

Curriculum Committee of the Board Meeting Minutes January 16, 2018

The Curriculum Committee of the Colonial Board of School Directors met on Monday, January 16, 2018 at Ridge Park Elementary School. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by Curriculum Committee Chairperson and Vice President, Leslie Finegold. Present were Board President, Felix Raimondo; Board Members: Susan Moore, Mel Brodsky, Eunice Franklin-Becker, Rosemary Northcutt and Adam Schupack; Superintendent, Dr. Michael Christian; Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Dr. Liz McKeane; Curriculum Supervisor, Maria Wileczek; Ridge Park Elementary Principal, Ms. Eileen Carr; Ridge Park Elementary Instructional Technology Teacher, Brian Adams, Parents and students of Ridge Park Elementary 2nd and 3rd grades and Community Members, Linda Doll and B.G. Gangwich; and Nancy Aiken.

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

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

Dr. Liz McKeane opened the meeting with a review of the agenda. She then introduced Mrs. Maria Wileczek, Curriculum Supervisor, who presented a brief summary of the elementary coding and programming units being implemented into the Instructional Technology Curriculum, K-3. It was noted that K-3 students rotate through this specialist approximately once a week and instructional activities and lessons are created to engage students in learning and develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills. Coding (also referred to as programming) is a skill set that CSD students are learning as part of their whole educational experience to support literacy and numeracy skills. The purpose of incorporating coding into the curriculum is to provide students with skills that will benefit them as they live in a technology driven world. Mrs. Wileczek added that coding skills go beyond career development and support critical thinking and problem-solving skills that transpire to multiple content areas.

Ms. Eileen Carr, Principal of Ridge Park, provided a synopsis of their School Improvement Plan and how technology education offers students unique opportunities that give more relevance to academic content across several areas. Incorporating coding into our Instructional Technology Curriculum helps students gain skills such as sequencing, problem solving, and math concepts which are beneficial for all students. Ms. Carr invited Brian Adams, Instructional Technology Teacher, to highlight classroom practices connected to the coding unit.

Mr. Adams noted that coding is a key component of technology literacy that is introduced at the kindergarten level. Kodable is one of the programs used at the elementary level. It breaks down computer science into the basic concepts for younger students and offers resources that include visual instructions and step-by-step levels to make it enjoyable for younger students to learn programming concepts. With Kodable, students use conditional statements (if-then), loops or commands that repeat, and functions to successfully solve puzzles. Scratch is another resource used at the elementary level. This is designed for students beginning in grade three. Scratch helps students to learn to think creatively, reason and work collaboratively. It encourages students to program their own interactive stories, games and animate them.

After providing some information regarding resources used in the Instructional Technology Curriculum, Mr. Adams introduced his grade 2 and grade 3 student “experts” to demonstrate Kodable and Scratch. Committee and community members did a gallery walk spending time with students as they shared and describe their experiences with basic programming concepts.

The second half of the meeting moved into an adjacent room to continue with the Board discussion. Dr. McKeaney shared a handout on K-12 Digital Learning Scope and Sequence. She noted our goal is to provide students with a solid foundation of programming skills and concepts using various developmentally appropriate apps and programs. She added that technology skills will help students to become creators and critical thinkers, not just consumers of digital products and information being presented to them. Through careful planning and collaboration, the Instructional Technology curriculum has been updated to support CSD students go through the process of designing, creating, and testing products to accomplish a goal or solve real-world types of problems.

Discussion Topics

A brief Q&A session was held.

Questions and comments about the purpose and quality of programs offered in the elementary technology curriculum were given. The importance of aligning curricula with state and national standards as well as looking at industry and high priority occupations and skills necessary to prepare students for a digital world was also discussed. The discussion included the importance of students being able to problem solve and communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.

Dr. McKeaney and Mrs. Wileczek added that while the standards dictate what skills and competencies students must reach before graduation, CSD’s curriculum is collaboratively developed using research related to best practice and input from industry and colleges (i.e. Drexel University), teachers, and administrators. A collaborative effort is used because it helps ensure CSD’s curricula and instructional programs are aligned to standards, cohesive, and based on scientifically valid research with appropriate developmental and learning goals.

Conference Request

The committee reviewed a conference request for Andrew Boegly, Director of Technology, to attend the CoSN 2018 Annual Conference in Washington, DC on March 12 – 15, 2018. This conference request will be presented for formal approval at the February Board Meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy C. Aiken
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Instruction and Assessment