

**BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING**
Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
October 6, 2022 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sarah Pregent (BC) – Chair
Paul Malone (BT) – Vice Chair
Rachel Aldrich-Whalen (BC Community Member)
Melissa Battah (BT Community Member) – departed at 7:59 p.m.
Nancy Leclerc (At-Large) – departed at 7:21 p.m.
Chris Parker (BT)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Karen Fredericks, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sonya Spaulding

COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT:

William Toborg

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mrs. Pregent, called the Thursday, October 6, 2022, BUUSD Curriculum Committee meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

None.

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as presented.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes -

4.1 September 1, 2022 Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the September 1, 2022 BUUSD Curriculum Committee Meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 SEL/MTSS Update (SP 4.A-B & 5. D-F)

A document titled ‘Academic & Social Emotional Learning MTSS’ was distributed.

It was noted that MTSS stands for Multi-tiered Systems of Support (including academic, behavioral, and social/emotional) and SEL stands for Social/ Emotional Learning. The codes in the Agenda Item refer to sections of the Strategic Plan. Ms. Fredericks advised that this presentation was also shared at the District’s kick-off meeting. Ms. Fredericks provided an overview of some of the layers of support offered under MTSS, advising that the layers of support are available for as long as needed, and sometimes change quarterly based on student need. Last spring, PLG’s (Professional Learning Groups) spent time discussing Universal Practices (Learning Environment, Clear/Shared Outcomes, Varied Content/Materials & Methods, Practice & Feedback, and Complex Thinking & Transfer). Ms. Fredericks provided an overview of the Practices included under ‘Elements of Effective Instruction’. In response to a query, Ms. Fredericks advised that progress monitoring tools are being utilized to assist with measuring success for students on IEPs. It was confirmed that the VTMTSS Field Guide is an AOE publication. Ms. Fredericks advised that equity means meeting the needs of all students, and proceeded to provide some examples of how disparity issues are addressed and it was clarified that additional supports should not impede first level instruction. Regarding IEPs, the objective is to see students making progress on achieving their

goals, and when possible, to get students off IEPs. Brief discussion was held and Ms. Fredericks answered questions from the Committee and a community member.

5.2 Setting Goals for Growth Within the 5-Year Education Action Plan

5.2.1 System Driver Map

A document titled 'What Will It Take To Improve Student Outcomes?' was distributed.

Ms. Fredericks provided an overview of the various 'drivers' for student outcomes, and advised that the relationship amongst the drivers is very complex and that if any of the drivers is missing, student outcomes are negatively impacted. Drivers include; Professional Capacity, Instruction Programs, School Climate, the 'Instructional Triangle', and Family & Community Partnership. Brief discussion was held regarding 'school climate' (which pertains to both students and staff), and the other components and how they relate to each other. Ms. Fredericks answered questions from Committee Members.

5.2.2 5-Year Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Plan (DRAFT)

A copy of the draft document was distributed.

Ms. Fredericks advised that her approach was to draw inspiration/intentions from the Strategic Plan. The draft document is outlined by the five key goals of the Strategic Plan. The document is a living document and will continue to be modified. Ms. Fredericks has met with one group of building administrators and plans to meet with the others within the next two weeks. The document will continue to be shared with the Committee. Mrs. Pregent expressed appreciation for the document containing action steps, outcomes, and evidence (the mechanism for accountability). Mr. Malone queried regarding some of the timeframes and expressed concern over continuity of strong curriculum, advising that he does not want students 'used for practice'. Mrs. Fredericks advised regarding data monitoring that will be utilized to measure success and identify deficiencies within a reasonable timeframe. Brief discussion was held regarding current professional development, training, supports for staff members, identification of problem areas, and alignment of curriculum. It was noted that outreach to local agencies is happening, e.g. Aldrich Library, the Rotary Club etc. Brief discussion was held regarding career pathways, including work based learning which was put on hold during COVID. There is a goal to begin reaching out to younger students (7th grade) regarding opportunities provided by the technical center. Additional discussion included; assessment of students (which is an important component of measuring success of the multi-tiered systems of support), social/emotional learning, lack of support staff, and a suggestion to have high school students provide assistance (tutoring etc.) as part of their community service.

5.3 Discussion of Blended Classes/AP Students and Enrichment for Elementary/Middle School Students (SP 1.B & 3/5.G)

5.3.1 Hattie Rating: 252 Influences And Effect sizes Related to Student Achievement

A document titled 'Hattie's 2018 updated list of factors related to student achievement.....' was distributed.

