

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, November 20, 2019 at 4:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

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

Community members absent: Ms. Commins

Student members absent: Thomas Peters

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

Guest: Mrs. Parness, STEAM Coordinator

Dr. Taylor called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the agenda, as presented.

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

Approval of Minutes - October 23, 2019

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2019 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of October 23, 2019, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor.

STEAM integrated in math workshop and how we are currently using makerspace

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that she had invited Brenda Parness to give a presentation on how the district is integrating technology in math stations, utilizing Seesaw, and how makerspace is integrated into the elementary schools.

Mrs. Parness explained that they have been working to integrate makerspace into the classrooms and infusing technology through the use of Seesaw. One of the goals is to demonstrate growth in math fluency strategies and they are using Bee-Bot and Osmo to target fluency by making learning more engaging. The math coaches, library media specialists and Mrs. Parness have written lesson plans using Bee-Bot and Osmo.

Mrs. Parness explained the various strategies they are working on and reviewed a student and staff member interacting using Bee-Bot. A short video was shown. Bee-Bot is used in the elementary grades and Osmo is used more for subitizing, recognition, addition and number sense. These are being used as stations within the math workshop, typically in small groups.

Mrs. Parness then explained that they have been integrating technology by expanding the use of Seesaw which the students used over the summer months. Mrs. DiMaggio added that the students and teachers interacted over the summer in both reading and math as part of the "Summer Learning" program. Mr. Roraback asked how the participation was over the summer and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that each school had different levels of participation, but it was overwhelmingly positive. Mr. Roraback explained that they had a summer reading program in the technical high schools and only about 40 percent of students participated and that really affected their grade for the first quarter of the new year.

Mrs. Parness added that 3/4 students have been using Seesaw in social studies as well and she showed a short video of a student communicating what she learned on a field trip. Teachers and classmates can also provide feedback. She then showed a video of a student doing a math problem. Mrs. DiMaggio added that this has been a wonderful tool within workshop stations for the teachers and for students to be able to understand the process. Each student has their own account, but there are privacy measures and the data stays in-house. It was also noted that teachers choose which videos get posted. The students also have the choice of doing a video or annotating with comments and the teacher can comment back and also highlight the work to let the class know.

Dr. Taylor asked what the expectation was on the teachers as far as reviewing the student material and Mrs. Parness explained that they have to review it all before the student can receive feedback. Mrs. DiMaggio noted that the expectation for the teachers this year was to try it. Dr. Taylor wondered whether it was adding extra pressure on the teachers, but Mrs. DiMaggio explained that this actually frees up the teacher to be able to interact more with students in the classroom and is used instead of worksheets that have to be taken home to be reviewed. They have not heard any comments from teachers about it creating extra work.

Mrs. Booth commented that she did not personally use this over the summer because she wanted her kids off electronics for the summer, but she does see the plus side. She also found it difficult to switch between accounts on Seesaw. She would also be concerned that it would put more pressure on the teachers. Mrs. Parness felt like the feedback is much more instantaneous now. Mr. Roraback also felt that a real benefit is also the self-grading feature.

Mrs. DiMaggio added that there are different ways to enhance technology in the curriculum and engage learners at the same time. She agreed with the issue of screen time, but also noted that the students are not on computers to play video games or take an online course. Dr. Friedrich felt that the key point is that it is groups working together and that alone time should be the concern, not just screen time.

Mrs. Caramanello asked what the students do with the feedback and Mrs. DiMaggio felt that it was more about the teacher gaining knowledge of what the students understand. Teachers then form strategy groups and work with the students. Mrs. DiMaggio also noted that she makes a point of talking with team leaders about what's going well and what's not going well. If this were a concern, she would typically hear that it was a concern and this has not been communicated to her.

Dr. Taylor worries a bit about the introduction of technology platforms to young children because of the high level concepts that are involved. He stated that the parents in the Silicone Valley area don't even

allow their children to touch technology until they are 14 to 16 years old. He is fearful that they are teaching kids to interact with technologies that will be gone in 10 years and not concentrating on using technology to teach fundamentals. Mrs. DiMaggio feels that the technology the district uses truly reinforces the skills. Dr. Friedrich felt that it is more important to know what the technology is teaching rather than the technology itself. Mr. Roraback felt that this is just another tool for the teachers to use to help the students who all learn in different ways.

Dr. Friedrich noted that he saw an article about screen impact on infants between six and 18 months old and even a moderate amount of screen time results in a varying degree of fiber development visible on MRI. He summarized that it really is a bad idea to expose young children to screen time. Mrs. Petrella felt that there needs to be a balance. Dr. Taylor wondered if this type of teaching is really effective. He felt that students are taking far more time to complete a task on the computer than they would if they just wrote it on paper. He agreed that those skills are necessary but just not sure they are at such a young age.

Mrs. DiMaggio summarized that the technology is not used all the time, but it is an option that is sometimes used in a station or as a choice for the student.

There was some discussion about how teaching is changing and that the maximum attention span is at about eight minutes now.

Professional Learning ideas for January and February

Mrs. DiMaggio has received feedback from the teachers and they consistently ask for time. She is proposing an individualized/group action plan to the PDEC (Professional Development Evaluation Committee). There is a three-hour early-release day on January 30th and this will allow the teachers to plan their own learning for that day. Collaboration will be encouraged, but teachers may choose to work alone. The plan will need to be approved by the Director of Special Services or the principal and then will need final approval by Mrs. DiMaggio. Mrs. Caramanello stated that they had done this about five years ago and it was very well-received. Ms. Commins remembered it as well and loved it.

In February, Mrs. DiMaggio would like to have teachers volunteer to provide proposals of items they would like to teach or share. As an example, some teachers really use Seesaw very well and she thought it would be fantastic for other teachers to see what they are doing. She felt it is important to tap into the talent that is within the district and offer different options. There are a cadre of teachers who will be trained in restorative practices on that day that will not be able to participate in choice options. Mrs. DiMaggio also reported that she just received a grant for three teachers to become restorative practices trainers and some of the Independent Day School teachers will join them as well. Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that restorative practices is a way to restore and repair relationships and described how it works.

Enrichment Update

Mrs. DiMaggio reported that they are working to develop a program to have equitable enrichment opportunities for all and they have been working on the identification of TAG (talented and gifted) students. They are looking at content vs. interest and are working to identify the vision. She stressed that it will be enrichment for all students, including talented and gifted students. Mrs. DiMaggio will be proposing an enrichment teacher for next year, primarily in grades five through eight.

They have noticed that a lot of districts have talented and gifted programs and not full enrichment programs. A site visit is planned to Shelton with a few administrators in December where they instruct

using project-based learning as part of their enrichment program. Mr. Moore asked what an enrichment teacher does and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that that teacher would organize all of the enrichment types of activities that will happen within and outside of the classroom. This would not be a gifted and talented teacher, but a general education teacher. Mrs. DiMaggio did not believe that there is a special certification for an enrichment teacher.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the identification of gifted and talented falls under special education, however the enrichment program would be for all. According to the law, the district needs to identify those students but does not have to provide any enrichment. She noted that there are many students who may not fall into that specific category but are very bright in many areas, so she would like to see enrichment opportunities provided to all students. They are in the process of developing what that will actually look like and one possibility is that it could be content-based.

Mrs. DiMaggio has asked Scott Sadinsky and Deb Stone to put together focus groups of students for her to meet with to discuss enrichment opportunities. These groups will be a mix of students. Mrs. Booth asked about the identified students and asked if they will get an IEP. Mrs. DiMaggio said that all students identified with a label of gifted and talented do receive an IEP. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that she wants to hear feedback from a variety of students when developing the program. Dr. Taylor was concerned that while equity is a good goal, he felt that they need to recognize that it may not serve the students in the best possible way. He worries that content will be diluted for the students in the upper tiers and also from a resource allocation standpoint. Dr. Taylor has concerns about the current methods of identification as he has heard from multiple people that it doesn't feel that there is even a program in place and kids that are clearly at the upper levels are not being put into any type of system unless parents actively engage in the process. He would like to have a board-level discussion about what the intent was of the enrichment program.

Mrs. DiMaggio felt that the way in which they are trying to design this program will meet the needs of the higher learners, however there are also students who are really gifted in one particular area but would not qualify as gifted and talented. Dr. Taylor felt that that may be an issue of thresholding and they may need to look at that. He feels that it will be exceedingly difficult to provide the type of programming which is above and beyond the current classroom structure. Dr. Taylor thought that the intent was to specifically develop a gifted and talented program, with maybe a 5 or 10 percent threshold to gain larger numbers.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that they are trying to develop a program that would meet the needs of the talented and gifted students, but also meet the needs of other students who don't necessarily fit into that gifted category. Mrs. Booth agreed with the idea of the talented and gifted program, but also felt that resources need to be provided for students talented in areas other than academics.

Mrs. Petrella felt that the way it's implemented will make the difference. Dr. Friedrich summarized that there are students who are certainly talented but may not qualify as talented and gifted though they need to have their talents nurtured. He would like to see some specific proposals to see how this would all work. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that they would meet with the teachers to help figure out what would best help the students. Mr. Moore felt that the first step would be to figure out what the talented and gifted group's needs are and then adjust the enrichment to include everyone else. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that they would be starting identification in fourth or fifth grade for gifted and talented, but she would look to the enrichment teacher to work primarily with fifth through eighth grade students. Dr. Taylor felt that students should be identified even earlier, but realizes it would be more difficult. He worries that if students are bored early, they will dislike school and that will continue throughout. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that most districts don't identify talented and gifted before third grade, but Mr. Moore stated that his son

was identified here in the district in first grade. Mrs. Petrella noted that some of the older students are tutoring the younger students.

In summary, Mrs. DiMaggio added that they are developing their vision statement, looking at a job description, discussing logistics and continuing to share district findings and research. She asked the board members to let her know their expectations. Mrs. Booth suggested that the interventionists focus on the talented and gifted as well and Mrs. DiMaggio stated that that was what the enrichment person would do. Ms. Commins asked if enrichment programs would be separate and distinct from talented and gifted and Mrs. DiMaggio stated that it could be or it could be one in the same. Mrs. DiMaggio summarized by stating that they are trying to create a program that provides enrichment opportunities for all students, but ensuring that the needs of the talented and gifted students are met. Dr. Friedrich wondered how the district will nourish the special talents some kids have, i.e. Carl Gauss. Mrs. Petrella suggested maybe a two-tiered program and Mrs. DiMaggio stated that she would not be happy with a pull-out program to do special projects.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First