

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in regular session on Tuesday, November 17, 2021 at 4:00 PM.

Committee members present: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback
Committee members absent: Mrs. Caramanello and Dr. Taylor
Community members present: Bronwyn Commins and Lindsay Dahlheimer
Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

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

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mrs. Petrella asked everyone to introduce themselves to Mrs. Dahlheimer. They also discussed having a community member from Middlefield join the committee as well as a student representative. Mrs. Petrella also mentioned having the meetings available via Zoom as well.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes - May 20, 2021

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2021 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of May 20, 2021, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback.

Student Achievement Results 2020-2021

Dr. Schuch explained that the district is in the planning stages of a strategic plan and hope to present a first look at the January retreat. That plan will have measurable outcomes and some of the scores/data being presented tonight will be part of that. Other things will include leading indicators. Dr. Schuch noted that the district serves the learners and their families, but also the community who primarily funds the district.

Dr. Schuch and Mrs. DiMaggio have gone through a True Accountability training and noted that there needs to be accountability, both looking backward and looking forward. They believe that focusing on

past test scores is pretty short-sighted. Dr. Schuch also reported that they did a ThoughtExchange with grades 5-12 learners and their parents, asking what their hopes and dreams were for after graduation. No one said getting good standardized test scores while in school. They talked about college, getting a job, being happy, living fulfilled lives and being good citizens.

Mrs. DiMaggio stressed how hard the teachers, staff, administrators and students have worked during the pandemic. She also asked to celebrate the full in-person learning from October to June and how rare that was. Mrs. DiMaggio also acknowledged Cohort C, grades K-8, which was very successful for remote learners. The perseverance of both the teachers and the students should also be acknowledged as well as the parent involvement. The teachers have been creative and have all improved their technology skills and credited the LMS and tech teachers for that.

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that the district's schools were fully remote from mid-March to mid-June of 2020. The new school year started with the hybrid model and moved to in-person learning in October. There were multiple examples of educational interruptions, with students and teachers leaving. Students had to be separated and nothing looked or sounded the same. Stress, anxiety, exhaustion and trauma were expressed by all and still continue today.

They are working to carefully interpret the data, looking at the formative assessments every day as well as standardized internal data, but mostly at how students are interacting and how they are being formatively assessed. They continue to adjust the curriculum and instruction and prioritizing standards. The district is aware that the students are a little bit behind and are working on adjusting the curriculum to meet their needs. Teachers, staff and learners are all being supported with a continued focus on social-emotional needs.

No testing was done in 2019/2020, so Mrs. DiMaggio began by showing historical national norms pre-COVID (2018/2019). Nationally, 57 percent of students met goal in reading. The district's data is from iReady. In 2020/2021, the in-school reports show 51 percent of students meeting goal nationally. In Connecticut, the 2020/2021 scores for in-school only show 56 percent of students meeting goal. In District 13, in 2020/2021, 68 percent of the students met goal in grades 1-8. The district was above the national norms pre-COVID and above both national and state norms in 2020/2021. Dr. Friedrich commented that the Connecticut in-school scores are 46 percent, so the district did even better.

Looking at where the district was in the fall compared to the spring, they started at 47 percent in the fall and were at 69 percent in the spring. Mrs. DiMaggio compared that with 2018/2019 when the district was at 73 percent.

Mrs. Booth asked if the students that are not meeting goal are all getting intervention and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that multiple measures are looked at to determine that. Students in the red and pink are more than likely getting intervention or special education services, but it depends for students in the yellow.

Looking at math, historical national norms pre-COVID (2018/2019) were 59 percent of students meeting goal. The national in-school 2020/2021 is 46 percent of students meeting goal. In Connecticut, the 2020/2021 scores for in-school only show 42 percent of students meeting goal. In District 13, in 2020/2021, 64 percent of the students met goal. Again, the district was above the national norms pre-COVID and above both national and state norms in 2020/2021.

Looking at where the district was in the fall compared to the spring in math, they started at 29 percent in the fall and were at 65 percent in the spring. Mrs. DiMaggio compared that with 2018/2019 when the district was at 75 percent.

