

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, October 23, 2019 at 4:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

Committee members present: Mrs. Booth, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor

Committee members absent: Mrs. Caramanello and Dr. Friedrich

Community members absent: Ms. Commins

Student members present: Thomas Peters

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

Guests: Mr. Falcone, Mrs. Melillo, Mr. Ford, Mrs. Keane, Mrs. Durkin and Mrs. Heikkila

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

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

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

Approval of Minutes - September 18, 2019

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2019 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of September 18, 2019, as presented: Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Mrs. Booth abstained.

Math Curriculum Adoption

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the district now has a fully-vetted K-5 math curriculum. The coaches worked hard to align assessments to the curriculum. They are here tonight to give a brief overview so that the Student Achievement Committee can bring it to the full board for adoption. The 6-8 curriculum will be presented later this year.

Noelle Durkin and Tara Heikkila are the district's elementary math coaches and began by explaining that the curriculum is being continually revised based on teacher feedback and student performance. They began by first mapping out each grade and every grade begins by launching the math workshop. This

lays out routines and rituals. The curriculum is broken down into domains and they have mapped those domains over days throughout the year.

Mrs. Heikkila reviewed the grade 3 curriculum pacing guide next which includes the individual units, the number of days allotted for each of them and the targeted standards. The 4Cs are also included in each unit. The content and skills are also highlighted. Mrs. Heikkila explained that each grade level has a curriculum pacing guide which is an in-depth overview of the entire year. All of the curriculum pacing guides can be found on the district's website. They have also made this presentation shareable.

Mrs. Durkin then went on to review the implementation guides that were created for the teachers. The lessons, concept, student-friendly "I can" statements and resources are all listed in the guides. Mrs. Heikkila explained that grade 3 is now working on introduction to multiplication and division and reviewed parts of that for the committee. These documents include live links to resources. Mrs. Durkin noted that curriculum is a living document and is constantly being updated. Resources have been changed and further explanations have been added. Mrs. Heikkila added that there is also access to the assessments and answer keys.

Mrs. Heikkila then went on to review the report card rubric and pointed out that the scores go from 4 down to 1 and include descriptors. Mrs. Durkin explained that they sat with teachers at every grade level to decide what the indicators would be for the scoring. Mrs. Petrella felt that this was amazing and was more like an IEP for math than a program. They also noted how helpful it was to have the coaches there.

Mrs. DiMaggio also noted that the state asked that the district present at Performance Matters because of the growth within the district. We were one of six districts asked to do that. Mrs. Durkin added that people have continued to reach out after that. Mrs. DiMaggio summarized what they presented, highlighting PLC data cycles and data literacy. Building the capacity of the teacher leaders was also noted as an important point as well as having a viable curriculum that is tied to standards and assessments. Mrs. Durkin added that professional learning is ongoing and authentic at all times with the addition of the coaches.

Mrs. Petrella asked if they get feedback from the teachers as to how they feel about it and they commented that they get daily feedback. Mrs. Heikkila met with a group of teachers just yesterday who had input on changing part of the assessment. She also noted that teachers are able to make comments on all of the documents and both she and Mrs. Durkin receive those comments.

NEASC Update

Mr. Falcone reviewed that the NEASC accreditation is a pretty big process to go through and explained that they will walk through the new standards. The standards are evaluated approximately every 10 years and, in 2011, seven standards were created (a total of 54 items that have to be addressed). These standards work to push schools to improve.

Mr. Falcone reviewed that the accreditation cycle was just finished in October. An intensive study was done internally by seven teacher-led groups and they looked at the items under each of the standards. That information was then sent to NEASC. Following that, 16 people visited Cogenchaug for four days and reviewed the report, interviewed a number of different people and then issued a report. In October, 2013, a report from NEASC was received that stated everything that needed to be addressed. They were then given two years to provide feedback on improvement and then again in five years. NEASC then can see the growth over time.

Looking at the data from the accreditation, the committee made 49 recommendations for improvement. After the two-year report, there were 10 highlighted recommendations remaining that required response. The five-year report required five highlighted recommendations remaining. The committee did ask for another five-year follow-up report and those answers were provided just this month.

Mrs. Melillo explained that the five-year report was submitted on October 1st which then concluded this cycle of NEASC. Of the 54 indicators, there were quite a few that were complete but some are always in progress. Anything with curriculum or assessment is constantly evolving. For 2020, NEASC has changed their standards and have narrowed it down to five standards, with a total of 32 indicators. The intention for that was to align with existing school improvements.

The district's timeline for accreditation is to train a team from the high school in the spring of 2021 on the new standards. The intensive self-study will start in the Fall of 2021 and the committee will visit in early 2024, with the recommendations due to be received in the Fall of 2024. Mrs. Melillo believes this will be more about a school growth plan this time around. The five-year progress will then be due in 2029.

Mr. Falcone noted that they have received some resources on the new standards and a lot of the work with PLCs and Portrait of the Citizen aligns with them. He explained that the district gets an accreditation update after each portion is handed in and we have always remained accredited. Mr. Falcone felt that this is helpful for the teachers and they understand what is necessary for accreditation purposes. Mr. Moore felt that the standards seem to be very generic, but Mr. Falcone explained that the indicators break them down. Mrs. Melillo explained that curriculum, instruction and professional development are all included in those indicators.

Dr. Taylor asked if there are consequences for not being accredited and Mrs. Melillo explained that colleges want to know that the students come from an accredited high school. Mr. Roraback noted that there was only the one accrediting body as well, but asked if any facility issues are outstanding. Mr. Falcone did not see any facility issues and thought that maybe the field house could be an issue, but he would be surprised if that were the case. He did mention that the library-media center may be red-flagged at some point because there is only a part-time librarian, though he did feel that he has a good rationale for that.

Enrichment Update

Mrs. DiMaggio reported that she, Jen Keane and Tom Ford are administrators on the Enrichment committee and a Google survey was put out to the K-8 teachers asking about enrichment items either in the individual classrooms or school-wide. They are also reaching out to different districts to get ideas. The philosophy behind this is to provide equity for all, based on needs.

They have found that clubs and activities are extremely important for students, but they also want to ensure that enrichment activities are provided during the school day as well. One possibility that came up may be to have a teacher come in at 10:00 and stay until 5:00 to provide extension activities. They are also working on the identification of gifted and talented.

Mrs. Keane explained that the identification of talented and gifted is really a special education process. There has been a process to identify students in the past, but there has never been a talented and gifted program. They are working to have the identification be more consistent, using similar measures in

every building. They are looking at scores from SBAC and iReady and she explained that the guideline would be to identify 1.5 percent of the total population as talented and gifted, if not more.

Dr. Taylor asked what that percentage is based on and explained that other districts don't necessarily use that number. Mrs. Keane stated that they are looking at the top fifth percentile of the SBAC and iReady scores. There is a gifted rating scale in this process that will be given to teachers. She explained that a greater percentile could certainly be identified. The talented piece is a bit more specific to the particular child's talent. This referral could be made by parents, teachers or outside sources.

Mrs. DiMaggio added that they are working to come up with a process that make sense for the entire district. Mrs. Keane added that the state says 1 percent as a guideline, but it is certainly different in smaller, high-achieving districts and the district can identify any percentage they'd like.

Mrs. DiMaggio noted that the enrichment piece comes in after students are identified and that if a student is not identified as gifted and talented, it certainly doesn't mean that they are not gifted in a certain area. Mrs. Keane added that they are looking at this as two different tracks, one being the identification and the other is enrichment for all students.

Mrs. Booth stated that she has had a parent reach out to her about her child at Strong and she feels that her child has not been challenged. This parent has done some research and found some programs online. She had also asked if book groups could be put together and interventionists could meet with them. Mrs. Booth will forward those emails to Mrs. Keane.

Mr. Moore asked if talent in athletics will also be included in enrichment and Mrs. Keane stated that that has never come up before. She added that the identification process is really done in fourth through sixth grade. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that they have had that discussion and teachers in art and music naturally provide that enrichment for those students, but they are not labeled as talented and gifted. She did feel that they will need to look at that more closely.

Dr. Taylor argued that sports are inherently in a structure that promotes and pushes students, so that it has a talented and gifted component to it.

Dr. Veronesi explained that the 1 percent is students who have an IQ of 140 and above and is just a guideline. It was also noted that IQ tests are no longer administered, though the OLSAT test is one that many districts use for that purpose. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that they were thinking about looking at the SBAC and iReady scores and looking at the top students, then perhaps giving them a group OLSAT. Mrs. DiMaggio also mentioned that she will be putting an enrichment teacher into the budget for next year. Dr. Veronesi felt that ultimately it would be a tiered and multifaceted model that speaks to the needs of the district, is coordinated with the curriculum and supports and sustains that population of students.

Dr. Veronesi asked Mrs. Keane what she would recommend for the parent that emailed Mrs. Booth and she explained that she would need to have a conversation with the parent to really get details. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that she would like to talk to the child because it's important to know their perspective and how they feel. She felt that that would be necessary throughout the program and is struggling with exactly how that can be done.

Dr. Taylor stated that Middletown has a very well-thought out process around identification, including teacher assessments, standardized testing and a PPT process. Dr. Veronesi stated that they have copies all

of Middletown's protocols as well. Dr. Taylor asked what the district's response is to parents right now about their children being identified. Mrs. Keane explained that they have a list of identified students and the identification process thus far has been via teacher referral, scores and report cards thought they'd like to refine that process. Dr. Taylor asked if parents are being notified of that and Mrs. Keane explained that they have been notified though no enrichment is available. Moving forward, they will have a PPT and create an IEP based on all of the information. Currently, parents can request a PPT if they feel their child is talented and gifted.

Mr. Moore explained that his children were identified by their first-grade teacher and were in the talented and gifted program. A lot of extra programming was provided for them up until about fifth grade.

Mr. Ford agreed with everything that has been said and summarized that they are trying to arrive at a common definition of what enrichment is. Finding out what the teachers thought about enrichment was interesting. He also felt that the more solidly the curriculum is in place, the ability to extend from that will become much easier.

Mrs. DiMaggio added that she felt that project-based learning will really provide enrichment that the students are looking for. Mrs. Booth stated that she has received feedback from parents that feel that the accelerated math at Strong is great. Mr. Roraback mentioned that students had gone to Mr. Sadinsky for enrichment and felt that that is the climate that needs to exist in all schools. Dr. Veronesi summarized that they did not want that to be by accident or led by students and that it should be that it's just a part of the educational experience for students in this district. Mr. Roraback also mentioned that some parents might need some input about that the talented and gifted program does, in fact, fall under special education.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First