

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 12, 2016

The Curriculum Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met Friday, February 12, 2016 from 1:00-2:15 p.m. in the Board Room of the Administration Building. Present were: Board of Education members Gary Blanchette and Tracey Kiff-Judson. Kris Picard Wambolt and Andrew McNamar were absent. Also present were Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools; Erin McGurk, Director of Educational Services; Neil Rinaldi, Principal, Ellington High School; David Pearson, Principal, Ellington Middle School; Michael Larkin, Crystal Lake School Principal; John Collins, Director of Technology; Liz Cole, Curriculum Supervisor; and Marissa Boucher, Nicole Bolduc, Jenna Dhandapani, and Michael Nash, Ellington Teachers.

Dr. McGurk began the meeting with introductions and stated that the Ellington Middle School team was in attendance to give an update on the student-led conferences. David Pearson, Ellington Middle School Principal, discussed the ongoing work at the middle school to prepare the students for presenting their work at the conferences, including work that was done in advisory sessions. The overall feedback from the conferences was overwhelmingly positive, with a very high percentage of parents indicating that the conferences helped them understand the work that their child is doing, the growth made to date, and the goals the student has set for continued improvement.

Ms. Boucher and Mrs. Bolduc shared examples of student work and discussed how their professional practices have changed over the past several years, including providing more clarity to students about expectations, more specific feedback and more feedback that is explicitly linked to the content area standards. Mr. Nash discussed the experience of serving as a coach while students presented their work, often, but not always, from their digital portfolios. Students were able to describe the ways in which their work met mastery expectations and, in other areas, were able to describe what they needed to work on to reach mastery. A brief discussion was held regarding some of the challenges of working within a dual grading system, with teachers currently giving both alpha grades and mastery/standards-based feedback to students.

Mr. Collins, Ms. Dhandapani, and Mr. Nash described the concept of a Makerspace as a space where people can gather to create, invent, experiment, and learn. Creating Makerspaces in our schools creates opportunities to promote self-directed learning and inquiry, provide opportunities for hands-on learning, and support collaboration. A proposal was made to create a Makerspace at Windermere in the space that is currently designated to serve as a traditional computer lab. The space would still have the functionality of a computer lab through the use of Chromebooks, but would have more flexibility to support learning opportunities for students. Other materials and potential ideas for furniture were discussed. Members of the Curriculum Committee were supportive of this idea. Mr. Collins will work with the architect and the Permanent Building Committee to make any changes needed in the purchase of furniture and equipment for the space. Mr. Larkin is interested in using one of the swing space classrooms at Crystal Lake for a Makerspace. It was agreed that piloting the concept in these two buildings would be a positive opportunity for our students.

The next meeting of the Curriculum Committee is scheduled for Friday, April 8, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.

A motion to adjourn was made at 2:15 p.m.

1st. G. Blanchette 2nd. T. Kiff-Judson

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by: _____
Gary Blanchette, Curriculum Committee Chairperson