Mrs. Petrella noted that the pink and red stay pretty consistent over the years. Dr. Friedrich asked if they have done cohort analysis and Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that the teachers are looking at individual students on the Data Dashboard to see where they were and where they are now. In certain cases, students were able to maintain or do very well while others fell and have gaps.

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that ELA includes reading, listening, writing and research and Math includes concepts and procedures, problem solving, modeling and data analysis as well as communications and reasoning. There are four achievement levels: exceeds and meets (which are both considered to be at goal), approaching and does not meet.

The State of Connecticut gave an overall Smarter Balance goal, but then broke it down into students who were fully, mostly in-person (more than 75 percent of days in-person), hybrid students (25 to 75 percent of the days in-person) and fully, mostly remote students (less than 25 percent days in-person).

Starting with historical data, the district has been moving in the right direction. Looking at the blue group (rough cohorts), there has been a steady increase. Mrs. DiMaggio reminded everyone again that there was no testing in 2019/2020. The lavender column shows a slight decrease. The light green remained pretty stable. The yellow column shows an increase. Looking at the ELA literacy column for 2020/2021, the rust color shows a 5 percent decrease from third grade to fifth grade. The peach column (grades 4 to 6) shows a 7 percent decrease, grades 5 to 7 show a 16 percent decrease and grades 6 to 8 had a 9 percent decrease. Overall, Mrs. DiMaggio feels that the district held steady in ELA, considering the pandemic.

The light yellow, light pink and light green columns are where the state separated the district out. Mrs. DiMaggio directed everyone to the hybrid and remote data which showed that students performed better remotely in grades 3-6, but better in hybrid in grades 7-8. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that students went back and forth in these categories. Dr. Schuch explained that it is hard to draw conclusions on this because of the small number of students. Mrs. DiMaggio added that hybrid students' performance was lower across the state. Dr. Friedrich felt that one conclusion might be that learners do better with smaller class sizes.

Mrs. DiMaggio then moved on to the math scores, again with rough cohorts and no testing in 2019/2020. Looking at 2016 to 2019, there was an increase every year with a slight decrease in the blue column. The district was doing extremely well in math. Moving to 2021, there are definitely decreases, ranging from 9 percent to 24 percent. They are paying very close attention to this. Mrs. DiMaggio noted that this is the case across the state and nation as well.

Dr. Friedrich noted that parents and students are at a disadvantage as the methods of math have changed. Mr. Roraback added that students do have more options and choices to come up with an answer. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that the middle school and high school have worked very hard on performance tasks within the curricular units. They are trying to teach the students why they are learning what they are learning. Dr. Schuch noted that this is true for anything; not just mathematics.

Mr. Roraback reported that the Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona visited Middlesex Community College who has a partnership with Google to align students with major employers. Mrs. DiMaggio added that she was Secretary Cardona's mentor when he was becoming an administrator. Mr. Roraback added that he is also a tech school graduate.

Mrs. DiMaggio then went on to report that students in grades 3 through 8 performed better in math remotely than in hybrid. Mrs. Booth added that the best of the best were teaching Cohort C. Looking at grade 3, three teachers were out on maternity leave in 2018/2019 and in 2020/2021 and the students who didn't have long-term subs had very high scores.

The trajectory for 2018/2019 was moving up in both ELA and math and then the pandemic hit. Mrs. Petrella recalled mitigation strategies being the most important issue at all the meetings during the pandemic and she isn't surprised there was an effect on the students. Mrs. DiMaggio didn't feel that the district fared as poorly as she would have thought. She also thanked the board members for the release time on Wednesdays which she feels greatly benefitted everyone's mental health. Dr. Friedrich added that all of those meetings focused on COVID were really about making sure everything kept on track.

Looking at NGSS, grades 5 and 8 dipped a little, but grade 11 went up. Erica Anderson at the high school stated that grade 11 was a very strong class and they persevered through the test. Dr. Friedrich added that each class is different and felt that each class gets the remedial work they need. Dr. Schuch added that the smaller the size of the district, the more influence the teachers have and a great teacher or a weaker teacher will skew the numbers.

Moving on to SAT scores, they ranged from 200 to 800. Benchmark scores for ELA are from 480 to 800 and 530 to 800 for math. In March 2019 to April 2021, the reading score was 546 in April and 565 in March. In math, there was hardly any differential. There was not a significant different in the percentage of students who met benchmark, going from 84 to 78 and 54 to 52, with 53 to 51 meeting both benchmarks.

Mrs. DiMaggio stated that they will continue to focus on social and emotional needs of the learners, resume the coaching model and intended PLC focus and implement strategy groups and targeted instruction in grades K-8 in reading and math. These strategy groups will design small group instruction based on students' needs and will track their progress. They are also developing rich problems and performance tasks in grades 6-12 and models for more student discourse.

Mrs. DiMaggio added that there are no growth scores this year because there was no testing in 2019/2020. Dr. Friedrich felt that this data could also be used to evaluate individual teachers and asked if the district runs the statistics that way. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that they are aware of that. Dr. Schuch added that there are states that tried to design their value-added system on that basis but have been found to be invalid. He would be concerned with a move in that direction.

Mr. Moore asked how Dr. Schuch looks at this testing with the learner-centered approach in the future. Dr. Schuch noted that they are still in the design phase and people are concerned about whether that work can be done with the pressures of the testing. His answer would be they do the testing because the state says you have to, but the level of importance that is placed on that testing is key. They won't get very far with the work if teachers continue to make the test outcomes the be-all and end-all, especially in the younger grades. Dr. Schuch believes that they can model that narrative and if the learners are competent,

the scores will take care of themselves with the exception that some kids may not be at goal when the state says they should. He emphasized that if the teachers and community don't embrace the work, it will not happen.

Upcoming Testing Schedule

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed the district assessment calendar with the committee. Each grade level has the assessments laid out. They made sure to leave time in between iReady and Smarter Balance.

Mr. Moore reviewed that the kids, parents and teachers all felt that there was a time when they did two weeks of testing and no learning. Mrs. DiMaggio agreed and stated that they did change the schedule to reflect that. Mrs. Booth asked about the DIBELS testing and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that it is basically a dyslexia screener. The district does have a reading specialist who is a dyslexia specialist and she has given professional training to all interventionists and the coaches are also being trained in OG. Mrs. Booth asked if there was something available for kids who don't learn from OG and Mrs. DiMaggio explained that OG is for more severe students and they are trying to catch students early with intervention.

Public Comment

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that people can't really gauge the numbers after looking at the cohorts. She would like to have parents see it how it is and not just numbers. Mrs. DiMaggio felt it was important for parents to know that the trajectory was heading up pre-COVID. Dr. Friedrich felt that communicating good news is a challenge. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that people go online and look up the information and Mrs. DiMaggio added that they don't really know how to interpret it.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if they aren't worrying about testing as much with the Reimagining Education, at what point will a child get so low that they get individual attention. Dr. Schuch felt that if standardized testing looks bad, they will have to make adjustments and corrections. He emphasized that what matters most is how the individual children are learning. Dr. Schuch felt it was more important to ask what the child can and cannot do rather than pass or fail.

Dr. Friedrich felt that the data is used to identify the students who need help. Mrs. DiMaggio added that it wasn't just students who need help, but also students who need to excel. Dr. Schuch added that the basic model is everyone gets the same amount of schooling and the system was never designed to bring all kids up to high levels. He felt that the bottom line is that the world of work has changed and school systems are very slow to change.

Dr. Friedrich stated that the most meaningful work that he has done while on the Board of Education has been in this venue. He feels privileged to have worked with everyone who reside where the rubber meets the road. He feels that his job was to ask questions that promoted thought and thanked everyone for the experience. Dr. Friedrich felt that Student Achievement and Well-Being are of utmost importance. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that she will miss Dr. Friedrich very much. Mrs. Petrella noted that she will miss her co-chair as well. Mr. Roraback added that Dr. Friedrich was very welcoming, informative and insightful.

Adjournment

Mrs. Booth made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to adjourn the meeting.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:21 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First