

**WALLINGFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
INSTRUCTIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday – May 4, 2015
Board of Education Conference Room
Hall-Elton Building**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairperson Shortell called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

J.P. Bolat, K. Castelli, J. Cei, K. Hlavac, J. Marrone, R. McKay, C. Shortell, M. Votto

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

J. Andreson, G. Bikakis, D. Bryant, D. Dayo, S. Govin, C. Lavalette, S. Menzo, S. Parkhurst, R. Mancusi, B. Napolitano, K. Ripa

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Instructional Committee Meeting minutes of April 6, 2015 were accepted as presented.

III. PRESENTATION

A. STEP Identification Presentation – Entrance and Exit Criteria

Robert Mancusi, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, introduced the STEP teachers James Andreson from Moran Middle School, George Bikakis from Dag Hammarskjold Middle School and Karen Ripa from the four 3-5 Elementary Schools. Mrs. Ripa stated the proposed changes to the STEP procedures are based on parent and teacher recommendations. In 2012 changes were implemented in how gifted students are identified. Students in grades 3, 5 and 7 are given the OLSAT (Otis-Lennon School Ability Test) and those students who score 90% or higher are qualified to move onto Stage 2. An OLSAT score of 89% or lower stops the process. All parents are notified prior to administration of the testing and after the test is administered a parent letter with the OLSAT scores indicating whether or not their student is moving on in the process is sent home.

Mr. Andreson stated the next step in the process is stage 2 where currently all students who score 90% or higher are then administered a GRS (Gifted Rating Scale) by the classroom teacher at the elementary school level or a team of teachers at the middle school level. If the student scores a 60 or higher on one of the 5 areas, they qualify to move on in the process. If not, the process stops. A letter goes home to the parents informing them of their student's status. In the proposed change to Stage 2 all students who score 90% or higher will be administered the GRS completed by a minimum of two raters and a letter will no longer be sent home to the parents informing them of their student's status. Students moving forward in the process will be given a performance task at their level with the STEP teacher and standardized test results (when available) will be collected in place of report card grades.

Mr. Bikakis stated in Stage 3 all data is collected, reviewed and weighted. A decision is made for each student as to their eligibility for STEP and a final letter is sent home to parents indicating the team's decision as to whether or not their student is in STEP. Currently OLSAT score is weighted 40%, GRS score is weighted 40%, Performance Task is weighted 10% and CMT scores is weighted 10%. In the proposed changes the OLSAT score will be weighted 50%, GRS score 30%, Performance Task 10% and Standardized testing 10%. The parent survey will be used to inform instruction for students eligible for STEP.

Currently students new to the district from another Connecticut school who were identified as gifted in their prior school, and there is evidence in their school records, they are automatically admitted to our STEP program. In the proposed change any students formally identified in a previous district will be reported to the state as gifted. They will be enrolled in STEP if space permits. Students without a formal identification who enter from a public school in Connecticut will wait until the next testing cycle.

Currently students new to the district from a private school or a public school outside of Connecticut are admitted just as students from a Connecticut school. In the proposed change these students after one marking period, with teacher or principal recommendation, CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test) will be administered for transfer students. CogAT score of 90% or higher qualifies a student to move on in the process. This district also does not test any students in the off years in grades 4 and 6. In the proposed change students in grade 4 and 6 would be eligible for off year testing when there is room available in the elementary program. The process would begin through a teacher nomination. A team of 2 or more teachers, including the classroom teacher, would complete a GRS and if the student qualifies they would be given the CogAT. The retesting would be done by the STEP teacher. If the student scores 90% or higher on the CogAT, the student will continue in the process taking the performance task. Admittance into STEP would be for grade 5. Mr. Shortell asked if we can compare our data to other school districts. Dr. Menzo noted he will do that.

There is no official policy for making exceptions to the STEP process. The proposed change is a student may be considered for identification, despite falling short of the criteria, in extraordinary circumstances. The following steps would have to be taken by a parent requesting an exception – the parent contacts the STEP teacher at their student's school, the STEP teacher mails out a parent exceptions form to be completed and returned. The parent exceptions form will be reviewed by the STEP management committee along with additional data. The subcommittee is comprised of 3 members of the management team who are off-level from the student in question.

The current exit criteria happens when a STEP progress report score is below 3 (scale 1-5) is sustained throughout the year, as well as Math/Language Arts report card grades that cumulatively drop below 10 points. The proposed change to exit criteria would no longer depend on grades in core subjects and would be based on performance in STEP as measured using an evaluation rubric. A score of one in three or more categories is a cause for concern and the parent would be contacted to discuss their student's performance. A student who scores three ones in two or more marking periods in a single year, will be subject to a review of eligibility for STEP for the following year. That student would be re-evaluated using The Gifted Rating Scale completed by two raters, a performance task, and Smarter Balanced results when available. A final decision would be made by the STEP management team. There was a discussion about students with special needs and the STEP program.

To requalify students currently in STEP the student must score 90% or higher on the OLSAT to stay in STEP. If the student scores 85 -89% on the OLSAT the student must go through STEP qualification process and if the student scores 84% or below on the OLSAT the student is exited from STEP. The Board requested additional revisions be incorporated into this document and then presented again at a future Instructional Committee meeting.

B. NEASC Evaluation Report for Lyman Hall High School

Mr. Bryant, principal at Lyman Hall High School, reviewed the NEASC (New England Association of Schools & Colleges) report of the visiting committee which occurred November 16-19, 2014. The prime concern of the visiting committee was to assess the quality of the educational program at Lyman Hall High School in terms of the Committee's Standards for Accreditation and serves as a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting committee. The accreditation process involves a self-study done by a committee at Lyman Hall and then the outside visiting committee spends time in the school and compiles a visiting committee report with all committee findings. These findings comprise a written two-year and five-year report.

The NEASC report overview stated Lyman Hall's Core Values, Beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving. Faculty members at Lyman Hall have made great efforts to adjust their instructional practices so that they are meaningful and purposeful to the students. As a result of the myriad of programs aimed at promoting a positive school culture, the school community reflects the shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. The relationship between the school Board, superintendent, and principal is collaborative, reflective, and constructive. The myriad of intervention strategies that address the complex needs of at-risk students, identified special education students, and students under a 504 Plan enhance and support student success in achieving 21st Century Learning Expectations.

Common themes throughout the report are commendations for positive school culture and climate that is driven by the school's core values and beliefs, commendations for the school's use of authentic learning opportunities, varied course offerings, and school organizations that reflect Lyman Hall's core values and beliefs and commendations for increased opportunities for teacher leadership opportunities. The school embraces recommendations for a clearer understanding of personalized and differentiated instruction, for professional development aimed at specific learning needs and for reviewing the district's course leveling structure.

The NEASC report also included commendations and recommendations for core values, beliefs, and learning expectations in the area of curriculum & instruction, in the area of assessment of and for student learning, school culture & leadership, school resources for learning and in the area of community resources for learning.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Feed Back and Follow-Up From Elementary PTAC Meetings Regarding Step-Up Day

There was a brief discussion and information shared from PTAC meetings regarding step-up day. The district is moving forward with classroom visitations in August 2015. Prior to these visitations information regarding the schedule will be available.

There being no further business, Vice Chairperson Shortell adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy McCully
Assistant Superintendent's Secretary