

Newtown Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut
Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee

Minutes from the Board of Education Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee held on Tuesday, May 14, 2019, in the BOE Conference Room.

J. Vouros	L. Rodrigue	L. Silveira	P. Vitarelli
M. Ku	C. McArthur	E. Tabasko	

J. Vouros called the meeting to order at 10:19 a.m.

M. Ku moved to approve the minutes from the April 30, 2019 minutes.

J. Vouros seconded the motion.

Public Participation: None.

Grade 3 Reading

Grade 4 Reading

C. McArthur, L. Silveira, E. Tabasko, P. Vitarelli, presented an overview of the curriculum. P. Vitarelli stated that they use Teachers College (TC) units of study as our resources. We follow the units that designed the curriculum concept. C. McArthur added we made it teacher friendly on Rubicon. There are six to seven units. P. Vitarelli stated that 2 ½ to 3 weeks prior to SBAC we prepare the students for test taking strategies and skills. Students will do games and academic vocabulary. C. McArthur stated it is okay if the tools are not available. Some of the students are computer savvy. We show students on the smart board the tools that they will see on the test. L. Silveira shared that SBAC measures stamina. One of the goals of test preparation unit is to have marathons where you can help students increase their stamina for reading and test taking. There is a lot of reading required. The stamina is a factor in their performance. C. MacArthur shared our units of study require the independent reading of novels. J. Vouros asked about the students who have difficulty in reading but are not 504. P. Vitarelli added in interventions we first try to diagnose what the student is struggling with. If it is a student significantly below grade level, we have an alternate program we use Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) which alternates between fiction and nonfiction texts. Comprehension, strategies, or fluent strategies, teachers will also meet with students for extra support. C. McArthur stated if the students are not getting what they need on the third grade level, we will look at the second grade level to see where the standard needs to be strengthened. We go over academic vocabulary and test taking strategies. L. Silveira shared that our curriculum with a little bit of planning for these students is where are we going to focus on with these students. The curriculum is very adaptable to those needs. Some students might be reading on a third grade level or second grade level. J. Vouros asked if you have enough books. C. McArthur said we have a lot of old copyright. We can use more non-fiction. She said we can use more

challenging books for the advanced reader. L. Silveira at Middle Gate we have a large quantity of books, but finding books that are appealing to young students is a challenge. E. Tabasko stated with the science unit we ask how can we integrate some of our units with what we are reading. M. Ku asked with a concept based curriculum, how does TC integrate well with concept based training? P. Vitarelli shared TC is standards based. The units are aligned with the standards. There are concepts and skills that they want all readers to learn. We looked at the conceptual lens. What lens are they trying to teach. In each bend we are able to pull out the concept. We are then able to dissect the core learning activity. M. Ku asked how concept based work with TC. P. Vitarelli shared what skills they are asking the reader to use, what is the lens we are trying to teach. In each bend we pull out the contents. We have the resource to support it. M. Ku asked how the teachers who have TC training internalize this. P. Vitarelli stated she would sit with the teachers show them the concept map, using Rubicon as a resource. There will be a need for concept based training for all staff. She has been looking at it with third grade and fourth grade teachers. C. McArthur stated we also had classroom teachers write this with us. J. Vouros asked what does the transition from elementary to Reed look like. C. McArthur stated we shared concept based writing over the summer with Reed. The math and science specialist were with us. Reed took our format for finishing what they started. P. Vitarelli stated the curriculum was being worked on from the top down, from the high school to the elementary schools. C. McArthur shared Reed used the same resources. The teachers were concept based trained.

Grade 3 Writing

Grade 4 Writing

L. Silveira shared TC units recommends being used as an assessment. Students are given a forty-five minute work session to do a piece of writing with a prompt that is very general. Example: write an informational piece that you know a lot about or an opinion piece. Based on the standards we wanted students to use resources. We wanted students to be able to read an article and use the information to support what they are asked to do. We added that the writing piece that is not part of TC. C. McArthur stated we raised what our students should be doing by the end of the school year. Students should be reading two sources of the information, coming up with an opinion. We have not been successful with the students with two sources. We are thinking about reducing it to one source. There is too much text for the students right now. P. Vitarelli stated we are trying to evaluate the students writing skills, not their research skills. It is not appropriate for the students. J. Vouros asked if they all have to do the same text. P. Vitarelli answered yes, to keep it fair. J. Vouros asked how can we help you. P. Vitarelli stated you can help us with our relationship with TC. It was not a good time. We only had one or two sessions before the tragedy. L. Rodrigue added we need an ongoing relationship with Teachers College. J. Vouros asked for explanation of testing strategies. C. McArthur stated it is mapped out thru out the year. When you go back to the standards, you are teaching to the test. We should teach the standards so the students do well on the test.

Superintendent Update:

Concept based is moving forward. Foundations vs. Teachers College. A decision will be made soon. Staff have made a visit to Monroe. They will be visiting Burlington. I respect the process. Lois Lanning was a Readers Workshop. I realize the district was using the resource as the curriculum. When teachers do not have a curriculum they will use resources. It is very common. Profile of A Graduate will be a priority in the near future.

Public Participation: None.

J. Vouros adjourned the meeting at 11:51 a.m.

M. Hu seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Norling

THESE ARE DRAFT MINUTES AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE.