

CENTRAL BUCKS SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Board Curriculum Committee
March 8, 2017
Board Room – 16 Welden Drive
7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Collopy, Chair
Dennis Weldon, Member
Jerel Wohl, Member

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS AND ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT

Meg Evans
Glen Schloeffel
Karen Smith
Mr. John Kopicki
Dr. Davidheiser
Dr. Walloff
Dr. Bolton

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

John Gamble

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

The meeting minutes from February 8, 2017 meeting were reviewed and approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment at the meeting.

INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

Textbook Recommendation—*Frankenstein* for 11th grade English.

Dr. Walloff noted that this textbook is one of several optional texts for the regular education 11th grade English course. Copies were distributed to the committee members at the February 8, 2017 meeting. Teachers who reviewed the text for selection felt the text is challenging in its language but accessible with teacher guidance, has themes that are relevant today, is a manageable size, and students relate well with it. One teacher at CB-South piloted the text this year. Dr. Walloff is looking to make an initial purchase of 90 copies of the text for each of Central Bucks West and East schools (which provides three class sets for each building) and 120 copies for CB-South (four class sets) as an initial purchase. Mr. Kopicki asked if the volume of the purchase was enough. Dr. Walloff noted that the text is an optional choice for the classes. She purchases enough to get the classes started, and if more need to be purchased because of increased use, the building budget affords those purchases. Dr. Davidheiser noted that books are purchased for use, and interest develops across classes in the same building, then the texts are shared. Books would not be shared between buildings. Mr. Schloeffel asked how many total optional choices are there for the 11th grade English classes at this time? Dr. Walloff noted there are nine other novels and seven plays to choose from. Ms. Collopy noted the paperback version (from Amazon) and Everbind version costs are close to each other. Committee members had been given the paperback version for review, Dr. Walloff showed them a copy of the Everbind version, noting the greater durability of that version. Ms. Collopy affirmed it would make more sense to spend the small price difference to get the Everbind version. The committee agreed to move the *Frankenstein* textbook on to the full board for adoption.

Curriculum Materials—*Lead 21 Spelling Program* for Grades 3-5

Dr. Walloff noted that the *Lead 21* spelling program was presented in the September 14, 2016 meeting prior to the piloting of the program in grades 3-5 across several elementary schools. In the past, Zaner-Bloser was the

spelling program utilized however the publisher is no longer supporting the existing materials. Currently, K-2 grades are using *Words Their Way* which provides support for the existing reading program at that level. For grades 3-6, Zaner-Bloser spelling is separate from the reading and writing programs. Teachers reviewed the new Zaner-Bloser program for grades 3-6 and felt it was time to look for something more meaningful and if at all possible, connected to the existing reading/writing programs. Zaner-Bloser, *Storytown*, *Sitton Spelling*, and *Word Skills* (other districts did not rate this one well), *Journeys* (a reading program we do not use with a spelling component), *Words Their Way* and *Lead 21* (both connect to our reading programs) were reviewed. *Words Their Way*, while effective, requires more teacher time generating lessons and individual lists for students than should be expended in this area. *Lead 21* complements the current reading program in grades 3-5, (grade 6 does not use *Lead 21*, so would continue to use Zaner-Bloser) and a sampling of pilot grade classrooms in buildings across the district put the program into use this semester. The piloting teacher feedback was positive. They found the program easy to implement and low-maintenance, focused on a variety of words with flexibility in use. Dr. Walloff reviewed the components of the *Lead 21* spelling program which includes spelling patterns, list words, review words, commonly misspelled words, challenge words, and teacher choice words (often used to include words that may come up as challenging in other curricular areas). The students learn words, are tested, can self-correct, and then follow on with a variety of practice activities. The question of how the *Lead 21* materials could be perfected was posed to the pilot teachers. Some suggestions were creation of *SmartNotebook* files for direct spelling instruction, creating quizzes for each unit, creating sample sentences for word delivery in quizzes, and creating more activity pages for each unit. The cost is low—based on current enrollment, with a grand total for student and teacher books \$11,913.20 printed through our district Print Services department. Self-printing also makes the materials easy to replace and augment. Ms. Evans asked if the reading program is *Lead 21*, do some of the words in the spelling materials correspond with what they are reading? Dr. Walloff noted that they had cross-referenced and highlighted the words that are used in the reading program and found that approximately five words per unit in the spelling materials correspond with the reading unit. Teachers also found that many of the commonly misspelled words in the materials are what they are seeing as commonly misspelled by their students. It was recommended that the *Lead 21* Spelling materials go to the Board for adoption.

Update on Elementary Report Card

Dr. Bolton noted that the Elementary Report Card Committee did meet for the final time on February 27 to wrap up some details. Letter grades in the academic subject areas will be included in grades 4-6. The Success Standards, which had been reduced from the 19 of the previous year, were reviewed and clarified with eight definitely decided prior to the last meeting, three more were discussed and clarified and voted to be included at that meeting for a final total of 11 Success Standards.

Ms. Collopy voiced her opinion that she wanted the Success Standards reduced even more.

Dr. Bolton reviewed the items that were discussed on the document (listed below the approved first eight standards), and the fact that several had been excluded after discussion. Ms. Collopy voiced her opinion that many of the standards could be combined, as she felt the information was redundant and the student letter grade could be taken to represent success in these areas. Ms. Evans noted that each of the standards are particularly appropriate to address separately in the lower grades to give a clear picture of areas of success and areas needing growth at that level. Ms. Collopy reiterated that she felt the number of Success Standards could be reduced further and made suggestions as to which should be changed. Ms. Evans noted that each of the six standards that are removed will require teachers to increase information in their comments instead of acknowledging achievement in the Success Standards. Parents would want to know from these standards what

their child is or is not accomplishing. Ms. Collopy expressed the opinion that if a child is having difficulties, (referring to areas addressing self-control, and positive interactions with all members of the school community), his/her teacher would know about it and address it with the parent. Problems in other areas of the building would come back to the teacher.

Further discussion focused on areas of behavior reporting through the Success Standards. Mr. Wohl asked if that should be documented somewhere? If student behavior in other areas of the school day, say lunchroom, playground, halls, shows need for improvement, this would be noted in a general way in the standards. Ms. Collopy noted that with the change to the trimester reporting format, she would expect that the parents would hear about any difficulties from the teacher, guidance counselor, lunchroom aide long before the report card is issued. Ms. Smith questioned how a teacher is to know if there are issues everywhere else outside of his/her specific classroom if behavior in the classroom shows no evidence of difficulties? Dr. Bolton noted that with interaction between teachers, teachers and aides, guidance counselors, principal and others, parents are made aware of any difficulties that arise. Behavior issues are shared with the classroom teacher whether they were directly witnessed or not. Dr. Bolton noted that both groups on the Report Card Committee, teachers and parents, selected these Success Standards based on what they viewed as being important. Many standards were considered, and the committee felt that this was the appropriate list. Mr. Schloeffel asked how did the committee end with 11? Dr. Bolton indicated there was no set number goal.

Mr. Kopicki commented on Ms. Collopy's concerns, and reminded the members that the size of the report card had been reduced from nine pages to two to three pages, and that was an accomplishment. Additionally, and more importantly, he noted that by changing the elementary format to a trimester we provide more instructional time for the students. This is a very important accomplishment.

Mr. Kopicki returned to the subject of the Success Standards and noted that he could see combining several of them, and refining "Demonstrates positive interactions with all members of school community" by removing the "all". He also agreed with the view that if I have a child in school, I should be aware of any problems ahead of the trimester report, so collapsing some of the standards will reduce the volume of information further. Ms. Evans expressed concern that some of the standards that were discussed to be combined are actually very separate skills. By combining two skillset characteristics, you are not providing clear information. This will become part of the permanent record moving forward and might create a false impression. Mr. Kopicki believes that the 11 Success Standards can be collapsed down to nine at the most. He feels we are very close and some of these suggestions need to be taken.

Mr. Wohl asked how are we going to effectively communicate with parents (by combining information)? For example, if a student completes homework on time, but is not doing well on the tests? Mr. Kopicki referred to homework as being another question area altogether. The important focus is that there will be more instructional time for students with the accomplishment of changing to the trimester. He could find things with the report card that he would choose to change, however what the Report Card Committee has accomplished is good. What the Board did by driving this committee to review the entire document, and the committee is coming close to a final document, it will be valuable to go out there one more time (for review). Ms. Collopy interjected that they have not seen the final document yet. Mr. Kopicki acknowledged that, however advised the Board to push the process forward, get final feedback, and get to a conclusion. The full and most effective feedback will come when the first report cards are delivered to parents.

Mr. Kopicki noted that Ms. Evans wanted to keep the first two standards separate (Follows directions and classroom routines. Works independently to complete tasks.), he could see her point, but thinks we can collapse down the others. There is enough in the report card for parents to know whether or not their child is doing well.

Mr. Kopick stated he does think the Board has accomplished this goal. He recommends to gather feedback before April, then get the final documents to the Board so that they can go forward after public feedback. Mr. Kopicki thinks the report card can be concisely, neatly condensed more—which was the original goal.

Ms. Collopy stated that the document that gets released for public comment should be one that the Board has seen first. Mr. Kopicki agreed. Dr. Bolton will have the report card to the Board next week electronically. The Board will review, with the hope to have the documents ready for approval at the end of April or beginning of May. Mr. Kopicki noted that at the March 14 Board Meeting the Report Card Committee will be recognized.

