

A meeting of the Curriculum Committee was held on Tuesday, February 21, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room, 47 Main Street, Ellington, CT.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Michael Young.

PRESENT Michael Young, Chair (Virtual), Marcia Kupferschmid, Angie Moser, Liz Nord, Miriam Underwood, Gary Blanchette

ALSO PRESENT Oliver Barton, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Aaron Fliss, Director of Technology
Liz Loubier, Amy Duff, Emily Wry (Literacy Consultants)

AGENDA ITEMS

Waiver of Connecticut Approved K–3 Reading Curriculum Models or Programs–Status and Process

Mr. Oliver Barton, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

Mr. Barton gave a slide presentation on the pending EPS request to the CSDE for a waiver with regard to the State mandate to adopt one of eight chosen K-3 literacy curricula and request a waiver. We have selected to request a waiver and are seeking approval for our combination of reading curricula. The review and determination by CSDE is anticipated to be completed prior to Summer 2023.

Mr. Barton and three district literacy specialists reported that we are using this as an opportunity to review what is being done, and the intent is to review the eight State approved curricula as well as data on our current K-3 reading/writing instruction to make continuous improvements in our approach. We have a team of eight administrators and teachers attending a State provided Master Class on this topic.

As per the CSDE requirements, our waiver request reviews how well our reading program as currently designed is succeeding. An informal assessment (below) targeted vocabulary learning as well as letter naming fluency (LNF) and rapid automatized naming (RAN) as areas for improved curriculum and teaching. In the other areas, our waiver will make the case that our combination of programs are succeeding quite well. Our ELA performance is in the top 20% within the State, suggesting by grade 4, our students are reading at a very competitive level.

	Consultants' assessment on 1-5 scale
oral language	2-4
phonemic awareness	4+
phonics	4
fluency	2
vocabulary	1-2
RAN & LNF	2-3
Rdg. Comp.	4

On Dibels (a measure of oral reading fluency) we have less than 10% “substantially deficient” who don’t make the cut scores for K-4 and we identify and support those students in multiple ways.

Mr. Young inquired if the waiver case was largely to be made for those needing tiered supports, given a good portion of students succeed in gaining reading fluency in the current curricula. Mr. Barton responded that the State’s efforts to reform early reading are targeted at all students and that many students often need some of the foundational supports identified in the Science of Reading.

Ms. Underwood inquired as to whether we explicitly teach spelling and Ms. Moser inquired about spell checkers. Literacy specialists reported that students are accountable for words they have learned, but not for all spelling. This led to an further discussion of the value of spell checking and writing, and literacy specialists shared from a recent Master Class the suggestion that spelling lists in the early grades could be organized around phonics and principles of the Science of Reading rather than content themes.

	Heggerty	Foundations	Waipole-McKenna	F & P Guid. Rdg.	Decodable Texts	Tchrs College
oral language	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
phonemic awareness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
phonics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
fluency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
RAN & LNF	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rdg. Comp.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Mr. Barton’s presentation showed the essential logic of our waiver request. While the Lucy Calkins Teachers College program (far right column) alone does not check all boxes of the principles of the Science of Reading, we use six interconnected programs to meet the full range of the Science of Reading principles. Using this assortment of programs does present some challenges. Using multiple programs is harder for teachers because the scope and sequence of each do not always align.

Ms. Underwood inquired if the State mandate required districts to adopt just one of the eight CSDE’s approved programs? Mr. Barton reported that in large part it does, suggesting there should be a single guiding program.

Ms. Nord inquired about the costs of the various options, including adopting an entirely new K-3 reading program with new instructional materials and the need for teacher professional development. Mr. Barton reported that such a transition can cost as much as \$180K initial + \$40K per year.

2022-23 Mid-year Anonymous Parent, Student, and Staff Climate Survey results

Mr. Barton presented a summary of the mid-year climate survey and distributed to committee members the full survey results. The mid-year survey was completed by three groups, Students, Parents, and Staff. Student results showed that students feel safe and have options in schools. While still over 60% agree, the two issues of school lunch and respect for one another are areas we can continue to target.

90% and above:

- Safety
- Teacher encourages me
- Feel part of the school community
- Trusted Adult (two sch. are 88-89%)
- Learning is engaging (elem.)

80-90%:

- Feel academically challenged
- There are healthy food options

60-80%:

- Students treat each other with respect
- Overall, I enjoy school lunch (elem.)

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Curriculum Committee Meeting**

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Family/Parent results were also positive, showing families felt welcome and safe. The results suggest that providing school meals that satisfy all students continues to be a challenge. At the high school level the featured meal portion size was discussed and at the lower grades competing healthy versus tasty options were discussed.

90% and above:

- Feeling welcome
- Safety
- Communication
- Student challenge

80-90%:

- I know how my child is doing before I get a report card
- Students treat each other with respect
- There are healthy food options

65-80%:

- My child likes school meals

Staff results also suggested we are doing well in most climate areas including teacher growth, safety and access to data (given our continuing integration of Infinite Campus teacher dashboards). The committee discussed how a recent attack on school wifi (denial of service) was the likely explanation for concerns with technology reliability. Issues of meaningful professional learning and continued improvement on student behavior and rule compliance were discussed as topics for continued emphasis during the rest of this school year.

85-100%

- Principal supports teacher growth
- Opportunities to collaborate
- Opportunities to be a teacher leader
- Safety
- Access to student data
- Students teach each other with respect

60-80%

- Professional learning/training has been meaningful
- Technology tools are reliable
- There are clear rules for student behavior (60-97%)

**ADJOURNMENT
MOTION**

First: A. Moser

Second: M. Underwood

To adjourn the meeting of the Curriculum Committee (6:05 p.m.)

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Michael Young, Curriculum Committee Chair

