

MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
Homewood-Flossmoor High School, 999 Kedzie, Flossmoor, IL
September 10, 2024

In attendance for all of the meeting were, Mrs. Hoereth, Mr. Riedel, Mr. Legardy, Dr. Wakeley and Dr. Hester. Dr. Alexander, Mrs. Rudan, Mrs. Erdey, Ms. Catherine Ross-Cook, Ms. Jeanne Miller and Mr. Dan Gould were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Marilyn Thomas from The Chronicle was present for part of the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m.

Approval of Minutes. The May 14, 2024 minutes stand approved as presented.

Comments. Dr. Wakeley asked to slightly alter the agenda to speak about English Course Approvals after the Weighted GPA Recommendation is discussed. Mrs. Hoereth suggested they discuss English Course Approvals as the first item. The committee agreed.

English Course Approvals

Dr. Hester stated they were excited to bring the new English pathways to the committee. It is the first curriculum that was built entirely using the standards based process, which was a very collaborative process. Dr. Hester introduced Ms. Jeanne Miller, English Department Lead and Mr. Danny Gould, Curriculum Specialist. Dr. Hester explained there is a subject area committee that worked together and every draft in the process was taken back to the full English department, who have all been trained in the standards based process. Dr. Wakeley shared that all departments will go through this process, and there is an ongoing process for curriculum renewal. Dr. Hester explained for Math, it was an entire rewrite of curriculum, whereas with English, all core courses were renewed. They are recommending approval of the 4 year course sequence to begin implementation in the 25-26 school year. They are also recommending 2 new courses: English 3 LGBTQ+ Lives & Literature, and English 4 Global Voices. Lastly they are seeking the approval of earned honors, starting with English 4. They are bringing an overview of how texts are being selected, using a culturally responsive approach, and there is a high level of excitement around these new courses. Dr. Hester turned over the meeting to Ms. Miller, who explained that all students will start with English 1. As they move up, students will advance to English 2 or AP Language. At grade 11, there will be potential for dual credit (which will be discussed later in the meeting). Course offerings for grade 11 would be American Lit, the requested new course LGBTQ+ Lives & Literature, AP Language, AP Lit and IB Lit. At the senior level, the offerings will be African American Lit, the new requested course Global Voices, as well as the prior offerings of AP Lit, IB Lit and AP Lang 2, and Intro to College Comp. Global Voices will replace Contemporary Lit. Built into these sequential courses are intentional reading and writing opportunities. Ms. Miller then offered a description of the new proposed courses (LGBTQ+ Lives & Literature, and Global Voices) and gave an opportunity for the committee to ask questions. Mr. Riedel asked about the fact that preparing students for essay writing was not specifically referenced in Global Voices, whereas in Contemporary Lit, it was. Dr. Hester explained that the prior curriculum heavily emphasized reading for literature, and while writing was present, it did not have an intentional progression. The new curriculum is very intentional and follows a progression for all common core standards, which includes writing. Dr. Hester then pointed to a document detailing the writing progression in all the courses, including Global Voices.

Ms. Miller then went through the curriculum development process and explained that the proficiency scales were built from common core standards and takes into consideration a four year sequence of learning (how things align vertically, not just horizontally). There will be

common assessments and some shared texts between courses at the same level. This is a shift in how they are using texts in the classroom.

Ms. Miller reiterated they are asking for approval of earned honors. Dr. Hester shared that, unlike other departments, they are recommending earned honors start at the senior year (English 4). Mr. Riedel asked how they would roll out earned honors after year one. Ms. Miller stated that it will depend on how the first year goes. Mrs. Hoereth commented that she appreciates the approach of starting earned honors with English 4, but that makes her wonder about the other earned honors that have been approved which are starting in the first year, and it will be interesting to see which is the best approach. Mrs. Hoereth also had follow up questions as to why the language in the Global Voices description doesn't include working on college essays. Dr. Hester explained college essay writing work will take place in junior level courses, however she also agreed there may be a need to rewrite descriptions to cover skills in ISBE course descriptions. Mrs. Hoereth also asked how students learn about new course offerings, as she wants to ensure students know the two new courses are everybody. Dr. Hester responded that currently departments preview courses students are currently taking but there is no formal schedule. However, there has been discussion around scheduling days for each department. Mrs. Rudan added that students will have each course they are eligible for populate in School Links. Dr. Alexander added that counselors will have talking points around all courses, especially new ones. Mr. Legardy commented that they provided data for the new English 3 course but not for English 4, so how did they develop that pathway? Mr. Gould responded that they spent a lot of time researching what other districts in the area were doing. He also clarified that the new English 3 course was not a replacement for another class, but an add-on. Mrs. Hoereth encouraged them to consider local authors as they decide text selections for English classes.

