

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, May 22, 2024 at 4:30 PM.

Recording of meeting: <https://youtu.be/DwaxV5SZqTk?si=GLU8w2H7SFJim7a9>

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

Committee members absent: Mr. Mennone

Board members present: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Hurlbert and Mr. Moore

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools; Mrs. Quarato, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Development, Dr. Siegel, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Accountability, Mrs. Durkin, Principal of Memorial School, and Mrs. Gonzalez, Principal of Strong School

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 4:34 PM.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mrs. Petrella welcomed Mrs. Hurlbert to the Board of Education.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Approval of Agenda**

*Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Hurlbert, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

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

### **Approval of Minutes - April 24, 2024**

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Dr. Darcy, to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2024 meeting, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the April 24, 2024, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback.*

### **5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Schedules 2024-2025**

Dr. Schuch explained that he has had some concerns with how the schedules work, specifically with math. He has talked with Mrs. Durkin and Mrs. Gonzalez about his issues and asked Mrs. Gonzalez to start with grade 6.

Mrs. Gonzalez agreed that they need to prioritize literacy and math as her goal is to make sure that every student who leaves from eighth grade is ready to take any course at the high school. They decided to

prioritize the sixth-grade schedule. Currently, all classes meet three times a week for 70 minutes. They decided to have the three academic courses (ELA and math) meet every morning for 80 minutes all year long. They did not take any time away from science or social studies. They will now meet five times a week for 80 minutes. They did try to keep the schedule as simple as possible, with a half year of social studies and a half year of science. The total minutes for each are virtually the same. Students will then go to second lunch and have related arts and electives in the afternoon as well as any other resources. Each afternoon class will meet for 51 minutes.

Mrs. Gonzalez summarized that they are prioritizing the core areas for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students with the hopes that all students will be at grade level by the time they leave 8<sup>th</sup> grade. They will be rotating the three morning blocks so that the kids have the different classes at different times.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if there was data behind doing half-time social studies and science. Mrs. Gonzalez explained that they are not losing any time with this new schedule. Mrs. Caramanello noted that not everything is about test scores, but she would be interested to know if there is data on whether this half-year schedule will be a detriment. Mrs. Dahlheimer was also worried about the retention with long periods without the subject. Mrs. Gonzalez explained that they don't test NGSS until the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Dr. Schuch added that he has seen this model in a lot of different places and noted that he would be concerned if this was being done with numeracy and literacy. He did not believe having a gap in social studies or science will hurt.

Mrs. Durkin added they didn't have science or social studies every day in the past, both in the district and in other places she taught. Mr. Moore felt that outside science activities would be limited to the season. He felt that the two biggest issues facing the country today are climate change and democracy and they should be taught every day in every school.

Mrs. Hurlbert asked if there was a plan for what data will be used to show that the increase in instructional time is actually working. Mrs. Gonzalez stated that there was not at this point, but they will figure that out. Mrs. Hurlbert asked about related arts classes and Mrs. Gonzalez explained that they meet three times a week for 51 minutes. Electives will also meet in the afternoons as will music. Mrs. Hurlbert asked how many sections of related arts will be in any given quarter and Mrs. Gonzalez did not have that information. She did note that it is a very large sixth grade coming in this year. Mrs. Hurlbert cautioned about class size and safety of the students in TI classes. Mrs. Gonzalez added that class sizes will be between 20 and 24.

Mr. Roraback asked what support and communication would look like when a student leaves Memorial and goes to Strong. Mrs. Gonzalez explained that the teachers do meet and talk about strengths and concerns of students. She and Mrs. Durkin also meet and do the same. Mr. Roraback was also concerned about the safety aspect and was reassured that no one does anything before knowing the precautionary measures. He added that electives and related arts can support both science and social studies.

Dr. Darcy encouraged them to be sure there is prep time for teachers who are going from a short to a long period. Mrs. Petrella asked how the 80 minutes would be structured and Mrs. Gonzalez reviewed that the teachers are going from 70 to 80 minutes and station rotation, brain breaks and other things are included. They will also include some sort of snack time. Mrs. Gonzalez expects that there will be four different activities in the 80-minute block. She also noted that students do like the longer time schedules.

Mr. Moore asked if the schedule is the same for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and Mrs. Gonzalez stated that 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade schedules will remain the same, at 70 minutes, three times a week. Mrs. Hurlbert noted that ELA and math instructional time will almost be doubled and asked about professional development for the teachers. Mrs. Gonzalez stated that the teachers are thrilled to have more time and they do have personalized PD. Mrs. Quarato added that they are starting PD with the grade 6 team next week. She has also had conversations with the math teachers. There will be a lot of time in August for the Strong staff to get more personalized PD.

Mrs. Petrella stated that the board was very concerned about eliminating study halls and asked what electives will be available. Mrs. Gonzalez stated that each teacher will be teaching electives. The one that stands out to her is AgVentures which will be about plant and animal sciences. Another will be an enrichment course to prepare students for the upcoming electives in STEM. Mrs. Dahlheimer reviewed that the electives were all supposed to come from the core related arts and she sees a very large jump for the sixth grade. There is a large high-needs population in that class and she wondered if this was even feasible. Mrs. Gonzalez added that students will still have their rotation of related arts, including health, TI, enrichment and PE. Dr. Siegel added that she has been working with the teachers who are building the electives and they are working to include digital music, global movement in dance and global sports and games.

Mrs. Dahlheimer struggled as they are almost in June and don't have a curriculum or plan for certain electives and the board needs to know what kids will be learning day-to-day, even with electives. She is frustrated that so much is still to be determined. Mrs. Petrella agreed and asked to see the schedule and list of options. Dr. Siegel added that two teachers will be coming in on June 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> to start the full curriculum process, making units and lesson plans.

Mr. Roraback acknowledged that the teachers still need to get through this school year, while working on this. Mrs. Dahlheimer realized that they are putting a lot of stress on the sixth-grade team, but didn't feel like the board got what they needed for the fifth grade and found it hard to trust that this will all work for sixth grade. She noted that they still do not know if the fifth grade has actually done any social studies and whether that has been successful with Open Studio. She felt that the board needs to have more of a role in curriculum and noted that they do, by state statute. She would like everyone to work together to develop and implement what is best for kids.

Mrs. Durkin volunteered to speak to any of the fifth-grade team and understood the new schedule helping to build in more instructional time. She agreed that there are parts of the schedule that are less than ideal for this year and acknowledged that the teachers are giving 120 percent this year. There had been a plan for following the social studies curriculum in Open Studio blocks, but once the year got underway, a lot of related services wound up pulling from the Open Studio blocks which then created a counterproductive environment for the classroom teacher. A lot of teachers did work to make the social studies integration successful over the winter, but the team did meet and realized that two units had not been covered content-wise. Mrs. Durkin did feel confident that they will hit the content standards through grade 5 by the end of the year.

Mrs. Hurlbert stated that pulling kids out of a content area has been an issue for as long as she has been in the district. She felt that they need to acknowledge that and create a schedule that works. Mrs. Petrella asked what they plan to do next year if Open Studio didn't work this year. Mrs. Durkin explained that their plan for next year is more of a one-teacher model. That will be very similar to how K-4 has operated

and they will have five fourth-grade classes and five fifth-grade classes which will allow for a little more flexibility with academic time. After receiving feedback from all staff, they believe that flexible academic time allows for the services to be provided in a way that can also focus more on climate and connections. They do feel they need to provide direct instruction in social-emotional skills. This will not be a change in the amount of instructional time in math, literacy, science or social studies.

Mrs. Petrella was concerned that they changed the schedule for fifth grade and now changing it again for sixth grade, it feels like this group is being experimented on. She felt any changes should be very well-vetted before being implemented. Mrs. Durkin stated that the fifth-grade schedule this year was not different than many schedules across the US. All of the content was still delivered. The way they used Open Studio became different but, for many students, it was their favorite part of the day. The difference for the fifth grade was that they had three teachers rather than the one they had in fourth grade. Mrs. Petrella also agreed with Mrs. Hurlbert that pull-outs are the bane of education and she hoped that that could be reasonable.

Mrs. Hurlbert added that one of the roles of the board is to work with administration on development, implementation and maintenance of a program for curricular review. She didn't feel that that means the board tells the teachers how to teach, but they are there to help. She hoped they could share some of the burden.

Mrs. Caramanello was not a fan of the half year of science and social studies and asked if that was set in stone. She felt that parents will not receive that very well and would like to see it be more consistent. Mrs. Gonzalez stated that this is the schedule that they are creating and is in place. She added that the curriculum is set, but noted that they could have a science field trip at any time of the year. Mrs. Caramanello asked if they know of other schools that have been successful with this type of schedule. Mrs. Gonzalez will send that information to the committee members.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked how sitting for 80-minute periods will be beneficial to a high-needs grade level, even with breaks. Mrs. Quarato taught at a school with this type of schedule and felt that there are always pros and cons, but it gave her an opportunity to break the kids up into smaller groups. The co-teaching model is also done at Strong School and that also gives more time to dive deeper into the content. She added that there is already a lot of time carved out in a middle school classroom. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the co-teaching model helped one of her children, but added that Student Achievement has not gotten any information as to whether that co-teaching model has been successful. She felt that the committee is constantly being asked to give them a chance and she is frustrated about being asked to buy into something again. While she would like to be sensitive to the staff and administration, she felt that this is all being rushed. She felt that they need to find a way that every stakeholder is comfortable with what is being done before the year ends.

Mrs. Petrella felt that this conversation is not over and will probably be brought up again. She added that she keeps hearing that data is not important, but wondered how else they judge the success of a program. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they need to meet within a week or two or they will be into the summer. She asked at what point they can no longer change the schedule for next year.

Dr. Schuch felt that what Mrs. Gonzalez is proposing is a reorganization of time and he believes that is within the purview of the leadership and staff at the school. He felt that how the time is organized is very different than the curriculum. Dr. Schuch added that a lot of work has already been put into this and

cautioned everyone about thinking that what is currently being done is necessarily best for the children. The term “experimenting” makes Dr. Schuch uncomfortable and he thinks of it more as innovating. He did admit that if the board is not comfortable, they will have to go back and retool though he did not feel that the board wants to get into the business of dictating what the master schedule is or isn’t.

Mrs. Dahlheimer clarified that she believed that this information should have come to the board months ago as it skirts the line of curriculum. She noted that a few board members have children going from fifth to sixth grade and saw a schedule that was drastically different. She felt it will become very difficult for students to be successful and teachers to be happy if they don’t all work together. Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that they are not trying to do the administrators’ jobs, but are trying to be sure that students are successful and the community is happy. Dr. Schuch and Mrs. Gonzalez both apologized that the board didn’t get this information sooner.

Dr. Darcy added that the evaluation of the superintendent and holding the superintendent accountable for the direction of the district is 100 percent in the purview of the board. She also apologized to Dr. Siegel for what happened at the last meeting. Dr. Darcy asked Dr. Schuch what the directive has been to the administrators as to the accumulation of, analysis of and what they are doing with the data. She felt that the way the board has received data is a reflection on Dr. Schuch’s leadership and the data climate that he has created. She fears that Dr. Schuch’s belief of the role of data is different from the board’s belief.

Dr. Schuch asked if this was a Student Achievement meeting or an evaluation of him. Dr. Darcy asked if he would rather that she go after his people about the data. She reminded him that, after her first Student Achievement meeting two years ago, she suggested some coaching on presenting data. Dr. Darcy wanted to know who they should hold accountable for missed steps. Dr. Schuch did not feel this public forum was the place for that, but apologized if Dr. Darcy did.

Mrs. Petrella clarified that Dr. Darcy would like to know how much importance the superintendent puts on data and added that the board feels that data is critical. Mr. Roraback stated that he gets a lot of feedback that if the district is going to spend the money, they want results and the only way to provide results is with good data. Mrs. Petrella asked to move on at this point and that Dr. Darcy’s question could perhaps be addressed in a different forum.

Mr. Roraback asked if the new schedule will create any issues for teachers with prep time. Mrs. Gonzalez stated that they looked at that and talked to the union rep and it is equal time for teaching and prep time.

#### Review and Discuss Student Data

Dr. Siegel explained that she had provided slides of the data that is currently available and shared a folder with the information, as requested. The information will be updated as necessary.

Looking at SAT data, Dr. Siegel reviewed the average scores in math and reading for the district. The SAT went back to a 1600 grading scale in 2016, so she began there. The first time that the test was computer adaptive was in 2024. The trend looks to be that numbers are declining slightly after COVID. She included the state average scores as well for comparison. Dr. Siegel then showed the PSAT scores for the same group of students in fall 2023 which was 475 in math and went to 501 in the SAT scores in the spring of 2024. The scores in reading went from 501 to 532. The scores in the previous year had gone from 497 to 521 in math and 525 to 530 in reading. In 2021-2022, the scores went from 475 to 526

in math and 522 to 542 in reading. Dr. Siegel summarized that math is moving down slightly and they will keep an eye on that.

Mrs. Petrella felt that the state average includes urban and rural areas and wasn't sure what the situation had been during COVID in all of those areas. She was concerned that the trend seems to still be going down and are nowhere near pre-COVID numbers. Mrs. Petrella acknowledged that they are planning to increase time spent on math in sixth grade, but asked what is happening in the high school and all the other grade levels. Dr. Siegel added that some are working on play lists and she has noticed growth in iReady math scores. Others in the district are looking at the need to address some of the content that may have been missed or not yet learned. They also have the EL implementation and they are seeing some good gains in kindergarten.

Dr. Siegel noted that they are planning on a curricular review cycle in math and there is personalized professional learning as well. They are also introducing instructional strategies through play-based learning. Mrs. Quarato added that they recognize a lot of work needs to be done on the high school math curriculum and a lot of time is spent in the algebra curriculum repeating skills that the kids should already know. This will require both time and people, both of which are very limited. Sub coverage is also a huge issue right now. Mrs. Quarato added that some staff members have offered to come in over the summer for pay to work on developing play lists and pre-assessments.

Mrs. Hurlbert noted that Dr. Siegel's and Mrs. Quarato's job descriptions have changed so many times and she did not envy them. She felt that this group is the think tank for student achievement, curriculum development and review which means they can share the burden. Mrs. Hurlbert asked Dr. Schuch to put together some sort of curriculum review specifically related to enabling teachers to get professional development in math, ELA, science and social studies. She felt that that is not something that Dr. Siegel and Mrs. Quarato should be doing on their own. Mrs. Hurlbert also requested that Dr. Schuch consider bringing back team leaders so that individual questions can be answered about the test scores.

Dr. Darcy asked if all students in the district take the SATs and Dr. Siegel stated that all students do and anyone who is absent can take it at another time. Mrs. Hurlbert asked if that includes students with learning support needs or disabilities and Dr. Siegel stated that there are accommodations for those students, but they do take it. She will check on the few students who take the CTAA or CTAS, but students with IEPs are allowed by the college board. Mr. Roraback wondered if colleges stating that they don't really use SAT scores anymore filters down to the kids. Mrs. Petrella felt that some colleges are starting to put importance back on the SATs.

Mrs. Petrella asked if they were still using iReady and Dr. Siegel explained that it was used for reading in grades 6 through 8 this year, taken in the fall and the spring with an interim assessment taken in the Winter. The district is moving away from iReady as they don't feel like it provides the data they need and the students are invested in it. Because Dibels was implemented in K-5 this year, they did not do iReady reading. iReady math was done in grades K-8.

Dr. Siegel began with iReady math and noted that they only did it in three bands in 2018 and 2019, but 2020 through 2024 are divided into five bands. The data from 2017-2018 was not available. There are similar trends throughout this data and noted that the numbers that are starting at grade level are decreasing. Every grade level is a little bit different and Dr. Siegel began by reviewing the data from grade one. They are seeing that as learners start lower, they end lower. Grade 2 is also going slightly

down. There was a large increase in grade 4 in 2020-2021, but that went down to 27, 29 and 32. In grade 5, there is less of an increase and they do need to look at that. Grade 6 shows similar increases, but starting at a lower number. Grade 7 shows pretty much the same level with increases in the teens. There was a large dip in starting numbers in grade 8 in 2023-2024 and the increase was only 2 percent from September to March. Dr. Siegel noted that this class has shown amazing growth and great learning and she would not want to judge them on one test.

Dr. Darcy asked what data shows that there is great learning happening in that classroom. Mrs. Quarato explained that Mrs. Penney has been really focused on whether or not the learners are mastering the skills. Instead of looking at it from a whole lesson perspective, Mrs. Penney is already doing what they are working towards doing with play lists where she has everything broken down by standard. Kids cannot move on until they master the standards. Mrs. Quarato feels that the kids look at these assessments as irrelevant. She feels they need to be sure the students understand why the assessments are necessary and what they do with the data.

Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that she has two kids in eighth grade and she knows the great work that Mrs. Penney does, but wondered if they are learning what they need to go up to ninth grade. She asked if there is another factor happening here. Dr. Darcy asked when the assessment is done in September and Dr. Siegel stated that it was within the first two weeks of school. Dr. Darcy thought maybe the testing should be done at the end of September. Mrs. Quarato felt that Mrs. Penney is covering the standards that should be covered in eighth grade and is doing a lot of personalized learning. She reiterated that the high school needs to not spend as much time repeating the skills that were already mastered in eighth grade. Mrs. Dahlheimer's concern was that the kids that enter ninth-grade math are going back to a different way of being taught.

Mrs. Hurlbert noted that covering the standards and evidence of mastery are two different things and felt that there must be other classroom assessments that Mrs. Penney is working on. She asked how much, if any, does iReady impact where the students get placed next year. Mrs. Quarato did not have the answer to that, but will reach out to Mrs. Penney. Mrs. Gonzalez stated that it is taken into account, but is not the end-all, be-all. They also have conversations with students and ask them to talk to their parents about where they think they fit in.

Moving on to EL, Mrs. Quarato explained that they do not have the end-of-year benchmark assessments yet, but the students have been working on them. She recommended the committee go back and watch the March meeting video where Deb Mariani reviewed all of the assessments. There are five assessments, but not all grade levels take all five assessments and not every child takes every assessment. Mrs. Quarato explained that the benchmark assessments are more competency-based and went through each of them. The goal with these assessments is to see movement and she felt that is exactly what they are seeing.

Mrs. Quarato has a meeting with the coaches on June 4<sup>th</sup> when they will pull all of the data and conversations they've had and talk about what needs to be fixed, modified and improved for next year. They do intend to start these assessments a little bit earlier next year. EL has modified some of the benchmark assessments to make them better and Mrs. Quarato will find out more about that next week.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked why they would change the benchmarks and Mrs. Quarato felt that the program is newer and not a lot of districts have used it in the past. They are now getting a lot more feedback and

have been making a lot of improvements based on that. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if the reps were working with the districts in the PD cohort as she feels she is not hearing enough from that. Mrs. Quarato speaks to two individuals that helped developed the program, not the people involved in the cohort. The cohort shares ideas and instructional practices. Teachers have stated that they don't need PD as much as they need time to go through the modules.

Mrs. Petrella felt that the question Dr. Darcy asked Dr. Schuch earlier in the meeting needs to be addressed and she asked that he do that in writing to the committee. Dr. Darcy reiterated that she would like to know what Dr. Schuch's vision is for the culture for data in the district. She asked what direction he has given building-level leaders as to the collection of and use of data.

Mrs. Dahlheimer mentioned NGSS data and Dr. Siegel stated that NGSS is being taken right now and will come out with SBAC data. Mrs. Hurlbert stated that the district paid CREC a lot of money in 2018 to work with staff on creating bundles and proficiencies that were in alignment with Common Core and engineering design principles, etc., and asked where the district is with that.

Mrs. Quarato stated that they started to implement a new curriculum, OpenSciEd, this year in grades 6 through 8 and they hope to bring it to the high school as well. Science teachers at the middle school have stated that they and the kids are really enjoying it.

Mrs. Hurlbert reiterated that this is a team effort and noted that the district's website represents the bundles that were developed in 2018, her old tech-ed curriculum is still there, science and social studies in fifth and sixth grade and she felt that it should be what is representative of what the students are actually learning. Mrs. Hurlbert asked what interim assessments are being given to inform instruction moving forward based on the summative assessments with the NGSS annual test in grades 5, 8 and 11.

Mrs. Petrella thanked Dr. Siegel and Mrs. Quarato for the data they presented. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if the committee wanted to bring the fifth- and sixth-grade schedules to the full board in June or if they were scheduling another Student Achievement meeting. Mrs. Petrella would like to have another Student Achievement meeting before school gets out. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt they should add it to the board meeting agenda on June 5<sup>th</sup> to loop everyone in.

### **Adjournment**

*Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to adjourn the meeting.*

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First