

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, October 21, 2020 at 4:00 PM remotely.

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

Committee members absent:

Community members present: Ms. Commins

Student members present:

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

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

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

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

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

Approval of Minutes - September 23, 2020

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the minutes of the September 23, 2020 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of September 23, 2020, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor.

Strategic Coherence Plan: identifying student learning metrics

Mrs. DiMaggio reminded everyone that Dr. Serino had reviewed the strategic coherence plan at last week's full board meeting and this afternoon, they will identify the student learning metrics and how they tie into that plan.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that she felt that well-being is of utmost importance, along with creating and maintaining connections to the students and each other. She also stressed that students need to be fully engaged. In order for students to learn and teachers to teach, social-emotional wellness, connections and engagement have to be at the forefront.

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that when they look at metrics this year, they will start with formative assessments which are quick snapshots of where students are. From that, teachers can develop strategic groups and differentiate instruction. Interim blocks will pinpoint specific domains and teachers will get a clear indicator on how students perform in those domains. There will also be state summative tests, including Smarter Balance, NGSS and SATs, which measure overall performance and align to standards.

Looking at a comprehensive, balanced assessment system, District 13 uses formative processes, universal screeners (iReady) which look at skills, skills diagnostics which are used primarily before instruction, progress monitoring which pinpoints student needs, interim which measures the students' mastery of content and summative which are the state's standardized tests.

Mrs. DiMaggio then reviewed the district's academics metrics, including Dibels, PAST, iReady and interim assessments blocks in grades 3 through 8 in science, math and reading. She then reviewed the iReady reading scores from 2018/2019 until now. She noted that grade 1 students at Brewster started the fall of 2018/2019 with 11 percent at goal, 22 percent in 2019/2020 and 23 percent in 2020/2021. She does feel that this shows consistent instruction. There is also increase in achievements scores between fall and winter. Mrs. DiMaggio also explained that the winter test for first graders is a grade one test and the fall test would be a grade two test. Mrs. DiMaggio is encouraged that the fall starting numbers are not that different each year. Dr. Friedrich commented that there was a slight drop, but it doesn't look as bad as it might have been. Mrs. DiMaggio felt that the students are basically starting out at the same place which is encouraging.

Mrs. DiMaggio also noted that the writing curriculum is written and teachers are getting adjusted to it. She does feel that phonics will continue to get better as the curriculum is implemented. She then showed scores for the middle school students as well.

Moving to math, Mrs. DiMaggio felt that they are not as promising as the reading scores for this fall and the interruption in instruction is evident. In some cases, they are not far off from where they started. She is celebrating growth made in the winter last year, but is concerned about the fall scores this year. Mrs. DiMaggio has contacted the coaches and are having discussions about where to begin. She did note that the coaches are teaching the cohort C students which creates a resource drain in in-person learning. They are trying to find a way to transition the coaches back into the fold.

Mrs. Petrella asked if they have tried to figure out why reading scores have held steady when math has slipped. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that they have discussed it and one reason is that math is very skill-based. They are looking at the curriculum as well. She also noted that students read in every subject, but that is not the case with math. Mrs. Petrella noted that she asked that question so people could have an understanding of why it is so different. Mrs. DiMaggio also noted that the winter math scores last year are something to be celebrated and believes the math curriculum is strong. Dr. Friedrich also mentioned that math is taught differently to the students now than many of the parents received. Mrs. DiMaggio also noted that the coaches are becoming incredibly proficient at teaching remotely and will be able to help the teachers if the district has to move to full remote learning.

Mrs. Petrella felt that these scores are a testament to how well the program is being run and how amazing the teachers are. Dr. Serino added that there is a necessity for teachers' real-time diagnostics and that math skills are refined far differently than reading skills.

Dr. Taylor asked how they plan to bring the coaches back into the fold and how that would look for both cohort C and the teachers. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the coaches are currently doing only a bit of coaching and do meet with the grade levels, but are also functioning as classroom teachers. For the cohort C students, they have talked about transitioning those students back into their initially-assigned classrooms. There is no definitive answer at this point. For the coaches, it is very difficult for them to do both.

Dr. Friedrich asked how many teachers are involved with cohort C and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that there are seven coaches, the enrichment teacher, the science specialist, a social studies teacher and a couple of teachers who are out for health reasons. Dr. Serino added that they know they need the coaches' support to assist teachers understand how to do curriculum modifications, the skills of students and how to make adjustments. The other goal is to maintain high-quality, uninterrupted instruction for cohort C. Right now, they are looking for a way to meet both of those goals. Mrs. DiMaggio added that the teachers are missing the instructional leadership that the coaches provide as well.

Dr. Friedrich asked, if they had to do it over again, how many additional teaching positions should have been included in the budget to meet the current needs. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that students were assigned to classes at the end of the last year and they didn't want to disrupt that, but perhaps they could have pulled a teacher from each grade level and made the classes slightly larger. Another idea would be to have had a co-teaching model or maybe one more teacher per grade level. Dr. Taylor reviewed that he had brought this issue up in March and stated that more resources will be needed. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that they tried to use the resources that they had in place and she does feel that it is working really well. However, Mrs. DiMaggio did not anticipate coming back in the hybrid model. She also mentioned that the opt-out piece was last minute decision by the State Department of Education.

Dr. Friedrich asked what resources they would need if next year were to begin in the same configuration that the district is in now. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that they are looking at providing teachers with more technology, using the Cares Act money. She added that some technology is still on backorder. Dr. Serino added that they need to have an HR committee meeting to look at who has been hired. She also mentioned that it has been very difficult to find teachers this year. Dr. Serino explained that they recently hired an additional special education teacher because more special education students have opted out and are in cohort C.

Dr. Serino also reported that the administrators had their first budget meeting this afternoon and they discussed that the fall of 2021 will look much like this fall. She asked what type of staffing would be needed. Dr. Serino explained that they are still having challenges finding substitutes. She felt that the challenge now is coaches. She does feel that the district is adequately staffed, but people are straddling two roles. Dr. Serino summarized that they will continue to discuss these issues at an HR committee meeting to determine if there are greater issues that need to be discussed at the board level.

Dr. Friedrich pointed out that they need the coaches back which means that they need additional staff to do the remote learning that the coaches are doing.

Dr. Serino explained that the next phase of Portrait of the Citizen is what they have been calling school-based design teams. In February, they looked at areas aligned with student achievement and came up with a number of ways that students think creatively and critically. This year, they will look at what instructional decisions need to be made so that students develop these skills. The focus will be on thinking creatively and critically as well as communicates and collaborates.

Mrs. DiMaggio then explained that the state is suspending the standard accountability in 2020-2021. This year, the focus will be on maximizing students' chances to develop rich understandings of grade-level content and not chasing test scores. The state wants the schools to focus on engaging students, given the likely gaps in skills. The state will continue to provide Smarter Balance and NGSS as long as students

are in school. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that there will be an accountability report, but it will not be the same as usual.

The state will really be looking at the health and safety of students as well as their social and emotional needs. They will look to be sure that all students have access to high-quality curriculum and instruction as well as having access to dependable internet and devices. They will also look for evidence of what students have learned in the 2020-2021 year relative to grade level standards and statewide achievement tests.

Mrs. DiMaggio then read a statement from Ajit Gopalakrishnan about accountability results and that the state should focus on providing information directly related to the activities that truly matter. Mrs. Petrella agreed that the whole focus has shifted and it makes sense.

Dr. Serino noted that a number of teachers are on this call and she wanted to let them know that the district trusts their judgment and their expertise. She stated that the district has amazing teachers who are caring and committed to the students. She also reminded everyone that the teachers are also struggling with all of this.

Ms. Commins agreed that the professionalism of teachers assures that the needs of the students are being met in all areas and that no one will change their integrity in doing what's best for the kids.

Mrs. Caramanello also felt that accountability was not the foremost thought for teachers. Teachers will do what's needed to be done for the sake of the children, not for the sake of evaluations.

Dr. Serino added that the collaborative is talking about legislation and writing a letter to the governor requesting a bold statement about the prioritization of the well-being of staff and students as a primary focus. She felt that they need to look at the relationship of well-being and student learning. Mrs. Caramanello agreed and felt that the teachers being able to make those judgment calls will trickle down to the students. She added that she felt that the teachers' stress is being carried over to the students. Mrs. DiMaggio added that the engagement piece is also extremely important and the learning will come.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, 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 5:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz
Alwaz First