

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

The Curriculum Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met for a virtual meeting on Tuesday, April 13, 2021, at 5:00 p.m.

Attendees:

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

Administrative Team Members: Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations

Also in attendance: Mr. Steve Autieri – Superintendent Intern

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Dr. Young at 5:01 p.m.

Agenda Items:

1. *Technology Integrationist Staffing*

Dr. Young introduced the agenda and asked Mr. Hendrickson to speak to the pending upgrade to a 1.0 from .6 for a replacement tech integration position. He also advised the committee concerning pending legislation about remote learning, specifically State Senate SB 977 to create guidelines for virtual learning and conduct a State-wide audit of how remote learning was used and teachers were provided professional development during the emergency pivot to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Young asked for general parameters about the financial implications of the tech integrationist proposal, noting the Finance subcommittee would hear details. Mr. Greenleaf shared that since the Finance subcommittee is not scheduled to meet prior to the next full Board of Education meeting, the Board should expect to see the item presented at next meeting without Finance review.

2. *Summer Curriculum/PD priorities*

Dr. Young introduced the topic of summer curriculum and topics/priorities for focus regarding teacher and student offerings. Mr. Hendrickson briefed the committee on the work of the PDAC teams seeking PD on social/emotional learning and teaching social justice topics. Some teachers are advocating substantial increases in social justice topics to be a feature of professional development on a variety of issues building on prior PD on implicit bias and related readings. Ms. Picard spoke to the controversial nature of social justice topics and expressed hope that the topics will be addressed in an unbiased fashion that takes as a basis the Seeds of Civility for discussion. Mr. Hendrickson agreed that it will be important that voices from across the political spectrum are represented on these topics, and efforts be made to establish a bias-free learning environment. Ms. Dzen asked to what extent it is possible to teach about topics of social justice without political bias entering in.

Mr. Hendrickson reinforced that the position of the administration is to establish a learning environment in which all can participate and have their perspectives safely heard and valued for their warrants and feelings, in the spirit of the Seeds of Civility document.

Ms. Underwood reported that the Board should be aware of discussions at Board of Selectmen meetings seeking the town to verify that racism is a public health issue. It was reported that these efforts were tabled, but were likely to continue to be raised in the community.

Dr. Young asked Mr. Hendrickson to confirm that rather than the Board taking a stance on each topic, if it might be a better course for the schools that the role of teachers would be to encourage students to look at multiple perspectives on such controversial and politically balanced topics and interrogate each topic in an effort to support students forming substantive and warranted opinions for themselves.

Further on the topic of expected summer work within the district, Mr. Hendrickson reported that at the elementary level, there are efforts to look at students who have struggled during the remote learning response to COVID, particularly grades K-3 with a focus on early literacy to get students caught up, more through engaging new activities rather than solely through remedial work.

Dr. Young asked about any plans to prepare for pending ESSER State funding and Requests for Proposal to offer programs directed at summer “gap” activities to address academic losses due to COVID, particularly “fun” enrichments serving as both instruction and assessment of student gaps. Mr. Hendrickson mentioned several possible options currently under consideration, including “boot camps” and “jump start” activities prior to Fall 2021, but that final decisions about program offerings would be based on faculty/staff availability and interests.

Ms. Dzen expressed a concern that August boot camps might be too close to the start of school to provide sufficient support for some students. Mr. Hendrickson reported

there are possible options that would start such activities as early as July. Ms. Dzen also suggested use of peers as in the possibility of a “wingman” activity to facilitate jump start grades 5-6 and 9-10 transitions. Mr. Hendrickson acknowledged the suggestions.

3. EDUinnovate Grant Proposals Process

Mr. Hendrickson provided an update on EDUinnovate’s review of teacher proposal. They are reviewing proposals at this time. Once that process is complete it will come to the Curriculum Committee at our May meeting.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 5:44 pm.

1st. M. Underwood

2nd. K. Picard-Wambolt

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Michael Young

Curriculum Committee, Chair