the thought exchange that Dr. Veronesi came up with. Dr. Friedrich commented that Portrait of the Graduate is a phase that means something to Mrs. DiMaggio, but not necessarily to the people they will be reaching out to. He suggested putting the question at the top and ending with the Portrait of the Graduate. Mr. Moore agreed and stated that people have asked him what Portrait of the Graduate is. Mrs. DiMaggio will give that feedback to Dr. Veronesi.

Dr. Taylor asked who would be included in the thought exchange and Mrs. DiMaggio would rather that Dr. Veronesi explained it. The Guiding Coalition will be a selected group; however, they will try to get feedback from everyone. Dr. Taylor felt that more weight should potentially be put on what teachers are putting into this than others, but he wasn't sure if that would be the right approach.

Mrs. DiMaggio stated that Dr. Veronesi had sent out an update today with samples of Portrait of the Graduate from other schools. Themes will be developed based on the feedback that is received.

Mr. Moore also mentioned that the chamber choir won best in show at Disney, the full chorus won best in show, the jazz band came in second after a performing arts school from Puerto Rico and the full band came in third against all music schools.

Dr. Friedrich reminded everyone that they had talked about ways to get course credit for these kinds of activities. Mrs. DiMaggio does not have a definitive answer on that yet, but she spoke to the Curriculum Council about that and some felt that students should get credit for that. She also brought it up to Brian Falcone and Beth Melillo. There was also discussion on whether sports could take the place of some gym credits.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Dr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, 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 7:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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