

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

February 19, 2020

Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

The Curriculum Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met on Wednesday, February 19, 2020 in the School Administration Building.

Attendees:

Administrative Team Members: Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Mr. Donald Bartomioli, Elementary Physical Education and Health Teacher, Ms. Taylor Parker, Lead Teacher/Math Specialist, Center School, Ms. Sara Varga, Lead Teacher/Math Specialist, Windermere School, Ms. Pam Whiting, Grade Two Teacher, Center School.

Board of Education Committee Members: Ms. Miriam Underwood, Dr. Michael Young (Chair), Ms. Marcia Kupfershmid, Ms. Jen Dzen, Ms Liz Nord, & Ms. Picard-Wambolt.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. by Dr. Young (Chair).

AGENDA

1. Science Update

Mr. Hendrickson introduced three elementary science teachers, and provided a background of how the current elementary science curriculum has been developing since Summer 2019 to better address the [Next Generation Science standards](#) (NGSS). He presented a grid of unit plans (color coded red to green) currently being revised to align with NGSS standards and assessments.

K-6 Curriculum Development Status Report 1.27.20			
Grade	May 2019 Unit Development Status	Sept 2019 Unit Development Status	January 2020 Unit Development Status
Kindergarten	Living Things	Living Things	Living Things
	Pushes and Pulls	Pushes and Pulls	Pushes and Pulls
	Weather	Weather	Weather
Grade 1	Animal Adaptations	Animal Adaptations	Animal Adaptations
	Light and Sound	Light and Sound	Light and Sound
	Patterns in the Sky	Patterns in the Sky	Patterns in the Sky
Grade 2	Corn	Corn	Corn
	Matter and Materials	Matter and Materials	Matter and Materials
	A Changing Earth	A Changing Earth	A Changing Earth
	Seed Dispersal	Seed Dispersal	Seed Dispersal
Grade 3	Forces and Motion	Forces and Motion	Forces and Motion
	Animal Adaptations	Animal Adaptations	Animal Adaptations
	Sound	Sound	Sound
	Weather	Weather	Weather
Grade 4	Waves	Waves	Waves
	Earth Systems	Earth Systems	Earth Systems
	Energy	Energy	Energy
	Life Science Structure and Function	Life Science Structure and Function	Life Science Structure and Function
Grade 5	Roadkill	Roadkill	Roadkill
	Astronomy	Astronomy	Astronomy
	Matter	Matter	Matter
Grade 6	Disruptions to Ecosystems	Disruptions to Ecosystems	Disruptions to Ecosystems
	Weather	Weather	Weather
	Human Impact on the Environment	Human Impact on the Environment	Human Impact on the Environment

The target is for now through Summer 2020 to get all units to “green” by start of fall semester. Mr. Hendrickson shared how it was important to understand that “adding” science to an already busy curriculum could present challenges. Cross curriculum approaches that infuse science with reading and/or math instruction might help support the introduction of more science content into an already busy school curriculum. Ms. Underwood asked about the elements of math being built in to the new units. The teachers reported that is part of the design, integrating math data units in coordination with both reading and math. Ms. Dzen asked about science rooms and lab facilities being available in all elementary schools. Center and Crystal Lake have facilities that support science instruction that

may not be fully utilized with current designs. Makerspaces are also available for some science and engineering projects. Some discussion of how classroom design (high lab tables and stools) might limit utility of a traditional science lab for the revised curriculum. Ms. Dzen mentioned that we should work toward roughly equal science experiences across elementary schools. Mr. Hendrickson mentioned how report cards may become flexible with our transition of Infinite Campus, allowing a common report on science units for parents which might help ensure some equity and coordination among schools.

Ms. Dzen asked how we should interpret “yellow” on the grid. Teachers reported that things in the yellow may include missing materials, or yet to be completed vertical alignment with other Ellington units, while “red” does not necessarily mean missing entirely, but may be existing units that have not been updated yet. So for example a “sound unit” does exist but has not been translated into the NGSS elementary teacher-friendly standard language and refined to align with the other units in sequence.

