

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Roundtable Meeting

January 30, 2018

Called for 6:00 PM, in the CRLS Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of Reviewing Level Up Initiatives.

Members Present: Ms. Bowman, Ms. Dexter, Mr. Fantini, Ms. Kelly, Mr. Kimbrough, Ms. Nolan, Mayor McGovern

School Committee Member Present: Mr. Paul Sullivan

Also Present: Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent
Ms. Barbara Allen, Executive Director of Human Resources
Ms. Jean Spera, Interim Asst. Supt. for Student Services
Dr. Anda Adams, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
Mr. James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer (ABSENT)
Ms. Lori Likis, Chief Planning Officer
Ms. Elizabeth Liss, Education Liaison for Mayor's Office
Ms. Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer
Ms. Maryann MacDonald, Asst. Superintendent of Elementary Education
Ms. Desiree Phillips, OSS Coordinator for CRLS, Upper Schools and out of District
Ms. Tanya Milner, History Dean
Ms. Jennifer Hamilton, ELA Dean
Ms. Jan Tingle, ELA Coordinator
Mr. Principal Smith, CRLS
Ms. Adrienne Stang, History Coordinator
Mr. Andrew Kreuser, 9th Grade English teacher
Ms. Jennifer Hogue, 9th Grade English teacher

Mayor McGovern in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and informed everyone that the meeting is being recorded by audio and visual devices. There is no public comment.

The meeting was turned over to Principal Smith who gave an overview of what has been going on with our introduction of the Level Up Program at CRLS for freshmen. They are reshaping the idea of equity.

Level Up Initiative January 30, 2018

Agenda

- Vision for Grade 9 Level Up
- Ensuring Honors Experience
 - ❖ High Expectations with High Support
 - ❖ High Quality Professional Learning
 - ❖ Measure and Monitor Progress

Jay Jordan, doctoral intern, spoke about what will be shown tonight in three parts. He explained how they structure the learning experience to be certain the students are successful.

Ms. Milner spoke about what an honors level classroom is. All students are engaged in the thrill of learning. The student experience with windows and mirrors allows students to look at other cultures and reflect on their own culture and identity.

Ms. Hamilton spoke on the different wants of students and what is needed for all students to be successful. They believe that all students can learn and be successful and push themselves in Honors ELA class. They have been able to keep their classes small, under 29 students. The students receive academic, mental health and emotional supports, all classes are supported by special education teachers.

Ms. Tingle explained the slide High Expectations with High Support. The assessments were created by teachers and for teachers. She and Ms. Hamilton created four Common Formative Assessments (CFAs). The goal is to maximize their impact on student learning.

Ms. Phillips spoke on High Quality Professional Learning and their work with Dr. Marilyn Friend using co-teaching and case models. Ms. Friend came a few times and observed their classes and gave feedback when they asked questions. There are a lot of students with ASD in general education this year.

Ms. Milner spoke on High Quality Professional Learning and bringing in Carol Burris, who wrote a book on De-tracking and Equity. She also spoke about RADES: (Re-Imagining Diverse and Equitable Schools). The focus was on finding out what rigor means and building it in our 9th grade classes. Ms. Milner's last remarks were on the works of Dr. Darnisa Amante, of Harvard, her initiative is in DEEP (Disruptive Equity Education Project), and expert support from Larry Ainsworth and Arnie Clayton.

Adoption of School City

PD and supports have been provided to 9th grade ELA teachers to:

- ❖ Provide students with feedback
- ❖ Administer online assessments
- ❖ Score assessments
- ❖ Use key data reports

Ms. Hogue stated they use priority standards, common assessments, basic core texts and are able to provide consistency across all sections. The students have the opportunity to do their assessments online, which allows them to have the experience of looking at their own data, synthesize materials and see their own progress.

Advantages of School City

- Allow deep dive into data
- Standard, item level and demographic analyses
- Develop a complete profile of student performance
- Assessment data based housed in one system
- Ability to provide testing accommodations
- Speech-to-text and accessibility features: line reader, highlighting, magnification, etc.
- Testing platform is similar to MCAS platform
- High school students will take MCAS online in Spring 2019.

Ms. Hogue continued regarding standards that have been mastered and the standards they are still working on. Some students were getting enrichment and some were getting review. Students had to figure out why they received the reviews they did. They had to go back and revisit their work in order to figure out what went wrong. It helps the teachers revise their work also to look back at their work and see what or if they need to do it differently next time. Students received feedback and Correction of Errors cards

Mr. Jordan spoke on how to get data on how students are doing, they also partnered with School City and RADES program to find out if the students:

1. Did they feel they belonged?
2. Did they feel they could live up to the challenge?
3. Do they plan to take more Honors ELA courses over the next three years?

They were interested in how students felt challenged and supported. He spoke on strategic outcome #3. What did students think their courses would be? Would they take more? 89% plan to take more Honors ELA courses. 69% plan to take an AP English course.

Ms. Hamilton spoke on upcoming steps that will be initiated in March. 1st step to be done in March is during the time when students will participate in focus groups. They want personal stories and testimonies around Honors and Seminars class. They will also ask if they were academically challenged in this class. The RADES colleagues will collect the data from both Sept. and March. Hopefully the numbers will increase. They also have plans to continue their work with DEEP: Defining Equity Equality and Rigor. They have struggled a little bit with whether or not all teachers have the same definition of Rigor.

Ms. Milner spoke about being a History teacher and then a Dean. She mentioned that in one popular Social Studies class, STARRS, the students have written about creating a common experience for all students. Teaching history lends itself to being an important place for having a diverse group of students be able to talk and learn about social justice, power, inequity, equality and democracy issues.

Ms. Stang, spoke about the connection between English and History teachers in the 9th grade world. The History teachers have been creating common formative assessments. School City has been moved from just the Upper schools to include 9th grade. English and History have the same literacy standards and skills. They have a good system to look at the data.

Before they begin discussions, they asked two students to share their experiences:

Mr. Kalijah Robinson is glad that he did the Seminar class, it is helping him with his Honors ELA class. In the beginning, he did not feel capable of doing Honors classes, he did not know what seminar was and what it would help him do, but now going forward, he is convinced he will have more opportunities for growth. In his seminar classes the atmosphere is great, it is like a family. He has been able to bond.

Ms. Phobe Tamaoki is also a freshman; she is in Honors ELA, and loves her class, it is awesome. She likes the exposure to be pushed more and realizing that she can do it. Some of her classmates are complaining that now everyone is in it, its' not Honors class anymore its' just CP again. She does not feel that way, she considers herself an Honors student. It is a great idea and she hopes that everyone continues to use it and improve.

Ms. Milner shared a quote from Thurgood Marshall about learning and living together. The world is increasingly diverse. CRLS students are learning how to take other people's perspectives in their learning.

Mayor McGovern in the Chair.

Ms. Bowman asked Kalijah why he did not see himself taking Honors courses. She explained that she asks because she wants to make sure we don't make other students feel the same way. He responded that he didn't think he was smart enough to do the work; he just didn't know that he had it in him.

Ms. Nolan stated that this is very exciting. It is hard for her to judge this because there is no information about how it is going. The data is there, but it was not ready to print. She wants to know how we are assessing it so we can make improvements to make sure it is working.

Ms. Hamilton confirmed they will have the data by next week. The two snow days really threw them off. Silver days are important days to take the assessments that provide the information. They intend to use the standards and 8th grade scores, as they continue with other assessments; they will be able to see by standard student's progress.

Ms. Nolan is concerned about expanding to other areas without any data to show how well this is going at the half way mark. There was a survey from students, which was shown to three different social scientists; the result being that they were not impressed. The survey does not ask whether the students learned anything. There were questions of a sensitive nature about race that concerned her also. She is excited that data is coming.

Mayor McGovern stated it takes time to see if a program works. It sounds like it is going well so far.

