

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

The Curriculum Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met in the School Administration Building, 47 Main Street, Ellington, CT and virtually on Tuesday, December 14, 2021.

Attendees:

Board of Education Members: Mr. Michael Young, Ms. Marcia Kupferschmid, Ms. Liz Nord, Ms Angela Moser.

Administrative Team Members: Mr. Oliver Barton, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and Mr. Ed DePeau, K-12 Lead Mathematics Instructional Specialist

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Mr. Young at 5:10 p.m.

Agenda Items:

1) PSAT Achievement Update

Mr. Young asked Mr. Barton to update the committee on SAT/PSAT achievement test results for Ellington high school students. Mr. Barton and Mr. DePeau presented a slide deck on PSAT data from the recent October 2021 administration that suggested Ellington is maintaining its pre-COVID level of performance on these high stakes Junior and Senior tests. There was positive news regarding the class of 2023, who outperformed even pre-COVID classes and the state overall, in Math and maintained its level of performance in English Reading/Writing. An analysis of cohorts' (class of 2021, 2022, & 2023) rubric scores for ERW shows the class of 2022 had lost some ground with regard to PSAT performance. Ms. Moser asked if perhaps students and parents may not have emphasized the PSAT as much during COVID as college admissions relaxed their requirements during that time. Mr. Depeau explained that the school day SAT is more aligned with curriculum and the message to students and parents was/is that the test is important for careers beyond college readiness. But it was acknowledged that COVID impacted results in several ways. He reported how our Ellington curriculum is broadly changing to adjust to the PSAT/SAT goals/purpose, including Math understanding in Social Studies courses (such as interpreting graphs), and even

advisory activities to explain information about how the SAT relates to careers that students may otherwise not be hearing. Student-led SAT Saturday practice sessions also may be supporting our gains. The committee will continue to be interested in SAT/PSAT as one indicator of our academic success.

2) EDUinnovate Fall 2021 Grants

Mr. Young introduced Mr. Barton to discuss the six 2021 EDUinnovate grant recommendations totaling \$11,196. Since it was one of the proposals selected for recommendation, Mr. Depeau stayed to give some details about his proposed use of Sphero robots to supplement elementary Math curriculum. Mr. Barton then reviewed the other five proposals that included decodable books and Mr. Collin's proposal for video production equipment. He overviewed three additional projects. He described proposed hands-on anatomy models for elementary science instruction, funds for connecting our students to the Skype-a-Scientist program, and startup funds for the Crystal Lake School store and its integration to the curriculum.

As a result of discussion a motion was presented to recommend these six projects to the full Ellington Board of Education.

Moved: Ms. Nord, 2nd Ms. Kupferschmid Move to recommend the BOE endorse the EDUinnovate recommendations. Approved unanimously.

3) Secondary-level Structures for Communication on Course Content

In the interest of continuously improving curriculum transparency for parents and others in the Ellington community, Mr. Young asked Mr. Barton to begin a discussion of course syllabi, open reading options (choice books), and the potential for controversial topics to arise within the school curriculum. Mr. Barton began with a review of current practices with regard to documenting the curriculum and notifying parents of pending potential controversial topics. Currently, all core high school classes have syllabi shared with students on the first day of classes and shared with parents at Open House. [NEASC accreditation](#) procedures upcoming for the high school in 2022 and beyond may support even more sharing of updated curriculum documentation. Whenever issues of controversial discussions arise, they are encouraged to be addressed at the teacher and student level, but can be mediated at the Central Administration level when necessary. Ellington will continue to value students' and parents' diverse perspectives and lived experiences, and look to our [Seeds of Civility promise](#) in any such open discourse and controversial topics. The Ellington Public Schools adoption of [Infinite Campus](#) may provide new opportunities for open sharing of curriculum in the interest of transparency. At the middle school level, even more attention may be paid to scaffolding students on how to approach "Firestarter" controversial topics. Teachers are asked to

send a note home to parents in advance of any anticipated controversial planned discussions. The middle school is working toward the public availability of syllabi for their courses by next year (2022). Ms. Nord expressed hopes that parents can become more comfortable with contacting the teacher whenever questions arise of appropriateness of content. The 2020-21 program of study is available on the website and should be updated to 2021-22. The committee expressed that teacher professional development should also be considered around the issues of transparency and the scholarly conduct of discussions of potentially controversial topics.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:08 pm.

1st. Ms. Moser

2nd. M. Kupferschmid

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Michael Young

Curriculum Committee, Chair