

Revised

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, April 26, 2023 at 4:30 PM.

Recording of Meeting: <https://youtu.be/jMQBqR7bh54>

Committee members present: Mrs. Dahlheimer and Mr. Roraback (arrived late)

Committee members absent: Dr. Darcy and Mr. Mennone

Board members present: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mrs. Roy

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Stephanie Quarato, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Accountability and Liza Siegel, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Accountability

Mrs. Dahlheimer called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Ms. Betty made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer.

Approval of Minutes - March 2, 2023

Ms. Betty made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the minutes of the March 2, 2023 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of March 2, 2023, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer.

Future Meeting Topics and Meeting Format

A. May 24, 2023

Dr. Schuch reviewed that the committee has picked meeting dates, but wanted to know if the committee wanted these meetings to be remote or in-person. For the next meeting, he noted that staff is going to ask the committee to do a deep dive at the high school including any new courses as well as things they plan to do differently next year. Another big item has to do with NEASC timelines for options they are considering. These items will probably take a large chunk of time. Dr. Schuch also wasn't sure how long the committee wanted to meet each time. He asked if the committee would be okay with the high school administration coming to the May 24, 2023 meeting to review those topics.

Mrs. Dahlheimer thought that would be fine and felt that Mr. Roraback would agree. Mrs. Dahlheimer also felt it was okay to have the meetings via Google Meet. Mrs. Petrella added that she thought it was fine as long as there was an opportunity to meet in person, if needed. Dr. Schuch agreed and added that there is probably a better chance of getting participation if the meetings are remote.

B. Other 2023 Meetings

Dr. Schuch mentioned the agenda item, Student-Centered Learning Practices Fall 2023-2024, and felt that they could use multiple meetings to discuss that item. He thought they could provide updates from each of the action teams. There are a lot of people on the action teams who are not administrators and he would like to get them involved in these meetings as well.

Mrs. Petrella would like action team reports presented at board meetings or work sessions as well, possibly in a more abbreviated form. Dr. Schuch noted that that was how it was done in his previous district, but they didn't have committees. He agreed and wished that more people would watch committee meetings. Mrs. Dahlheimer agreed, but wants to be sure Student Achievement meetings don't go for three hours.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if the link to the recording is included in the minutes and Dr. Schuch thought the recordings were available to everyone. Mrs. Dahlheimer didn't think that was the case and felt that a link in minutes would be a good idea.

Dr. Schuch asked the committee for the most advanced notice as possible for future meeting items to allow for people to attend.

RSD 13 Measures of Success

Dr. Schuch reviewed that he had shared a draft of Measures of Success at a board meeting back in October or November. He strongly believes this is something the district needs. Connecticut tries to do this, but the district's Measures of Success may show items they value that may go above and beyond the state's. He recalled that the board felt the format was a bit confusing and some things may be reaching too far and may be costly. Prior to the January retreat, the team refined them and color-coded them to make them simpler.

Dr. Schuch reviewed that the board had felt that the Student Achievement Committee should work on these and make a recommendation to the full board for approval. After that, they will start regularly reporting on the Measures of Success. He asked if the committee wanted to talk about them tonight.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked Dr. Schuch to share his screen and give an overview, but not do a deep dive today. Mrs. Petrella asked for them to be sent out afterwards.

Mrs. Siegel reviewed the outline of Measures of Success and why they are important. They are a set of qualitative and quantitative measurements to allow the district to gauge long-term performance. It moves beyond the traditional measures to be sure they are being accountable to the whole child and their experience in the district.

Mrs. Siegel shared a graphic that illustrated the different measures they brainstormed, including reading and math benchmark assessments, various scores, high school credits, graduation rates, graduate life plans as well as kindergarten readiness. Dr. Schuch added that colors on the graph relate to the four domains of academics, employability, wellness and citizenship which align back to the Strategic Plan.

Ms. Betty asked if these were mostly the same measurable outcomes that were presented in November and Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they have changed a bit with some added benchmarks and measures. Dr. Schuch noted that they are very similar. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that if administration is going to change something big like competencies or measurable outcomes, they need to reiterate those changes.

