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New London Public Schools

BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Curriculum Standards Development and Implementation
Committee**

Meeting Minutes

Date: December 2, 2009 (*Rescheduled from October 28, 2009*)

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Location: Central Office – Conference Room A – 1st Floor

Chairman/Facilitator: Mr. William Morse

<u>BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS</u>	<u>ATTENDANCE STATUS</u>
Mr. William Morse, Chairman/Facilitator and BOE Member	PRESENT
Ms. Susan Connolly, BOE Member	ABSENT <i>Ms. Louise Hanrahan acted as Proxy</i>
Mr. James Pearce, BOE Member	ABSENT

<u>BOARD OF EDUCATION STAFF, CITIZENS, ORGANIZATIONS, OTHERS</u>	<u>ATTENDANCE STATUS</u>
Ms. Joanna Brother, NLEA President / ELL Dept. Chair HS Teacher	PRESENT
Dr. Christine Carver, Assistant Superintendent of Schools	PRESENT
Mrs. Grace Conti, K-12 Literacy Supervisor	PRESENT
Ms. Kate Erickson, NLHS Teacher / Dept. Head	PRESENT
Ms. Louise Hanrahan, BOE Member	PRESENT
Mrs. Alison Ryan, Supervisor of Curriculum, Data, Assessment & Instruction	PRESENT
Ms. Eileen Schindler, NLHS Teacher	PRESENT

I. Call to Order

Mr. Morse welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.



A warm welcome was extended to all in attendance.

Chairman Morse introduced Ms. Louise Hanrahan and noted she is a newly appointed Board member and also will be replacing him and will be the chairwomen of this committee.

For the record, Chairman Morse appointed Ms. Hanrahan as the acting Proxy for Ms. Connolly.

II. Roll Call

A quorum was present and noted for the record.

Please refer to the above listed attendance chart on Page 1 for roll call status per member.

III. Approval of the Minutes from March 3, 2009.

Motion: To approve the Minutes from March 3, 2009.

Motion by: Chairman Morse

Abstention by: Ms. Hanrahan

Voice Vote: Motion Carried. (1- In Favor – 1 Abstention)

1 - In Favor – Chairman Morse (*Override Approval by Chairman*)

1 Abstention – Ms. Hanrahan

IV. Comments from Citizens / Public

There were no comments from citizens.

Dr. Carver requested going out of agenda order sequence so that the staff members present could depart after their presentations. Chairman Morse approved this request and Addendum Item V.C was discussed first.

V. New business

A. CMT Results

- **What reading and math strands were successfully taught?**
- **Which were not taught in last year's 3rd grade?**
- **How did our use of data and assessment fail to predict the poor CMT results and how can we better use and configure them to better predict results?**

B. Curriculum / Testing

- **What changes are we making to this year's reading and math curriculum in the 3rd grade?**
- **What are we doing in the 4th grade reading and math curriculum in order to instill the skills that were not taught the previous year?**
- **What goals are we setting for the 3rd and 4th grades in reading and math this year?**
- **We need to look at the amount and nature of daily homework given to 3rd graders. How does it strengthen their reading and math skills? How do we address homework that is not done?**

Dr. Carver sees the above questions in Agenda Items II.A and II.B as a combination of related issues. Dr. Carver gave a handout and breakdown from the Connecticut Mastery Test / Connecticut Academic Performance Test 2008/2009 Report. This report details problem areas. We have been working on the strands that need attention in our Data Teams meetings. At these meetings, we looked at all of our data K-12 and reviewed all the assessments that we currently use. We actually broke it down to the actual skill levels and where the weaknesses are across the board by skill. We found patterns. Most of the weaknesses we identified were the higher order thinking skills and comprehension related skills. One of the things we are working on in our DELTA Team meetings is we are actually focusing on identifying the causes of these weaknesses, what are some solutions, and strategies we could incorporate improvement. As a district, is this something the district should be addressing, should this be in the school plans and how should we monitor this? These are all issues we are currently brainstorming.

Chairman Morse stated these problems did not just occur at the third grade level and this is the summation of a bunch of deficiencies that have ridden upon each other. We need to take a long look at K-3 and address what need to do before they reach the third grade.

Mrs. Conti reported we are taking a close look at deconstructing the tasks themselves. We are also individualizing instruction. The students will have tools to complete the tasks. Making connections is an ongoing teaching skill. Identification and addressing the issues are also being discussed and these issues are being broke out in our Professional Learning Communities (*PLC's.*) Teachers are now working together cohesively. They are making their own higher order questions, rubrics, talking about sub-areas, and addressing degrees of reading power. We are going deeper into the open ended questions and are integrating this into the daily routine of our teachers. Baselines are now being focused on so we have data to focus on for improvement. In the past few years, our focus was on phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding.

We are making the shift now to focus on vocabulary. We now have DRA and Dibbles scores to work with, as well as the Peabody Vocabulary Test to see where that particular student is upon arriving in our system.

Fluency is also an important determiner and we have raised the bar in bringing our third grades students to 140 words per minute. Lots of reading on independent levels is happening. Our goal is to make sure that each child has twenty minutes of reading assignments each night. The Principals are sending out letters to parents when a child has not completed homework. We continue to check the reading sign off logs and make sure the books are brought home and the twenty minutes of reading is completed.

Dr. Carver addressed some of our district struggles and one target focus is having teachers understand the process of teaching reading. It is one thing to teach to a program, but how do you know your teaching methods are working and how do you access this? She believes if we are going to change literacy in this district, this is what we really need to focus on. Recently we had a literacy specialist in our district who suggested we review our coaching model and using our literacy coaches more effectively. One of the best things the district did was to incorporate the early release/dismissal days. The PLC's that are now being facilitated by Mrs. Ryan and Mrs. Conti have had very rich conversation and what is accomplished is in-depth strategies and discussions. When teachers leave the PLC's they actually "try" techniques discussed in the classroom.

From teachers prospective, Ms. Hanrahan inquired as to how we are getting all of these initiatives completed? Ms. Conti said we are carefully picking and choosing our focuses.

Chairman Morse asked what reading programs we are currently using in the elementary school? Mrs. Conti reported Grade K-3 is Open Court and 3-5 is Success for All. Mrs. Conti noted they are not scripted programs, but the sequence of the skills is taught. What is good about a core reading program for a district like ours is it brings consistency of instruction and there are not gaps and the skills are taught sequentially. Mrs. Conti said some teachers have bought into the programs and some are have not. The teachers that commit and "make it their own" are the classes you will see the most growth in. The teacher is what makes the learning happen. Nancy Boyles has been to our district and we used her work from K-8 in our last district professional development sessions to talk about what the components of an effective lesson are.

Chairman Morse also stated that Dr. Fischer told him the Principals should be visiting the classrooms on a regular basis so best practices are being incorporated. Is this occurring? Yes, Dr. Carver noted it happening. In-depth discussions and follow-up is happening. We are requesting written feedback. We are setting standards for making daily priorities and have increased accountability.

Ms. Ryan noted we are seeing gains already with the roll out of our new Envision Math Program. She is very impressed with how the teachers have embraced the Envision Math Program and worked with it.

ADDED ADDENDUM ITEMS

C) CAM: Agenda Item: High School Curricula / Final Drafts for committee approval (This requires a formal vote)

Dr. Carver opened the floor for questions and/or comments pertaining to the High School Curricula / Final Drafts.

Questions and comments included:

- 1) Who is the Department Chair at NLHS for English?** Deanna Brucoli
- 2) Is Ms. Brucoli the author of the documents in the package?** No, this was collaboration between MS and HS staff in an effort to try to align these documents.
- 3) Is there a syllabus set up or will this be coming later down the line?** The syllabus will be an evolution. This is the first step to look at what books and materials will be designated to the appropriate grade levels. Themes are also being reviewed. There will be two themes per semester. We would then select literature that would reflect the certain themes and within those themes they are concept and literacy skills we would need to focus on and address.
- 4) Is this set for September of 2010 for implementation?** We are looking at next fall, September 2010. We are also trying to get all of the appendix pieces together which are the assessments, rubrics, graphic organizers, and teaching tools. The fall semester should be ready by the end of the school year.
- 5) Is there anywhere in the new curriculum about independent reading, or this up to the discretion of the teacher?** Nothing is specifically stated, but it is implied.
- 6) Will there be online reading?** Yes, we are planning a combination of online and hard copy resource lessons. Promethean boards and other options are being incorporated.
- 7) What is a kindle?** Kindle is a software and hardware platform developed by Amazon for rendering and displaying e-books and other digital media.

