

Thursday, November 16, 2017

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held November 16, 2017, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. Present were members Chair Ben Walker and Annette Segarra-Negron.

Supt. Johnson arrived subsequently as noted.

Ms. Segarra-Negron moved to approve the committee's minutes of October 17, 2017. The motion was seconded by Mr. Walker and unanimously approved.

John DiDonato, chief of specialized instructional reform, provided a special education update. He said the corrective actions regarding the state complaint that will take place focus on supporting the implementation of the special education manual. On October 18th, there were departmental teacher meetings where select sections of the special education procedures manual were discussed. On October 25th, there was a workshop for teachers who provide services for students who are identified as autistic.

Mr. DiDonato said it was determined that there was a section in the manual that needed to be amended to include specific guidance as it relates to cases of bullying involving students who have been identified as disabled. The Office of Civil Rights mandates that when a student with a disability is involved in a case of bullying there is a mandated requirement for an IEP conference.

Mr. DiDonato said earlier this year the district was identified as being out of compliance in terms of its website. There was an official complaint filed by the Office of Civil Rights. He said he was been working with Dr. Johnson and the IT director to address those concerns. On November 15th, a resolution agreement was entered into with the Office of Civil Rights. He said the website is migrating to

Blackboard, a fully accessible platform. Mr. DiDonato said the IT director, who had been working on the issue before the complaint, was confident that the district would meet the February deadline to provide a plan for review and approval.

Mr. DiDonato said he would like to report back at the next meeting on the details of how the platform is more accessible, possibly with the IT director present.

The next agenda item was on review and revision of field trip policies, Series 6201.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Deborah Santacapita said the policy was put into effect in August 2016.

She noted the references to executive directors should be changed to assistant superintendents.

Mr. Walker said the committee had not dealt with this issue before and it should be referred to the Governance Committee.

Supt. Johnson arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Walker told the superintendent he believed the matter go to the Governance Committee. Dr. Johnson said she agreed with that process. Mr. Walker said he would refer to the matter to Mr. Bradley.

The next item was a summary of interpretation and translation.

Ana Sousa Martins, director of bilingual education and world languages, said in March of last year a committee was formed to look at the language services provided to parents. The district's website now has a Google translate application where the parent can choose their language out of 103 languages.

Ms. Martins said other urban districts referred the committee to several large language companies. Companies were vetted and Linguistica International was selected. Their services include translation of documents in over a hundred languages, interpretation in person, onsite in interpretation in over a hundred languages or

telephonic interpretation. She said telephonic interpreters can be found on demand within a few minutes.

Ms. Martins said she had heard from administrators who have used telephone interpretation for Swahili, Arabic and Haitian Creole. Mr. Walker urged video capability through Skype be investigated because facial expressions are important when interpreting.

Ms. Martins demonstrated posters that are used where parents can point to the language they speak and then the company can be called for telephonic services. She noted that 48 hours' notice is requested by the company for in-person service. She said the company is based in Utah, but there is a satellite office in Milford, Connecticut.

Ms. Martins said in every student registration packet there is a home language survey. She said messages sent out via School Messenger can be sent in English and Spanish and text/email communications can be sent in Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese and Haitian Creole. These are the four most common languages in Bridgeport.

Ms. Martins said training was provided to administrators, teachers and clericals on the process for requesting an interpreter so the usage and the languages can be monitored. A student support area of the website's portal is used to access a form.

Ms. Martins said for written translations the charge is 18 cents per word, with a minimum of charge for a job of \$28. Telephonic interpreting is 57 cents per minute. Onsite interpretation is \$55 per hour and 54 cents for mileage.

Ms. Martins said a contract was signed to lock in these prices and payments are made as costs are incurred.

Mr. Walker and Ms. Segarra-Negron said this was great. Mr. Walker said it was student-centric and parent-focused.

The next item was the district's profile and performance report.

Dr. Johnson said the report was submitted on October 25th and she requested that this committee presentation take place for the board's review and approval.

The superintendent said this year's report includes more input from the world language department and the IT department.

Supt. Johnson said the information covers the previous school year, 2016-17. The information on parent and community outreach is pretty much the same as the previous year. The special education section covers the special education procedures manual and audits for IEPs.

Dr. Johnson said the work related to chronic absenteeism is provided. There is information on efforts to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation, including magnet schools, Open Choice and the lottery system.

Dr. Johnson said the talent management office's work is described, including efforts to recruit a diverse group of highly effective teachers and ongoing work with universities.

The superintendent said Ms. Siegel provided updated information on the fiscal condition of the district for 2016-17.

Mr. Walker said he will include a copy of the document in the Board of Education packet for its next meeting. Dr. Johnson said she would submit last year's report and this previous year's so the differences can be looked at.

Dr. Johnson said board approval of the report would be needed as well. Mr. Walker said he would report at the next board meeting and ask for the approval of the full board.

Dr. Johnson said this has never gone before the board in the past, but policy indicates it should be presented to the board. She said next year the information will be compiled beginning in June, so the October deadline will be met.

The next item was the trimester report. Mr. Walker said he inherited the term; he noted the term academic snapshot was suggested.

Dr. Santacapita said assessments such as I-Ready are done fall, winter and spring, but there are four marking periods per year.

Dr. Santacapita said she liked the phase academic snapshot, which was suggested by Mr. Lischner.

Mr. Walker said that would be the new term used.

Dr. Santacapita demonstrated the online access district employees have to data, through bps.net. She demonstrated a list of anonymous students which includes school, gender, ethnicity, if ELL or special education, absences, ISS, OSS and other metrics. The same information is available by grade, school, race, or an individual test or subject.

Dr. Santacapita said she showed this at the state level three superintendents ago and no other district had anything like this. She said it was the vision of Mr. Karaffa and herself to create something like this.

She said her next frustration is why everybody doesn't use this every day.

Dr. Santacapita said the most frustrating thing for a new school receiving a new student is not knowing the student's past records. The data system makes district records available to all principals, who then provide the data to teachers on the students in their classes.

Dr. Santacapita said an individual student's report can be created from the data. She said Ms. Price, a teacher honored at a board meeting, advanced her students by large amounts because she met with every student about their data.

Mr. Walker said as an old-time teacher the data collection has given him a headache, but this is the most compelling use he has seen.

Dr. Santacapita said at professional development on Election Day hundreds of teachers received professional development on use of the data. She said ideally there would be professional development

built into the calendar to expose more teachers to this. She said the data team has offered to present on School Improvement Days to teachers.

Mr. Walker noted a lot of training was needed on how to use the data as well.

Dr. Santacapita demonstrated data on RULER, which all elementary schools are trained on, with high schools now in the process. She noted restorative justice is now being turn-keyed.

Dr. Melissa Jenkins, director of literacy, said myON is an online digital platform that students K to 9 have access to at home and at school. It provides opportunities to read complex texts, primarily non-fiction, and supports preparation for college and career readiness and for performing well on the SBAC. Students can read a text they are interested in and at their level. They can listen to texts above their level.

Dr. Jenkins said students take an interest inventory and reading placement test before they use the digital library. She said myON supports Tier One instruction and is not an intervention program.

Dr. Jenkins said administrators have access to a variety of reports to understand students' reading.

Dr. Jenkins said last year 3rd grade students did the most reading, but current shows 4th grade has exceeded 3rd grade. She said myON is used in the middle school as a tool for building background knowledge.

Dr. Jenkins said last year the executive directors' schools were grouped into conferences and competed in the amount of reading, which the Marshall conference won. This year there could be a three-way competition.

Dr. Jenkins said she heard from girls that they prefer fiction, while boys prefer nonfiction, but the platform is oriented towards nonfiction. She said she has begun to look at alternative publishers and getting more fiction texts for middle school girls.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said Central and Harding use Reading Plus, a competitor to myON. Only Bassick uses myON in 9th grade. Fairchild Wheeler uses Newsela. She said if myON is renewed she would not recommend its use in high schools.

Dr. Jenkins said Harding had the best usage last year because it was used outside of ELA classes in an interdisciplinary approach. She said she could provide further information on Reading Plus usage. She added Reading Plus was aligned to the STAR assessment at high school.

Assistant Superintendent John Lischner provided information on daily attendance, chronic absenteeism, in-school suspension(ISS) and out-of-school suspension(OSS).

Mr. Lischner said as out-of-school suspensions decrease that will improve average daily attendance since out-of-school suspensions are included in the daily attendance rate and chronic absenteeism.

Mr. Lischner said Bassick's attendance rate is about the same as last year, while Central has improved by 3 percent and Harding by 2 percent.

Mr. Lischner said 17 schools have a higher daily attendance now compared to the end of last year. He noted that we had not reached flu season or tougher weather months.

Mr. Lischner said chronic absenteeism is defined by being out for ten percent or more of the time. He said interpretation of the data can be suspect. A student who misses three days of the first month is considered to be chronically absent, even though they might have bronchitis or allergies.

Mr. Lischner noted that Bassick's chronic absentee rate was 46 percent and Harding was at 53 percent, but the average daily attendance is better. He said nationally 10 to 11 percent of students are chronically absent. He said the district once had 25 percent of students chronically absent, which was reduced to 18 percent at the end of last year.

Mr. Lischner said kindergarten has the highest percentage of chronic absenteeism, it decreases in 1st grade, 2nd grade has the lowest levels, and then it rises steadily up to 12th grade.

In regarding to a question about Central's rates, Mr. Lischner noted the data includes Central Magnet students. He said in the next report the rates for the magnet students could be broken out.

P.J. Karaffa, manager of data systems, noted Central Magnet isn't considered a separate school in state breakdowns. Mr. Lischner said the three high schools at Fairchild Wheeler are considered three separate schools on one campus.

Mr. Lischner said the suspension data was broken out by totals and by unique students. He noted the decrease in out-of-school suspensions. As an example, Tisdale had 68 OSS at the same time last year(2061-17), while this year they have 19. It was noted that Cross had worse numbers this year.

Regarding graduation rates, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Christiana Otuwa noted the four-year graduation rates were in the report, but statistics are not available for last year yet. The graduation rate should be a little bit elevated because of the addition of magnet schools at BMA and Fairchild Wheeler.

In response to a question, Mr. Karaffa said the graduation rates as calculated by the state and federal government are complicated. He said it is further complicated by students who leave the district and return to it.

Mr. Walker said he understood the formula is almost as convoluted and confusing as the ECS formula.

Mr. Walker said given the mobility of our community, he would be interested in following a cohort of students who started in the district in 9th grade and remained in the district throughout. He said there was no doubt that the large number of students who move in and out of the district has an impact on graduation rates.



Mr. Karaffa said every year the district has about 21,000 students, but there are approximately 26,000 to 28,000 students who actually come through the district, with many who leave for another district, another county or a charter school, etc. He said during the year about 7,000 students move from one school to another. One student was in five different schools last year.

Dr. Santacapita said the No Child Left Behind data was unfair because you were always comparing different children across grade levels. She said if students were followed who stayed in the same school for three or more years there were always gains.

Mr. Walker said when you couple mobility with absenteeism these numbers are not surprising.

Mr. Karaffa said if a child is absent for five days for a flu and then are sick later for five days, they go into the chronic absenteeism category according to the state, but it amounts to only two incidents.

Mr. Walker says the community judges our schools on numbers without knowing factors such as those discussed tonight.

Dr. Santacapita displayed the Connecticut Dept of Education's website, highlighting the EdSight data that is available on all districts, including per-pupil expenditures, discipline, ELL, enrollment counts, and many other data points.

Mr. Walker thanked everyone for their reports. He said there was a lot of data to chew on.

Ms. Segarra-Negron said this was her last meeting with the board. She said as an outsider you always hear bad things about the schools in Bridgeport, but this shows the educators are working hard on fixing the problems.

Ms. Segarra-Negron moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Walker and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on January 16, 2018*