

Tuesday, October 19, 2021

MINUTES OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 19, 2021, at Central High School, 1 Lincoln Boulevard, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:11 p.m. Present were members Chair Joseph Sokolovic and Joe Lombard. Board member Albert Benejan was present.

Mr. Lombard moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 21, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on new course development in high schools.

Dr. Melissa Jenkins, chief academic officer, said she has worked with Supt. Testani on a process whereby all new courses in the high schools are to be presented to the Teaching & Learning Committee and potentially to the full board for approval. She said this is the practice in many school districts.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said the intent is to present courses far in advance of their implementation in the high schools. Courses presented in this school year would be started in the following school year.

Mr. Lombard moved *“to have all new course development in the high schools be brought before the Teaching & Learning Committee and then to the full board before implementation.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said all courses are available to special needs students and products are sought that offer translation to many languages.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Dr. Jenkins presented on the next agenda item, a contract for curriculum renewal with Actively Learn.

Dr. Jenkins said Actively Learn is a digital, core program for high school ELA. She said 2018 was the last year high school teachers had access to a digital product. She said the program will support the PSAT and SAT.

Dr. Jenkins said Actively Learn is currently used in Grades 7 and 8 and high school social studies in Grades 9 to 12. She said a presentation by the company to high school English teachers was very well received. Its use will create continuity across the schools. She said the program translates into over 20 languages. There is ample practice material for students.

Dr. Jenkins displayed some positive feedback from teachers about the program. Students can choose materials geared towards their personal interests.

Dr. Jenkins said a price quotation was requested for two, three and four years. The recommendation is to purchase four-year access for Actively Learn. The cost includes professional development.

Dr. Jenkins said there is no paper involved in the fully digital purchase. All students in high schools have devices. It includes diverse texts and supports culturally responsive

practice, includes translation and the ability to go down to 5th and 6th grade levels.

Dr. Jenkins said the plan is to renew for two years after the four-year contract. However, if the program does not keep up with innovation there would not be a renewal.

Dr. Jenkins said high school students have developed a love for the graphic novel and there may be additional materials presented to complete the high school resource renewal. She noted texts such as Shakespeare are available in graphic novels.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said additional texts and articles are added to the available collection. She said the district would be obligated for the four years through the contract.

Mr. Sokolovic noted there is a \$40,000 savings on the four-year contract. Dr. Jenkins said the professional development is included and is all online. Mr. Sokolovic said our gamble here is between two and four years and that the price won't increase more than \$40,000 for the next cycle. Dr. Jenkins said this is the first program where the content would be updated constantly. She described the company as responsive to inquiries.

Mr. Lombard suggested obtaining a quote for a six-year contract, including whether the price for years five and six could be locked in. Dr. Jenkins said she would do so.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said English teachers had never asked for anything like they have asked for Actively Learn. She said she could find out which other districts use the program.

Dr. Jenkins said English teachers have been waiting for a product that supports differentiation and helps with learning loss out of the pandemic and a growing ELL population. She said the IT department has indicated integration will be easy because high school social studies classes are using Actively Learn.

Mr. Lombard moved *“to recommend to the full board to enter into a curriculum renewal contract with Actively Learn for a period of four years, with the possibility of a two-year extension or a six-year contract.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod