

Curriculum Committee of the Board Meeting Minutes April 17, 2017

The Curriculum Committee of the Colonial Board of School Directors met on Monday, April 17, 2017 in the Superintendent's Conference Room. The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm by Curriculum Committee Chairperson, Leslie Finegold. Present were Board President, Susan Moore; Board Vice President, Beth Suchsland; Board Members: Mel Brodsky, Cathy Peduzzi, Felix Raimondo; Superintendent, Dr. MaryEllen Gorodetzer; Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Dr. Liz McKeane; Curriculum Supervisors: Maria Wileczek, Sergio Anaya; PE Principal, Mrs. Rosemarie Gregitis, PE Teacher, Michelle Weidamoyer; CES Principal, Dr. Terese Boegly, Assistant Principal Kylene Phillips, Grade 4 Teachers: David Caruso, Christian Speranza, Valerie Willson, Nathan Orfe; and Community Members: Rosemary Northcutt and Linda Doll.

Curriculum Committee Chairperson Leslie Finegold opened the meeting asking for any public comments and there were none. Dr. McKeane then welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Public Comments: There were no public comments on the agenda.

CES Scheduling Proposal Follow-up

Dr. Boegly provided a summary of the grade 4 scheduling proposal presented at last month's meeting. She then invited teacher representatives to share additional details regarding changes to teacher teaming structures and how incoming families would receive information about their child's schedule. Teachers noted that communication of the new grade 4 CES structure would occur through the following venues:

- Principal visits to elementary schools
- Principal welcome letter
 - Contains "Family Orientation Night" invitation
 - Transition to CES "tab on website"
- Third grade tours led by 5th grade students and their teachers
- Video presentation
- Parent orientation night with accompanying brochure with FAQs
- TAP (Transition Assistance Program)
- Summer Letters sent to families by their child's teaching team

Family orientation will include a community gathering social, specialists and school committee presentations, as well as, music displays and performances. Teachers also emphasized the importance of maintaining a "whole community, whole child" focus and establishing a "yearlong community building" plan. Further, samples of student schedules were provided along with short and long term goals. A brief question and answer session followed.

Looping

Dr. McKeane invited Plymouth Elementary Principal, Rosemarie Gregitis and Plymouth Elementary teacher representative, Michelle Weidamoyer, to share their experiences and perspectives regarding the looping practice that is being offered at Plymouth Elementary

School. Mrs. Gregitis explained that looping is the practice of a teacher remaining with the same group of students for more than one school year. She noted that looping is sometimes called multiyear teaching or multiyear placement and occurs when a teacher is promoted with her students to the next grade level and stays with the same group of children for two years. It is most common in elementary grades. Mrs. Weidamoyer then shared her experiences with this practice. She highlighted that the major benefit of looping is the sense of stability it provides to her students, particularly in the early years when there is so much to learn both socially and academically. Parent feedback also revealed that looping makes them feel more comfortable asking questions and voicing concerns, as well as, becoming involved in school activities because they have built a relationship with their child's teacher. Mrs. Weidamoyer added that coming into the second year with the same group of students has many benefits, especially for at-risk students who need to feel a bond with one another and with adults. For example, for students with high levels of anxiety, it can take much of the first year to build a level of trust. Coming in to the second year with the same teacher, students already built a relationship with their teacher and classmates. Further, teachers know the students' routines and personal experiences which has positively impacted student growth— "evident with the substantial increases in my student reading levels."

Mrs. Gregitis reported that experts say teachers in the second year of a loop can gain upwards of six weeks of instructional time at the beginning of the school year because they don't have to start from scratch. Learning a new set of names and personalities and going over classroom rules and expectations takes time. By looping, there is no time taken to reassess or diagnosis students' abilities, knowledge base and personal learning styles. The teacher already knows their students' strengths and weaknesses and can plan accordingly. There is also some evidence that looping boosts student performance, because teachers are able to spend more time on individual instruction and feel more responsible for student success.

Conference Requests

The committee reviewed conference request for PWHS 9-12 Tech Ed/Robotics Teacher, Chris Brunner, to attend the Carnegie Mellon University Robotics Academy in Pittsburgh, PA from July 24-28, 2017 and for PWHS Counselor, Pat Tamborello, to attend the Mid-Hudson River College Consortium conference in Poughkeepsie, NY on April 24-26, 2017. Both requests were approved.

Discussion Topics

A brief Q&A session was held, and there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Elizabeth McKeane