

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Curriculum Advisory Committee

Minutes of December 6, 2018

Mrs. Hadaway called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. in the Administrative Center, Curriculum Library, 520 Fifth Avenue, Fairbanks, Alaska.

Members Present:

Paula Addis
Tara DeVaughn
Grant Guy
Aimee Hart
Sharon Hildebrand

Earnest Kincade
Earl Peterson
Deborah Rinio
Fé Seymour
Christina Sinclair

Nonvoting Member
Melanie Hadaway

Members Excused:

Nonvoting Member
Chrya Sanderson

Members Absent:

Jessica Eid
Heather Stewart

Staff Present:

Jennifer Morgan

Guest Present:

Kristina Roehrig

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Ms. Hildebrand moved to accept the December 6, 2018, agenda; Ms. Addis and Ms. Seymour seconded. Hearing no objection or comment, the motion was approved.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Ms. Hildebrand moved to make a friendly amendment to page two, paragraph two of the October 4, 2018, minutes, changing the word “survey” to “surveyed”; Ms. DeVaughn seconded. Members reviewed the minutes. Hearing no objection or further comment, the motion was approved as amended.

CURRICULUM PROCESS

Mrs. Hadaway reviewed some details from the previous committee meeting, reminding the group a survey was sent to teachers and administrators last spring resulting in the following guiding principles:

- Students and their needs must be at the center of learning and decision making around curriculum, instruction, and materials.
- Student centered learning happens through personalized learning with the support of the Core Four.
- Ultimately, the teacher should decide on the right mix of instructional practices and materials needed to facilitate learning experiences that meet students' needs.
- Equity is maintained through teaching to the Alaska standards and maintaining a baseline for the quality of curriculum and instructional materials used.
- Teachers are professionals with different needs, styles, and philosophies; therefore, they need personalized support.

Mr. Peterson reiterated a point he raised at the last meeting - if the third bullet point means teachers will have the ability to decide on both instructional practices and the materials they use, this could result in a number of different books for a single subject, which raises budgetary issues. He went on to state the choice of textbooks and materials is a two-fold decision: an educational decision about the content of the material and a budgetary issue. Mrs. Hadaway acknowledged Mr. Peterson's question is something that needs to be addressed as we progress through this upcoming revision process.

Ms. Rinio thinks this is a really important discussion and inquired about where Mrs. Hadaway's sees this discussion taking place. Mrs. Hadaway thinks it will evolve throughout the next year, as the district starts to work through some of these issues. Referring to the first bullet point, Ms. Rinio also asked about the role students have in the curriculum and decision making processes. Historically, the curriculum process has started with teachers and then gone out for public comment, but one of the questions Mrs. Hadaway would like the committee to discuss is how to include different voices earlier in the process.

Mrs. Hadaway continued with her presentation, which included information about the curriculum process. Ms. Rinio inquired about the twice per year check-in and whether Mrs. Hadaway would like input from the committee. Mrs. Hadaway stated she does not know if this will be a topic for discussion during an upcoming meeting, but committee members are welcome to contact her and provide input.

Mrs. Hadaway informed the committee that January is the start of the research and review stage of the social studies and secondary English language arts curricula. Information was sent to social studies teachers, and will soon be sent to language arts teachers, the CTE Advisory Committee, and organizations such as the Fairbanks Native Association (FNA) and Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC). Ms. Rinio inquired as to whether there will be an opportunity for members of the community and parents to have conversations about the curricula. Mrs. Hadaway stated there are meetings scheduled for both teachers and community members to discuss this. Ms. Hildebrand suggested attending other organizations' meetings, such as setting up a table at a TCC event and having a drawing for those who fill out a survey or going to Alaska Native Education's (ANE) quarterly meetings. Ms. Rinio recommended contacting UAF and attending some department meetings. Ms. Sinclair suggested using social media or cold calling as ways to get feedback. Ms. Hart recommended attending PTA meetings, and Ms. Addis suggested participating in Science Night or other school events. On the topic of conversations versus surveys, Ms. DeVaughn stated the more personal the approach, the more likely it will get a response. She used the example that if someone asks her in person to answer a couple questions, she is more likely to do it than if she is emailed a survey that she forgets to complete.

Mrs. Hadaway shared multiple charts, such as the probability a robot will take your job in twenty years and the number of employees by job sector. In regards to the chart titled "Which Essential Skills are Hardest to Hire?," Ms. Rinio commented the skills listed on this are also included in the library standards.

At the end of the presentation, committee members were asked to break into groups and discuss the following:

- How should curriculum address nonacademic or cross-content skills and expectations?
- What knowledge, understandings, and skills should a graduate of Fairbanks schools have, and how do we build a series of requirements to deliver that graduate?

