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BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING

Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
October 4, 2023 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Boutin (BC) – Chair
Rachel Aldrich-Whalen (BC Community Member)
Melissa Battah (BT Community Member)
Nancy Leclerc (At-Large)
Chris Parker (BT)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Paul Malone

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Karen Fredericks, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Mari Miller, SHS Assistant Principal

COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alice Farrell Karen Heath Michelle LaFrancis Rachel Van Vliet

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Boutin, called the Wednesday, October 4, 2023, 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

Add 6.1 Status of Committee Mission and Charge

3. Public Comment

Alice Farrell queried regarding discussion of results on outcomes for students' for the last academic last year, and regarding the availability of reports for outcomes on reading and math. Mr. Boutin advised that last year's academic performance results are supposed to be presented at the Board level (at the first November Board meeting). Local assessment data will also be presented to the Board at that meeting. Mrs. Farrell voiced concern for special needs students, who often do not do well in summative assessments even though IEPs are being followed. Ms. Fredericks advised that VTCAP results have now been released again and information is supposed to go out to parents with quarter 1 report cards. Mr. Malone queried regarding availability of historical information on AP Test scores. Ms. Miller advised that she included historical information in the addendum to the meeting packet. Ms. Fredericks advised that last week, BCEMS had a very successful Open House. The BTMES Open House is scheduled for this Thursday.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 June 7, 2023 Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Boutin apologized for not holding a September meeting, noting that there was not much to put on the agenda.

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mrs. Battah, the Committee unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the June 7, 2023 BUUSD Curriculum Committee Meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 AP Slideshow

Ms. Miller advised that she did not prepare a slide show because information is in the packet. Ms. Miller provided an overview of the AP score reports included in the packet. Information includes; AP score reports for last year (the number of students who took the exams, how SHS compares to the state and globally, and distribution of score reports). Ms. Miller advised that there is a second report which includes historical data (back to spring of 2020). Ms. Miller advised that she can also report on the various courses that are offered at SHS and advised that SHS is now offering fewer courses. Most AP classes are full year classes. It was noted that not all colleges give credit for AP classes, and sometimes dual enrollment is preferred as more colleges give credits for dual enrollment

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courses, though colleges do like to see that students are taking academic risks (by taking AP courses). Ms. Miller answered questions from Board and Committee Members, including, but not limited to; concern regarding low scores for AP Biology, AP Calculus and AP History –Government/Politics (which are lower than the state average), possible ways to decipher if other schools in the state offer classes as inclusively as SHS (no), student struggles with taking some AP courses remotely/virtually, an overview of how to read the reports, AP exam fees being included in the budget (to allow all students to test regardless of finances), the benefits of comparing SHS to similar sized schools that also have the same socioeconomic make-up, the cost for AP exams (\$85 to \$89), whether students are being prepared for AP courses, imbedded honors classes, acknowledgement that not all colleges accept dual enrollment credits, if anything can be done to encourage colleges to accept credits, and clarification that Vermont State Colleges, including UVM, do accept credits from CCV (Community College of Vermont). Ms. Miller encourages Board Members to reach out to her with any questions.

5.2 Workplace Programs Slideshow

Ms. LaFrancis addressed the Board and provided some historical information relating to the implementation of Work Based Learning (Under Act 77 - an unfunded mandate), which includes a variety of flexible pathways, including Dual Enrollment, Early College, CTE Programs, Virtual High School, and Project Based or Work Based Learning. A presentation titled Work Based Learning was displayed on screen and Ms. LaFrancis provided an overview of the presentation, including; exploration of community needs, program changes necessitated by COVID, preparing students (for the workforce, college, or the military), preparing students, access to The Generator, cultivating relationships with area business partners, the importance of STEM/STEAM Programs, the importance of community support, being mindful of the impact of recent flooding, the risk management process utilized prior to accepting business partners (over 100 pre-covid / approximately 40 active partners at this time), the power of the alumni network, the importance of having programs that qualify students to apply for in-house scholarships, the current needs of employers who are looking for employees with ‘soft skills’, utilization of students in-house (opportunities within the school district), working with students on the college application process, and a request to the Board, to adequately fund the program, (including transportation and food), so that all students have the ability to access this program.

6. Old Business

6.1 Status of Committee Mission and Charge

Ms. Parker advised that the Committee had unanimously voted to “make a recommendation to the Board that they revisit the purpose, charge, and continuation of the Curriculum Committee”, and that the recommendation has not been presented yet. Mrs. Battah had requested an update on that recommendation. Mr. Boutin believes the discussion held this evening is similar to what some other districts do and he believes the Committee can decide on the mission and charge. Ms. Parker advised that the Curriculum Committee is different than the Board’s other committees because it does not make recommendations to the Board or ‘look into things’. The other committees have more specific charges. Mr. Boutin advised that he would like discussion at the next meeting, to include cell phone usage, noting that cell phone usage can, and has been, banned in a number of other schools. Ms. Parker reminded the Committee that they have already held lengthy discussion on the Committee’s Mission and Charge and agreed to send the matter to the Board, so she is not clear how additional discussion this evening is beneficial. Mr. Malone believes that a good education, requires good curriculum and he believes this Committee is or could be beneficial to the District. It was reiterated that the Committee made a decision and voted to send discussion of this matter to the Board. Mrs. Aldrich-Whalen queried regarding her role as a community committee member. Mrs. Aldrich-Whalen does not know the difference between her role as a Committee Member vs. attending meetings as a community member, and requested guidance. Ms. Fredericks advised that curriculum work is being performed on a daily basis, and noted that she feels that the work at the committee level feels ‘forced’ and less natural. Mr. Malone believes discussion at the Curriculum Committee is beneficial to parents and students. Mr. Malone believes constructive improvements can evolve from Curriculum Committee meetings (identification of problems and introduction of possible solutions). It was reiterated that this committee differs from others as this committee does not produce action items or make recommendations. Mr. Malone noted that in the past, Curriculum Committee work resulted in new and/or improved programs, and wasn’t all ‘show and tell’. Mrs. Farrell suggested that the Committee look into avenues of communication.

7. Other Business

Mrs. Poulin advised that in the past, AP scores were an annual presentation to the entire Board.

Additionally, Mrs. Poulin noted that during the first presentation, there was no on-screen display of information, and it needs to be appreciated that there are individuals attending virtually, or watching the video afterward (who do not have the packet), so the protocol has always been to display the information so that those joining on-line or watching videos are ‘not in the dark’ and can view what the presenter is talking about.

8. Items for Future Agendas

Mr. Boutin noted that at the Policy meeting, he raised the possibility of a cell phone policy (‘cell phone removal’), which he believes would have a positive impact on academics, and he believes this might be something the Curriculum Committee could explore as well. Mr. Boutin advised that he can have someone attend the next meeting to give a presentation about removing cell phones at schools. Mr. Hennessey believes this matter is more appropriate for the Policy Committee. Mr. Boutin may work with the Policy Committee Chair regarding a presentation at their meeting.

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Mrs. Poulin advised that normally committees work at the direction of the Board for things such as new policies that don't currently exist elsewhere, and suggested that this matter be put before the Board prior to committee level discussion. Additionally, Mrs. Poulin advised that at a previous Board meeting, Assistant Principal, Jim Ferland, when asked about the biggest cause of disciplinary and behavioral issues, advised that cell phones were hands down, the biggest problem at the high school.

Ms. Parker suggested that the Board discuss possible discussion topics for the Curriculum Committee.

It was noted that Mrs. Leclerc, at the request of the Committee Chair, had submitted a list of possible topics. Ms. Fredericks is currently reviewing the list.

- Foundations – Including Penmanship and Cursive

9. Next Meeting Date

The Wednesday, November 1, 2023 meeting is cancelled.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Aldrich-Whalen, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin