

**Barre Town Curriculum and Teacher Support Committee  
Minutes of the Meeting  
Barre Town Middle and Elementary School  
September 21, 2016**

**In Attendance**

- Brenda Buzzell, Committee Chair and Board Member
- Jen Nye, Principal, Grades PreK-4
- Scott Griggs, Principal, Grades 5-8
- Venus Dean, BSU Math Specialist
- Rick McCraw, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment, BSU

**Agenda**

1. Review/approve minutes of May 23
2. Additions/deletions to agenda
3. Establish future Curriculum Committee meeting dates and times
4. Homework practices:
  - a) Share plan for convening a BSU homework study committee
  - b) Sharing of recommendations for K-4 math homework for this year
5. Initial conversation about EngageNY math
6. Upcoming agenda and meeting date/s.

The meeting was called to order at 4:05.

**1. Review/approve minutes of May 4**

Minutes were approved without amendment.

**2. Additional/deletions to agenda**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**3. Establish future Curriculum Committee meeting dates and times**

We will meet from 4:00 to 5:00 on the third Wednesday of October. At that time we'll consider whether to lock in the third Wednesday for subsequent meetings.

**4. Homework practices**

Rick will convene an SU-wide homework committee. The intent is to use current research to recommend consistent practice across the Barre schools. Rick will provide periodic updates.

Recommendations regarding K-4 math homework: Venus has suggested that teachers not assign the homework from EngageNY at the younger grades. She pointed out that research indicates that homework is beneficial only when students are already able to do the tasks securely. Homework is not a place for new learning.

## **5. Initial conversation about EngageNY math**

Brenda mentioned that the board, at its retreat, expressed concern about the language level and the corresponding homework. It is challenging for parents who are unaccustomed to working beyond the procedure level.

Brenda asked about the language of EngageNY. Venus believes that the discussion may be more about models and their names, e.g. “number bond,” “unit fraction” and “area model.” Brenda wonders if a sheet could be sent home with some of the key ideas. Jen reported that last year one of the BTMES teams did exactly that, but they didn’t feel it was a successful effort.

Brenda then wondered if parental concerns about language will be improved or harmed by *not* sending work home.

The “big concern” of the board is that parents are not comfortable with the math that is being taught. Jen suggested that ways be developed to address this, possibly including a parent night. In addition, the situation will be helped by only sending home work on which each student is secure. Scott: This would allow parents to ask their children to explain their work to them, something that does not work if the student is not secure.

Brenda asked if we purchase EngageNY. Venus answered that the material is online and free, and the EngageNY site offers many resources. Teachers do not need to access the site directly, as they are provided copies. Brenda asks that parents be told that they can access the materials themselves online.

EngageNY material is presented in a developmentally appropriate fashion through the years. Teachers are supported by means of the material, team and after-school meetings, and staff development.

Venus added that the concerns expressed above are not fundamentally about EngageNY, as there are comparable problems with every program. However, Venus pointed out that year on year, students are more prepared at the end of each grade.

Venus also pointed out that there are common pacing guides between the two elementary-middle schools.

Brenda asks if teachers differentiate. Venus answered that teachers “do their best” to do so but that differentiation is challenging for teachers.

Brenda requests a presentation on math in the near future that is similar to the one done by Beth several years ago. This need not be done immediately but should be done before the March budget vote.

Brenda agrees that it is reasonable to de-emphasize EngageNY homework as Venus described above.

## **6. Upcoming agenda and meeting date/s**

- Update on the homework committee.
- Summer reading program – Rick will invite Karen and Lindy

- Design lab (further into the year, perhaps in November)
- Ainsley Burroughs regarding her ECO classroom (further into the year)
- Work on improving students' keyboarding skills (further into the year)

The next meeting will be on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 from 4:00 to 5:00.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:02.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick McCraw', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rick McCraw  
Director of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment  
Barre Supervisory Union