

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Julie Altman, Diane Crocco, Thomas Hurley

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Rita Gedansky, James Horwitz

Also Present: Charles Britton, Richard Dellinger, Sarah Dowling, Jonathan Furst, Warren Gohsler, Ali Grasson, Marianne Lippard, Lisa Meyer, Mary Raiola, Sheila Wycinowski, Natasha Zannelli

A meeting of the Curriculum Committee was held in the Presentation Room of District Offices at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 5, 2011.

1. Call to Order: Julie Altman called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m.

2. Discussion of District Technology Plan

Sheila Wycinowski said that the District is about to write the technology plan. One of the tasks is to create a new needs assessment. An idea put forward is to expand the Technology Committee to include more parents. Connectivity is a priority. Teachers creating lessons need to be able to be sure their lessons will be accessible. Plans are to Skype with other districts. A think tank will be created at Amity. There will be pieces that will need to be approved. The plan will be brought to ACES, the Curriculum Committee, and then the full Board.

One piece of the plan is 21st Century Skills. Students need to learn how to use sources properly and it is necessary to ensure that students are using multiple resources. Students are expected to research, collect resources, collaborate with other students, and create their own responses. They should have the skills to persuade using research.

By sixth grade, pupils at Beecher Road School are expected to be able to do digital story telling. If all of the elementary schools are doing this, then Amity can take this skill to the next level. This can be discussed in the BOWA.

Teachers are encouraged to use Skype and students are learning how to structure conversations and problem solve. Teachers have been discussing Voice Thread. With more iPads and other tools in the classroom, resources could spread out for students to use in groups.

Four teachers attended the meeting to talk about the iPad pilot. Lisa Meyer, an eighth grade special education teacher, co-teaches English, math, and social studies in Bethany. Sara Dowling teaches eighth grade math in Bethany.

Ms. Dowling said that she uses the iPad each day in class and created a Google site for the class to use. The site allows students to easily get right on and she had the students save the address as a bookmark. She tells students which items to download. Files are

opened in Notability. With the technology, she is able to create PDF files of worksheets she developed. Work did not have to be recreated.

One benefit to students is that they can e-mail a completed worksheet. If a student is absent, work can be sent this way. Students can write on the worksheets and they can color code to highlight facts as needed. It is particularly nice because textbooks can't be written on. The system makes it very easy for students to organize data and find what they need.

Ms. Meyer said that the iPads have helped with student skills. Instead of students having five two-inch binders, they can use their iPad. The students involved in the pilot get to bring the iPads home. A \$3.00 app was given to all students and it is helpful for those who can't write well. The technology is also helpful for PPTs.

Ms. Altman asked if the teachers still use a password protected environment.

Ms. Dowling said that the Google site is not password protected. No student information is available on the site.

Ms. Altman asked if there is a benefit compared with Moodle and whether there are concerns with putting worksheets there. There isn't integration.

Ms. Dowling said there were features of Moodle that weren't being used. She isn't concerned about the worksheets. Ms. Meyer said that a Google site is easier to use.

Ms. Wycinowski said that the iPads are particularly useful for organization.

District Digital Facilitator Jonathan Furst said that it is important to recognize that students are learning the basic skills of using the iPads right now. The devices were distributed in October.

Ms. Meyer said that with iPads, teachers can more easily give students different assignments so that students can work on different skills if necessary. The students are picking up a lot of skills with the devices.

Natasha Zannelli and Ali Grasson, teachers at the High School, used the iPad with students reading the Odyssey. Ms. Zannelli said that she can control the iPad with her iPhone, which is useful when moving around the classroom. Most of the students had tablet technology prior to taking part in the pilot. Since many students were using their own iPads, free apps were downloaded.

Benefits of the technology include increased student engagement, an increased ability to accommodate different learners, and enhanced interaction with the text. The teachers found the technology increased motivation, as students could look up unknown words. If a student wanted to hear a book read, they had that option.

There have been some challenges. When students had to share devices, they had to highlight text using different colors. E-mail was problematic for those sharing devices. Connectivity was slow and Wi-Fi really needs to be working if students are being asked to download apps.

The teachers reported that after using the technology to read the Odyssey, students were asked to rank their understanding of the novel and about their experience using iPads. Most students provided positive feedback.

Thomas Hurley asked if there was any negative feedback.

The teachers reported that a student commented that there was a preference for books that allowed pages to be turned. There was also some negative feedback about the Wi-Fi.

Ms. Zannelli said that some free apps that teachers use include Dictionary.com, iTranslate, Zite, Schoology, and SidebySide.

Ms. Altman said that a small percentage of students didn't have their own devices. She questioned how that was handled.

The teachers said that while it was noticed, the students seemed happy to get to use the new iPads that the school provided. Shared devices couldn't be brought home.

Mr. Furst said that the school is fortunate to have teachers creating this type of work. Wireless capability is needed and mobile devices should be in the hands of every student.

The District is working on a survey to get an idea of how many students already have their own devices. What is being addressed at the meeting is the starting point of what can be accomplished with the technology. Currently, iPads offer more in this area than similar technology in the marketplace. With the Kindle Fire, students can read and access the Internet, but are not able to do get creative, as with the iPad. This is a year for data gathering, learning, exploring, and evaluating the technology.

Amity must examine what is going on with textbooks. With iTunes University, there are over 500,000 free lectures available. While working with Apple last summer, he worked with groups to create content. It isn't yet clear exactly what device should be put in a student's hand. More and more universities are putting lectures on-line.

Ms. Altman questioned whether the teacher's union has discussed how this will change what is going on in the classroom. With the changes taking place, their role would be as more of a facilitator.

Mr. Furst said that if students have iPhones they can use technology. This empowers the student.

Mr. Hurley praised the staff. With the speed at which technology is becoming available, the Committee needs to gather useful information. Taxpayers don't always understand the potential applications for new technology. They understand purchasing a textbook, but not an iPad.

Ms. Wycinowski said that Orange has been getting SMART Boards in classrooms, but Woodbridge has had a different focus. The community needs to support the technology.

Ms. Altman asked if there are any students on the Technology Committee. Student perspectives would be important. Bobby Brown, the student representative to the Board of Education, had been on the committee, but graduated last year.

Ms. Meyer said that technology makes more sense once the community sees what we can be accomplished.

Mr. Hurley said that there should be some way to go out into the community and educate the public about the applications of technology in the classroom.

3. Discussion and Possible Action – AP Chinese

Ms. Wycinowski said that students are requesting Chinese 5. She wanted to address the Committee to present the concept. It would be nice to offer students this option. The concept must be approved, not the staffing, which will be addressed in the budget. Chinese 5 is sophomore college level.

There was no vote due to lack of quorum. The item was tabled. Mr. Hurley said that the topic could be brought before the full Board.

4. Approval of Minutes – November 17, 2011

There was no vote due to a lack of quorum.

5. Other

No other business was discussed.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Lippard, recording clerk