

## Broad Based Planning Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 7, 2022

Members in Attendance: Jenaffer Jenkins, Amelia Jenkins, Andrea Brown, Amanda Ramirez, Susi Clark, Melissa Dougherty, Kristen Hwang, Laura Samide, Julie Stevens, Kristen Isbell, Amy Maharas, Allison West, Dr. Dustin LeMay, Carrie Alday and Barb Marcotte. Guest Speaker Frank Meyer was also in attendance.

The first meeting of the year for the Broad Based Planning Committee was held at White Oak Early Learning Center's new Professional Development Center. The meeting was called to order at 6:01 by Dr. Dustin LeMay. He welcomed everyone and thanked them for being here and a member of the Broad Based Planning Committee. Glad that we can be together, in person, for the first time in two years and work together as a committee. As such, time was taken so that each member could introduce themselves and explain why they want to be a part of this group.

After introductions, Dr. LeMay discussed the traits and definition of high ability students. PLC's (Professional Learning Communities) will be tied into the strategic goal for this group. We will start with the end game in mind – our high school students.

Dr. LeMay also presented to the group that we need a high ability program review. There are advantages of doing an internal review versus an external review. A few year's back we did have an external team from Ball State University come in and critique the program. After Covid-19, it is a good time for us to do an internal review. We will also review the demographic data of our high ability and general education students. Lastly, we will need to review the identification process for selecting high ability students – are we missing students with our current process? The definition of High Ability Student Identification was shared with the group.

What are the traits of high ability students? Around the room we have placed poster boards for you as we will work in small groups to discuss the cognitive, affective and behavior traits of high ability students. Please feel free to use the post-it notes to write down your thoughts for each category and have a spokesperson place them on the appropriate posters. Time was given for this activity.

Starting with cognitive traits, each spokesperson shared with the group the items their group listed. We will compare our thoughts with what researchers found out to see if our thoughts are similar or not. The slide listing the researcher's traits showed that although we had some overlaps, we also listed some differences. The same process was completed for affective traits. Our list was much closer to the researcher's list. The last trait was behavior. Again, we had similarities and differences.

Why is it important to look at traits? Because high ability identification has a wide range of traits, and there can be some misconceptions regarding high ability students. Not all high ability students are the same. We need to look at some of the traits that don't always show on test scores. What about students who have anxiety when taking tests? The perfectionist may have high anxiety regarding taking a test, so should that keep them out of the program? We need to look at more than test scores. This is how PLC's may help us find these students that the test scores are not. Dr. LeMay and Carrie Alday have

been working with high ability leaders at the state level this fall and winter so that we can identify more students.

Carrie Alday spoke about the next slide regarding PLC's and High Ability. Four questions are asked in these meetings to ensure what we want our students to know, how we know if they are learning, how will we respond when they don't learn, and lastly, how will we respond if they already know it. We need to have a structure and know how to respond with strugglers, as well as those students who already know the material.

Moving onto high ability demographic data. Everyone has a folder with some charts and also a T-chart for your small groups to review the data and write down what you "Notice" and what you "Wonder" when looking at this information. Time was given for the groups to review. Many groups "noticed" that some demographic groups were fairly equal, while others were not. Older grades made gains but younger groups lost ground. Also, it was noticed that our group is not diverse and does not represent the demographics of our student population. We have a higher percentage of white and Asian students in the high ability program while black, Hispanic and multi-racial students showed lower percentages of high ability students.

What did they "wonder"? Does our program's identification criteria provide equitable access to qualification? Did Covid-19 impact our students? Are neighboring districts closer/more represented? Are there barriers to identification for non-white students? Are we over-identifying our students? Is this related to parent/home life? Is our identification process fair to all students? Should 25% of our population be considered high ability? What would the graph look like for gender?

The state definition regarding the Identification Process was shared with the group. As for a percentage of students in the group, it really depends on *if* the students qualify for high ability, more than achieving a certain percentage number.

The question was asked if parents can advocate for their students? Why are teachers not part of the identification process? What about twice exceptional students? It was also mentioned that while CogAT does have a non-verbal portion; the instructions are in English – shouldn't it be available in all languages? Another concern was that we only give CogAT in kindergarten, second grade and fourth grade and to our new-to-Avon students. What about as a student's English language skills grow? As an EL student just moving in, they may have lower scores due to the language barrier; however, as they continue their education, their reading and comprehension of the English language should change and we may miss students because of this. These are great reasons to review our process for identifying students with high ability potential.

The next slide shows NWEA historical growth for our students in grades 3-8 for the 2018-19 and 2020-2021 school years. Again, using the supplied T-chart, please jot down what your group noticed and wondered about this data. Time was given for members to review.

Carrie Alday explained that NWEA projects that 50% will make the expected to make growth from Fall to Spring in a school year. This chart shows us that 65% of students maintained growth. The problem arises when students achieve a 99% in the fall; how can they achieve growth? Amy Maharas shared that as a student progresses with the ELA portion of NWEA, the reading passages get longer and harder to comprehend.

Frank Meyer, Assistant Principal at Avon High School, was introduced as our guest speaker. Frank has been very involved in the placement of our students as they transfer to the high school to make sure that their schedule places them on their path to success. Frank asked the group if they were aware of AP courses, and asked the group if they were considered high ability courses? AP courses are classes that our high school students can take and at the end of the year if they score a three out of five or higher, then they can get college credit for that course. It is a great way for students to gain college credits at a lower cost, as well as entering college with some basic courses already completed and credit gained. Although these are not high ability courses, it is the goal for our high ability students to take these courses as they matriculate through their high school career. These are weighted classes, so that is also why you see some grade point averages higher than the possible non-weighted scale.

With that explanation, when placing students in middle school classes, it is important to start with the end in mind. What happens if a student takes Algebra 1 in 7<sup>th</sup> grade? What will they take as a senior? We have a high number of Avon students who take the AP Calculus exams each year. These are all high ability students as it is important to master a skill in math before moving up. Without successfully completing a math course, the student is not enrolled into the next math class automatically – they may need to retake the course in order to master the steps so that they can succeed in the next course.

Frank explained that English is different. While we had 200 students take the AP Calculus test, we had 310 students take the 11<sup>th</sup> grade AP Language exam. This has increased from when Frank taught the class and had 30 students take the exam. There is not a pre-requisite for students to be high ability to sign up for AP English courses. The College Board states that all students should be able to take this class. Another option for college credit is for students to take VU English 101 and VU Literature 100. For a small additional fee, all students taking these classes and pass, also receive college credit through Vincennes University, which transfers to most colleges. This is a great option for students who may want an engineering degree, so that their English credits are complete before starting college.

Regarding demographics of students enrolled in these classes, Frank has noticed the same results as our study. We do need to cast a bigger net so that we can enroll more students that match our demographic make-up in high school advanced placement or honors courses. The question was asked regarding how we schedule new move-in students? The high school can give a quick NWEA assessment to obtain a baseline for the student's placement in classes, or transcripts from their previous school can decide their schedule.

Dustin thanked Frank for his presentation. He also noted that we have a lot of work to do. We need to start with a plan in place for a program review of the following categories: Student Identification, Curriculum and Instructional Strategies, Counseling and Affective Needs, and lastly, Professional Development. We won't get this process done in a year. We will do an internal review with a committee made up of representatives of our whole community. A timeline needs to be established, and this committee will need to grow with better representation of our students. Connecting PLC's and high ability, so we know how to grow with professional development.

We are currently interviewing candidates for the Data and Acceleration Coordinator position. This person will become the high ability coordinator as well. As we look for the right person for this job, please know that we are taking the first steps towards an internal review of our program. As we have gone over our time tonight, Dustin thanked everyone for coming and participating. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.