- 8) **Moving to the Math curricula, who is the Department Chair?** Deborah Herrick
- 9) **Are we incorporating number theory?** This been taught in previous years and then discontinued. We are bringing this back and we believe this will making sure students have the necessary math readiness skills.
- 10) **When is the math curricula implementation anticipated?** Spring of 2010.
- 11) **Once a student completes intro to Algebra 1, will the student be able to use a scale in interpreting maps or blueprints using a scale or dimensioning calculations?** No, those skills are more applicable to the Geometry course.
- 12) **When will Intro to Algebra 1 be implemented?** Now, this is current.
- 13) **Moving to history, who is the Department Head?** Kate Erickson
- 14) **Who completed these curricula?** Tom Poblete, Kate Erickson, and Chris Marot.
- 15) **Is this current?** Yes
- 16) **Is there a textbook currently in use?** Yes, Glencoe – with various editions - 2005 & 2007 copyrights. Dr. Carver wanted to emphasize that although hard copy textbooks are important; we need to keep and focusing on teaching to the standards and develop those skills. Ms. Hanrahan also felt we need to start educating our parents about new teaching techniques. Many parents are from the day and age that students should have a hard copy textbook for every class. If they do not see books coming home, they just think the system is failing. If you really want to study history, you need to go way beyond the boundaries of a hard copy textbook.
- 17) **Do we have enough hard copy textbook to service our students?** Right now, each student has a textbook. Next year we may need to order one full class set/count of books.
- 18) **What does RAFT stand for?** This term comes from CRISS strategies training.
- **R** – Role, **A** – Audience, **F**-Format, **I**- Topic
- 19) **Are we using debate in the classroom as a learning tool?** It is not a uniformed learning tool that happens in every classroom, but many classes do foster debate and it is happening periodically.
- 20) **Could we contact Barbara Dixon to have our students get involved with local government and our local departments (*police, fire, etc*)?** Many of our students have sports and part-time jobs after the school day. Free time and transportation costs may be issue; but we could look into this for our students.

Chairman Morse stated this is also a way to feed people into committees and we seem to very stagnant at times with the same people on many committees.

This could also act as the catalyst to nourish our youths and possibly assist them to get involved in local politics and see how different departments work within our City.

21) Does each class have a student council or class officers? Yes.

Motion: To recommend that the below curriculums are submitted to the full Board:

- Introduction to Algebra 1
- Number Theory
- Algebra 2 – A and B
- World History
- Government
- American History

Motion by: Chairman Morse

Seconded by: Ms. Hanrahan

Voice Vote: The vote was unanimous. Motion Carried. (1- In Favor - 0 - Opposed)

2 - In Favor – Chairman Morse and Ms. Hanrahan

D) INFORMATIONAL: Agenda Item: Elementary Report Cards, Elementary Parent Guides for Curricula, and Assessment Information – Grades 3-5
(No formal vote is required)

Samples of the revised elementary report cards, elementary parent guides for Curricula, and assessment information was provided in the agenda package for informational purposes. We have been working hard to try to communicate this information to our parents. This information was sent to the parents before the parent/teacher conferences to encourage questions and conversations. Regionally, we are progressive with the changes we have made to our report cards. The report card is the reflection of the instruction and is really meant to drive the curriculum. We could call it an instructional assessment guide.

Chairman Morse inquired as to why we changed from the four report card periods to three report card periods. Mrs. Ryan noted the teachers have been very vocal on the fact that we are doing a lot of assessing. The report card is one of the major assessments that teachers have to do. Ms. Hanrahan felt you would also get a much more accurate assessment with trimesters. When you come back in September and you are giving an assessment in October, those grades were elevated. By waiting another month, she felt it is a much more accurate assessment and she feels good about the grades she gives and portrays the true reflection.

Dr. Carver commended Mrs. Conti, Mrs. Ryan and the standing committees for all of their hard work.

Ms. Hanrahan was very impressed with all of the hard work and detailed documents. She noted she feels great in having her children in this school system.

VI. Setting of Future Business / Future Topics of Discussion

No setting of future business or future topics was discussed at this time.

The next meeting will be determined at a later date and will be forthcoming.

J. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

Motion by: Chairman Morse

Seconded by: Ms. Hanrahan

VOICE VOTE: The vote was unanimous. **Motion Carried.** (2 – In Favor – 0 – Opposed)

2 – In Favor – Chairman Morse and Ms. Hanrahan

Respectfully submitted by:

Marie Smith, Secretary to the Assistant Superintendent of Schools