Ms. Fredericks advised regarding opportunities at SHS, including; early college, AP classes, honors classes, imbedded honors classes, and the implementation of a robotics program. Mr. Malone queried regarding the availability of specialized courses, e.g. engineering. Brief discussion was held regarding imbedded honors classes and the pros and cons of those types of classes. Brief discussion was held regarding AP classes being held as year-long classes, as AP exams are held in the spring and students who complete an AP course in the fall semester are at a disadvantage for spring testing. In response to a query regarding concerns related to a previous announcement that SHS was considering eliminating AP courses, Mr. Hennessey advised that there are no current discussions regarding elimination of AP classes. Ms. Fredericks provided an overview of the 'Hattie' study which encompasses information for individuals from pre-school through adulthood, identifying influences on achievement. The research indicates factors that positively and negatively impact achievement. Discussion was held regarding the many of the various factors listed in the report. Brief discussion was held regarding 'boredom' in students, those who are not challenged/engaged, and those who are disinterested because they have difficulty learning.

5.3.2 Three Reasons Tracking Kids is Wrong (And How to Start Making a Change)

An article from 'education world' was distributed.

- What assumption does the author of the text hold?
- What do you agree with?
- What do you want to argue with in the text?
- What parts of the text do you want to aspire to (or act upon)?

Ms. Fredericks advised that she chose this article because a lot of the research on 'tracking' has been disproven and there is not a lot of current research available. Ms. Fredericks noted that the article is biased, but that it 'gets to the point' of what some of the research shows; that tracking holds kids back, supports a fixed mindset and produces inequity. Community input included an opinion that homogeneous classrooms are easier to teach, that there are challenges posed when classrooms have significant gaps in student ability, and concern that sometimes assumptions are made based on bias (demographic, race etc.). The Committee discussed; concern that tracking is problematic, produces a fixed mindset, and that students in a lower track are not exposed to grade level skills and enrichments, tracking practices from decades ago, the need to encourage families to be supportive, the value of the District becoming more active in the community, concern that high achievers are not being served as well as could be, social/emotional impacts (self-esteem), students struggling with behavior, concern that the benefits of being with like-minded individuals, e.g. PSTL (an accelerated program) which increases learning and provides for social/emotional growth) is being lost (with all blended classrooms), that those in

high tracks benefit, but those in lower tracks lose out, concern that constant development of new systems is setting the District up for radical changes again in five or six years, and the benefits of being in classes with like-minded students. Community input was received, with concern raised that public input be given more consideration, noting that after hearing powerful impact statements from the Board, community members, and staff, it was announced that the PSTL Program had already been cut and was not being considered for reinstatement. Concern was voiced that although high achievers (in imbedded honors classes) benefit from the experience of assisting other students (students are in school to learn, not teach), their own education is impeded. Concern was voiced that most discussion has been centered on struggling students' needs and that the needs of high achiever's appears to have been put on the 'back burner'. In the interest of equity, the District needs to meet all students 'where they are at'. Mrs. Spaulding voiced support for embedded honors classes, noting that those classes provide social/emotional support by allowing students with learning disabilities to be in classes with their friends. There is a need to find a balance to serve the needs of all students. In response to a query regarding the possibility that the quality of teaching staff may differ between schools, it was noted that previous data indicated that student achievement, based on demographics, was equal at both elementary/middle schools.

6. Old Business

None.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Items for Future Agendas

- Fall Climate Survey (parents, students, and faculty) - (Parking Lot Item A)
- Percentages: Student Drop-out / Completion Rates - (Parking Lot Item C)
- Use of Diagnostic Assessment Data to Assist Teachers with Identifying Student Needs - (Parking Lot Item D)

Brief discussion was held regarding whether 'Review of Continuous Improvement Plan' should be presented to the full Board rather than the Committee. Mr. Hennessey will perform research on this matter.

Parking Lot:

- Remove: B. Results from January 2022 Staff Survey (outdated information)
- Remove: F. Organization Flow Chart (Outline – personnel fit/responsibilities) – check with Mrs. Leclerc regarding whether or not she still wants this. This information would be more appropriate to provide to the full Board, not this Committee.

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is Thursday, November 3, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

10. Adjournment

Ms. Fredericks expressed her appreciation for the collaboration on discussion of topics this evening.

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin