

**WALLINGFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
INSTRUCTIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday – September 6, 2016
Board of Education Conference Room**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairperson Doerr called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

J. Cei, A. Doerr, K. Hlavac, S. Glidden, R. McKay, M. Votto

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

D. Bellizzi, H. Brinton, D. Curtis, G. Dirkson, M. Distante, R. Duthie, J. Foss, K. Friend, C. Laudadio, C. Madancy, R. Mancusi, J. Marciano, B. McCully, S. Menzo, K. O'Donnell, S. Parkhurst

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Instructional Committee Meeting minutes of June 13, 2016 were accepted as presented.

III. PRESENTATION

A. Mark T. Sheehan NEASC Report

Rosemary Duthie, Principal at Sheehan High School, introduced her staff and informed the Board the New England Association of Schools and Colleges had a visiting committee in Sheehan High School from November 15 to November 18, 2016 to assess the quality of the educational program at Sheehan in terms of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. There are four teaching & learning standards – Core Values and Beliefs About Learning, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment of & for Student Learning. There are three support standards – School Culture & Leadership, School Resources for Learning and Community Resources for Learning. Mrs. Duthie stated the accreditation process is truly based on a growth model and mentioned that Sheehan was evaluated on the 2011 version of the standards.

The accreditation process is a program which involves a threefold process: 1.) a self-study conducted by the school's staff, 2.) an on-site evaluation conducted by a NEASC visiting committee, and 3.) follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of the self-study and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee. Heather Brinton, a member of the NEASC committee and a Sheehan teacher, stated there are 16 people on the visiting committee (comprised of one NEASC member, building administrators, teachers from multiple subject areas, a school counselor and a library media specialist). The task of the visiting committee is to determine the extent to which the school meets the standards for accreditation and what the school needs to do to improve and better meet its stated core values and beliefs. She added Sheehan has developed core values and beliefs about learning through a dynamic, collaborative and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practice. There is a shared vision of excellence embraced by students and staff that is reflected in the culture of the school. These core values and beliefs serve as the driving force of the Sheehan community and guide the school's procedures, decisions and resource allocations as well as influence curriculum, instruction and assessment. The next step is to adopt the cross-curricular graduation standards as expectations for student learning.

Maura Distante, a member of the NEASC committee and a Sheehan school counselor, stated the committee found the district curriculum provides multiple opportunities for students to practice and achieve the 21st century expectations for student learning and emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through authentic learning opportunities. The next steps are to update curriculum in all subject areas, provide students opportunities for informed and ethical use of technology, implement curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among departments on the middle school and high school levels and to offer professional development on computer-based lessons/activities that allow students to apply their content knowledge.

Mrs. Duthie stated Sheehan includes active and self-directed learning as a common practice, teachers' exam current research to help improve their instructional practices and use faculty meetings to build capacity. The next steps are to emphasize inquiry, problem-solving and higher order thinking in all classes, implement the consistent use of progress monitoring to meet student needs and engage teachers in professional learning groups (PLG's).

Mrs. Brinton informed the Board Sheehan teachers use rubrics to ensure that students know what is expected of them and to assess their learning. Teachers provide corrective feedback to ensure that students revise and improve their work and they utilize formative assessments to inform and adapt instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. The next steps are to develop and employ a consistent method to evaluate student progress towards achieving the expectations for student learning, utilize PLG time to examine student work and implement a mastery-based learning assessment system.

The visiting committee found that school pride is visible throughout the school, discipline is fair and consistent, school culture is safe, positive, respectful and supportive and the Peers Supporting Peers Internship and Advisory program is active. There is a professional culture for learning and meaningful decision-making roles are provided for teachers, students and parents. The next steps are to ensure that all students have access to challenging academic experiences by decreasing the number of course levels within the school and to increase opportunities for differentiation and choice in determining professional development activities.

Mrs. Distante stated school resources for learning at Sheehan include timely, coordinated and directive intervention strategies which are provided for all students. All school counselors meet frequently with students and provide robust, developmental guidance program, students and teachers work with a teacher/student assistance team, all students have access to high quality health services and the library media center is a welcoming place for students and faculty. The next steps are to enhance the library media center's holdings through the addition of online databases that support the Common Core writing and research standards, define the role for special education teachers in the classroom and modifying curriculum & assessments for identified students and to increase the amount of collaboration between teachers and the library media specialist regarding curriculum & instruction as well as modeling the use of instructional technology.

The visiting committee found Sheehan had a climate which ensured the safety of the school and its students and the school's website contains abundant and updated information regarding events, information, curriculum and initiatives. Next steps are to implement a procedure for communicating status of work orders to staff and to address facility concerns.

Mrs. Duthie informed the Board this comprehensive evaluation report reflects the findings of the school's self-study and those of the visiting committee. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administration and other officials to use for improving the quality of programs and services for all students attending Sheehan High School. The school will implement the findings of the self-study and valid recommendations of the visiting committee. The faculty, school board and the superintendent will be apprised by the building administration of yearly progress made in addressing the visiting committee recommendations. A two-year progress report must be submitted by October 1, 2017 and a five-year progress report must be submitted by October 1, 2020.

B. Focused Monitoring Plan

Robert Mancusi, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, spoke about the Focused Monitoring Plan and informed the Board the Focused Monitoring Team is comprised of staff members from Pupil Personnel Services, Shawn Parkhurst, Carrie Laudadio (ELA Curriculum Coordinator), three elementary principals, one middle school assistant principal, a reading interventionist, a special education teacher, a general education teacher and the Director of Information Technology. This team met six times throughout the year for a total of thirty hours. Mr. Mancusi stated the district is “focused monitored” because of the grade 3 reading scores. This team was charged with developing goals which focus on improvement and are as follows: Goal 1: By June 2018 all PreK-5 staff will implement evidenced-based instructional reading strategies in the areas of phonics, phonological awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Goal 2: By June 2018 all grade 6-12 staff will engage in content-specific evidenced-based literacy practices and personalized literacy instruction for all students. Goal 3: By June 2017 Wallingford Public Schools will revise its SRBI/Intervention process and practices relative to the academic, social, emotional and behavioral needs of students and articulate revisions in the district SRBI/Intervention handbook. Goal 4: By October 15, 2016 all PreK-5 schools will develop a parent engagement goal and support the development of early literacy skills as part of each school climate plan.

Mr. Mancusi concluded his presentation by stating the next steps in this process are the following: A submission of a Focused Monitoring Plan to the Connecticut State Department of Education, ongoing review/revision of Focused Monitoring plan throughout 2016-2017 & 2017-2018 school years with the CSDE, completion of SRBI self-assessment by October 15, 2016, review/revise the district SRBI/EIP procedures, provide ongoing staff professional development on the areas of foundations of early literacy skills, identification, assessment & intervention for students with reading deficits and on implementation of standards based IEP’s. In addition staff development will be provided on service delivery and LRE (Least Restrictive Environments).

C. Approval of UCONN Research Study: Interventions and Neuroimaging for Polysyllabic Word Reading (Pond Hill & Yalesville)

Shawn Parkhurst, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, informed the Board this is a research study being conducted by UCONN to see the most effective way to improve student word reading skills. The purpose of this project is to test out two ways of providing instruction to read long words. One method of teaching focuses on a very explicit and systematic syllable division strategy and the other method focuses on a flexible strategy that does not require strict rules. (Both methods will be used in this study). This research study requires Board approval prior to parental/guardian permission for student participation.

Christine Bellizzi, principal at Pond Hill Elementary School, stated students who participate in this study will participate in one of two kinds of intervention. In one version students will be asked to break words into syllables according to rules and read them. In the other version students will break words into syllables using some basic principles, but not a specific rule. Students will be randomly assigned to one of the two interventions and will work in groups of 2-5 with a research assistant for about 8-15 sessions for 30 minutes, 3 times a week. During each lesson, students will earn points for completing different learning activities. When enough points are earned, students will receive a small prize. The intervention groups will include pre-tests before the intervention starts and post-tests after the intervention ends. Students may participate from one to six cycles of intervention sessions and all will be audio taped to ensure the intervention is taught correctly. Each student’s teacher and parent/guardian will receive a report with scores in each of the interventions and a summary of the scores. The summary will contain the number of correctly answered questions. Ms. Bellizzi noted the permission slip does include a section for parents/guardians to refuse participation of their student in this study.

The unanimous consensus of the Board was to send the proposed UCONN Research Study: Interventions and Neuroimaging for Polysyllabic Word Reading to the Board of Education for action at its next meeting.

D. District Letter on Habits of Work, Homework and Extra Credit

Mr. Parkhurst stated this letter was sent to families informing parents/guardians in 2016-2017 that much of the district focus and work will continue to be on the launching of a Mastery-Based Learning system. Included in the letter is a brief overview of the three components of the Mastery-Based Learning system: Use of Work Habits, Refinement of Homework and the Elimination of Extra Credit. All three of these components have a direct relationship to grading and reporting progress. He briefly reviewed each of the three components.

E. State Assessment Report: SBAC

Shawn Parkhurst stated the SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) is administered to students in grades 3 to 8 and is not intended as a sole measure of student achievement, program evaluation or school, district, and state accountability systems. 2016 was the second national administration and therefore the SBAC test is still not yet statistically reliable and valid. SBAC has four levels of achievement (1-4) and is not intended as a substitute for a wide variety of other relevant ways to assess student learning.

Mr. Parkhurst noted the English Language Arts SBAC scores showed a 5.5% year-to-year percentage growth across all grades, scores were 1.2% above the state average across all grades, cohort growth was at least 4% (with an exception in grade 6) and grades 3 & 6 students performed below the state average. The Mathematics SBAC scores showed a 3% year-to-year percentage growth across all grades, scores were 2.6% above the state average across all grades, cohort growth in grades 4 & 7; grades 5, 6 & 8 showed minor reductions in achievement and grade 6 students performed below the state average. He also reviewed results of the percentage of students on target to meet testing goals in English Language Arts and in Mathematics in grades 3-8. The percentage of students achieving level 3 & 4 in the results of the SBAC English Language Arts and Mathematics tests were also reviewed.

The next steps for the district include reviewing, revising and implementing best instructional practices, strive to increase rigor and student engagement and continue to develop and implement a mastery-based system consisting of the following: clear and consistent expectations for student learning, for assessing student achievement, for communicating student learning to student & parents and maintain local control over what students need to know and be able to do to graduate. The district also will continue to utilize STAR (Standardized Testing and Reporting Program) testing data in January to identify areas of instructional focus and shift as necessary, provide specific, targeted, professional development for staff in the area of reading through a Comprehensive Focused Monitoring Plan, provide job-embedded professional development through the math and literacy coaches, provide specific, targeted professional development for staff in the area of math, utilize the Early Intervention Process consistently throughout the district in accordance with the newly revised district intervention guidelines, implement extended day programming in reading and math for students below expected levels and establish portfolio tied to performance indicators for students not meeting SAT benchmarks to demonstrate mastery of local graduation standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The district will continue to focus on math high leverage strategies to increase student outcomes and to collect data through district/administrator walkthroughs related to observable instructional practices and data collected through STAR universal screenings with areas tied to CT Core Standards.

IV. CURRICULUM

A. Proposed Adoption of Wallingford 3D Learning – Grades K-8

Kate O'Donnell, Science Curriculum Resource teacher, spoke briefly about the 3D Learning Curriculum and informed the Board this curriculum has been copyrighted and trademarked. Wallingford will receive 50% of the profit once this curriculum is sold electronically. These funds will go into an enterprise account and the Board of Education will determine on how to use the funds. Mrs. O'Donnell stated the curriculum for each grade level K – 8 is divided into three modules: DREAM module – DESIGN Module – DO Module. Within each of these modules there are lessons and each lesson includes an overview, standards, objectives, materials needed and procedures.

The unanimous consensus of the Board was to send the proposed adoption of Wallingford 3D Learning Grades K-8 to the Board of Education for action at its next meeting.

B. Proposed Adoption of Revised Science Standards & Indicators – Grades K-12

Mrs. O'Donnell stated the Science curriculum management team worked collaboratively on these revised K-12 Science standards and indicators. They are as follows: Standard 1: Scientific Questioning – Standard 2: Systems in Science – Standard 3: Laboratory & Field Investigations – Standard 4: Data Analysis – Standard 5: Scientific Explanations and Standard 6: Communicating about Science.

The unanimous consensus of the Board was to send the proposed adoption of revised Science Standards & Indicators – Grades K-12 to the Board of Education for action at its next meeting.

C. Proposed Adoption of Next Generation Science Standards Transition Plan 2016-2020

Mrs. O'Donnell stated this Next Generation Science Standards Transition timeline and plan was developed with members of the Science curriculum management team. Within the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) there are three distinct and equally important dimensions to learning science. These dimensions are combined to form each standard or performance expectation and each dimension works with the other two to help students build a cohesive understanding of science over time. The NGSS are K-12 science content standards. These standards set the expectations for what students should know and be able to do. They were developed by states to improve science education for all students. A goal for developing the NGSS was to create a set of research-based, up-to-date K-12 science standards. These standards give local educators the flexibility to design classroom learning experiences that stimulate students' interests in science and prepares them for college, careers, and citizenship.

The unanimous consensus of the Board was to send the proposed adoption of Next Generation Science Standards Transition Plan 2016-2020 to the Board of Education for action at its next meeting.

D. Proposed Adoption of New Science Units – Pre-K to Grade 5

Mrs. O'Donnell stated these new science units she developed with members of the Science curriculum management team during the summer using an UBD model (Understanding By Design). The units are interdisciplinary and implementation of the units will be in 2017-2018. The Pre-K-Kindergarten unit consists of the following instructional units: Exploring Water, Seasons and Plant Parts. These units have been designed for a center-based classroom and there are multiple learning experiences included for each learning target to allow teacher choice. Additional resources or activities that align with standards and indicators within the units may be used. The Kindergarten units consist of two instructional units: Weather & Climate and Force & Motion. Grade 1 units consist of two instructional units: Space Systems and Light & Sound Waves.

The Kindergarten unit consists of the following instructional units: Animals, Plants and their Relationships, Weather & Climate and Force & Motion. The Grade 1 unit consists of the following instructional units: Plants, Animals and their Relationships, Space Systems and Light and Sound Waves. The Grade 2 unit consists of the following instructional units: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems, Earth Science and Structure & Properties of Matter. The Grade 3 unit consists of the following instructional units: Forces & Interactions, Inheritance & Variance of Traits and Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems. The Grade 4 unit consists of the following instructional units: Waves, Structure, Function & Information Processing, Energy and Processes that Shape the Earth. The Grade 5 unit consists of the following instructional units: Matter & Energy in Organisms and Ecosystems, Structure & Properties of Matter, Space Systems and Earth Systems. Mrs. O'Donnell noted going forward the science curriculum management team will be working on the assessment piece.

The unanimous consensus of the Board was to send the proposed adoption of new Science Units – Pre-K to Grade 5 to the Board of Education for action at its next meeting.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Vice Chairperson Doerr adjourned the meeting at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy McCully
Assistant Superintendent's Secretary