

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

June 5, 2019

Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

The Curriculum Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met on Wednesday, June 5, 2019 in the School Administration Building.

Attendees:

Administrative Team Members: Mr. John Collins, Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Mrs. Jenna McDermott, Ms. Michele Murray, Mr. Aaron Fliss, Mrs. Susan Kalagher

Board of Education Committee Members present: Mr. Gary Blanchette, Ms. Jen Dzen, Ms. Tracey Kiff-Judson, Mr. Michael Young (Chair)

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Mr. Young (Chair).

AGENDA

1. Student Information System (SIS) Update

Renewal of the Students Information System has been identified as a priority drawing from the District Improvement Plan (e.g., calls for meaningful data, and calls for providing teachers more information to enable personalized learning for students). A year-long process has been undertaken to identify what data are currently being used and what systems and platforms might support continued development of meaningful data-driven decision making. Our contract with Rediker, the current SIS, is expiring in 2020, which provides additional impetus to look at alternatives at this time. PowerSchool and Infinite Campus were targeted as the top options. Mr. Collins described “targeted demos” they received from Infinite Campus designed to show features for various district factions including counseling demos and classroom demos. It was reported that administrators in Shelton and Fairfield have shared their experiences and provided working examples of data uses that Ellington would want to do, but cannot with the current system. Infinite Campus has a “Tableau” data warehouse with data visualization as one of the key features that is bundled with the Infinite Campus package. This tool would provide many advanced features for support decisions with data. Mr. Collins reported on a few other advantages they saw to selecting Infinite Campus. There are opportunities to collaborate with other districts using Infinite Campus, and the system is a more integrated tool within itself, drawing on a common database structure for grading and reporting. In addition there are features for designing individual student plans for unique cases of courses, and to create responsive scheduling that could handle our Flexblock scheduling.

Mr. Hendrickson distributed 2 handouts relating to the SIS goals and a description of the Infinite Campus features.

Mr. Collins shared a budget spreadsheet related to both the financial implications and the planning needed for a two-pronged approach as to how best to handle training on a new Infinite Campus system for the various stakeholders, starting January 2020, targeting the new HS schedule and guidance-heavy features of the new system. Year 1 would focus on core functions including gradebooks and guidance and leave other features for a second phase, which would then roll out the data visualizations over a multi-year time period.

Mr. Young asked for further details about the curriculum warehousing features and the potential benefits for the functioning of the Curriculum Subcommittee as well as for other stakeholders such as parents interested in interrogating the curriculum map or reviewing possible student pathways through the curriculum. Mr. Hendrickson detailed a number of Infinite Campus features that would support such efforts to visualize various features of our curriculum, including a financial services pipeline student pathway, an agriculture pipeline, or an aerospace pathway for students.

Mr. Collins discussed the budget spreadsheet and how some costs for existing separate systems will be eliminated, how Infinite Campus would include those features as well as adding new features, with a net annual cost increase in the range of \$10,000 for a system with upgraded features.

The subcommittee discussed its unanimous support for moving forward to adopt Infinite Campus to support the work of the district to wisely use data.

A question-answer discussion ensued. Ms. Kiff-Judson asked how the data warehousing works. Mr. Collins reported that the core system is fixed by the company programmers, but it can be customized by our Ellington tech staff to adapt to our specific needs.

Mr. Young inquired about compatibility with a future State-wide SIS system. Mr. Collins reported that it should be okay with either of the proposed options, including Infinite Campus, because integration with any future State-wide SIS system would likely be an issue addressed State-wide, as has been the experience of other states creating State-wide SIS systems.

Ms. Dzen inquired about the features of the proposed Infinite Campus SIS for parents. Mr. Collins reported that the new system would consolidate our School Messenger within the new system and be fully integrated. Parents would have individual access to student data with individual parent logins to the system. It was noted how this could further support our efforts on Mastery-Based Learning.

Ms. Dzen inquired regarding integration of the Infinite Campus system with our existing Finalsite district website. Mr. Collins reported that we would retain Finalsite for our website but information could be shared between the systems.

User training for the new Infinite Campus system (should it be adopted) was briefly discussed. While training is provided as part of the Infinite Campus costs, it was acknowledged that a system for training should be considered as part of the process of adopting any new SIS system.

Training would be a large undertaking with financial implications, and would draw on current IT staff time and may require innovative approaches for adult learners.

It was also briefly discussed how any new SIS system might help support not only curriculum planning and warehousing of syllabi, but might help inform the live curriculum as implemented.

2. Review and discuss summer Curriculum & Instructional planning work

Mr. Hendrickson distributed a memo that was sent to all staff regarding all summer work being supported by the district on curriculum planning. Much of the focus of approved summer curriculum proposals will be on Science, to support moving the curriculum toward the new NGSS Science standards. Doing this work as summer work is designed to allow teachers optimum time in the classroom. Mr. Hendrickson shared how documentation of the current scope and sequence of the curriculum is housed in an array of Google doc files which are not as readily accessible as one might hope, and that the new features of Infinite Campus might address this issue.

The memo also listed the teacher PD days planned for the 2019-20 school year: August 26-27, November 4 & 5, and February 18, 2020.

A brief discussion was undertaken about what adoption of the new SIS Infinite Campus system might add to visualizing the curriculum in its dynamic implementation, to supplement the curriculum as planned. This discussion also involved how report cards might be more informative to parents and students, and relate back to the curriculum, and to student-lead teacher-parent conferences.

The committee also asked about instances where parents might become aware that some students get certain content and others in the same grade do not. Ms. Murray described how curriculum compacting, such as is being done over the summer for Math, might be a factor to help resolve such issues and enable all teachers to get to important content, for example prior to Smarter Balanced testing. Mr. Hendrickson provided information about how grade level team meetings and other teacher team activities might also help coordinate important efforts such as shared assessments, that would help horizontally align the curriculum.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM.

1st: Mr. Gary Blanchette; 2nd: Ms Dzen Vote: Unanimously approved.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Michael Young, Curriculum Committee Chairperson