

Spaulding High School Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2016

Members present:

Joe Blakely, Curriculum Committee Chair

Others present:

Brenda Waterhouse, Principal, Spaulding High School

Erin Carter, Chair, Spaulding Math Department

Rick McCraw, BSU Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 PM.

I. Review and Approve Previous Minutes

The minutes of April 12 were approved without change.

II. Additions or Deletions to Agenda

No changes were adopted.

III. Math Studio and its evolution for 2016-17

Erin reviewed Math Studio, a program offered by the Teachers Development Group. Each “studio classroom” visit (of which there have been five this year) includes “data snaps” (classroom observations) in the first morning, in-depth lesson planning with the designated studio teacher in the first afternoon to plan the studio lesson, then in day 2 the whole department observes and collects data on the studio lesson.

The methodology strives to develop a number of high-level practices for students, including discussing their thinking during learning. Students may feel they are not able to discuss what they haven’t yet learned, but Erin pointed out that new learning does not start from scratch: It builds on what is already known. Brenda also points out that this approach forces students to engage more deeply in the material. Student should be able to apply their math more broadly than was the case in traditional math. To help them go deep into the math, the ideal is to have a single substantial problem rather than many small ones.

Despite its benefits, there are challenges to the studio classroom approach. The main problem is that it requires every teacher except the studio teacher to be out of their classroom for the studio day, and even the studio teacher teaches only one class. Other downsides include the need for many subs. Brenda observes that next year, it may be more beneficial to have teachers work more often in course-alike groups (all the Algebra I teachers, for instance) in a “mini-studio format.” It would be far less disruptive to Spaulding’s overall functioning. The mini-studio approach could also include more structured opportunities for teachers to observe one another’s practice.

Erin: The math department already plans together a great deal, but the conversations generally focus on curriculum and much less on instruction. This will be necessary in conjunction with proficiency-based learning in any case.

Erin invited Joe to observe the studio classroom of Wednesday, May 11.

IV. SHS 2016-17 schedule

Brenda discussed the process by which the 2016-17 schedule was developed. It was first examined on the basis of preliminary enrollment, and certain classes were chosen for elimination based on low enrollment. Data were then loaded into Infinite Campus along with constraints such as when certain classes can be taught. Planners then tried many possibilities in order to honor the requests of as many students as possible. Scheduling was on-going as of the time of the meeting, but at that point some 90% of student requests had been satisfied. Fine-tuning continues in an effort to meet as many student requests as possible. The next step in scheduling is for department heads to examine class lists for balance.

In addition, CVCC is completing their admissions process, and that will impact about a hundred Spaulding students, impacting scheduling significantly. Counselors then spend much of the rest of the school year planning with individual students to address unresolved issues.

Class sizes and teaching positions have balanced out well for next year. Fine-tuning student-teacher ratios is difficult: Although students decrease one or two at a time, a change of one teacher position affects 50 or more students. In the end, roughly four teacher positions were dropped, one each in math, English, tech integration and history. (Fortunately, no teachers are being RIF'd.) (Technically 1 1/3 history FTEs are being dropped, as Michelle LaFrancis is transitioning to a position supporting students taking advantage of the Flexible Pathways called for by Act 77.

Joe mentioned that a number of Burlington teachers have been RIF'd and wondered if we could reach out to them. Interviews took place today for Nancy Lynn's position. The only other position being filled is a long-term Q1 sub for a teacher going on family leave. The upshot is that only one teacher is being replaced.

In net, the staff is quite stable, and that is highly beneficial to Spaulding.

V. Possible CVCC topic

There were no topics for discussion at this meeting.

VI. Future Meeting Dates and Agenda Items

We will next meet in September. The Chair and the Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment will meet in August to identify a date and plan the agenda.

Brenda suggests adding proficiency-based grading to the September agenda as PBG will be ready to roll out at that point.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



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