

Broad Based Planning Committee Meeting

Monday, May 17, 2021

Members in Attendance: Melissa Dougherty, Amy Beliles, Kristen Hwang, Laura Samide, Leila Rostam, Barb Marcotte, Carrie Alday and Dr. Dustin LeMay.

The first meeting of the year for the Broad Based Planning Committee was held via zoom. The meeting was called to order at 6:31 by Carrie Alday. She welcomed everyone noting that the weather was not so nice, so a great evening for a zoom meeting. Carrie introduced herself to the group as the new Director of Teaching and Learning Pre-K to 4th Grade. Mrs. Alday let the group know that she had worked with the high ability program at her previous district, Westfield Washington Schools.

Dr. Dustin LeMay then introduced himself to the group as the Director of Teaching and Learning Grades 5-12. Dr. LeMay has participated with this group in the past, first as a teacher, and then as a principal. He is looking forward to being back with this group.

It was mentioned that we usually do meet earlier in the year, however, this has been a different year than others in the past. First, let's start with introductions and please share your experience with this group.

Barb Marcotte spoke first. Barb has been a member of the Broad Based Planning Committee for over ten years now. Carrie thanked Barb for her dedication to the group.

Melissa Dougherty was next. Melissa is new to the group, but shares that she is a sixth grade math and science teacher who teaches both general education and high ability students. Melissa does have her high ability endorsement.

Amy Beliles greeted the group as a returning member. Amy works with Melissa teaching English Language Arts. She has been part of the group for eight years now.

Kristen Hwang spoke next. Kristen has been a member of the group for five years now. She has had the responsibility of being an at-large member and then as a parent spokesperson. Kristen has seen different leadership in this group and is excited about the new focus for the group.

Laura Samide, Counselor at Maple Elementary School, joined the group about eight or nine years ago when she had the task of counselor for both River Birch and Maple Elementary Schools. After taking a year off, she is excited about the upcoming school year.

Carrie shared a power point with the group. This will also be sent out to the group. An icebreaker was introduced to the group: In five years, what would you like the headline to be in social media about the high ability program in Avon Schools. Suggestions came quickly, "Avon's High Ability Program Addresses the Needs of the Whole High Ability Student". "Avon's High Ability Program Places Emphasis on Academic and Social/Emotional Needs of Students". "Giving High Hopes to our Community". "High Ability Students in Avon Are Leaders in Using Healthy Coping Skills and Teaching Them to their Peers". The comment was made how awesome it is to have older high ability students help other high ability students. "Avon's High Ability Program Allows Students to Explore Topics Deeper and Encourages Students to Delve Further in those Areas".

Great topics! Thank you for sharing! Tonight Mrs. Alday and Dr. LeMay would like your feedback on four objectives:

1. Student Identification
2. Curriculum and Instructional Strategies
3. Counseling and Affective Needs
4. Professional Development

This can be intense, but tonight we are looking for the strengths and weaknesses of these objectives so we can work towards the goals to grow and move forward.

Dr. LeMay reviewed Avon School's Mission and Belief Statement with the group. Then he shared the State of Indiana's definition of High Ability. We will want to review this definition when we evaluate our current high ability program.

Let's break into two groups and please provide your feedback on two of the four objectives. The first group will work on Student Identification and Curriculum and Instructional Strategies. The second group will concentrate on Counseling and Affective Needs, and Professional Development. Each group will have a recorder to present the group's feedback. Please share with your group the strengths and weaknesses based on your personal and/or professional experience. Everyone will be redirected into a room. It is 6:50 p.m., so we will come back at 7:15 as a group. With no questions, we were divided into our groups.

Group One consisted of Mrs. Alday, Laura Samide, Amy Beliles and Leila Rostam. Group Two consisted of Dr. LeMay, Kristen Hwang, Melissa Dougherty and Barb Marcotte. Each group had to assign one person to take notes and report back to the entire group once we unite.

The groups were reunited at 7:15 p.m. The first topic was Student Identification. Laura Samide was the spokesperson for this group. They would like a "wider net" with multiple opportunities to assist with identifying the correct students for the high ability program. A stronger appeals process would be helpful also. Communication by the counselors to the parents can help prepare the kids better with their placement.

Curriculum and Instructional Strategies was their other topic. It was noted that by being a large corporation we have the opportunity to offer and fill more high ability classes. Can be challenging as well, but we are building a good foundation. Leila shared that her sons are filling out college applications and have had compliments on the essays that they have written. She believes that Avon Schools helped set her children up for success outside of high school.

Dr. LeMay spoke on behalf of the second group. For Counseling and Affective Strategies, he mentioned that that focus was on strengths. First is the ability for all students in high ability classes to focus on team concepts. This is also considered a weakness. Another strength is the ability for teachers and families to provide positive reinforcement and build relationships.

We need to focus on helping students to self-advocate and continue to grow. Also, for our perfectionists: stress and anxiety need to be identified to help the students grow through this. Identify future needs through assistance with teamwork and test anxiety. Guidance counselors can give support in these areas.

As for Professional Development, the IAG Conference is very helpful for high ability teachers. Several strategies can be learned and brought back to their classrooms. Teachers have had very positive outcomes from what they gleaned at this conference. Also, having a High Ability Endorsement can be a positive for the teacher, as well as the students in the class. Avon teachers are offered the ability to achieve this endorsement and be reimbursed for their tuition incurred by the high ability grant. An area for improvement would be the multiple disciplines in the classrooms. Also assisting high ability students identify their needs, what they need to assist their learning, and keep on track with the curriculum.

Carrie thanked everyone for sharing as we are “dipping our toes” in these areas. We need to keep driving forward. Dustin added that we are just getting started for the upcoming year. The next steps are to reconvene earlier next year to review goals, create an action plan and grow as a team.

Thank you for your time this evening and your feedback. We will utilize this information when writing the high ability grant for the 2021-22 school year. Thank you again for your support of our high ability program. The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.