

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

Communications and Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

The Communications and Curriculum Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met for a virtual meeting on Tuesday, February 16, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Board of Education Members: Ms. Jenn Mullin, Ms. Marcia Kupferschmid, and Ms. Miriam Underwood, Ms. Liz Nord, Ms. Jen Dzen, Ms. Kris Picard-Wambolt and Dr. Michael Young.

Administrative Team Members: Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools and Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.

Also in attendance: Mr. John Collins, Director of Technology, Mr. Aaron Fliss, Database Coordinator and Ms. Jennifer Brown, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Human Resources Coordinator.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Ms. Mullin at 6:01 p.m.

Agenda Items:

1. *Review of 2021-2022 District Calendar*

Mr. Nicol discussed some items that were changed based on feedback from the union regarding next year's school calendar. The following items are changes from the originally presented calendar:

- August and September professional development days were changed from Friday, August 27 to the following Monday resulting in 3 full days prior to the first day of school on September 2, 2021. This will then allow teachers the opportunity to have one full day to get their classrooms ready while the other two days are for professional development. Typically we have only two

professional days prior to the first day of school. This will then change the end of the school year to be June 10th with graduation on the same day marking the 181st day of school.

- In the past, the last day of school was convocation for staff. This would result in the probably of having convocation on one of the last three days of school being either June 13, 14, 15 as we will probably have at least 1-3 snow days during the winter.
- Professional development days have been added to afternoons on October 6th, January 14th, March 23rd and on May 4th. This would equate to an extra two full extra days of professional development for staff for the 2021-2022 school year.
- The union wanted our April break to align with surrounding public schools such as South Windsor, Vernon, and Tolland.
- The most notable change is that we will be beginning school on a Thursday rather than our typical Wednesday start of the school year. This will still allow for our staff to have most of the month of August off with their families.
- Ms. Dzen asked if the ½ day of professional development could be more consistent for parents and occur on the same week of the month for planning purposes. Some members also voiced that some families have other meeting that fall on the same week and having a consistent week of the month would impact them as well. This will be further explored by the committee.
- Ms. Underwood asked as to the state's requirement for professional development. Dr. Nicol indicated that the length of the school year is 180 days but the state does not require a specific number of professional development days. Currently there is not a specific number of hours the district is required to offer our teachers per their contract. The ½ days will only enhance the number of professional development days offered to teachers.
- Ms. Picard-Wambolt asked if ½ day Wednesday schedule is going away for next school year? Dr. Nicol indicated that the district is assuming that we will not be required to do remote learning and the COVID scare will die down. We would only have the 4 additional ½ days on Wednesday for professional development and we would go to a full 5 days per week schedule for next school year. Of course that may need to be revisited should things change within the state due to COVID.

Mr. Nicol indicated to the committee members that he does have an additional meeting with the union the next day and the revised calendar will be reviewed with

them. The consensus was to meet with the union and to also reach out to various PTOs to get their thoughts regarding the proposed calendar for 2021-2022 school year. Dr. Nicol said that the vote could be moved from February to March and still be enough in advance for families for planning purposes. He also suggested that the tentative calendar could be posted as a draft on our website until officially approved so parents could have an advanced look before the final changes are made.

2. *Data Visualization Updater*

Dr. Young acknowledge the work of staff for continuing forward progress on updating our data system even through the exigencies of the emergency response to COVID-19. He introduced Mr. Hendrickson to provide an update on progress in getting data into the system and building out dashboards and data visualizations to help staff and the Board of Ed conduct their work.

Mr. Hendrickson discussed the implantation of Infinite Campus this school year. The decision to go with Infinite Campus is a game changer and allows us to capture the assessment data, intervention data, SBAC data for our students.

Mr. Collins explained that it was challenging to launch this during a pandemic and the district knew from the beginning that this was going to be a 3 year endeavor to get all of the aspect of Infinite Campus up and running. At this time, we are currently in year two - with year 1 for preparatory work and year 2 for implantation to staff. As mentioned before various data is being rolled into infinite campus to have one data source for teachers rather than Excel and Google Sheets. Our ultimate goal is to get all of our data into a centralized location and make that available to our staff for analysis. Mr. Collins indicated that next year we would be implementing Tableau.

Mr. Fliss discussed the aspects of data mining and making data visible to all staff and the Board of Education through Infinite Campus. Mr. Fliss presented a raw data view and explained how that information can be put in usable information for staff. The importance of this information is to have historical growth from year to year for our students to see the progression for each school year. This information is also used to track if a student is receiving special education services or SRBI intervention. Some additional information that is important to the analysis of a student's growth would include chronic absenteeism levels and due to COVID we have also added % of time spent in remote learning. Because of this tool, we are looking more at various spreadsheets to determine the growth of our students to make sure we are addressing their learning needs The data will definitely show those student who are in need of intervention or special education and what types of interventions are working with our students.

Dr. Young asked the question as to the cyber security measures that are taking place if this data is being put into Google cloud? Mr. Collins explained that we are signed off and in FERPA compliance with our goggle environment as long as we are staying in the confinements of our own environment. Sharing outside of our Google environment would not be advised. Bi-weekly meeting are taking place regarding cyber security to help us maintain a secure cloud. This is constantly being communicated to all of our staff members on a regular basis.

Ms. Underwood asked the question if a parent has right to view this information? Parents do have a right to see this information as it is part of their student's record. Most of this information is already available to parents in the parent portal.

Mr. Hendrickson related to the committee how these data are being used at the Ellington High School regarding our silver learners. Trends are disproportionately in the danger zone for our silver students in getting a D or F grade. This enabled our staff to put strategies together for our grading at the high school level.

Mr. Hendrickson wanted to compliment the entire IT Department regarding the implementation of the new data system both on the software and network side of the system.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:57 p.m.

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt

2nd. M. Underwood

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Jenn Mullin

Communications Committee, Chair

Dr. Michael Young

Curriculum Committee, Chair