

## **Barre Town Curriculum and Teacher Support Committee Meeting Notes May 4, 2016**

### **Present:**

Brenda Buzzell, Chairperson

Tim Crowley, Principal

Jen Nye, Principal

Julia Pritchard, Special Services Director

Karen Heath, BSU 3-8 Literacy Specialist

Rick McCraw, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The meeting was called to order at 9:39 AM.

### Agenda:

1. Review/approval of minutes
2. Additions/deletions to agenda
3. Update on decisions made around looping
4. Homework practices in elementary and middle school
5. Discussion of future meeting times

### **1. Review/approval of minutes**

The minutes of April 6<sup>th</sup> were approved by consensus.

### **2. Changes to the agenda**

No changes were made.

### **3. Update on decisions made around looping**

Although there was strong interest in introducing grade 3-4 looping in the 2016-17 school year, the decision was made to make no changes for next year. A factor is mobility among the grade 3-4 teachers, as a significant number of them may not be in that assignment next year. In preparation for future discussion, teams were asked to examine their systems, as another challenge is disparity of practice across teachers.

Teachers responded positively to the decision to postpone implementation.

(The current situation is that there is no looping in any grade at BTMES.)

Jen distributed copies of the letter to teachers informing them of the decision (attachment “HO1 – Looping 16-17 letter to teachers”) and notes from a planning/feedback meeting with the 3-4 teachers (attachment “HO2 – Looping discussion”).

Julia introduced the idea of looping to her special educators. An ingredient in the decision is possibly to allow special educators to specialize by content area. The decision will be finalized once the 16-17 schedule and case management assignments are final. Specializing is seen as desirable in part because of the increasingly specialized demands of pedagogy in each of the content areas. Specialization is being discussed in grade 3-4 special education.

Jen added that work is being done to identify the must-learn parts of each unit in order to facilitate transitions from grade to grade.

Tim discussed the long-running work of ensuring consistent pedagogy between classrooms so that, for instance, any two grade 3 classrooms have the same practice around things like grading and homework.

#### **4. Homework practices in elementary and middle school**

Jen distributed a document (“HO3 – BTMES homework survey”) outlining current homework practices P-8 at BTMES. Key points from the discussion:

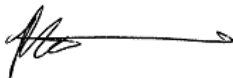
- Each grade has a grade-level facilitator. The form was filled out by these facilitators in consultation with individual teachers.
- The report represents current practice.
- It’s expected that there will be much conversation going forward around these issues.
- With respect to assigning some fixed number of minutes per night, Brenda asked how teachers know how long homework will take. Tim replied that the old 10-minute/grade rule around homework runs counter to general school expectations.
- In grades 5-8, students are given time in class to start their homework.
- In connection with homework, Brenda mentioned a resource website called *Mind in the Making*.
- Rick raised questions about what constitute equitable practices around homework.
- One slide alludes to “homework policy:” That refers to a grade 6-specific expectation, not a school-wide policy.
- Homework: There is a homework club that is not referred to in the handout.
- There was extended discussion of the implications of the information collected. There was general agreement that Barre Town (and preferably all Barre schools) should systematically examine the beliefs and practices that underpin homework. “The idea that there can be choice [of expectations] across grades has to stop.”
- Brenda asked how improvement of homework policies could move forward. Rick suggested convening an SU-wide task force to examine research and recommend/adopt changes, to be chaired by him.

#### **5. Discussion of Future Meeting Agendas and Dates**

This is the final meeting of the school year. Rick and Brenda will meet in August to plan a September meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:53 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Rick McCraw  
Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment