

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in special session on Tuesday, February 25, 2020 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 (by phone)

Committee members absent: Mrs. Booth and Mrs. Caramanello

Community members present: Ms. Commins

Student members present: Thomas Peters

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

Guests present: Mrs. Aronson, Mrs. Brajczweski and Mrs. Penney

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Friedrich 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, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor.

Approval of Minutes - January 22, 2020

Mr. Moore noted that Mrs. Booth was noted as a committee member absent, when she was not.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to approve the minutes of the January 22, 2020 meeting, as amended.

In favor of approving the minutes of January 22, 2020, as amended: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor.

Middle School Mathematics Curriculum, Grades 7 and 8

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that two math teachers and the math coach were present tonight to present the 6-8 math curriculum and hopefully the committee will go to the board to ask for approval.

Dr. Friedrich requested that any materials presented tonight be included in the board's packets and that they should feel free to include notes with the slides.

Mrs. Aronson explained that the eighth-grade algebra course is currently being developed in conjunction with the high school and is not included. She provided a copy of their pacing guide which is a one-page summary that helps the teachers see the year at a glance. All stakeholders have access to all of the documents. She explained that the pacing guide is just a guide and adjustments will be made based on the needs of the students.

The curriculum pacing guide by grade, which includes time frames, priority standards, essential questions, the 4 Cs and technology standards was also shown. This is located on the district's website and is shared with parents. Mr. Roraback asked if this was intellectual property of the district and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that it is just a glimpse of what the students are learning, but not details. She also added that it would be okay if another district wanted to borrow it.

The unit documents were distributed and were gone through section by section. A typical unit is around 20 to 25 days, but the teachers have flexibility. Each unit has an overview, a synopsis of the standards and areas of focus, rigor and coherence. Learning targets are included as well. Vocabulary lists have direct links for resources. Assessments are linked and performance tasks are under construction at the moment. Teachers are using a lot of different formative assessments, but they are not consistent.

Mrs. Aronson went on to describe the instructional resources and stated that they do not currently rely on a textbook. They collect high-quality resources and activities that align with the curriculum and the standards. It was decided that they had the textbook, but weren't really using it and it wasn't as helpful to the students as they had hoped it would be.

Dr. Friedrich mentioned that online resources can change without any notice. Mrs. Aronson felt it was actually the opposite because the textbooks were so far behind. Mrs. DiMaggio added that the coaches have converted a lot of the documents to PDFs so that they are always available. Mrs. Aronson added that they still have access to the teacher piece of Glencoe until the district's license expires. Manipulatives and hands-on lessons are now included as well.

Mrs. Aronson explained that the unit documents are living documents that are all linked and located on a common Google Drive. If the team agrees, changes are made and resources are added or removed. She also stated that they encourage people not to print the unit documents as they are constantly changing. Mrs. DiMaggio added that they are working hard to have consistency and coherence across grade levels. Everything is now in shared drives and no longer in individual teacher folders.

Dr. Serino asked if they felt the predictability and consistency across teachers has contributed to enhanced student performance. Mrs. Aronson felt that the assessments show that because they are now being done by teachers and they are diving deep into the standards together. Mrs. DiMaggio has seen it in the teachers looking at the data and what needs to be enhanced. Dr. Serino felt that, in the past, the variability led to parents feeling that one teacher was better than another for math. She felt that it is the district's responsibility to have all students achieve the standards.

Thomas Peters that his teacher was very hands-on and always listened to the students. He felt that it was great that all of these resources are available now for all of the teachers.

Mrs. Brajczweski explained that the teachers work really well together and want to share everything. Dr. Friedrich recalled seeing seventh and eighth grade math in a very different place years ago and feeling sad about that. The teachers felt that they have had a lot of conversation vertically, beginning in kindergarten. As they are now getting to the middle school, they have the basic skills and are ready to learn the bigger

concepts. Mrs. DiMaggio added that more time has helped as has professional learning that the teachers have had. Mrs. Aronson stated that the collaboration is extraordinary and they are constantly looking for ways to do better. Mr. Roraback added that students are more demanding and difficult to engage, so an autopilot teacher is destined to crash and burn.

Over the past few years, it has become less teacher-directed and more student discovery and student investigation. Mr. Moore asked how they handle students who want and need more and Mrs. Aronson explained that Strong School has the accelerated curriculum that includes all of the seventh grade curriculum and part of the eighth grade. It also allows them to take algebra in eighth grade. Within the classroom, there is a lot of opportunity for students to challenge themselves and each other.

Mr. Moore asked about homework and the teachers explained that it varies day-to-day. Mrs. Penney stated that if the students can do three or four problems to demonstrate their understanding, that's enough. If it takes them 10 minutes, that's fine. They don't have homework every night, but it is most nights and generally not on weekends. They also tell the students if they are struggling, just come in the next day and talk to them. Both teachers stated they tell the kids that they don't need to spend more than 20 minutes on homework.

Mrs. Petrella asked if there were accelerated units in the K-5 curriculum and if there will be in sixth grade. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that right now, the children really need to understand the standards and get a good foundation. In most districts, the accelerated curriculum starts in seventh grade and that is when students are developmentally ready.

Dr. Friedrich asked if they had any idea of how many students they expect in eighth grade algebra once it is developed and it was explained that it currently exists and there are 24 students in the class. They are in the process of revising the curriculum for that class so that the students can earn high school credit.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the bulk of the professional development has been done by outside consultants, but she would be very open to sending the math teachers to other workshops and professional learning opportunities. Many times, the coaches and/or interventionists will go and bring the information back.

Mr. Moore stated that he has heard that the kids get bored with i-Ready and give up or just stop. Mrs. Penney stated that the scores don't show that. This is a conversation they've had in the PLCs and they now ask the kids to pass a lesson and fill out a log. They have also changed it so that the work is due on Fridays so that they can check in with the teachers during the week. Mrs. DiMaggio added that some of that reorganization with i-Ready was based directly off student feedback. The reps from i-Ready are also working on revisions to the 6-8 curriculum as well.

Mr. Roraback asked when the students need the expensive calculators and Mrs. Aronson explained that that is in high school. At Strong, the calculators are provided for those students in algebra.

Review of Accountability Reports 2018-2019

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that an accountability report comes out each year based on last year's data, including SAT data and Smarter Balance. There are 12 indicators that the state looks at.

Mrs. DiMaggio showed the scores for the last three overall district reports. Points are earned for each indicator. In 2016-2017, the district was at 79.3 percent. In 2017-2018, that went up to 81.5 percent. This past year, 2018-2019, the district was at 83.6 percent.

Mrs. DiMaggio went on to review the DRG standings. In 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, the district was 9th out of 30. There are certain situations that differ, such as Andover which is just an elementary school and District 19 which is one a high school. Last year, District 13 moved up to number 6 in the DRG. The top three, Andover, Cornwall and Essex, are elementary only. Mr. Roraback noted that the state is no longer compiling this information and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that she compiled the information because the board has asked for it. Mrs. Petrella stated that she always looks at District 17 and they have dropped down.

Mrs. DiMaggio then reviewed the school categories, ranging from 1 to 5. In addition to the 12 indicators, the state also looks at the achievement gap which is measured for performance in ELA, math and science between the non-high-needs students and high-needs students. The high-needs students are students who receive special services, free and reduced lunch and EL services. They also look at the difference in six-year graduation rates between the two groups and assessment participation. The district needs to have 95 percent participation in SAT, Smarter Balance and NGSS.

Brewster has a gap in both ELA and math and has dropped from a School of Distinction to a category 3 last year. Mrs. DiMaggio felt that that can be attributed to the change in leadership as well as the fact that there are three third-grade teachers, two of which were out on maternity leave. Mrs. DiMaggio predicted that this would happen as she saw the i-Ready scores and internal assessments. Cuginchaug also went from a category 2 to a category 3, with performance gaps in ELA and in science. Last year was the first year that science actually counted toward the accountability report.

In reviewing Lyman, it remains a School of Distinction for high-performing growth in ELA. The RSD 13 DRG rating has increased to six out of 30 districts and there was an increase in the overall accountability index, from 81.5 to 83.6. Strong School increased to a category 2 from category 3, with no gaps identified. Memorial continues as a category 2 and the district has continued high participation rates, going from 98.8 percent to 99.3 percent. There was an increase in the ELA performance index for all students, going from 73.3 percent to 75.2 percent. The math average percentage of growth target achieved by all students went from 67.2 percent to 75.3 percent.

There was also an increase in math average percentage of growth target achieved with high-needs students, going from 57.6 to 60 percent. There was an increase in the six-year graduation rate, from 88.6 to 95.1 percent, and an increase in arts access from 56.9 to 57.8 percent. Preparation for CCR (college and career-ready) courses increased from 90.9 to 95.1 percent. The graduating class of 2018 increased from 73.2 percent to 83.8 percent for post-secondary enrollment.

Mrs. Petrella asked that this information also be added to the board packets for tomorrow's meeting. She also asked about the drop at the high school and Mrs. DiMaggio felt that the science standards were part of it as well as the high-needs students' participation was only at 93.3 percent.

Looking at areas that require improvement, there was a decrease in the four-year graduation rate. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that some of the students who receive special services go over to MTA and that is a six-year program, so they can't graduate in four years. There was an increase in chronic absenteeism for all students. There was a decrease in passing the CCR exams. With more classes available, more

students are taking AP classes, but sometimes students just aren't ready to take the exam. She did feel that the good news is that more students are taking these types of courses.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained how performance gaps are measured and noted that the non-high-needs students at the high school were at 70.6 and the high-needs students were at 52.5, with the size of the gap being 18.1. The state gap was 15.3 and we were penalized because we were over one standard deviation. We were also penalized for participation. Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that the arts participation was at 57.8 for the district, with the target being 60 percent. She noted that the state does not give credit for drama or sports as they are not courses. Dr. Friedrich asked what the requirements are for making those a course and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that she has asked the state several times about that. Dr. Friedrich felt that our students put a huge amount of time into music, drama and sports. Mrs. DiMaggio also explained that the district needs to have 20 students in order for there to be a subgroup.

Looking at focus areas from last year, Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that they wanted to increase the number of students who met their individual growth targets and they have. They wanted to decrease the achievement gaps in math and ELA at Strong and they did. They wanted to increase the percentage of students who enroll in CCR courses and they did.

This year's goals are to decrease the achievement gaps in science and ELA at the high school and to decrease the achievement gaps in math and ELA at Brewster. They want to improve physical fitness participation rates at the high school and overall health fitness scores. They also want to improve the participation percentages at the high school in the high-needs category.

There is a report card for the district available on the EdSight website. It shows the amount of students, how many schools, how much is spent per pupil, how many certified, full-time staff and the accountability index score. Dr. Serino noted that it showed six schools and wondered if they include MTA. Looking at performance, you can see comparisons over the years and that the district has gone up in almost every area.

Mrs. DiMaggio focused in on students reaching fitness standards and explained that the district needs 90 percent participation on this test. The test is done in grades 4, 6, 8 and typically the sophomore year of high school. The students have to pass each of the four tests, including 35 push-ups, a mile run, sit and reach and curl ups.

Ms. Commins asked if the individual schools can be broken down more specifically in terms of what led to the drop in category. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the accountability reports are specific to each school.

Mrs. DiMaggio will make the report available to the board tomorrow.

Expansion of HOT Approach

Dr. Serino stated that the HOT approach has three defining areas: strong arts, arts integration and democratic practices. She shared a chart that showed the definition of those three categories.

Dr. Serino reviewed that, during the strategic visioning process, people identified characteristics of the HOT approach or the integrated-day design. Because of that, the conclusion was drawn that there is an existing example of that in the district that can advance into the future on a district-wide basis. Simultaneously, they did the Portrait work and now have a chart that includes Lyman, Brewster,

Memorial and Strong. This chart shows current practices, grant-supported work and proposed or future focus areas.

In the area of strong arts, education in, about and through the arts helps students develop critical thinking abilities, independent judgment and creative problem-solving skills. The arts convey knowledge not learned through studying other academic disciplines and provide vehicles for children to communicate their ideas. Looking at what is currently done at Lyman, they rely heavily on student inquiry, collaboration and ownership of their learning. Many new things are happening at Brewster, Memorial and Strong, including artists in residence and other programs. The Connecticut Office of the Arts is involved at both Brewster and Memorial for the first time. Future programming is focused on the broader implementation of project-based learning, where students have voice and choice.

As for arts integration, Lyman has been the one school who has had the teaching artist residency. Some areas of arts integration at Brewster are in science, the dance festival, art show and cultural workshops in all grades. At Memorial, they have outdoor education hikes and an annual play. Proposals for the future include continuation of arts integration grants. Dr. Serino noted that most districts have one HOT school and our district is unique because the approaches are expanding beyond just one school and there is a commitment at the superintendent and central office level.

In the area of democratic practice, they will work to cultivate a school culture in which purposeful activities support choice, participation, connection, contribution and responsibility to celebrate the unique voice of each member of the school community. At Lyman, they plan their work and have weekly assemblies and ECHOs. They also have several different student boards and student-led conferences. These focus areas are somewhat more developed at Memorial and Strong and not so much at Brewster. Dr. Serino feels that the differentiation is the student decision-making that happens at John Lyman School as opposed to adults making the decisions for clubs at other schools. She feels that students are truly leaders at John Lyman in a more robust sense than anywhere else in the district and that is a great example to build upon and expand.

The proposed budget for next year has \$37,000 dedicated to assist in moving this forward. This will include working with a consultant who will directly focus on this work and help to organize it.

Dr. Serino summarized that they are working to bring the HOT approaches together with the characteristics and skills that have been identified in the Portrait work. They are planning a community conversation in March to talk in greater detail about this and to share with the public, but that conversation will now likely include whether there will be another plan amendment and reconfiguration. Dr. Serino hopes they can have a two-part series in March.

Enrichment Teacher

Mrs. Petrella thought it may give more strength to the enrichment teacher position if the committee were to vote to recommend to the board to approve the proposed position in the 2020 budget.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to recommend the position of enrichment teacher in the proposed budget to the full board.

In favor of recommending the position of enrichment teacher in the proposed budget to the full board: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor.

Mrs. Petrella also asked for a recommendation of the math curriculum that was presented tonight.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to recommend approval of the 6-8 math curriculum, as presented, to the full board.

In favor of recommending approval of the 6-8 math curriculum, as presented, to the full board: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded 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 5:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First