Weighted GPA Recommendation

This topic is a continuation from a previous meeting and Dr. Alexander stated they wanted to provide additional data about why they are recommending this change. He shared how they can provide a holistic experience for students so they can be focused on the career path and choices to prepare them for post secondary options as opposed to gamifying the system. It's more about helping students to see what can best prepare them for the real world. Mrs. Rudan explained that most colleges don't recognize the 6.0 scale and counselors have to convert it to a weighted 4.0 scale anyway so it really becomes just for them. She echoed Dr. Alexander that students are not making choices based on career goals but on how they can best position their GPA. Their recommendation is a weighted 5.0 scale. Regular CP classes will be on a 4.0 scale, and anything beyond that (Honors, AP, or IB course) gets an extra point weight. Dr. Alexander commented that they wanted to provide more data as the committee in the past was looking to ensure students are taking the most rigorous courses along with increasing enrollment in higher level courses. The conversation turned to earned honors. Drs. Wakeley and Alexander explained how the proficiency scales will help students be clear about what it takes to advance to earned honors. Dr. Alexander also shared that they want to increase AP enrollment as well as increase the AP passing percentages. Mrs. Rudan commented that as students advance they will automatically be placed in more rigorous courses and students will have to opt out of the rigorous course they are placed in. She added if they provide the right supports, students succeed. These are strategies to close the achievement gap. Mr. Riedel expressed the need to articulate that increasing rigor also helps students who are going into trades or apprenticeships, as they want to raise the bar for everyone, not just students who plan on continuing their education. Mrs. Hoereth asked what the selling point was for taking AP over Honors or CP. Mrs. Rudan and Dr. Alexander concurred that college credit and the financial impact of that are the selling points. Dr. Hester added that they need to help students see the connection between reading and writing skills and their post-secondary plans. Mr. Legardy expressed that he is not convinced, as he feels they are relying on the kids to have a long range view. Mrs. Rudan

explained that they are having guided conversations through counselors. Dr. Hester added they are building a different architecture, one of higher skills and success. Dr. Wakeley pointed out that they are one of the only schools that has multiple grading levels and feels if other kids can do it, their kids can do it. Mrs. Hoereth commented that the change is aspirational but risky, as the system is heavily reliant on counseling and advising. Administration agreed it is going to take time, but it is about providing access and opportunity. Teachers also have to be “counselors” and encourage students. Mrs. Rudan added they also have a heavy focus on post secondary built into the vision for Compass. This is a whole school effort. Mr. Riedel commented that they are speaking about two separate issues which are becoming conflated. He feels it is clear the weighted scale needs to change but when it comes to increasing rigor there is not a finite plan. Communication is critical, and things will need to be reevaluated periodically so they can be clear what “needles” they are moving. Mrs. Hoereth asked for the timeline on implementing these changes. Mrs. Rudan stated the recommendation is they will recalculate the GPAs on the new scale beginning with the 25-26 school year and move forward with the new ranking system beginning with the 27-28 school year. Mrs. Hoereth shared she is willing to pilot something, but they have implemented so much since Dr. Wakeley has started, and there are some data points that they need to see. She asked how they will track progress. Dr. Hester responded that this is attached to the College, Career & Life Readiness (CCLR) goal of the Strategic Plan and is reflected in year one goals. Mr. Riedel reiterated they need to have indicators so they can report back and see where the trend lines are going. Mrs. Hoereth and Mr. Legardy agreed they need to have checkpoints built in the strategic plan to allow them to pivot when needed. Dr. Wakeley talked about the reporting mechanism for the strategic plan, explaining how the action steps in year one will determine what they do in year two, as they can look back at the data and make changes if they need to. Dr. Hester suggested they build in a subgoal and key performance indicator (KPI) of intentionally moving kids into higher level courses. They will include the specific KPI for the full board so there is no confusion regarding where they are heading. Mr. Legardy stated that this should be on the standard agenda and not the consent agenda for the September board meeting.

New Business:

PRESS Policy Updates: Issues 115 & 116

Dr. Wakeley stated much of the PRESS changes deal with Title IX changes. He commented that they needed to make some changes with the departure of Jodi Bryant who had been the gatekeeper of Title IX. They brought in Franczek attorney Ms. Amy Dickerson to provide additional training, as they have moved Dr. Hester into that role. They will also have further training for the rest of administration on investigations so they can help staff know who to go to and what the processes are. Dr. Wakeley stated there are no earth shattering changes with the remainder of the policies.

Administrative Procedures Development

Dr. Wakeley explained they have board policies that are managed by PRESS Plus but they are now working with PRESS to develop Administrative Procedures. This will be for an additional fee. He indicated this process would be more staff heavy than board heavy. He stated he wanted to make sure before anyone else steps into the superintendent role that these things have been taken care of.

Policy 7:70

This is one of two policies that need to be reviewed by the board every two years and submitted to ISBE. PRESS did not have any suggested changes regarding this policy at this time. The policy will remain unchanged and will be on the consent agenda at the September board meeting.

Other

The Union has voted on the new HFEO contract, which passed. It will be on the September Board meeting agenda.

Dr. Wakeley shared he will not be at the September board meeting.

Mr. Legardy asked where they were with the IB audit. Dr. Hester responded that there is a planning committee meeting scheduled for October that will provide an opportunity for administration to share their thoughts and recommendations.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10:23 a.m.