

Boyertown Area School District
Curriculum Committee
May 3, 2016
Minutes

Mrs. Usavage called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm in the Board Room of the Education Center.

Board members in attendance: Mrs. Dennin, Mr. Elsier, Mrs. Usavage, Mr. Breece, Mr. Landino and Mr. Lewis (by phone)

Administration in attendance: Dr. Miller, Dr. Woodard, Dr. Faidley

BASD Staff in Attendance: 2

Members of the Public: 2

Everyone recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and observed a moment of silence.

The minutes from the March 8, 2016 meeting were approved.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Presentation and Discussion

The XQ Super School Project

Mrs. Usavage introduced Dr. Woodard who discussed the XQ Super School Project which provides an opportunity and challenge to redesign and rethink America's schools and experiences. The Super School Project is sponsored by Laurene Powell Jobs, the widow of Steve Jobs. It's a competition among all the schools in America which provides great monetary rewards. Dr. Woodard shared that Rebecca Hester, Wayne Foley and she submitted the required information in the fall and they were notified in January that Boyertown Area School District has moved to the next level of the competition. The project focuses on the importance of student voice and what they expect from high school and their experiences. Dr. Woodard shared they interviewed several students throughout the district during lunches. The students are looking for more authentic learning experiences, preparation to live on their own and personal finances. Dr. Woodard shared our career learning academies aligned to the XQ Super School Project beautifully. After submitting our high school concept in February, Boyertown Area School District was notified in April that we were accepted to move to the development phase or the last round of the competition. Dr. Woodard shared a video from XQ Super Schools that shows where they believe high schools should expand to.

Dr. Faidley asked if Dr. Woodard would highlight some of the partnerships we are building upon. Dr. Woodard shared we have started to build relationships with the YMCA, local child care centers, Giant Food Stores, East Penn Manufacturing, DeKa, Berks County Chamber of Commerce, Pottstown Medical Center, local engineering firms, etc. Making connections will provide our students with job shadowing and mentorship opportunities. On May 19, 2016 the Berks County Chamber of Commerce will be coming to the district to help us work on

developing these relationships. Dr. Woodard shared a poem which they uploaded with their application. The poem was about the experience of a student in a day. Everyone applauded the success of the group working on the project.

Mr. Landino shared his recent visit with the BCTC and The Reading Area Community College and how enlightening it was to see the integration of the coursework and how it transferred into college and then into career. Mr. Landino would love to see a close relationship with our students and local colleges so the students are best prepared for college or career.

Dr. Woodard assured Mr. Landino the XQ Super School committee's objective is to make curriculum more relevant and create situations where students have to engage in critical thinking.

Mrs. Dennin feels the job shadowing option is a valuable experience for all students. With a lot of emphasis on STEM, we need to make sure students are more knowledgeable in communication, public speaking, civics and understanding the world globally when leaving high school. Mrs. Denin asked if CPR is a state requirement for students. Dr. Woodard shared it is not a requirement but we do offer CPR/first aid as a course at the high school.

Mr. Breece asked if there is insurance on the children when job shadowing. Dr. Faidley responded that it's a district liability. Mr. Breece thinks we need to find ways of engaging the children's enthusiasm by allowing them to pick their own reading materials. He would love to see Boyertown School District be the best in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Lewis responded via phone that he loved this project and is excited to see the outcome.

Mrs. Usavage loves to hear the passion of this project and feels if we can remove all the barriers of the traditional school we can do so much. She had the opportunity to see engaged learning through the elementary gifted program. It would be nice to see this offered to all students.

Mrs. Usavage asked what the next stage is. Dr. Woodard shared the deadline of May 23. We are holding another work session on May 18 along with a community forum on May 19. The results will be available in August.

Mr. Breece wondered who will be submitting the final project. Dr. Woodard stated that she will be hitting the submit button. She shared the teachers working on this project are extremely passionate and believe this is right for the kids.

Mr. Landino shared the Junior High West 9th grade project is a great example of students working together and overcoming barriers to develop a presentation.

Common Core

Dr. Woodard introduced the topic of the Common Core Standards and the goal of this presentation is to provide some background, along with its challenges and opportunities. Standard-based education reform began in 1983. By 1998, almost every state had implemented academic standards for their students in math and reading. However, the standards were not consistent from state to state. In 2013, the State Board of Education approved the final PA School Code which took effect March 1, 2014. The state tests were revised to reflect the

changes during the 2014-2015 school year. The PA Core and Common Core Standards offer a set of rigorous academic expectations in ELA and math that students should master by the end of each grade level. They are relevant to the real world and reflect skills our students need to succeed after high school.

The ELA literacy standards state that students should read the same amount of non-fiction as fiction, read more challenging material closely, discuss reading using evidence, write non-fiction using evidence and increase academic vocabulary. Dr. Woodard shared it is important for students to embed informational texts into content area teaching along with writing across those content areas. There is an appendix of common core titles of text that are appropriate for certain grade levels.

Dr. Woodard shared an example of an ELA pre-common core question which is very different than post-common core. Pre-common core is more about personal connection where post-common core looks at text to text comparison and draws from the text to support your argument and counterclaim.

The mathematical common core shifts focus, to building skills across grades, developing speed and accuracy, using it in the real world, thinking fast and solving problems. The big challenge has been in content alignment where a fifth grade skill has been moved to a fourth grade skill. Dr. Woodard shared filling the gap and teaching the content as expected is challenging for the teachers and students but will get easier as students go through the system which will provide more focus as to what skill should be mastered at each level. Some people argue that common core does not expect students to know facts, which is not correct. Students still need to know the facts but they also need to have a better number sense than before. Research says the better foundation you have in the younger levels, algebra will come much easier for the learner.

Dr. Woodard shared an example of a math pre-common core and a post-common core question. Both questions are multi-step but post-common core involves different concepts and decomposing the problem into a variety of correct answers. A video clip of the common core math explanation was shared. The video emphasized the progression from kindergarten through high school was all designed to produce students who really know how to use the mathematics they learned.

Dr. Woodard explained that standards of mathematical practice is a key piece we want our students to grow in. We want students to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. Some proficiencies which the students are required to have include: capacity for logical thought and reflection, can they explain and justify their answers, procedural fluency and do the students see that math is useful.

Boyertown Area School District needs to provide greater focus on mathematical practices, building knowledge of CRA practices and seeking out resources promoting deeper thinking. Implementing the standards will require substantial changes in curriculum and instruction. We need to prepare our teachers and communicate the changes with parents. The Common Core standards will require younger students to learn more at a quicker pace than they ever have before.

Boyertown Area School District will continue to monitor the process of the Everybody Succeeds Act which, in accordance with the federal government, requires every district to have academic standards to receive federal funds. As a district, we will continue to align our curriculum to the core standards and implement practices that are aligned to our expectations. Until we hear otherwise, PA core is here to stay.

Mr. Landino would like to know how stable the PA common core standards are. He would like to know if it's a static or moving target each year. Dr. Woodard responded the PA core standards have been denoted and we know what those standards are for reading, writing and math. The science standards are still the same as in previous years.

Mrs. Dennin asked if all districts are still able to use different math textbooks. She wondered if teachers are required to follow a script or can teachers develop their own teaching strategies. Dr. Woodard shared each district may choose their own textbooks. Our district has not changed our current textbook but we are using common core aligned supplemental materials that allow teachers to choose which option works best in their classroom.

Dr. Faidley added one of the challenges with making this transition is in the instructional shifts and getting instructional practices and delivery in the hands of the teachers and allowing teachers to have time to discuss those shifts with one another.

Mrs. Dennin asked how we envision the high school curriculum changing from general academic classes to aligned common core classes. Dr. Woodard explained we will be looking at the textbooks being used to align general academic and advanced placement classes. Mrs. Dennin asked if we have come up with a better plan of communicating the common core to parents. Dr. Woodard explained in the fall they plan to do parent and parent child workshops at each elementary school to help gain a better understanding of the common core.

Mr. Elsier thanked Dr. Woodard for putting this presentation together and has gained a better understanding that this presents a big change for the teachers and students. Mr. Elsier likes the idea of better communication because of the rigorous curriculum. Mr. Elsier would like to know what other districts are doing to better equip the teachers, students and parents. Dr. Woodard shared the BCIU has been providing CRA training sessions for all teachers, coaches and administrators. Boyertown Area School District has been partnering with the BCIU for all of our professional learning experiences.

Mr. Breece wondered if the standard of college readiness is changing. Dr. Woodard answered in 2013 there was a revision but no additional changes have been made. Mr. Landino shared universities will give new students an assessment on their program to tell which math class is best suited for each individual. Dr. Woodard will provide a copy of the college and career readiness standards from which the common core standards have been developed. Dr. Faidley shared that Dr. Miller and he are part of a national conversation that is called Redefining Ready which is looking at what the new definition of college and career ready should be based on research. Across the nation, more high schools students are taking collegiate courses while in high school. Therefore, they should be defined as college ready. Dr. Faidley believes there is a disconnect between the collegiate and secondary system. Mr. Breece thanked Dr. Woodard for the effort she put into preparing this presentation.

Mr. Lewis also thanked Dr. Woodard for the excellent presentation. Mrs. Usavage wondered if there is a concern that some kid's brains may not be able to support the level of rigor. Dr. Woodard expects we will be successful because we are growing the students through the process. However there may be some students who will need more time to reach each standard. Mrs. Usavage would like to know how we are sharing best practices within the district. Dr. Woodard shared that our instructional coaches are working with cohorts and individual teachers. We are also imbedding best practices into early dismissal times and 1 hour meetings.