The groups were given time to discuss these questions and then share ideas with the entire committee. In regards to the first question, Mr. Guy stated his group discussed standards-based report cards for kindergarteners and first graders, and he thinks this area is a great way to start addressing some of the nonacademic skills. These contain important information that parents need to know, such as whether their kid gets along with others or if he/she can work in a group with someone he/she does not like and still complete the assigned task. Ms. Rinio's group discussed multiple pathways to graduation and having a common set of standards for soft skills that can be injected into every class. Mr. Kincade's group talked about tying soft skills to a class that goes out into the community and learns to network so students can learn how to make and grow connections.

The committee then began to discuss the second question. Mr. Guy thinks the idea of multiple pathways is a phenomenal idea, and the requirements for high school graduation fit some kids but not all kids. He used the example of the 1.5 PE credits that students are required to have in order to graduate. He knows there are ways for students who play sports to get out of some PE courses, but he raised the question of whether these students would benefit from a different pathway. Both Ms. Sinclair and Ms. Seymour commented that their high schools offered multiple pathways to graduation. Mr. Kincade stated there are a lot of jobs that do not require a four-year degree and some career paths require less post-secondary education. Students do not necessarily understand all the options, and think it is just the natural progression to go to college.

Mr. Guy thinks the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is a fantastic assessment that highlights students' skills, and provides the opportunity for schools to have discussions about whether students' skill sets align with their interest. Ms. Rinio also stated this test is not about content knowledge, but instead is about skills. Discussion ensued.

Mrs. Hadaway appreciates all the great discussions, and reiterated it is becoming obvious there are things we want students to know that are not attached to content areas. As we move through the social studies and secondary English language arts curricula, these types of things will need to be a part of the curriculum conversation. She also mentioned there is nothing new to report at the January meeting, and suggested the committee consider canceling it.

GENERAL COMMENTS/ QUESTIONS

Last year Ms. Addis provided input for the second grade standards-based report card, and she inquired about a timeline for this. Mrs. Hadaway responded that there is not a timeline for using a standards-based report card in second grade. Currently, there are many discussions occurring throughout the district about this, and this process has been paused while these discussions occur. Michelle Daml will follow up with teachers at a later date.

Ms. DeVaughn thinks there were some really good conversations during the meeting, and appreciates the feedback that was provided. She also stated she is excited about the math curriculum that is scheduled to start next year.

Mr. Guy commented that the discussions throughout the meeting have raised several questions, such as how students, schools, and parents are impacted. He has lots of questions around standards-based report cards, such as what might happen if a student learns the content but does not master the soft skills. He also thinks, as we talk about personalized learning, elementary needs to focus on fundamental or soft skills. In middle and high school, parents and students can begin to have conversations about specific topics or areas students are interested in and drive their own learning. He also loves the idea of different pathways and providing choices for students. However, he pointed out there needs to be systems in place for this and it takes lots of planning. He stated he would be happy to come back and use the January meeting to continue the conversations that were started at this meeting. He feels like the committee has barely scratched the surface of the two questions put before them.

Ms. Sinclair thinks this has been a great discussion, agrees with Mr. Guy about continuing in January, and is really excited to see what the future holds for students and teachers.

Ms. Seymour commented that with only five committee meetings left this school year, she hates to waste the January slot and it is possible they can come to some conclusions.

Ms. Rinio agrees with everything Mr. Guy said, and would like to have a meeting on January 10 to continue this discussion. She also stated the National School Library Standards have six shared foundations: inquire, include, collaborate, curate, explore, and engage. She believes these are things we want in our soft skills, and are things we ask students to do every day. She thinks the district should seriously look at these standards and consider adopting it or a version like it. As we continue to discuss the process and the question of soft skills and nonacademic content, it will be important to answer the question of how it will be integrated when looking at a specific discipline.

Mr. Peterson agreed the soft skills issue is important. In reference to the ASVAB, he thinks it is alarming to identify students' skill sets and push them to go a specific way. It stifles students' creativity and prevents the opportunity for them to explore and choose their own path. Mr. Guy mentioned his group discussed this, and acknowledged students must be able to change their minds if they wish. However, he thinks when students discover their skill set and then compare it to their interests, it provides opportunity to have conversations with students about whether a particular career path might be worth looking in to. Mr. Peterson commented that we do not want to create a process for shepherding students through and locking them into a pathway to get their diploma. Students need the opportunity to explore as much as they can in order to become what they want to be. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Kincade stated he has always been a big fan of personalized learning and thinks it is a great thing for students, but he does not understand how teachers can keep up with the many levels of academics in one class. And, this can become even more complicated in twelfth grade when talking about graduation requirements.

Mrs. Hadaway thanked everyone for participating in the group discussions, and she appreciates the different perspectives the committee brings to the topics. She thinks this will help build a richer curriculum. Mrs. Hadaway reminded members the next meeting is on January 10, 2019. She also shared the news that the Department of Teaching and Learning plans to bring a resolution to the School Board asking the district to encourage the state to adopt new library standards, and for the district to look into adopting these as well. This item should be on the School Board agenda in January or February.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Peterson moved to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Addis seconded. Hearing no objections or further comment, the meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m.