

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, April 24, 2024 at 4:30 PM.

Recording of meeting: <https://youtu.be/xwBuRG6cA0A>

Committee members present: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy and Mrs. Petrella

Committee members absent: Mr. Mennone and Mr. Roraback

Board members present: Mr. Moore

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools; Mrs. Quarato, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Development, Mrs. Siegel, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Accountability, and Tara Heikkila, Learner-Centered Coach

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

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

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, and Mrs. Petrella.

Approval of Minutes - March 27, 2024

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the minutes of the March 27, 2024 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of the March 27, 2024, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer and Mrs. Petrella, with Dr. Darcy abstaining.

Competencies Update

Mrs. Quarato explained that she will forward the presentation to everyone after the meeting. They decided to start with math and literacy competencies because that's where they felt the biggest need was. They do hope to develop competencies in more content areas as well. All of the competencies align with the Common Core state standards. Once they were completed, the interventionists and coaches are now taking a look at them and giving feedback. The goal for next year is to start slowly rolling them out to staff members through PLCs.

Mrs. Heikkila added that they researched a lot of different state and community documents while developing the competencies. She began reviewing the K-8 ELA competencies which are split into four levels. It begins with Reading Foundations and goes through at least sixth grade, with level four still in working form. Mrs. Heikkila highlighted the competency statements and the Common Core standards that align with them. The expectation and rigor increases through the grade levels, especially in ELA.

There are learning targets that are listed as a checklist in hopes that this becomes a working document for teachers to use when they are assessing students. They went on to break out level one further into three different levels. Mrs. Heikkila is working with the coaches and reading interventionists on these levels. The idea is that students will move through all three levels before they move to level two.

Mrs. Heikkila went on to the next section, explaining that it is formatted in the same way, going from kindergarten through eighth grade. She noted that there were no areas that the coaches and interventionists felt needed to be parsed out even further. Mrs. Dahlheimer didn't feel anyone could ask any questions as they are seeing this for the first time and really can't absorb it. She wished this would have been linked in the agenda. Mrs. Heikkila agreed that it is a lot to digest.

Mr. Moore asked how this will be used and Mrs. Heikkila noted that some coaches and interventionists want to use this as almost a case study with certain students next year to see if it is usable. They have also talked about creating checklists for the students. Mr. Moore asked how often it will be used and if there will be an assessment for each student that can be reviewed. Mrs. Heikkila explained that the frequency will be based on the learner's progress. They will have to have conversations about assessments and what mastery will look like. She imagines that there will be common assessments.

Dr. Schuch added that they don't want to overwhelm any of the teachers, but the end game is to allow teachers to move away from teaching everyone the exact same topic on the exact same day and move a little more independently. He felt the potential is amazing if they can get the buy-in from the teachers and for them to actually use this. Mrs. Petrella noted that all of the students in the EL curriculum are reading the same books at the same time and have the same discussions and asked how this jives with that. Mrs. Heikkila gave an example of kindergartners coming in with varying skills and in the EL program, there are micro phases based on where the learner is. They do not move on from a micro phase until they show mastery of the skills. Mrs. Petrella asked if those micro phases align with these competencies and Mrs. Heikkila explained that that is what they are working on.

Mrs. Petrella felt that the EL program in grades K-3 is more of a traditional program, but asked if the skills still align in grades 4-6. Mrs. Heikkila explained that EL is based on the Common Core standards as well, so they should align. She has yet to sit down with the interventionists about that. Mrs. Petrella felt that these are the competencies that align with Common Core, but that they also feel are critical for student learning in whatever program is used and Mrs. Heikkila agreed. Mrs. Petrella also asked if the assessments will be put into place before these competencies and Mrs. Heikkila agreed that they can't have one without the other.

Mr. Roraback asked if the expectation is that a lower grade student will be reading at these levels or is this for the teacher to use as a rubric to grade. He wondered if this will then be based on numerical grades. Mrs. Quarato noted that this is more of a continuum to help the teacher understand where each child is and what standards they might need to look at. If a child is doing really well, they could look at whether they are prepared to take on the next level. She added that once the kids get to the older levels, it's a little easier for them to understand when they've mastered a standard and are ready to move forward. It's a continuum to help the teachers understand how the standards are built, starting from kindergarten and going up to 12th grade. Mr. Roraback saw the value for the teacher in that students learn at different rates and that this is the new way of doing things.

Dr. Schuch added that another benefit for this is communication to parents and families. He felt that, at the upper elementary levels, they tend to start talking about averages rather than what the child can do which becomes somewhat frustrating for the parents. This puts more of a premium on learning and less on grading, though they will not go away from grading.

Mr. Moore asked what teachers will do if they find that either part of the class or the whole class is nowhere near where they had anticipated them to be. Mrs. Quarato explained that conversations about where the students are going is crucial. Using this, teachers can really pinpoint where kids are struggling and have conversations with their team, with their coach and interventionists to develop a plan. That information will move with the students up to the next grade. Dr. Schuch added that it's a challenge for the teachers now as well, but he sees this as an opportunity to change the way the structure changes. Mrs. Siegel added that this also has to do with the difference between scope and sequence and pacing guides. If a child hasn't mastered certain skills, they will not get anything further if the teacher keeps going just to follow the pacing guide. This is a way for teachers and learners to check what they're understanding and move forward. She added that it will also be helpful to build out what learners need to do in each grade level as they try to make it more hands-on learning and use better instructional strategies.

Mr. Moore was concerned that the structure of grades is not ready for this and when a child isn't ready at the end of third grade, they would still go on to fourth grade. He felt that the structure is behind the concept and he wasn't sure that can be broken in the next decade. He was also concerned that the kids who are out-performing end up getting held back with the rest of the class. Mrs. Siegel agreed that that was a concern and felt that this will help with that. Dr. Schuch felt that the grade level itself will become less important and they would not want to hold anyone back if they are doing well. This will make the teacher feel better about letting them do that. He agreed that the existing structure may not support that 100 percent, but he felt that the teachers have less freedom now.

Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that parents feel that they have relied on pacing guides and rubrics to know what their children are and will be learning. She asked if they know how parents will continue to stay involved on a grade-by-grade level. Mrs. Quarato stated that goes back to the learner profiles that they are hoping to develop because the goal would be to get the competencies in there. She added that they are developing play lists to go along with the math competencies to keep track of when a student masters a certain skill, how long that took and whether they needed a lot of support or not. This will be helpful to the students, the parents and the teachers. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if Mrs. Penney's eighth grade class is following a pacing guide and Mrs. Quarato stated that she follows her rubric and pacing guide, but she is also tying in a lot of personalization. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that she felt that Mrs. Penney is one of the most phenomenal educators she has ever seen, but wondered how hard this would be for most teachers. She would also like for committee members to see what is actually happening in the learning environment with this type of work. Mrs. Quarato stated that she and Mrs. Heikkila will talk with a couple of teachers about that. Mrs. Dahlheimer had a concern about trying out these different forms of teaching and then having kids move to a different classroom.

Dr. Darcy was a little frustrated as she would have had questions and comments had she received the document ahead of time, but understood why they didn't. She felt that it would have been a better use of her time to have had the information ahead of time. Dr. Darcy felt that there was validity to both approaches.

Mrs. Petrella asked about how the math curriculum will fit in with the competencies. Mrs. Quarato stated that when they start to develop the play lists, resources will be provided to the students all in one place. They will modify some of the assessments and think about pre-assessments. The competencies are nothing in addition to what is already being done, but are just modified to help the teachers understand how to target where the students are struggling or where they need to go if they are really excelling. Mrs. Heikkila added that it is really just a shift in delivery of the math curriculum. Mrs. Petrella did not see anything that was significantly different from what teachers should be doing. Kids were always put where they needed to be and didn't follow a timeline, but rather a competency. She felt this should have been happening all along.

Mrs. Petrella also felt it would have been helpful to see this material ahead of time and had previously asked for all information to be sent to the committee members at least three or four days ahead of time. She added that this may be brought up again at the next Student Achievement meeting if people have additional questions and acknowledge the amount of work that went into it. Mrs. Heikkila left the meeting at this point.

Career and College Readiness Platform Update

Mrs. Siegel reviewed that she was made aware of an issue with the Career and College Readiness platform, Naviance, which had had trouble with some of our students logging in which she was told was happening over several years. This was a major concern with the current 11th graders because this is what is used for the college application process.

Mrs. Siegel looked for a platform with issue-free access, college applications, career planning and self-discovery. They wanted the platform to house a profile, help with the Capstone projects and competencies, help with social and emotional learning, alumni tracking, ongoing year-after-year and good customer support.

Mrs. Siegel went on to explain that SchoolLinks actually does most of the things on their wish list. It supports the entire student planning journey for college and career readiness. It has a place for a student profile, college planning and application process, career exploration and SEL check-ins and lessons. It is also a way for students to communicate with their advisor/teacher about SEL issues. It does have a place for competency tracking, allows for alumni networking and also has an industry portal which allows for internship opportunities and community service.

Other platforms include student information systems, multi-tiered systems of support, social-emotional learning, college and career readiness and pathways and course planning. There was rarely one that encompassed most or all of the items on the wish list. Naviance was used some at Strong and a little bit at the high school and was mostly used for the college application process and that was mostly because it just wasn't working. Last Fall, 103 learners could not log on. Other platforms used include Renzulli Learning which can be used for enrichment and career exploration at Strong, and Pathful Explore used by Matt Thompson for college and career exploration. SchoolLinks can, in fact, take the place of those three platforms. In addition, Second Step is used in sixth and seventh grade for SEL, but are thinking about switching for a different one in eighth grade. SchoolLinks does have some SEL check-ins, but is not a full platform for SEL. The counselor at the middle school would like to keep Second Step for some of the SEL that is not available. Aperture is also used for SEL in the district and is mandated by the state, where some climate data is stored.

Mrs. Siegel reviewed the steps she took to find SchooLinks. She met with reps from two programs and SchooLinks came out ahead. She has discussed SchooLinks with the leadership team and counselors. She also presented this at a Connection Strategic Action Team meeting and received feedback. High school counselors spoke with districts already using SchooLinks, Mrs. Siegel spoke to several teachers and advisors and a draft implementation plan was created. They also discussed it with the technology team and then began training counselors in the college application process as well as Mr. Thompson in the career readiness areas.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if there was a significant cost difference and Mrs. Siegel stated that there was not. There was an added cost for the extra trainings that are needed, but that is a one-time cost that came from professional development.

Because the college application process was a major concern, they are going to have current 11th grade students be onboarded in May. The implementation plan will allow them to go through an abbreviated onboarding so that their accounts are ready for the Fall. Their advisors and teachers will also be aware of the new platform through the trainings. SchooLinks also has a professional learning hub in their program. In September, they will look at implementing this in grades 6 through 11. There are also parent accounts with SchooLinks where parents can see their child's profile, college selections and careers. The parent accounts will be implemented in September as well.

Mr. Moore asked if the current seniors have been able to look at this and provide feedback. Mrs. Siegel stated that she had a lunch meeting with some 10th, 11th and 12th grade learners and asked them what they wanted in a platform as well as their use of the current platforms. They did not specifically see this platform, but gave a list of their wants and concerns.

Mrs. Siegel went on to share her screen and demonstrate a student account in SchooLinks. She explained that she has created an abbreviated scope and sequence for the 11th graders to get them on board and sixth through 11th next year. Mrs. Siegel also noted that she took one of the surveys and it was spot on. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked to meet with Mrs. Siegel to go through it in person and Mrs. Siegel invited everyone.

Mr. Moore asked if the students are required to use this platform and Mrs. Siegel explained that it is mostly required because they have to use this for their college applications, career readiness and Capstone projects. It will be presented in advisories and the advisors will check up on it. The students can choose how in-depth they use the platform. Mr. Moore asked who will have access to it and Mrs. Siegel explained that she can assign different levels of access. Currently, counselors at the high school and Strong have the most access. Teachers have access to the profiles of their own students.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if the platform is required for students going into the trades or not going to college right away. Mrs. Siegel explained that certain parts will be required, including the Capstone and profile. There is also a section about entering the military as well as a career section.

Mr. Roraback felt that there could be potential privacy issues and asked if the platform is information-gathering and the students will get information from colleges and other places, whether they want it or not. Mrs. Quarato explained that every time they bring new software into the district, a student data privacy agreement needs to be signed which includes that they will not share student information. Mrs. Siegel added that they do not allow anyone under 11th grade to receive outside emails.

Assessment Data Update

Mrs. Siegel reviewed the assessments used in 2023-2024, including benchmark data which identifies students' strengths and weaknesses to guide future instruction. These included iReady Math in grades 1-8, an interim assessment block in grades 6-8 in both math and ELA which came from the state, a math benchmark in kindergarten, DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) in K-5, PAST (Phonological Awareness Screening Test) in grade 2, and the EL benchmark assessments in K-2.

Summative assessments are to evaluate student learning at the end of instruction and compare it against a standard. These included the SATs in grade 11, the SBAC in grades 3-8, the NGSS in grades 3, 5 and 11, as well as the Las Links for the ELL learners. In addition, they were also selected to run NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) where certain schools in certain districts and certain states are used to decide national progress. Fourth graders at Lyman and eighth graders at Strong were selected to participate in NAEP.

Last year, the district moved away from iReady literacy at the elementary schools, given that the benchmark assessments were coming in and DIBELS was expanded as well as the fact that iReady is not approved assessment for the state. Mrs. Siegel has heard several different reactions to iReady and how it's not the best assessment tool. She compared the iReady math scores in eighth grade to the interim assessment block and they did much better on the interim assessment block. Both teachers and learners have stated that they just don't like iReady. The principal, coaches and teachers at the middle school would like to try IXL next year. It has a shorter assessment period and they feel it will provide some better information with lessons involved.

Mrs. Siegel also sent a survey out on Friday to the elementary classroom teachers (grades 1-5) about iReady and asked how they use it, the value they see in it and whether they would like to continue with it or not. She has received 18 out of 27 responses and two-thirds of them said they would be interested in a different platform as they do not feel it provides the data they need to inform instruction. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if the survey went out to the students and Mrs. Siegel noted that it was only for the teachers. Most teachers did say that students sometimes complain about the lessons, but usually about the assessments.

Mrs. Siegel went on to note that they are looking into Forefront which is an interview-based assessment and will allow teachers to see how or why a learner is getting something incorrect. It takes about three minutes per child and tests all the domains. They are looking at other programs as well to make sure the teachers have the best benchmarks.

They have also looked to be sure that intervention staffing is where it needs to be for the learners that are not growing as much as they would like. They are continuing to review the SAT (Student Assistance Team) process to identify learners who need assistance. They are also working on math pathways which will help teachers to use standards from previous years. It is now a state mandate for PB (play-based) learning which will help support learners in executive function and teachers in instructional strategies. They are also making schedule changes to allow more time for reading and math.

Mrs. Siegel went on to explain that DIBELS data will not be available until May and iReady is just up on the data dashboard. She then asked what the committee members are looking for as far as presenting the

data from iReady. Mrs. Siegel was concerned about putting raw data on a Google drive due to the fact that it would be linked to board agendas without context or understanding behind some of the data. Benchmark data is really to guide instruction and has, in the past, been used more in a summative way. The purpose of the summative data is to evaluate programming and instruction and is a secure testing environment.

Mr. Moore stated that they have been looking at the data forever and haven't run into any problems. Mrs. Siegel was speaking more to the fact that it would be linked for public view. Mrs. Dahlheimer understood and explained that the board is trying to be as transparent as they can. She added that the competencies should have been linked to the agenda as well and they need to figure out how to structure Student Achievement to make sure it aligns with the state Curriculum Committee statute. She acknowledged that Mrs. Quarato and Mrs. Siegel are doing a great job, but they need to iron out what the charge is and what the role of the committee is.

Mrs. Petrella added that with all the testing that is being used, along with the fact that some will be changing, she found it very difficult for them to make comparisons. They would like to see something relatively consistent so they can see what is happening from year to year. Mrs. Siegel explained that that is the summative assessments and added she would not want to keep using benchmark assessments that are not helpful.

Dr. Darcy would like to see numbers, but didn't care as much about high school numbers as she did about K-3 numbers. She wanted to know more about the intervention process, how a kid gets into that and what interventions have been done. She felt that the high stakes tests are lagging indicators. She would like to see more leading indicators and know that the benchmarks are being used to improve instruction. Dr. Darcy felt that they have continually asked for real data and get interpretation without the numbers or just talk about what the assessments are with no data at all. She felt that they get that same conversation every single time. It felt like a stalling tactic to get the committee away from numbers and they need to see numbers in reading and math at the elementary level. Dr. Darcy wanted to see whatever data there is for elementary math and ELA.

Mrs. Siegel noted that she had previously sent the DIBELS mid-year data through January to the committee and had the SAT data today. Looking at the DIBELS, Dr. Darcy asked if she had the percentage of students who have moved from one band to another and Mrs. Siegel stated that she can provide that. Mr. Moore felt that it looks as though they've gone backwards from the beginning of the year to mid-year in grade 3. Mrs. Siegel agreed and they have looked at why that may be and provide the services that are needed. She added that SAT is a school-based process and could have a principal come to explain their process. Dr. Darcy didn't think that was necessary and imagined it was written down somewhere.

Mr. Moore asked if anyone has analyzed what is happening as a result of this data and Mrs. Siegel stated that they are looking at this more from what each child needs and not from a whole grade level. This is one five-minute test. Mrs. Siegel then showed the Fall to Winter iReady data which she had previously sent out. They also just took it at the end of March and that data is being analyzed.

Mr. Moore asked what they felt was happening in third grade and Mrs. Quarato explained that a lot of students in third grade were still struggling with having a lack of phonics instruction. When the district shifted to the new program, there is not a phonics core component for third, fourth or fifth grade. The

teachers have started to use a little bit of the skills block from grade 2, based on the needs of the individual learner. They also brought in a supplemental phonics program that is geared specifically to older students.

Mrs. Siegel also had the IAB from middle school in December, but had no comparisons since this was new this year. Mrs. Quarato explained that the IABs are more aligned to what students will see when they take SBACs. They are not aligned with the curriculum which makes it difficult for the teachers. Mr. Moore felt that the eighth graders going into high school would be a year behind. Mrs. Siegel agreed that there is still learning to be done, but the problem with this is that it was not taken in fall, winter and spring, but just winter. She did ask all students who are taking the SBAC take one IAB in order to feel comfortable. Grades 6-8 did that in the Winter and grades 3-5 did it recently.

Mr. Moore asked to see the data from the SATs and Mrs. Siegel explained that they were taken in March. The district's mean reading and writing score was 532. The state average being 492 and all testers averaged 485. For math, the district's mean score was 500. The state average is 472 and all testers were 466. Mr. Moore stated that his interest in the data is because the data shows a lot of things to very different people. For him, it shows that there are either deficiencies or exceedances and provides an answer to why it costs so much to educate the kids. They can say they know there's a math problem in third grade and that staff is dealing with it. They can also say they are way above the mean of the SAT scores in high school. He added that they can look at SAT scores over the past 20 years and compare and see if there is a trend. Mr. Moore left the meeting at this point.

Mr. Roraback felt that the various digital platforms should make it easier to get the data. Mrs. Quarato agreed and noted that one of the downfalls of the EL program is that there is no digital platform for that information to be collected. One has been created in-house and coaches are doing most of the testing, but it can be overwhelming to get it all digital. Mr. Roraback asked if Power School integrates with these platforms and Mrs. Quarato explained that it does not. They are trying to keep this all from being overwhelming for the teachers and hope that Forefront will help with that.

Dr. Schuch apologized for the frustrations from the board members and will do a better job of getting information out ahead of time. They would also be interested in meeting with the committee over the summer to try to map out the meetings with regard to the data sets and curriculum stuff that has been requested. Dr. Schuch also had concerns about putting information out to the public before the committee has had the chance to discuss them, but understood that the board is okay with that.

Adjournment

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

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz
Alwaz First