

A meeting of the Curriculum Committee was held on Tuesday, September 26, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room, 47 Main Street, Ellington, CT.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Dr. Michael Young.

PRESENT Dr. Michael Young, Chair, Marcia Kupferschmid, Liz Nord, Angie Moser, Miriam Underwood, Jen Dzen

ALSO PRESENT Mr. Oliver Barton, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. John Guidry, Principal, Ellington High School
Mr. Michael Nash, Co-Principal, Ellington Middle School
Ms. Kelly Browne, K-12 Math Specialist

AGENDA ITEMS

Review of Student Achievement Results from [May 2022 – SBA and SAT](#)

Mr. Barton summarized our EPS top-line trends on the SBA ELA and Math, comparing EPS to the State of CT. EPS is doing well relative to statewide data, but our trends are steady, with some decreases from cohort to cohort of students currently in our testing grades. While EPS did not observe a large learning loss during COVID, we have continued to stay steady in ELA and make incremental gains in some areas. Mr. Barton presented elementary grades 3-6 separately from middle grades 7-8, which highlights how EPS may not precisely align with comparisons to other districts that have 6-8th grade middle schools. Development (cohort) scores (comparing roughly the same student from one grade to the next) reveal more details, where patterns show increased difficulty of the test resulting in a reduced percentage of students remaining proficient (Levels 3 and 4 on the mastery-based rubric). Particular attention was given to grade 8 ELA and Math performance as judged from a comparison with nearby districts. This cohort will continue to receive planning and attention.

Ms. Kelly Browne, Elementary Math Specialist, described the plan to respond to the 2023 results. She reported further on the SBAC Math elementary where our students did well on concepts and practices, and comparatively less well on “communicate reasoning.” This has produced a response to set some goals for a curriculum focus to help students learn to analyze, interpret and communicate mathematical thinking. Ms. Browne shared teacher efforts to enhance curriculum to make some of the student work a little more elaborate and draw on analysis and communication skills. This work may also entail combined assignments that draw on ELA communication skills and Math and Science content.

Ms. Moser asked how the “analyze and communicate” skills in Math relate to ELA performance. Ms. Browne acknowledged that the ELA and Math skills are related, and understanding word problems and situations may be a factor in the Math communication skills as well as summarizing and communicating quantitative results.

Dr. Young asked if there might be a touch point between how we communicate Math results effectively and Seeds of Civility skills to listen and appreciate multiple perspectives. Mr. Barton responded that there is likely work that can combine emotional intelligence, communication skills, and the ability to effectively analyze and communicate mathematical results.

Ms. Moser asked if this related to both ear and eye reading, listening to ideas closely, and close reading of texts and problem statements. Ms. Browne confirmed that being precise is both a mathematical reasoning and ELA skill that could draw on both listening and reading text.

Ms. Underwood asked about the piloting of a new 4th and 5th-grade Math curriculum that aligns with grades 6, 7, and 8. Could this impact our current or future test results in Math? Mr. Barton confirmed that changes are expected to be reflected in our test performance results and that it is something teachers are anxious to see as we enable them with Infinite Campus data visualizations of formative test results to support the planning and teaching.

Ms. Dzen asked if teachers were sharing what was working as a result of the Math Specialist's assistance and if time was being increased (from 60 to 80 minutes) for Math. Ms. Browne reported that teachers are using shared planning time to actively collaborate on effective teaching. Ms. Browne also shared that the time was being reallocated during the day in many cases and that activities that combine ELA, Science, and Math are a productive direction to address our goals in all areas.

Mr. Barton reviewed the ELA SBA results for grades 3-6. He highlighted cohort increases, suggesting we are impacting students as they work through our system, but fluctuations in grade results may be more associated with these cohort variations. He noted that the Readers/Writers Workshop approach appears to show up in comprehension ELA results.

Mr. Nash reported the SBA results in Math and ELA for grades 7 and 8. The Math results suggest we are serving the Level four highest performing students very well, but the Level one students are not fully benefiting as much. ELA results show a more normal curve of the highest number of students at Level three and not having such a high percentage of students in the Level one group. Writing and editing were areas of emphasis to be considered and potentially enhanced in the curriculum. There was a discussion of the silo nature of subjects like Math and ELA, and how integrating data analysis and communication skills in Social Studies and Science might enable more efficient acquisition of the communication and analysis skills we saw were a problem area in our Math results.

Mr. Barton reported on the junior year School Day SAT results for 2022. We saw drops in the 2022 ELA results that may be related to cohort effects. However, within cohorts, we saw consistent growth across the years. Similar results were shown for Math. Mr. Guidry provided additional analysis of scores including a high school decision to return to punctuation & grammar (Word Crimes), and an intention to complete existing curriculum design updates (as suggested by the recent [NEASC accreditation](#) process) across all courses on a five-year update cycle. Mr. Guidry noted that [Khan Academy](#) may be proving very helpful and five years of common planning periods, as with the ELA teachers. Departments (Professional Learning Groups) will include work on reviewing student data and/or work samples to adjust instruction.

Mr. Young inquired about recent changes to the SAT, including it being digital and being reduced from three hours to two hours, as well as other changes in design, such as tailored testing from part one to part two within each of the two subject areas. A broad discussion of the possible impact ensued, including how such changes in the test might produce an easier test or more accurate assessment of our student's academic achievement in the 2024 administration of the test.

ADJOURNMENT
MOTION

First: Ms. Moser
Second: Ms. Nord
To adjourn the meeting of the Curriculum Committee (6:24 p.m.)
Motion carried unanimously.