Update on Middle School Schedule Focus Group

Dr. Davidheiser noted that the group has met twice since the last School Board Curriculum Committee Meeting. They are on target with their objectives and have a draft philosophy and mission statement for the committee (copies had been distributed). There was consensus within the focus group—commonality with some wordsmithing. The backbone of research, data and conversations merged to encompass the same things, with order the area of compromise. With acceptance of this document the group can move forward to the next stage of creating a blueprint schedule for middle school principals to take at the end of the sixth meeting and go behind the scenes to see if scheduling is possible with the blueprint. Scheduling presents a number of limitations in structure (block, hybrid block, six-day, seven-day period, timing, length of classes, 30-minute lunch taken out of the total 420 minutes per day, transition between classes, Chapter 4 PA Code instructional requirements—all constraints that will affect the functionality within the blueprint). With the committee approval this evening of the draft document, the focus group meeting next Monday (March 13) will be able to move forward. All Board members are welcome to attend.

Mr. Kopicki was at the last meeting session and commented on the arduous process and collaboration. Ms. Collopy was also at the last meeting and commented that an old mission statement sign that hangs in Lenape Middle School had not been acknowledged. She agreed with the draft document presented except for the last bullet point and felt that should be eliminated (Partnerships with our community that build a sense of identity, cultural proficiency, responsibility, and connectedness to others). She commented on the lengthy discussion and difficulty in reaching agreement for this last point.

Ms. Smith was at the same meeting and felt that everyone had something that they were concerned should be included. Ms. Collopy commented again that the last bullet should be eliminated, she felt there was too much redundancy in the document. Dr. Davidheiser noted that the process is a reminder that there is compromise in everything, and he was beholden to the School Board Curriculum Committee to move forward so that the process can continue. He noted that he could strike the last bullet point if that was what was needed.

Mr. Wohl commented that the description could apply to high school, elementary school, or middle school. What distinguishes this to middle school? Dr. Davidheiser noted that what was on the Committee's minds regarding middle school level students included a rigorous curriculum, focus on understanding the whole child and what the needs are at that age level when there are so many changes, it is a very tenuous time for students. Focus was on what the students and community see as the social/emotional aspects, technology, exposure to

specials instruction, everyone had a stake in each of these. There is overlap across K-12—in teaching to the whole child there will be overlap.

Mr. Wohl agreed, and asked where to the specials fit in the program, for example, how does the elementary QUEST program move forward in the middle school? What is the direction/purpose? Dr. Davidheiser noted that the hard facts will provide more specificity when this is moved forward into a schedule structure. The task is to get 60 people (the focus group) talking about the same common themes and what is important to students in Central Bucks and the community. Now, the next step, we go to specificity in the schedule and detailing with all the imposed constraints.

Mr. Wohl asked that as the process bridges from elementary to high school, what will be the mission? Will there be actionable changes at the building level next year? Or will it take more than one year to work through? Ms. Evans asked what the breakout of the focus group was. Dr. Davidheiser indicated that there are 10 teachers (two from each middle school), 10 parents (two from each middle school), and 10 students (two from each middle school), and curriculum supervisors, principals and assistant principals from all the buildings. The breakout is equally balanced and there has been very good participation (in the upper 50s in attendance)—retention has been good as well.

Ms. Smith stated she would keep the last bullet (partnerships...) as it does represent the thoughts of several people. Mr. Weldon asked for an understanding of “cultural proficiency”—Ms. Smith explained it is knowing the differences, norms and ideals of various cultures. Dr. Davidheiser noted that it is particularly important given the current state of our country and world. Mr. Weldon commented he felt the “whole child” theme was redundant in the document. Dr. Davidheiser noted that we have students at their most vulnerable ages, and we need to help them form good habits, be exposed to many different people, and enjoy the people they are with. Ms. Collopy commented—we are back to redundancy. How many would like to see the last bullet point removed? Ms. Evans stated that this is important to keep as it is part of partnerships. Mr. Wohl spoke to Mr. Kopicki that a lot of people worked together to come to agreement on this document, I think it is important that we keep it.

Mr. Kopicki asked that the committee look at the last bullet and possibly modify it. There is some redundancy, but we should include partnerships, responsibility, and community in it. Mr. Schloeffel brought up a question about rescheduling the start time of the School Board Curriculum Committee meetings now that the Communications Committee schedule had changed. Mr. Kopicki said no, keep the schedule at 7:00 p.m.

Dr. Davidheiser asked that the committee come back to the draft document at hand. Part of the focus group process has been to update the community following each group meeting with the results of the meeting, and he would like to publicize this document without the DRAFT watermark so the community can see the philosophy and mission. Can this be posted with modifications? Mr. Kopicki asked if Dr. Davidheiser could rework the last bullet at next Monday’s (March 13) focus group meeting? Dr. Davidheiser noted that with adjustments tonight, the group would be able to move forward at its next meeting. Several committee members’ comments on possible changes or bullet elimination were exchanged. Mr. Kopicki noted that there was obvious disagreement among the committee members and no consensus, and stated that Dr. Davidheiser should review the last bullet point for modification at the next focus group meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.