Mrs. Petrella felt that, as the Strategic Plan is evolving, they would want to see an update of what's been changed from what they had seen and approved. She asked for the updated copy at some point. Dr. Schuch reviewed that the board has had this document since January. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that this will be added to the agenda for the May committee meeting to do a deep dive. She will also send a copy to the board members for any questions and comments.

Expeditionary Learning (EL) Program Update

Mrs. Quarato reported that a lot has happened since March and they are in a good place. Supplies were ordered, have been received and are being sent out to the schools. They are still doing an inventory of trade books that will be needed and they are not going to purchase the online program until July 1st. The team met with team leaders from K-5 and listened to what the teachers need for the Fall. The plan was created and teachers received it at the beginning of April.

There will be a professional learning opportunity on May 16, 2023 from Better Lessons who are a partner of Open Up, the provider of professional learning for the program. It will be for K-5 general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessional, interventionists, speech and language pathologists, administrators and coaches. The coaches have already started going over the different components of the program and will continue at PLCs throughout the remainder of the school year.

Mrs. Quarato explained that the plan is for K-2 to begin implementing the skills block in September and they would like for them to do at least two modules next year, but they will not jump into module one until October. The additional language block does have to run concurrent with the modules, so grades 3-5 will be doing that, with the goal being two modules for the year. The goal for next year will be additional professional learning in August and PLCs will include discussions about what's working and what the challenges are.

Mrs. Quarato added that they would like to be sure teachers know about the flex option for the end of next school year because they know that they will want to spend some time over the summer reviewing the program and making preparations.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked what happens in grade 5 and Mrs. Quarato felt that Ms. Johnson, the instructional coach at Memorial, plans to sit down with that team after May 16th to figure out the plan. Grade 3 is also in need of more phonics instruction and there might still be a need for the skills block. They are planning some benchmark testing for the end of this school year to see where the second graders are at in terms of their understanding and what needs to be done in the fall.

Mrs. Quarato summarized that there is no structure change in grade 5, but just going to monitor to see what they need. Dr. Schuch added there has been a retirement in that grade level and Mrs. Durkin is having conversations with the fifth grade team, thinking about whether the structure really supports all of the subjects.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if they can brainstorm ways that the kids and parents know about the program for next year. Mrs. Quarato noted that they have had conversations about that and there will be information on the websites and the principals will send things out in their weekly updates. This program has many different tools and resources for parents to access from home and they will make sure that they are made aware of that.

Mrs. Caramanello had a concern that having the skills block and two modules may be too much and would have preferred they did it more like Guilford, taking it slowly for the teachers, to allow them the opportunity to master it before they are expected to move onto the next. She is nervous that teams will compete to move on to the next module, but not fully master it. Mrs. Quarato noted that, based on the conversations they had with the team leader, K-2 was split, but 3-5 all agreed that they want and need something. The program does have a suggested timeline, but they have been strongly emphasizing the word suggested. The first module should take four to six weeks, but they have let the teachers know that that is just a suggestion. In grades K-2, one team felt that they wanted to do the skills block in isolation for the first year and another team didn't want to do the skills block and wanted to focus on the modules. And yet another team wanted to do both. They felt that they didn't want to have teams do things differently and felt that consistency across grade level was important. They also plan to get together once they have gone through the skills block to see if everyone is comfortable to move on to the module. Mrs. Caramanello appreciated that, but she believes that the skills block and then complete mastery of module one should be it for the first year across grade levels and schools. She does not want to see kids in different schools getting different skills.

Mrs. Quarato explained that they made it very clear that they want all grade level teachers to cover the same content, regardless of schools. Mrs. Caramanello strongly suggested that they reconsider the roll-out and reel it back in a little bit. Mrs. Quarato thanked her for her feedback and will have conversations with the team.

Mr. Roraback asked if it was possible to identify a teacher within the building that thoroughly understands it and perhaps be a coach to train others. The start of the school year is overwhelming to most teachers and they wouldn't want to pile on too much. Mr. Roraback asked if there is a need for parents to proctor any tests with this and Mrs. Quarato noted that there is not.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked how the roll-out of the program was going for special ed and asked if it will be in the classrooms and like normal intervention. Mrs. Quarato explained that the special ed teachers will still have to work with their caseloads, but the goal is to keep everybody in the classroom. They will have conversations with the interventionists about how what they are doing may look a little different next year. The small groups are created based on data from the previous week which helps to personalize instruction based on where the learners are in the moment. Special ed teachers will still need to pull students out based on IEP hours and other things.

Mrs. Dahlheimer also asked about grade 5 working with this program this year and what happens when they move to Strong next year. Mrs. Quarato reiterated that they are doing literacy professional learning

for almost all of the Strong staff on May 16th because they recognize the need. They are hoping that the teachers gain some strategies that they can continue to use or begin using to help build vocabulary and comprehension. Mrs. Quarato also noted that they may need to revisit whether the curriculum at that level needs to change after next year. She added that all of the teachers need more support on how to integrate literacy into the classrooms.

Strong Electives and Tutorial Update

Dr. Schuch sent a Google doc to everyone with a report from Mrs. Gonzalez. That document describes specific new things that will be offered and he asked that any questions be sent to Mrs. Gonzalez. Dr. Schuch is excited about these new choices.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked that the document be attached to the minutes. Several elective courses that will be available include art (campus beautification), health (food as fuel), physical education (PE fitness and skills), TI (do-it-yourself carpentry and construction or hammer time), and enrichment (maker's madness and lights, camera, action). Mrs. Dahlheimer thanked everyone for coming forward with these electives and Mrs. Petrella loved the fact that they are all hands-on. Mr. Roraback liked that there was something there for every kid. He would be happy to advise on what may be needed for the cooking facility.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked that this be forwarded to the full board and have any questions brought to this committee.

Student-Centered Learning Practices Fall 2023-2024

Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that she and Mrs. Petrella had asked for this to be on the agenda and were looking for any practices that will be coming at a district level in the Fall as well as any that are currently happening.

Dr. Schuch noted that they just spoke about two of the things happening in the last two items on the agenda. There are certainly more things that they would love to see happen sooner vs. later, but they are cautious about throwing more at the K-5 teachers. He added that one of the things that distinguished the EL program was its ability to personalize which is exactly what they talk about in learner-center or student-centered education. These changes will require additional support. The other thing about this is part of what will be happening is they will give more freedom for the teachers to take risks and try new things. The culture amongst many of the teachers is that they are afraid to do anything outside of the lines of the curriculum pacing guide and they are waiting for someone to tell them that they can.

Dr. Schuch met with all of the teachers in the late Fall and let them know that they have permission to do that while communicating with their principal. A lot of that they have been doing is scripted and it will take a while to get people out of that mindset. Dr. Schuch would like to prepare some information for the May meeting. He did note that part of this process is getting the teachers to buy in and it will not work to demand how things are done. Dr. Schuch felt that Mrs. Stone will provide an update about a lot of exciting things that are planned for the high school.

Mrs. Quarato added she always encourages others to take the jump and flip their classroom. One thing that has been the norm for so long is the focus on test scores and grades and they need to help the teachers, parents and students change their mindsets about that. She added that Ms. Heikkila, their coach,

has been working hard and more and more teachers are saying they want to try. She is now working with a dozen teachers across the district, helping to identify one area in their classroom where they want to start making the shift as well as showing them research and helping to design lessons.

Mrs. Siegel added that a lot of things are planned at the high school that are a little more program-concrete that Mrs. Stone and Mrs. Trainer will review in May.

Mrs. Caramanello was happy to hear the direction that the teachers are headed in. She reiterated that she was concerned about the demands on the teachers and the possibility of differentiation.

Mr. Roraback felt that whenever he had to adhere to pacing guides and covering content were his worst times teaching. He felt that was teacher-centered and is the old way of doing things. He agreed that they need to encourage the teachers to have flexibility and do something a little different.

Summer School Programming Update

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if there was any programming planned beyond special education. Mrs. Siegel reported that summer programs are set to run from July 5, 2023 to July 27, 2023. The ESY program, which is the special education program, will run at the same time as other programs. Intervention summer school, called Summer Academy, is for those who are currently receiving tier 3 intervention in math and/or literacy. They will invite 65 students in grades K-4 and may also invite current fifth graders, depending on the numbers enrolled. There will also be a Kindergarten Academy for those who will be coming into kindergarten. They will attend a one-week session that runs Monday through Thursday.

Mrs. Siegel completed a state grant for possible summer enrichment and will find out if they got the grant on May 1, 2023. If those funds are received, they are hoping to run some enrichment camp opportunities at the same time. Possible camps will include science exploration, nature exploration, art, music and technology.

Mrs. Quarato added that if the district does not receive the grant, there is a program called Defined Learning which is pretty self-paced and at no cost. It is a platform that provides project-based learning opportunities as well as career exploration activities. It is meant for all ages, but could be done by middle school and high school kids.

The Early Childhood Committee at DMYS will hold a kindergarten kick-off on May 19, 2023. Leading up to that, there will be four sessions, on things like literacy, social and emotional wellness, prevention, which will be virtual for parents of incoming kindergartners. The district hopes to have somebody at the gathering as well. Mrs. Quarato just received this information today and has shared it with the elementary school principals.

Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that DMYS is already promoting that online and she wished that had come from the district beforehand. She felt that there needs to be good communication, letting them know timelines and why things are done in certain spaces. She noted that it does say RSD13 right on their flyer. Mrs. Dahlheimer would also like to look at both rec departments.

Mrs. Petrella asked what grade levels the summer camps would include and Mrs. Siegel explained that it is a two-year grant and, this year, it will be for grades 3-5 as that could be accommodated at Brewster

with the other summer programs. For the following summer, they can expand upon that. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they need to look at grades 6-8 and asked for more information on the Defined Learning platform.

Ms. Betty asked if DMYFS had reached out to the district prior to advertising their program. Mrs. Quarato explained that she and Mrs. Allen are on the Early Childhood Committee and have been talking about this. In March, the program was further discussed, but Mrs. Quarato was not in attendance. In April, she did a presentation on Reimagining Light. The final information with links was just given to her today. The district is not leading the group, but is part of it.

Professional Learning Update

Mrs. Quarato reported that the district had a professional learning flex day on March 10th which was very successful. The staff was very appreciative that the district was honoring the time they were spending outside of their contractual school day to do professional learning. They are continuing to build a Google Classroom with resources for the teachers. They have asked staff who they'd like to hear from and are hoping to hold podcasts. People have been nominating others to be interviewed and posted as a podcast. Many of the teachers already listen to podcasts.

May 16th is a professional learning day where elementary teachers will receive information on the EL literacy program. Some of the Strong staff will have learning on co-teaching and others will work on literacy strategies. The staff at the high school will participate in the senior Capstone that day. There is a professional learning action team and they will meet on May 15th with a goal of figuring out how to best receive feedback from the staff about professional learning this year and what they would like to see moving forward. They also plan to set professional learning expectations for the June flex options.

Mrs. Quarato added that the State of Connecticut will soon be approving new teacher evaluation guidelines. They are allowing districts to be more flexible in the 2023-2024 school year. Once the guidelines are approved, the district will begin discussions on what the focus will be next year and how to plan for the new guidelines.

Adjournment

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

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Dahlheimer and Mr. Roraback.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First

Strong Electives: Update for Student Achievement Committee Meeting

This past Monday students chose their Music Electives and 6th grade chose their world language for next year. In the upcoming weeks students will have the opportunity to choose the electives below or a study hall. Electives and study hall run for a quarter.

ART**Campus Beautification**

Introducing our Campus Beautification Course! This fun and educational program teaches learners the importance of taking care of their school's environment while also promoting creativity and teamwork. Get ready to unleash your inner Picasso with our exciting Campus Beautification Course. This is your chance to take your artistic skills to the next level and leave your mark on the campus in a BIG way.

With the guidance of the instructor, you'll learn how to design and create breathtaking murals that will turn heads and leave everyone in awe. From brainstorming ideas to selecting the perfect color palette, we'll take you through every step of the process.

But that's not all! You'll also learn how to create fun and engaging bulletin boards that will keep your classmates informed and entertained. From seasonal themes to pop culture references, the possibilities are endless.

Part of this course will be "Classroom Art and Design". This will be an immersive, hands-on experience that allows learners to work closely with teachers to create posters and artwork for their classrooms. Throughout the course, learners will gain foundational knowledge of visual design principles, including color theory, composition, and typography. They will also learn how to use a variety of design software and tools, such as Cricut, Pixlr and Canva, to create high-quality graphics and artwork.

In collaboration with their teachers, learners will identify classroom design needs and develop creative solutions. They will work on projects such as creating motivational posters, infographics, and bulletin board displays, all while practicing effective communication and teamwork skills.

They will also have the opportunity to make signs and posters for Strong's Athletic programs. Sports enthusiasts can unleash their creativity and passion for athletics! We will be dedicated to designing and creating visually stunning posters that showcase the excitement and energy of sports.

Through this course, learners will not only develop their artistic abilities but also learn the importance of creating a positive and engaging learning environment. They will gain confidence in their creative abilities and will have the opportunity to showcase their work in a meaningful way. By working closely with their teachers, learners will also develop close relationships with their educators and gain a deeper understanding of the importance of collaboration and teamwork in achieving shared goals.

So, come join us and let your creativity run wild. Who knows? Your masterpiece might just become the talk of the town (or at least the campus)!

Health**Course Title:**

Food is Fuel: A Nutritional Cooking Course for Young Chefs

OR

Nutritional Cooking (if the title needs to be shorter)

Course Description:

Welcome to the Nutritional Cooking course, designed for middle school students who are interested in understanding how food choices can affect their well-being. In this course, you will learn about basic nutrition principles such as macronutrients, micronutrients, vitamins, and minerals and how these components play crucial roles in maintaining good health. You will also learn how to read food labels, understand serving sizes and plan healthy meals and snacks for yourself and your family. In our hands-on cooking classes, you will learn how to prepare simple and nutritious recipes using a variety of cooking techniques, ingredients, and tools. Throughout this course, we'll discuss the role of food in different cultures and the importance of sustainable and ethical food production.

PE

PE Fitness and Skills will be an enrichment class where learners will choose the activities they would like to perform in class. The activities chosen can focus on team sports and backyard games that are not focused on during the regular PE curriculum. There is also an element of fitness related options such as walking to parts of the Strong MS campus, Allyn Brook Park, and the CRHS sports fields.

*lots of options listed, but omitted from this document.

TI**DIY Carpentry & Construction**

or maybe

Hammer Time: The Ultimate Carpentry Workshop

Get ready to hammer, saw, and build! In this construction & carpentry class, you'll learn the basics of woodworking while creating cool projects that you design for Strong Middle School - maybe benches for outside, garden beds, or maybe something you think might be a great addition to a classroom. You'll also get to try your hand at more advanced techniques like framing, construction, and finishing. No experience necessary - just bring your creativity and enthusiasm!

Enrichment**Maker Madness**

Do you like to create, solve problems and make things better? In this class, learners will have the opportunity to engage in designing hands-on, creative projects using a variety of tools and materials located in the Makerspace. Learners will develop their problem-solving skills while exploring various areas of making. Learners will implement design thinking concepts, including prototyping and iteration. Experimenting and "failing-forward" are strongly encouraged.

Lights, Camera, Action

Breaking news: A new elective is being offered at Strong, where learners will step into the shoes of a reporter as they investigate and report on stories going on in our school and town communities. Learners

will be introduced to interviewing, reporting, writing, editing, videography, broadcast, photography, and design. Learners will compile stories to share with the Strong Community in Student News segments.

*This course will replace the traditional morning announcements at least once a week and will be limited to one class per quarter. Currently doing a trial run.