

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES

March 14, 2014

The Curriculum Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met Friday, March 14, 2014 from 1:00-2:20 p.m. in the Library Presentation Room at Ellington High School. Present were: Board of Education members Gary Blanchette, Tracey Kiff-Judson, Andrew McNamar, and Kristen Picard-Wambolt. Also present were Stephen Cullinan, Superintendent of Schools; Erin McGurk, Director of Educational Services; Michele Cirillo and Liz Cole, Curriculum Supervisors; and Leslie Mancuso, K-8 Mathematics Specialist.

Mr. Cullinan and Dr. McGurk presented an overview of work that has been done to strengthen reading curriculum, instruction and assessment in the district. Mr. Cullinan began by sharing the process used since 2006 to develop district goals for student achievement as well as the development of district instructional plans and the school-based plans which are in alignment with the district plan. Dr. McGurk presented highlights of the professional learning program, including the work done through the affiliation with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, and numerous activities designed to build capacity of teachers and administrators to meet the needs of all students, including book study groups, work on Scientific Research Based Interventions, Wilson Reading and differentiation within the core instructional model.

Dr. McGurk also highlighted work that has been done to ensure coherence of our reading programs, including the creation of Bottom Lines documents, report card revisions, and expectations for benchmark assessments. She also reported on Family Literacy activities and other ways that the district supports a strong reading culture for students and staff members. Mr. Cullinan reported on the staffing changes that have been made to support reading instruction, including increasing staffing for reading intervention in every building and increasing special education staffing at Windermere.

Mr. Cullinan reported on long term district trends in student achievement, with the percentage of students scoring at goal or above in grades 3 to 8 increasing each year (from 77.9 to 85%) between 2007-2013, while the percentage of students scoring at the basic or below basic levels has dropped from 12.6% to 6.2% in that time frame. Finally, Dr. McGurk shared next steps for continued improvement, including strengthening instruction in literacy in the content areas, as called for in the Common Core State Standards,

enhancing the English curriculum at the high school, and creating additional performance tasks to measure complex reading skills.

Mrs. Mancuso reported on a new resource being used in the district, *Bridges in Mathematics*, which is aligned with Common Core State Standards, was developed by the Math Learning Center in Salem, Oregon, a non-profit organization promoting high quality mathematics instruction. . *Bridges in Mathematics* provides both print and digital resources for our teachers and students and supports utilization of effective mathematical practices. Teachers in each grade level, K-5, and in each school, have begun implementing lessons using the new resource, and a decision regarding full implementation will be made this spring. Mrs. Mancuso shared photos of Number Corners in elementary classrooms and shared the positive reactions that students and teachers have had in their early work with this resource.

The next meeting of the Curriculum Committee is scheduled for May 16, 2014.