

MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
Homewood-Flossmoor High School, 999 Kedzie, Flossmoor, IL
March 19, 2025

In attendance for all of the meeting were, Mrs. Hoereth, Mr. Riedel, Mr. Legardy, Dr. Wakeley, Dr. Hester and Dr. Alexander. Mrs. Hoereth was available via telephone conference call. Ms. Catherine Ross-Cook, Ms. Jeanne Miller and incoming superintendent Dr. Jennifer Norrell were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Marilyn Thomas from the HF Chronicle was also present.

The meeting was called to order at 8:47a.m.

Approval of Minutes. The minutes from January 17, 2025 stand approved as presented.

Comments.

Mr. Legardy began the meeting noting that Mrs. Hoereth will soon be retiring from public service and he wished to thank her for her service to the board. He commented that it is often a thankless job but also a labor of love, and he truly appreciates the time and commitment she has put forth. Mrs. Hoereth responded that she will now be cheering and encouraging from the other side. She added that she does not regret one minute of the time she spent on the board and reiterated, it is indeed a labor of love.

Low Enrollment Courses.

Mr. Legardy commented that an agenda item was pulled off last night's regular board meeting to discuss with the Planning Committee, that being low enrollment courses (general education courses at 14 students or below). Initially he believed low enrollment would go through the Planning Committee, however, it was determined that committee hasn't dealt with low enrollment since 2018. Dr. Norrell suggested for the future it should probably come through the Personnel Committee. Dr. Wakeley stated that they do have specific policy language that addresses low enrollment: classes with 14 students or below require the approval of the board to run the class. Mr. Legardy stated that this item can move to the full board for approval.

English Instructional Resources.

Dr. Hester began the discussion with a celebration of the English department, as they have redefined their mission and vision. In addition, they have taken 7 courses and aligned them to standards with written proficiency scales and common assessments.

Dr. Hester then explained the process for reviewing resources, noting they are staying fiscally responsible. They used state standards to look at text complexity across five domains. They selected progressive texts with different authors, genres and styles. They are also using some texts from before. Mr. Riedel asked what is the anticipated longevity of these texts? Dr. Hester responded that some texts go out of print and you get new texts all the time, but they try to think in 5 year increments. Oftentimes there is an opportunity to sell retired texts to an outside vendor.

In the packet provided to the committee, Dr. Hester pointed out the first document lists every text by course, title, author, ISBN, the quantity estimated, and the estimated cost with shipping. The next document provided a summary of each text, along with the learning targets and the academic value for each. The texts, she stated, were chosen for their academic value so students will be successful with the standards. The final document lists all the texts for

English at-a-glance. Dr. Hester also noted there are some common anchor texts, and assessments that will assess the same skills across different courses.

Mr. Legardy commented that this is somewhat different from the prior process where the Planning Committee took time to review and/or read novels. Dr. Wakeley explained from a governance perspective, administrators should be held responsible for vetting. Mr. Legardy asked if they updated their policy, as the process used to be in board policy. Dr. Wakeley responded that PRESS does not have a specific policy regarding this and they chose not to include the old policy when they adopted PRESS. Dr. Hester added that there is a process however, which includes a requirement to post the resources annually.

Mr. Riedel commented that he thinks the academic value portion of the document is critical, in that what is most important is that the section be strong and explicit, as they as board members are also accountable. Mrs. Hoereth asked what is the process for assessing whether or not these are the right books and what is the timetable for reviewing. Dr. Hester explained that across time, they assess using the three “Rs” process (Review, Reflect and Revise), which happens at the curriculum level, of which resources are included. What will be critical, she continued, is asking if they got the students to read increasingly complex texts so they are building skills. Mrs. Hoereth wanted to know if they could consider a way to engage parents and the community. Dr. Hester responded that they would love to get the parents engaged and noted the Reading Department is already in discussion regarding that. Mr. Legardy commented on one of the new English 3 courses with a low enrollment. He referenced an earlier conversation where the administration said they would “let the students vote with their feet.” He asked the administration to please comment on that. Dr. Alexander responded that they wanted to run the class and give it time to build some traction as a lot of work was put into it. Dr. Alexander was also concerned about what it would say to the students who selected that class if they then chose not to run the class. Mr. Legardy stated that they had a mission to get kids more engaged and have greater attachments to English and reading. He asked how they are planning to have that engagement. Dr. Hester explained all classes have a goal of engagement, one of the ways being through text. Another piece comes from the clarity of the proficiency scales. Mr. Legardy asked how they are increasing reading proficiency. Dr. Hester explained that achievement comes through standards based learning and the texts are a part of that but also engagement in the classroom. Achievement is more about the bigger system. Ms. Ross-Cook further commented that they chose books based on “feeling,” and based on what they are going to teach about humanity and culture which is a big shift. Dr. Wakeley also commented that the difference is in making kids understand what it is we want them to learn, and there are some contextual skills that we want them to learn, so that whether they are reading fiction or non-fiction or a technical manual, they are learning reading strategies. It is a shift from learning “content” to learning “strategies,” Dr. Wakeley added. Ms. Ross-Cook added, as educators, they are always trying to understand how students show up, through their lived experience and family values, as those things go into consideration for the texts that they choose. The connection piece has to be the representation that the students see themselves, or see you, or learn something different in the selections they read.

Mr. Legardy thanked the team for the work they are doing and the summaries provided and stated this item would move forward to the full board.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) Proposal.

Dr. Norrell provided a two page summary of the proposal for Professional Learning Communities (PLC) highlighting items that need to come before the board to change. Part of the change, she explained, will be a better understanding of what the true structure and nature of the PLC is (the entire district being a PLC versus the individual team meetings that have been taking place at HF). The PLC proposal, she stated, directly connects to three of HF’s Strategic Goals: College, Career and Life Readiness, Fiscal Responsibility & Equitable Resources and

Professional Excellence, although it is a backbone for all five of them. Dr. Norrell then explained that all teachers will need to do some pointed work around standards and assessments and that these things need to be done through sufficient planning, which needs a cycle and a structure to allow it to work best.

The main goal around the idea of collaborative teams will be to do curriculum planning. Pointing to Mr. Legardy's earlier comment about reading proficiency, Dr. Norrell explained that many passages students will be gauged on, as far as reading skills on the ACT, fall outside the purview of the texts that English teachers are primarily responsible for. Therefore, every teacher that owns instructional time has to be a teacher of ELA and of reading, in particular. For the teachers whose departments have not started standards based learning, Dr. Norrell went on to explain the PLC structure being proposed is designed to bring everyone into the conversation. What has been traditionally known as a PLC at HF is primarily a collaborative team. Each collaborative team will need a team leader, and that leader will sit on the Leadership team once a month, to help to foster two-way communication. Teams will need to be research-driven around best practices and focus on data analysis through strong professional collaboration. As collaborative team structures need a leader, each team will have a Collaborative Team Leader (CTL) who will lead the efforts through each department. There will be 3 meetings a month and minutes will be kept. Teams will look at course content, review common assessments, and review how students are performing.

Moving to the professional development component, Dr. Norrell proposed that administrative leaders and CTLs attend Solution Tree's PLC at Work Institute. She suggested they start with the group of admin leaders who will be supporting the process. In June they will attend training in Minneapolis. The CLTs and Department Leads will then attend the PLC Summer Institute in July locally. The total cost for the training for the Administrative Leaders, 11 Department Leads, and the 32 Collaborative Team Leaders is estimated to be \$55,000. Stipends based on the contract hourly rate of \$40/hour are being proposed for 32 CTLs, which will require a conversation with the union and negotiating an MOU for the board to approve. The expectations for the CTLs will include leading the meetings, creating agendas and attending district leadership meetings once a month. This will provide an opportunity to have conversations about some of the heavy lifting and, to ensure there are no staff members who say they have no way to communicate with leadership.

Lastly, Dr. Norrell provided a proposed timeline with the activities to be completed each month, and gave a plan launch estimate of August. Dr. Norrell then opened up the meeting for questions.

Mr. Riedel asked how frequently will there need to be retraining? Dr. Norell responded that Solution Tree offers consultants to come out for eight hours and will consult on site for 100 people with a cost of \$8000. He also asked for a breakdown of how the number of CTLs was decided. Dr. Norrell provided the rationale that it was looked at mostly by course and the team is determined based on the majority of the course that is taught by the teacher. Mr. Riedel stated that he appreciates the bidirectional conversations, and asked if the CTLs will always be classroom teachers? Dr. Norrell stated yes, they would. Mr. Riedel agreed this creates ownership. Mr. Legardy commented that it seems worth the investment, as he noted there have been conversations in the past regarding the time normally spent on Wednesday mornings, that it may not be utilized as well as it could be. Mrs. Hoereth asked how success will be measured and how it will be tracked? Dr. Norrell explained the district will be able to hit the targets of the strategic plan and she feels this is the only way they will hit those targets. It will allow them to track back to areas that may be struggling. The data piece is profound, she continued, as they will have a running record of how students are doing on the same standards across all disciplines.

Dr. Norrell wrapped up the discussion stating that Solution Tree consultants are nationally known and very well respected. She feels the energy is contagious and hopes the

teachers will be excited. Dr. Wakeley added that many other school districts are using this structure. This will hold everything together for the big push for the work we want to get done. Mr. Legardy ended the meeting stating that this proposal will move forward to the Finance Committee which is scheduled to meet on April 8, 2025.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.