

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

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

Attendees:

Board of Education Members: Mr. Gary Blanchette, Mr. Michael Young, Ms. Marcia Kupferschmid, Ms. Miriam Underwood, Ms. Angela Moser, Ms. Kris Picard-Wambolt, Ms. Jen Dzen.

Administrative Team Members: Mr. Oliver Barton Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Ed DePeau, K-12 Lead Mathematics Instructional Specialist, Ms. Melissa Scarbrough, Teacher, Ellington High School, Mr. Brandon Hubrins, Assistant Principal, Ellington High School and Mr. Marc Richards, Assistant Principal, Ellington High School.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Mr. Young at 4:59 p.m.

Agenda Items:

1. *Pillars of Work improving teaching and learning in Mathematics 2021-22*

Mr. Young introduced Dr. DePeau who presented a slide deck starting with an introduction to his Math intervention team. The team has created “4 pillars’ of a philosophy toward improving Math performance to guide associated instructional changes. The 4 pillars are Using Data, Meeting Individual Student Needs, Performance on Math tests, and Strengthening Math Connections to the Community. Mr. Young inquired if there was a connection with Infinite Campus and data visualizations being planned using Tableau. Mr. DePeau reported they are building on Infinite Campus and Edulastics tools to improve our in-house assessments of Math and support data-driven decision making. Dr. DePeau highlighted a community aspect (pillar) to this planning in an effort to make connections between Math and real-world applications. Mr. Barton clarified that math education in general, has experienced a mindset shift toward not simply teaching algorithms toward a pre-determined answer, but instead building deeper conceptual understanding and using math in everyday life using math as a component of applied decision making. Mr. DePeau presented an example of how state

level data for Ellington are unpacked with regard to specific target standards. In this example our 3rd grade math performance on the SBAC test, District level trends masked individual differences among our elementary schools. The disaggregated data provided evidence that some patterns were school-specific, and some were consistent across schools, leading to different action plans.

Ms. Moser asked if the target standards were directly taken from SBAC tests. Dr. DePeau reported that they were. Ms. Kupferschmid asked if any of the instructions involved practical skills like check writing. Mr. DePeau reported that they do look at practical applications that should support improvements in test performance. Ms. Underwood asked if issues like area and perimeter that are known to be difficult for many students were given particular focus in our focus on Math activities. Mr. DePeau agreed that known areas of student difficulty are a focus, and reported how these concepts need to be giving practical applications like measuring the walls of a classroom that provide hands-on learning activities. Mr. Barton added how a focus on vertical integration across grades can also support innovative teaching and learning that target Math deficits. Mr. Young asked if this work does more than teach to the SBAC test. Mr. DePeau assured the committee that his team is committed to math support that is more than test prep, and the data presented were simply currently available SBAC data that was the basis for initiating this process to improve Math teaching and learning, framed by the 4 Pillars.

2. High School Advisory Structure

Mr. Barton introduced the efforts to provide a monthly structure to the high school advisory experience to make transparent the primary purposes of advisory, with connections to Social Studies, Career Counseling, World Languages and other topics. The program is planned to be introduced in early October. A slide deck was presented describing the “4 Types of Advisory” (Business Advisory, Academic Roundtable, Knight Shift, and Portfolio Work). In introducing teachers to Social Emotional Learning goals (SEL) some teachers reported feeling that this was one more additional topic to be covered in an already busy curriculum. But in reviewing what clubs and conversations were already taking place, there were multiple existing connection points between existing coverage and the proposed advisory monthly themes. Specifically with regard to the “Knight Shift” goals that would connect heritage topics with ongoing work on School Culture/Climate and existing SEL, it was acknowledged that this particular theme in advisory could address important yet controversial topics that students wish to discuss. Ms. Scarborough reported details of the intention to make connections to Social Studies standards, World Languages approaches to intercultural competence and other academic work, and bridge between curricular and extra-curricular experiences that touch on Knight Shift goals. The activities are designed to acknowledge that the advisory activities would be just the tip of the iceberg with regard to understanding diverse cultures in depth, but would enable students to be heard on

important issues while staying within the guardrails of scholarly discourse, the seeds of civility, and with direct connections to Social Studies standards.

Dr. Nicol added that the design is intended to value equal voice and avoid a dominant subset of opinions overwhelming student discourse. The concept is to bring students together around norms. Mr. Brandon added that some of these conversations are likely to be emotional and politically balanced, but these specific conversations in Advisory will be conducted with intentions to support scholarly discourse, the Seeds of Civility, and would contribute to proactive and preventative designs into which emergent issues could find a comfortable outlet with school activities.

Ms. Moser asked if there was a complete list of active and inactive high school clubs. Mr. Hubrins reported that new clubs could be introduced in the first 3 weeks of school and will be finalized shortly for Fall 2021, at which time a full list of all 30 clubs that are active this year will be made available to students.

A discussion ensued regarding the potential value and risks of undertaking an organized rotation of advisory topics as proposed. The discussion highlighted the need for the full Board of Education to understand the goals of the advisory effort and for all to monitor its success going forward.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:12 p.m.

1st. M. Underwood

2nd. M. Picard-Wambolt

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Michael Young

Curriculum Committee, Chair