Dr. Young asked about cross-cutting assessments and if new curriculum would not always require new assessments. Teachers reported that they are looking for opportunities to have more general assessments, with an eye to not having all assessments be exclusively writing assessments, but could be artifacts with rubrics or portfolio assessments.

2. Elementary Health Curriculum

The committee was interested in how health education is being used to inform students about the risks of vaping. Mr. Bartomioli reported that the vaping topic fit (as Lesson #7) within the Crystal Lake 6th grade health curriculum and could be linked to other information about smoking and the DARE program content. He walked the committee through several slides he uses to discuss the topic in class. His presentation included graphics and a portion of a YouTube video on the dangers of vaping. He reported that the overall impact on students is assessed by students willingness to refuse activities such as vaping. Mr. Hendrickson added that it remains a question if 6th grade is the “right” place in the curriculum for this content. Ms. Picard-Wombolt asked about addiction with vaping as compared to other forms of nicotine delivery. Mr. Bartomioli agreed that his current presentation is mostly focused on refusing use, and does not currently address some of the more subtle issues related to marketing/advertising or using vaping safely for positive medicinal purposes.

The committee discussed how next year’s site survey from Youth Services might best include a question about vaping at 5th or even 4th grade level and beyond.

3. Enrichment Update

Mr. Hendrickson reminded the committee of an upcoming conversation organized by a working group on enrichment in the elementary curriculum, scheduled for Friday, February 28, 2020 at the Senior Center. He mentioned a roll-in program in South Windsor focused on Spanish, adding some experiences at the Kindergarten level and repeating at each higher grade, designed as a world languages enrichment for their students. He used this as an example of where the current working group began its discussion of World Languages, language learning standards, and some of the constraints and possible goals for enrichment opportunities here in Ellington. Many of the participants in that initial working group agreed that it would be nice for elementary students to

have a few more choices. But were also surprised that world language standards were specifically or solely directed toward building language fluency, but rather targeted inter-cultural competence and appreciation of cultural diversity. An Hour of Code video from Crystal Lake, viewed at that initial working group meeting, was presented to the committee as a vision of what is often the image of enrichment activities (both as part of the school day and after school). Mr Hendrickson illustrated with a google search of the Ellington online curriculum, that “enrichment” does not even appear in the District Improvement Plan or the current Curriculum guides available online. He suggested we could make this more visible that activities like Hour of Code provide personalized learning choices and enrichment opportunities. Mr. Hendrickson described how a letter goes to parents whose students are identified as gifted, but then what is available for those students is not as clear. At this point it seems the teachers need to differentiate for all learners (including the “high fliers”), but teachers may need additional support as well to extend enrichment opportunities to challenge all students to optimize their engagement.

4. Update on JROTC information request

Mr. Hendrickson discussed his conversation with the JROTC Brigade Commander who reported a need for 100 students, or 10% of a district’s students, to express interest before they would create a post. The Commander reported there were also financial implications, such as a portion of the instructor salary, for offering this program. There is potential to pursue this on a regional basis.

5. College and Career Pathways Update

This agenda item will be taken up at the next meeting due to time.

6. Discuss Future Agenda Items and Confirm Future Meeting Dates/Time

Since 2020 is an election year, Mr. Hendrickson and Mr. Young have discussed adding an agenda item concerning how Civics instruction is addressed within the social studies curriculum and beyond, while ensuring a balanced presentation of political ideas, attention to the Seeds of Civility in public discourse, and fairness toward student and teacher ideas. The next Curriculum Committee meeting is scheduled for April 22 at 5:30 p.m. (directly preceding the full Board of Education meeting starting at 7:00 p.m.).

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt

2nd. J. Dzen Vote: Unanimously approved.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Michael Young, Curriculum Committee Chairperson