Middle School Transition

Mrs. Usavage introduced Dr. Miller who provided updated information on the transition of moving our sixth graders to the middle school. A planning committee of teachers and building administrators was created. The committee looked at what the middle school will include, what the classes and schedule will look like and the responsibility of an advisory period. With this transition, there should not be an increase in the number of staff members. The committee utilized research done by Hanover Research to identify the key elements in middle school education. Work was also done to analyze the schedules and offerings of surrounding districts to identify current trends. The committee reviewed the time allocation of a sixth grader when compared to middle school. A survey was created for sixth, seventh and eighth grade teachers, as well as parents of soon to be middle schoolers. The survey provided questions on instructional time, advisory programs and priorities of subjects offered. Once all the data was compiled, the following points were included in the program: extended learning time in math and ELA, more science and social studies, interdisciplinary teams, increased need of STEM offerings, world language offerings, building an advisory or mentorship program. Dr. Miller shared an example of a middle school schedule. In eighth grade, we will have some flexibility to offer opportunities like world language or completing two years of math in one year. Special areas will include art, music, tech ed, PE, Health, Computer and Road to Success. Road to Success will be taught by a school counselor and provide instruction to help kids develop through the tough years of middle school along with career exploration.

From a staffing perspective we decided to survey the teachers to see which teachers would like to go to the middle schools and what subjects they would like to teach. The goal is to put teachers in the middle school who would like to be there. The committee is currently working to identify those teachers and send out tentative job assignments the week of May 16.

Dr. Woodard shared there is a lot of curriculum development that will need to take place with this transition. Some examples include: tech ed. which was never taught before to sixth grade and increased instructional time for social studies and science. Once the staffing announcements have been made, curriculum work will be completed. Sub committees will be formed for the advisory piece. Dr. Woodard and the building principals are working together to develop professional learning since a lot of staff will be new to the middle school. Dr. Miller shared that the new schedule study halls will be eliminated, more instructional time will be added and no additional teaching staff will be needed.

Mr. Landino applauded the presentation and wanted clarification on the sample sixth grade schedule. Dr. Miller shared the sample schedule is based on the current elementary schedule which was modified based on best practices.

Mr. Breece thanked Dr. Miller on the presentation and loves the idea of implementing the Road to Success class and helping students find their best fit. Mr. Breece also applauded the increased instructional time.

Mr. Elsier is very impressed with the committee and liked the idea of the survey reaching out to the teachers. Mr. Elsier wondered if 9th grade was included in the survey for the high school transition. Dr. Miller stated that 9th grade was included in the survey. Mr. Elsier wondered what grade world language is currently offered in. Dr. Miller explained it is offered in 9th grade but after the transition it will be offered in 8th grade. Mr. Elsier asked if the instructional time in science is being increased. Dr. Woodard shared yes there will be increased instructional time of science and social studies. Mr. Elsier wondered if plans were evolving to include computer throughout all the classes. Dr. Miller believes with the 1:1 initiative we will eventually create a surplus of computers which will then get pushed down to the junior highs. Mr. Elsier wondered if there will be a communication plan to parents and students on the transition. Dr. Miller shared the information has already been communicated through the BASD website, emails, Facebook and Twitter.

Mrs. Dennin wondered how not having study halls will work for those students who need the extra support. Dr. Miller explained support will be provided through flex or through creative scheduling. Mrs. Dennin wondered if the 9th grade project will move to the high school. Dr. Miller shared discussions have been started within the curriculum development.

Mr. Lewis would like to see the 9th grade project be offered at both middle schools. Mr. Lewis felt all the presentations tonight were well prepared and planned out.

Dr. Faidley thanked the board for allowing them to have the resources to generate the quality research this committee was able to dissect. Dr. Faidley also thanked his leadership team on the extra duties and work on the XQ Super School Project. Dr. Faidley announced the Finance Committee Meeting on May 17 has been cancelled.

Public Comment

Mrs. Curry wondered if ELA test questions are graded on spelling, grammar and punctuation. Dr. Woodard shared there is a rubric used for grading and conventions are a very small part of the grading rubric. Mrs. Curry asked if the organizational routine time listed on the sixth grade schedule is homeroom. Dr. Miller answered that this time is designated for homeroom. Mrs. Curry feels that study hall is useful.

There was discussion about scheduling a summer curriculum meeting.

Announcements

May 10, 2016 – Policy Review Committee, Education Center, Conference Room A, 6:00 PM

May 10, 2016 – Board of School Directors Meeting, Education Center, Board Room, 7:00 PM

May 17, 2016 - Parent/Community/Intergovernmental Committee, Ed Ctr, Board Rm, 6:00 PM

Mrs. Usavage adjourned the meeting at 9:20 pm.