Dr. Salim stated that we are looking at multiple sources of data. This data will give us a snapshot; it is not designed to give us comparison data. We will have the experiences of students and teachers. We chose to do Honors ELA 9 first and have other teachers work around them to make sure all other issues and schedules work out correctly. We have a cohort of teachers in a seminar with students.

Ms. Nolan wants it to be successful and supports the program and student voice. She asked Kalijah if it is hard to have class every other day.

He responded that at first it was a little tricky, but then it was fine once he got the hang of it. It balances out.

Phobe agreed. She feels it is good to have it every other day because you have more time to accomplish assignments. It was a bit hard to adjust to, but then she got used to it.

Dean Milner informed the assembly that next year they will have ELA on a silver day and History on a black day. They have been purposeful about groupings and touch points.

Ms. Dexter is glad we are at this point. She would like to hear more about the course, what are the assignments, is it usually multiple choice?

Ms. Hogue stated that they do not only do multiple choice they can do long compositions etc. They began with a unit that was focused on building community. The book was easy to read, the activities that went with it were more complex, it was a novel about a high school English class coming together by learning poetry.

Mr. Kreuser stated that they are also moving between fiction and non-fiction. They are going to move on to Lord of the Flies. A lot more focus is going to be on speaking and listening. He added that the social skills and community building is going well in poetry analysis and on open mic days. They accidentally found that what they are doing works very well with MCAS 2.0.

Mr. Kimbrough is grateful to them for all of the work they are doing on this. He feels there is great leadership in place and is pleased with what he has heard today. He wants to know what type of information do parents get regarding how well their kids are performing.

Ms. Hogue stated that the way they are grading their performance is different and is in four categories, i.e. reading and writing, looking and listening. They are using the typical progress report and report cards. There is double the amount of opportunities for teachers to go around the classroom, and they can respond to parents more quickly and have better answers.

Mr. Kreuser stated that it is almost like there are three adults looking out for the kids, in order to be in the loop with family communication.

Ms. Milner stated that they are also putting together parent focused groups with their RADES colleagues.

Mr. Kimbrough asked Ms. Phillips about emotional supports.

Ms. Phillips stated the formalized services are provided by teams. They have worked with social workers for strategies to divert from disaster in a class. We don't give therapy in the class, but we help them work through a crisis, anxiety or being overwhelmed.

Mr. Kimbrough asked about the students that are not on Ed. Plans, what does that look like?

It was answered that there are systems in place; they have always had a process for that.

Mr. Kimbrough also asked about Student voices in the videos from the Black Student Union and how this can potentially impact the Level Up program and students' expectations.

Principal Smith answered that they have impacted the whole school and everyone will continue their work around those two videos. Before these videos were released, they have been trying to increase their equity footprint in the whole school. He feels that the video shows truth from a perspective of certain students, and listening to students' voices is always important. He also understands concerns around the RADES data, but that has to be recognized. It should not be our only signal point. It will continue to impact our work, but the video is not the only signal to impact their work.

Mr. Sullivan asked how is it decided who's put in a seminar course?

Ms. Milner answered that there was written feedback from teachers, SRI scores, grades; along with conversations with about 90 students out of roughly 400; and they also made sure they had conversations with students and families. Also, they had rounds with Upper School Principals and coaches to get the 8th grade ready for this next year.

Mr. Sullivan also stated that there is a lot of racial bias when he hears that it doesn't feel like Honors anymore because the CP students are in it.

Principal Smith responded that these are preconceived notions of the thoughts of others; these students are 9th graders, not former CP students. This is just damaging language without foundation. He visits these classes and is encouraged. People have concepts and whether or not they know whether what they say is honest critical thinking or just past traditional experience may be hard to define. Bringing diverse groups together may not match up to what other people have already made their minds up as to what it will look like. They try to re-educate.

Mr. Fantini thanked them for the presentation. Dr. Turk and Mr. Fantini went to a Carol Burris conference, which he enjoyed very much, she was a great lady and the work she did in Long Island was remarkable. We need a lot of supports and good people implementing it. We have inside and outside experts. Along with the budgetary and financial support, he is convinced we will be successful. He would like to know if there is a 10th grade expansion. What is coming up next?

Ms. Hogue spoke about connecting Frankenstein to some other book, based on appearances. When we can apply their experiences to real life as a learning process, the students won't find it a burden to take a test.

Mr. Fantini asked if they have considered using an app to help aid student communication.

Mayor McGovern asked what happens in 10th grade. He thanked Paul Sullivan for the question and Principal Smith for his answer. We are so focused on data now, but diversity is a great experience if we don't poison it. The Mayor asked a question about communication with the Upper School teachers, based on the issue was who was being directed toward Honors and who wasn't. This was based on race and special needs.

Dr. Salim answered that there are different ways of supporting students as they come in like AVID, Rise Up, summer preview courses are some structural pieces that exist to make sure under privileged students get the support that they need. All students have skills in different ways. He suggested that the Committee Members write their questions on the rest of this presentation and wait for the answers to come in the Weekly.

The presentation resumed.

Next Steps for students in 10th grade.

- ELA 10 with earned honors
- Heterogeneous class grouping
- Semester classes, honors curriculum for all
- Refining scope and sequence and developing CRAs
- Seminar 2.0

Principal Smith spoke about parents wanting the program to continue. They want to keep heterogeneous grouping for 10th grade. They are also thinking about honors pathway for students and earned honors criteria for students in 10th grade.

Closing Thoughts and Questions

Ms. Bowman asked if we are clear on what the goals are we wanted to achieve at the end, and do we have a sense of what we are measuring within this first year in order to know if we are succeeding.

Dr. Salim answered and mentioned that referrals are very important. Tonight's presentation shared outcome #3 and it looks like they have developed academic achievement and looking at the shift in instructional practice from traditional to what we are using now is promising. There is no specific measure that represents whether we are successful or not, but instead to help teachers make better decisions.

Ms. Bowman complimented this as a magnificent pilot. We need to clearly define what we have done and have something to celebrate. There should be some things to identify so we can celebrate the victory as well as process the challenges.

Ms. Nolan brought up small class size. She wonders about the survey and she looks forward to the additional questions. How do we measure whether or not students are speaking up in class. English and History need to have voices to make sure students are benefiting.

Mr. Kreuser responded that as an introvert himself, he is very intentional about doing partner work; they have a lot of think time. He revealed that some parents are concerned about their kids having discussions. A good amount of time is spent trying to make them feel comfortable with public speaking. The students have come out of their shells and are comfortable speaking and providing feedback to their peers.

Ms. Hogue added that different kind of co-teaching has more emphasis on interactions with students in stations, which are small groups. All students are getting feedback on a regular basis.

Mr. Fantini stated we might be able to get our summer courses at Harvard to accept Honors courses.

Ms. Dexter gave a scenario of three different students with different feelings:

Its too hard

I want more

What can I do in 10th grade that will replace the seminar?

Mr. Hogue said for the one that wants more, we provide "exceeds expectations" criteria. The 1:1 technology is wonderful for students that want to push themselves.

For the struggling student in seminar; he would try to be in a constant feedback group with family and use a Google spreadsheet with the teachers to support each other.

Ms. Hogue noted that they anticipate these scenarios and they prepare material and provide choices for the students so that the teachers are ready to meet each student where they are.

Ms. Kelly shared that she enjoyed listening to them all talk about the program and witnessing the level of collaboration and support they give to each other; she is impressed by the depth of this discussion this evening. She thinks this is going to change education. She thanked the two students that spoke also.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that his question about ELA and race should be imbedded into the curriculum so they are ready to support themselves. He also stated that what happens in the 14 years before they get to high school contributes to the Achievement Gap.

Mayor McGovern stated we do want data, even though we know the gains cannot be seen right away.

On a motion by Ms. Kelly, seconded by Mr. Kimbrough, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Dosha Beard
Executive Secretary
to the School Committee

Distributed Back-up Documents (copy on file in the School Committee office):

- School Committee Roundtable: Level Up Initiative January 30, 2018