

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Ellington, Connecticut
(virtual meeting via Google Meet)

June 17, 2020

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

The Curriculum Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met on Wednesday, June 17, 2020, using Google Meet.

Attendees:

Administrative Team Members: Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Mr. Daniel Spada, Dr. Edward DePeau, Ms. Jenna McDermott, Mr. Mark Mahler, Ms. Michele Murray, Dr. Susan Nash-Ditzel, Ms. Victoria Schilling, Ms. Jennifer Brown and Mr. Michael Nash.

Board of Education Subcommittee Members: Ms. Miriam Underwood, Dr. Michael Young (Chair), Mr. Gary Blanchette, Ms. Marcia Kupfershmid, Ms. Picard-Wambolt and Ms. Jen Dzen.

Additional Board of Ed members present: Martha Allegue (parent), Ms. Liz Nord.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 2:03 p.m. by Dr. Young (Chair).

AGENDA

1. Citizen and Staff Forum

None.

2. Center for School Change School Reopening Redesign Workshop Discussion

Mr. Hendrickson reviewed information from a June 10th redesign team workshop with the Center for School Change. His overview provided the background and framework for re-opening work on 3 key foci, Social-emotional support, high quality teaching and learning, and of course safety and efficient operations. Our Curriculum subcommittee is tasked with considering the 2nd thing, how to provide high quality.

Dr. Nash-Ditzel reported on information that emerged from the workshop, including the McKinsey data on “learning loss” of at least 3-4 months of lost learning or up to 7-11 months if summer learning did not occur. She highlighted the large impact of teaching at the grade k-3 level and how important teacher contact is in the early grades. This suggests a focus and urgency on those early grades. Jen Dzen reported on her perspective on how the distance learning work in the early grades. Ms. Schilling discussed the perspective of accelerated learning, with “just in time” teaching instead of re-teaching. She noted that current discussion

was about good teaching per se, rather than separating distance learning from classroom learning. She also noted the importance of being consistent with teacher PD to provide support across grades for just-in-time teaching. Ms. McDermott echoed the importance of high quality teaching that can “fit” in any environment. Dr. DePeau noted the importance of finding the “right amount” of work. Dr. Young added the importance of enrichment thinking as well. Ms. Dzen suggested the Wellness Wed, so essential for some students, might be distracting to others. Dr. Young suggested we need to dive deeply into this differentiated and personalized learning approach.

Next the admin team transitions to presenting the data from the data in agenda item 3.

3. Distance Learning Survey Preliminary Trends

Ms. McDermott reported on how the survey was designed to collect information about the distance learning experience looking back, and hope for learning looking forward. Mr. Hendrickson reviewed the survey findings noting the importance of teachers (and students) meeting with students, and feeling a connection. Dr. Young asked about how playful activities (scavenger hunts, games) might help make those social connections the can then support student engagement in the other curricular activities.

Mr. Spada discussed the successes reported on the survey which included providing tech support and teacher collaboration. Teacher Tip Tuesday seemed to be a success in sharing best practices among the faculty. He shared a number of creative ideas shared in that forum that not only supported distance learning but impacted good teaching in all environments moving forward.

4. Discuss and Provide Feedback on 20-21 Distance Learning Expectations

Mr. Hendrickson provided an update expectations document. It raises issues of the balance between synchronous and asynchronous teaching. Ms. Dzen described some flexibility on how much face-to-face is required. Jenna discussed how the 5th grade team has worked to scale a collaborative teaching approach. A discussion ensued on how teacher creativity could be nurtured to support new efforts to leverage the skills of several teachers co-teaching and project-based lessons. Mr. Mahler reported his appreciation of support and understanding of how stressful this is for teachers, including teacher protection of their own health.

Issues of secure assessment, the teacher evaluation model, and how we present the curriculum under then fall semester guidelines were discussed.

5. Discuss 2020-2021 PD Day Placement on School Calendar

Mr. Hendrickson asked if we consider, at the elementary level, the shift of a PD day into August to support the work on how to smooth our re-opening process.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Michael Young, Curriculum Committee Chairperson