

Broad Based Planning Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 18, 2023

Members in Attendance: Jennifer Miner, Amy Maharas, Amy Beliles, Melissa Dougherty, Mary Burkhart, Natalie Searle, Miranda Searle, Jenny Shayotovich and Barb Marcotte. The third meeting of the year for the Broad Based Planning Committee was held in the White Oak Small Professional Development Room.

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Jenny Shayotovich. Jenny thanked the members for giving their time for this committee. She brought in Bundtini cupcakes to share with the group tonight. Everyone enjoyed this treat!

Jenny shared that she has two agenda items to wrap up this year tonight. We need to review program adjustment recommendations and gather feedback on communication and letters to families.

The recommended program adjustments for grades kindergarten through second grade is based upon communication. Jenny recommends communicating CogAT results to teachers and families. Parents would receive a letter with results and an explanation of the test and scores. Teachers will receive a list of students and ideas for differentiation to challenge the students that score at the 96th percentile or higher, for the remainder of that school year. This can be implemented in the Fall of 2023. As a group tonight, we will review sample results letters to use beginning with the 2023-24 school year.

Jenny explained that for all kindergarten and new-to-Avon first grade students, they will take a screener test. The screener test is one section of each of the three categories of the CogAT full battery test. The sections are Verbal, Quantitative and Non-Verbal. If the student passes the screener with a score of 80% or higher, there is an option for the student to complete a post-screener test, which will be composed of the remaining sections of the full battery CogAT. This will allow the student to have a complete full battery without repeating any sections already taken.

For third grade, communication will be sent out to families in the winter of second grade notifying them of the identification process and the criteria used to qualify students for the high ability program. When CogAT scores are sent out in the winter, we can also send invitation letters to participate in the high ability program beginning the following year; or add a teacher and parent nomination link for students who do not qualify, but still must meet certain criteria on current tools (NWEA and CogAT). The SIGS will be sent to both the parent and subject area teacher of the nominated student.. A range of scores will need to be in place, possibly allow nominations for students who score within the 75% to 95% range. The middle schools have been using the 75th percentile cut-off to meet criteria with great success. This range allows us to identify more students who should be in the program, yet do not do well on CogAT and/or NWEA. The nominations will replace the current appeal process. Jenny Shayotovich is going to a High Ability Conference in May. She will ask the sponsors and other high ability coordinators in the area as to what would be a good cut score.

For grades four through eight, it will not be much different than in the past, with the exception that all high ability parents will receive a status letter annually sharing the area their student has qualified in and how it will be addressed. This letter will include middle school criteria for sixth graders.

We will add a teacher/parent nomination to the process. The student must meet certain criteria on current tools before sending out parent and teacher SIGS.

Our current Exit Process is not well known or utilized. We also need to re-establish the Exit Process with updating the Exit Form by following guidelines from the state. Also, we need to communicate better to the buildings that this tool is available to help students struggling in high ability classes.

As for the high school, the goal is to allow students to take the courses they want as long as pre-requisite work has been successfully completed. The hope is that nominations by parents and teachers can lead to the growth of the number of students taking courses that they truly want to take.

Next, let's take some time to review the parent letters. First is the CogAT results letter, and then letters for both second and fourth grade students, as those are years that all students take the CogAT. Also, please review the nomination forms.

Once these letters have been sent, we will then need to open a window for nominations. We can have a link sent out in school newsletters, place on school webpages to help communicate this opportunity. The window can be open for three weeks, so it will be manageable. The process can be as simple as the parent or teacher completes a nomination form. The form goes to the High Ability Coordinator's office. SIGS would be sent out to the parent and teacher with a cover letter and completion date. We will use SIGS scoring guidelines and data review (use the cutoff that we still need to establish – possibly 75th percentile). Lastly, send letter to the parent and teacher (if they nominated) sharing the results.

Jenny wanted to share with the group information about SIGS – Scales for Identifying Gifted Students. SIGS assesses seven different areas, yet we would be utilizing three areas: general intellect, math and language arts. The parent/teacher would complete the sections based upon the area(s) in question. What about different languages for SIGS? That is a great question! Jenny saw the paper version in Spanish, but will look into the online version and option to complete in other languages.

These nominations will be finalized in late Spring; so there will be plenty of time for scheduling for the upcoming school year. There was concern about the possibility of a large number of parents requesting teachers to complete the SIGS for their child's nomination. Jenny thought we may have a higher volume for the first year or two, but it should become smaller in years to come. Having the link describe the definition of what it means to be high ability may help parents determine if their child is above average or high ability. The comment was made that it was helpful to see a timeline in the form. Also, clarifying that this will not generate more work for the student, but offer differentiated learning opportunities for high ability students.

The question regarding permission slips was brought up. We will still ask parents to complete permission slips for the students in grades 3 – 6 and once we transfer to K-5 elementary buildings, ask for permission slips for grades 3 – 5.

What will the focus for Broad Based Planning Committee be for the 2023-24 school year? Next year we will focus on Programming. We did include questions on this year's survey that we can utilize that information to begin on task next year.

Jenny is setting up a guest speaker this May for K-8 principals and assistants. Her specialty is high ability clustering. This will help with scheduling for the upcoming school year. We will still honor both cluster and self-contained classrooms next year, but this depends on the number of high ability students in each building. We must be practical with the number of students in each area by grade and subject.

It is 7:32 p.m. and Jenny shared that her goal was to finish by 7:30 and ended at 7:32 p.m.