



Upcoming Meeting Dates

BOE Response to RTM Education Committee Meeting 4/23/2014

Policy Committee Meeting Agenda 4/28/2014

Policy Committee Draft Meeting Minutes 3/31/2014

FLHS BC Draft Minutes 4/8/2014

Tri-State Consortium Report 2014

RBC Draft Minutes 4/8/2014

English/LA Curriculum Documents



UPCOMING MEETING DATES

- | | |
|----------|---|
| April 28 | 4:15 PM – Policy Committee Meeting
501 Kings Highway East
Superintendent's Conference Room |
| April 28 | 8:00 PM – RTM Meeting – Budget Discussion
McKinley Elementary School
60 Thompson Street
Cafeteria |
| May 5 | 8:00 PM – RTM Meeting – Budget Vote
McKinley Elementary School
60 Thompson Street
Cafeteria |
| May 6 | 7:30 PM – Board of Education Meeting
Regular Meeting
501 Kings Highway East
2 nd Floor Board Conference Room |
| May 20 | 7:00 PM – Student Awards
7:30 PM – Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Fairfield Woods Middle School
1115 Fairfield Woods Road
Auditorium |

FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



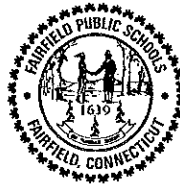
April 25, 2014

Please see the attached documents in response to follow-up questions from the April 23, 2014 BOE Budget Presentation at the RTM Education Committee meeting:

1. Outsourcing and Deficit Information
2. Staff Salaries and Union Information/Tenured vs. Non-Tenured Staff
3. Technology: Overview of Technology Configuration and Purchasing Requirements Memo
4. Technology: Economies of Scale Memo
5. Strategic Planning

FPS Response to RTM (Follow-up)

OFFICE OF THE
SUPERINTENDENT
FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



To: Members of the RTM
From: David G. Title
Date: April 25, 2014
Re: Outsourcing and Deficit Information

Outsourcing

The school district is open to the concept of outsourcing and has done so on numerous occasions. For example, our bus contract is outsourced to First Student. We have outsourced our Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy services and achieved savings. Most recently, we have not replaced two grounds workers and have outsourced the work to private contractors. And, of course, the Board of Education voted to outsource the Food Service Program and a contract is currently in negotiations. The BOE and district leadership had been monitoring the financial performance of the Food Service Program every year. As we noticed the fiscal issues, we took action to remedy the problem through outsourcing.

We are open to the suggestion of hearing what ADP has to offer. Every town's circumstance is different and we will follow up. Given that we have two payroll clerks for our 1500 employees, it is not clear what savings could be achieved by moving this function to an outside vendor. The Town of Greenwich hired ADP for its 3400 employees (town and BOE combined). According to minutes of a public meeting in February, 2014, ADP will cost Greenwich \$800,000 for its services from October 1, 2014 through June 30, 2014, an annual rate of over \$1,000,000. We will communicate directly with Greenwich to get more details.

Current Year Deficit Update

Due largely to unforeseen student outplacements in special education, we projected a year-end deficit for the current fiscal year of \$1.4 million as of December 31, 2013. We immediately brought this matter to the attention to the Board of Education and Board of Finance, and instituted a district-wide budget freeze to mitigate this deficit. Services directly impacting the instructional program were not impacted, nor were matters of health, safety and security. Measures included not filling vacant non-instructional positions (custodians, maintenance), postponing capital purchases in technology and other areas, deferring major maintenance projects, asking schools to work down inventory of supplies, cutting down on substitute teacher costs, postponing some curriculum and professional development and requiring all employees going to conferences to pay their own expenses.

These prudent management practices, including sacrifices made by staff, have mitigated the impact of meeting our educational obligations to all students.

At the end of February, we reported to the Board of Finance that, based on these measures, our projected year-end deficit was estimated to be \$469,000. As of March 31, 2014, the projected deficit is approximately \$300,000.

**Staff Salaries Increase
Union Contracts vs Non-Union Contracts**

	Budget 2013-2014	Budget 2014-2015	Increase (Decrease)	Union Contracts	Non-Union Contracts
101 Teaching Staff	\$ 68,309,520	\$ 69,161,139	\$ 851,619	\$ 851,619	
103 Certified Support Staff	\$ 6,312,213	\$ 6,355,172	\$ 42,959	\$ 42,959	
105 School Administration Staff	\$ 5,469,383	\$ 5,495,738	\$ 26,355	\$ 26,355	
107 Central Administration Staff	\$ 1,031,260	\$ 1,052,097	\$ 20,837		\$ 20,837
109 Director/Supervisor/Manager	\$ 694,225	\$ 699,249	\$ 5,024		\$ 5,024
111 Secretarial/Clerical Staff	\$ 3,213,978	\$ 3,220,423	\$ 6,445	\$ 6,445	
113 Paraprofessional Staff	\$ 2,881,998	\$ 3,075,932	\$ 193,934	\$ 193,934	
115 Custodian Staff	\$ 3,543,646	\$ 3,665,167	\$ 121,521	\$ 121,521	
117 Maintenance Staff	\$ 1,022,435	\$ 1,022,528	\$ 93	\$ 93	
121 Support Staff	\$ 1,115,099	\$ 1,234,533	\$ 119,434		\$ 119,434
123 Info Tech Support Staff	\$ 727,369	\$ 727,369	\$ -	\$ -	
125 SE Trainer Staff	\$ 570,547	\$ 631,301	\$ 60,754	\$ 60,754	
129 Part-time Employment	\$ 3,079,513	\$ 3,116,406	\$ 36,893		\$ 36,893
131 Wage/Benefit Reserve	\$ 700,802	\$ 906,025	\$ 205,223	\$ 197,145	\$ 8,078
133 Staff Replacement	\$ (460,000)	\$ (460,000)	\$ -		
135 Degree Changes	\$ 280,720	\$ 181,800	\$ (98,920)	\$ (98,920)	
Total	\$ 98,492,708	\$ 100,084,879	\$ 1,592,171	\$ 1,401,905	\$ 190,266

88.05% 11.95%

* There are currently 965 teachers and certified support staff. Of those, 752 (78%) are tenured, and 213 (22%) are not tenured.

FAIRFIELD BOE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

TO: DR. DAVID TTILE
FROM: NANCY BYRNES
SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF TECHNOLOGY CONFIGURATION AND PURCHASING REQUIREMENTS.
DATE: 4/25/2014
CC:

The process by which the technology department selects the equipment used in district, by both students and staff and acquires it at the best value possible, is a multistep process involving many and is in compliance with the Town of Fairfield, Board of Finance approved bidding and procurement requirements (approved by the BOF October 2011).

The IT Department Manager works with many different constituencies to determine the necessary configuration and components of the computers and technology equipment acquired. These include, but are not limited to administrative and teaching staff responsible for particular curricular areas: Curriculum Leaders and Curriculum Liaisons; Library Media Specialists and Directors and Principals responsible for delivery of instruction.

For example, within the budget request for 2014-15, there is a request for laptops for the World Language Department. These are replacement units for laptop carts acquired six years ago for the secondary schools. This equipment is used in lieu of costly traditional classroom world language labs. In working with the World Language Coordinator, it was determined due to AP testing requirements, that the device must have a headset and microphone input and the ability to record to disk media. (AP requires, as a part of their tests, the students vocal responses be recorded and "burned" to a diskette (CD) and mailed to them for scoring). There are no other special requirements.

This configuration resulted in a budget request for a commercial grade, Windows laptop that had the ability to burn CDs. The dollar value used for budgeting purposes was based on a purchase made in the previous summer (2013-14) for a similar model and charging carts. Those units were acquired under CT state contract /WSCA (Western States Contract Alliance) pricing with a three year manufacturers on site, next business day warranty. That price was \$650 per unit for 300 laptops plus 12 charging carts with network switches at a cost of \$2,800 each for a total of \$228,600.

Why do we use previous purchase numbers rather than a Google search for a similar laptop to create a budget number? The budget is built in November for purchases that take place the following July. Technology changes so quickly in that elapsed time, the originally specified equipment is no longer available. As a result, the actual purchase requires the selection of a readily available model that meets or exceeds the original configuration, at the best value available at the time of purchase.

Another example is the workstations for the CAD (Computer Aided Design) program at the high schools. This very intensive software program has very specific technical specifications. We worked with our vendor to review several different workstations with a variety of components to determine the best possible machine for our needs at the best price available under the BOF

purchasing rules. This is why these workstations are quoted at a much higher price than a standard desktop that would be used in a writing lab.

The department uses a standard configuration for desktops and laptops as a base to achieve several goals in addition to value:

- 1) A Windows compatible device which allows the computer to communicate with our district computer network and is compatible with district software (52+ titles)
- 2) Processing speed, memory and drive space required to provide a good user experience at the best possible price, and longevity. (Our average laptop lifespan is 5-6 years)
- 3) Efficiency of repair: Peripherals and Parts are readily available from reputable manufacturers
- 4) Commercial grade equipment (rather than consumer grade) where available- to ensure life span and the ability to stand up to being used by up to 45 different users a week
- 5) Purchase from reputable firms with reasonable return policies, warranties and guarantees who also meet the BOF consortium and bid requirements.

Standardization of brand and model, when compatible with the educational objectives mentioned above provide economies of scale in support, repair and training.

Standardization of peripherals, such as printers, are applied for equity in the classroom and to minimize the cost of supplies.

The district has migrated over the last five years from inkjet printers in the classrooms to monochrome laser printers. This effort was made to reduce the cost of supplies and improve the printing capability (e.g. faster output per minute) and capacity (of paper) for classroom printing.

The request completes the replacement of inkjet units; except where required for special purpose such as the high school art departments district wide. The dollar value budgeted per unit is \$345 based on the average cost of the printers we have acquired; normally under GSA (General services Administration) pricing. These are considered professional or commercial grade printers, which print up to 35 pages per minute, and begin printing in as little as 8 seconds. They are wireless compatible (to work with our laptops and tablets without cables) and are networked so they communicate with all of our district equipment, and the software which communicates to the vendor that services and provides supplies for district laser printers. Each printer would be the sole printer for the classroom supporting students, faculty and staff- up to 30 individuals simultaneously.

All technology department purchase orders are reviewed for compliance and value and approved by the Town Purchasing Agent.

Please see the memo on technology economies of scale for further examples of our efforts to acquire equipment to meet our objectives as a best value.

FAIRFIELD BOE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

TO: CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATORS
FROM: NANCY BYRNES
SUBJECT: TECHNOLOGY ECONOMIES OF SCALE
DATE: 4/24/2014
CC:

The technology department has been able to obtain discounts via economies of scale on several projects and through central control of software purchases rather than school based purchases. The Town IT department, in turn, has been able to use some of these deals to obtain better pricing than they would otherwise have enjoyed. Examples include:

- The use of “bid deal” pricing with Hewlett Packard when purchasing large volumes of replacement equipment, such as Procurve switches, desktops; workstations; laptops and monitors. For example, the switch upgrade project which took place between the years 2009-2011. We were able to get an additional 13% discount for this project under the big deal, a savings of \$94,520.
- Wherever available, we combine purchases of software and online subscriptions in order to get better discounts. As examples:
 - i. The district obtains Microsoft licenses via a district subscription rather than the need to purchase them outright. This enables the district to keep current at a minimum cost. For example, to purchase an open license for Office 2013 professional (Current posted price on CDWG website \$75.80 per computer) for each of our 6000 computers would cost \$454,800. The district subscription, which provides for Office as well as hundreds of other required licenses (e.g. desktop operating licenses; SQL and Exchange client access licenses; etc.) is based on FTE count, and cost \$85,693.40.
 - ii. The IT department obtains district or site licenses for any product used across disciplines, or schools. For example, several years ago rather than purchase individual licenses for Photoshop Elements and Adobe Acrobat we moved to a district license based on FTE to insure all students had access to these products. We also acquired site licenses to Adobe Creative Suites used in several different programs at the high schools in lieu of individual licenses. This enables students to not be limited to using a particular lab, but any lab to work on their graphic arts, photo art; marketing and web development projects.
 - iii. There are 52 instructional software or subscription titles which the district acquires centrally at best group, site, or consortium pricing. Examples include Encyclopedia Britannica, Type to Lean, Read and Write Gold, Follett library circulation and resources, and Gale resources.

FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the RTM

From: Philip Dwyer, BOE Chairman

Date: April 25, 2014

Re: Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning

The Fairfield School District had a "Strategic Plan" that ended in June, 2013. This plan had been augmented upon Dr. Title's arrival with a *District Improvement Strategy* document that he prepared and shared with the Board of Education in 2011 (attached). We believe the planning process has moved beyond the stagnant five-year plan approach to a more dynamic planning process that requires annual updating. Thus, our district is guided by a *District Initiatives* document that is reviewed each spring and updated each fall. The primary focus of our improvement efforts are contained in slides 44 and 45 (attached) from last Wednesday's Power Point presentation.

Our current planning process is:

- In recognition of the end of the existing Plan, and that our Mission statement had not been reviewed in many years, the Board of Education created an Ad Hoc Mission and Goals Committee in Spring, 2013 and invited community representatives from the BoS, BoF, RTM, PTA and other interested residents to help us re-write the Mission, Long Term Goal and Educational Goals (for students) of the district ("Goals Policies"). Community engagement is required by education law. Because these Goals Policies are adopted as official policy, the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations were presented to the Policy Committee of the Board of Education. The Board made edits, while conforming with the substance, and the BoE adopted these three Goals Policies in January, 2014.
- In the process of looking at Board Goals, we requested ideas from individual BoE members; this guided the next step in the planning process, the development of a long-range District Improvement Plan. The ideas were received in March-April, 2014 and will, together with staff guidance, form the basis for discussion at an upcoming BoE meeting. Staff will work in formulating a District Improvement Plan, based on BoE discussion. The Plan will include a variety of methods of measuring our progress toward meeting the updated Mission and Goals as

approved. Staff will also give regular updates on key components, so the BoE can help guide the document's development. Once completed, the entire District Improvement Plan will be approved by the BoE.

- Since planning is more dynamic today, the BoE and Dr. Title have reviewed accomplishments, as measured against the annual *District Initiatives* list, each spring. The list of *District Initiatives* has been updated at the beginning of each school year in 2011, 2012, and 2013 (and will be updated again in 2014). These annual updates have conformed to the existing strategic plan (2009 – 2013), the *District Improvement Strategy* document produced by Dr. Title in 2011, and the goals of the BoE.

We believe we have an appropriate, thoughtful planning process in place which guides the district annually and gives it a long term vision as well.

A District Improvement Strategy for the Fairfield Public Schools

David G. Title

For the past six months I have been learning as much as I can about the Fairfield Public Schools. As part of my “Entry Plan” I have conducted dozens of one-on-one and small group interviews, observed classroom instruction in every school, met with representatives from each PTA and read a wide range of documents to help me understand not only the current status of the Fairfield Public Schools, but also to understand the history, tradition and culture of this community and its school system.

In developing this document I have also drawn on my professional experience in education over the past 32 years and my 6 months of experience leading this school district and observing its operations first-hand. My learning about Fairfield and its public schools will continue. As that happens, undoubtedly strategies that, at this point, seem fruitful may not turn out to be so, and other strategies will be necessary. The ideas in this document, therefore, reflect my best thinking at this time but these ideas are subject to refinement in the future.

As I have said repeatedly at public appearances, our school system does not need a complete overhaul. It is a high-performing system on many common measures. We offer a comprehensive program in academics, arts and athletics. Our student performance measures are among the highest in the state. Hence, the urgency for change may be less immediate here than in other school systems.

However, in an ever-changing world, complacency sows the seeds for decline. Just a few examples – changes in the student population, changes in workforce requirements, changes in technology – illustrate that if we simply continue the status quo, our performance may not keep pace with the world.

If we have programs or systems that are working well, then continuing to support those programs or systems makes sense. Where we can grow and improve our programs or systems – that is where we can focus our change efforts. Given that we cannot focus on an unlimited number of initiatives, we need to focus our efforts on the change initiatives most likely to give us a good return on our investment of time, energy and resources.

One common thread through much of my entry plan discussions has been a sense of what I term “initiative fatigue.” Often, this feeling comes about because the school system takes on many disconnected change initiatives that cannot be implemented well. As a result, many change efforts fail to achieve the promised results and the resulting cynicism makes future change increasingly difficult to achieve. What I hope to outline here is a strategy to focus our energy for future changes – a lens, if you will, through which proposed changes will be viewed before implementation begins.

THE GOAL

Before we can begin to talk about change, we need to understand the goal – the end – we have in mind. My simple version reads like this:

Our goal is to ensure that all students acquire the skills and knowledge outlined in our comprehensive, rigorous instructional program.

In other words, we are here to improve student achievement. Offering a comprehensive, rigorous program is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to achieving this goal. We need to maintain a first-rate instructional program that ensures that students who master it are prepared for success in the 21st Century. The instructional program, as I see it, is not simply the academic courses, but encompasses, for example, displaying good character, problem-solving ability, collaboration skills and technological proficiency. It must be continually updated, which means weeding out obsolete elements that are no longer relevant to a 21st Century education. In other words, *what* we teach is critical – after all, doing a marvelous job of teaching the wrong content is not the outcome we want.

A truly premier school system ensures not only that the instructional program is first-rate, but also that all students achieve it. If we are to become a premier school system, our mission must be to “ensure” student success (not “hope” or “inspire” it). A truly premier school system targets success for all students.

MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARD THE GOAL

Given that our “end” is student learning, our progress toward that end needs to be measured in terms of student learning. Some examples of benchmarks that could be used to determine progress toward this goal are as follows (I invite discussion of additional measures or replacements of these suggestions):

- Percentage of student performance at Goal and at Advanced levels on CMT and CAPT
- Percentage of students performing at Basic or below on CMT and CAPT
- Number and percentage of students achieving 3 or higher on AP exams
- Number of students successfully completing a co-curricular program or activity (during school or after school)
- Percentage of students achieving their goals on Individualized Education Plans
- Percentage of students achieving the district standard on district-designed common assessments (meeting district standards on curriculum)
- Percentage of students achieving success in their first year of college
- Number of high school students needing credit recovery to graduate

These are neither precise targets nor an exhaustive list. For example, there is no measure of a student’s character development. They also represent data we may not be collecting currently. I bring them forward to lay out the general concept that we measure our success by examining data on student achievement. Determining the exact targets, timelines and measures is beyond the scope of this document. Improved student learning is the goal; everything else is a means to that end.

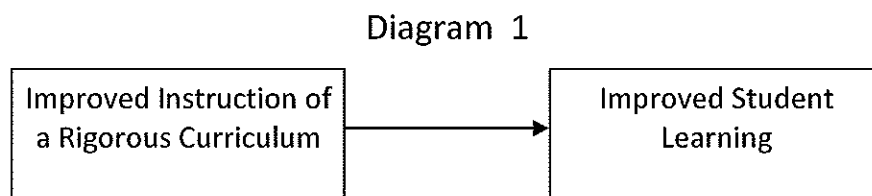
HOW TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL

Any strategy of improvement is, at its heart, based on a series of “if then” propositions that underlie the work. One may agree or disagree with these “if then” propositions; we may find that they seem correct now but are found to be inaccurate later. For example, we undertake professional development of teachers under the belief that if we improve the skills of teachers, then student learning will improve. Over time, that conditional statement has not always proven to work in practice. There may be a missing link in the chain – that is, something else that needs to occur to get the result one wants. In this case, it may be that the “if then” statement may be modified to state that if we improve the skill sets of teachers and if they change their instructional practices as a result, then student learning will improve. Hence, an improvement strategy is always subject to modification based on results.

The first underlying “if then” in this improvement strategy is this:

If we improve instruction of our rigorous program, that will lead to greater student achievement of it.

Diagram 1 shows this simple relationship.



Although this relationship sounds obvious, it is not clear that either educators or the general public actually fully believes it. Consider how often individuals will attribute student achievement results to factors other than instruction when asked to interpret results. Societal ills, video games, family background, the internet, home life and so forth are often listed as the primary factors influencing achievement.

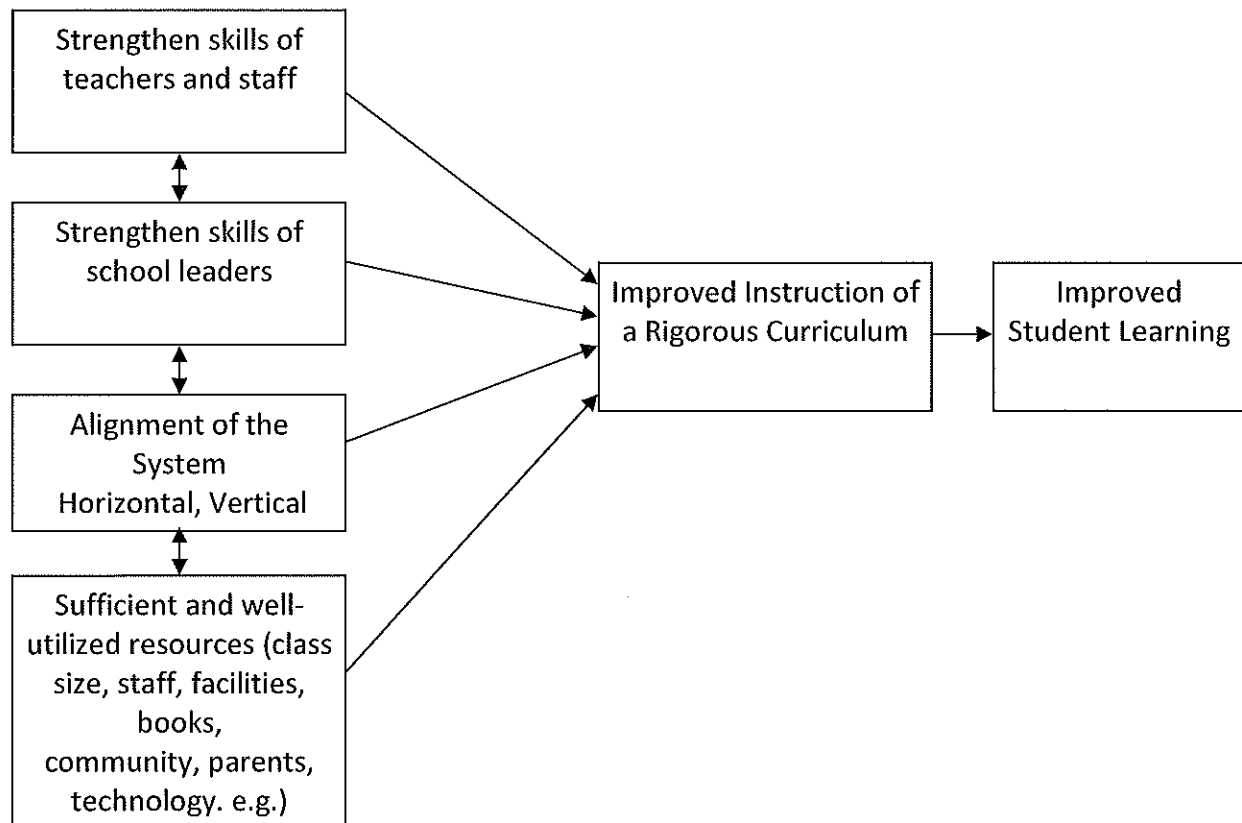
FOUR AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

The next step in building a district improvement strategy is to identify a limited number of focus areas that have the most promise for improving instruction. Every “good idea” can be linked somehow to improved instruction; the issue is which ideas have the greatest promise of showing gains in student learning for the resources we devote to implementing them. In the corporate world, terms such as “return on investment” or “cost-benefit analysis” would apply here. In our case, one of our scarcest resources is time. Money is another scarce resource but time is often more within our control.

Just because something takes little time or few resources does not mean that it is worth doing; similarly, just because something takes a large amount of time or resources does not mean it is not worth doing. It is the expected benefit (in terms of accomplishing our goal) in relationship to the time and resources spent that’s important. In other words, where is the best place to commit the time of our staff to get the greatest return in terms of student learning?

I see four broad strands that, were we to concentrate our resources and make significant progress in each of these areas, would pay significant dividends in improving classroom instruction and, therefore, improving student learning. They are Teacher Skills, School Leader Skills, System Alignment and Instructional Resources. Diagram 2 shows the connection.

Diagram 2



The verbal “if then” of this diagram reads like this:

If we improve the skills of teachers and staff, and if we improve the skills of school leaders, and if we have horizontal and vertical alignment of our system and if we have sufficient resources, then instruction will improve and student learning will increase.

One limitation of this graphic is that it does not display the interplay possible between each of the four boxes. Improved skills of school leaders, for instance, often will lead to improved skills of teachers and staff. Certain resources can lead to greater alignment of the system. Improved teacher skills can lead to greater alignment. Think of these four boxes as a connected set of change efforts rather than the discrete boxes that appear on this page.

For each of these areas, I will describe the specific area where there is room for growth; improvement efforts may overlap from one strand to another.

STRENGTHEN TEACHER SKILLS

The most direct route to improved learning is through the continuous development of teacher skills. We have many skilled teachers in Fairfield. Our student achievement results are very good. However, keeping teacher skills current is important because of the changes in the student population and expectations for student learning. Hiring the best and brightest is always a priority, but after hire, teachers need to continuously update their skills. For example, the demographics in Fairfield have changed over the past decade. The English Language Learner population is rising. Colleges and the workplace expect greater skill levels from our graduates than ten years ago. Technology continues to evolve, so teachers need to learn how to use instructional technology to improve student learning.

Another area for growth that relates not only to teacher skills but also to the other three focus areas is the analysis and use of student performance data, in particular by teams of teachers. We can make great strides in pinpointing where we need to improve student learning by looking at student performance data in a collaborative and systematic way. Our teachers need skills in collaboration and data analysis, timely access to meaningful data and the time to do this work well. Moreover, analysis of student performance data should be the driving force for the focus of professional development efforts.

STRENGTHEN SCHOOL LEADER SKILLS

Teachers need support in improving instruction. Principals, assistant principals, headmasters, housemasters and curriculum leaders/liaisons play a critical role in assuring that instruction in each classroom is of the highest possible quality. There are virtually no instances in the literature where a school has made sizeable gains in student achievement without a solid school principal. School leaders provide the balance of support and accountability required to improve instruction.

Principals need a skill set in analyzing and taking action based on student performance data. They need to be able to develop school improvement plans based on student data and work with teams of teachers to enable them to work collaboratively in developing new strategies for improved learning. They also need to be able to articulate a shared vision of what good instruction looks like in the classroom, and they need to be able to give feedback to teachers, collectively and individually, that will encourage teachers to continue effective practices and change ineffective ones. They also need to know how to support teams of teachers as they struggle through this new process; collaboration is a learned skill.

AN ALIGNED SYSTEM

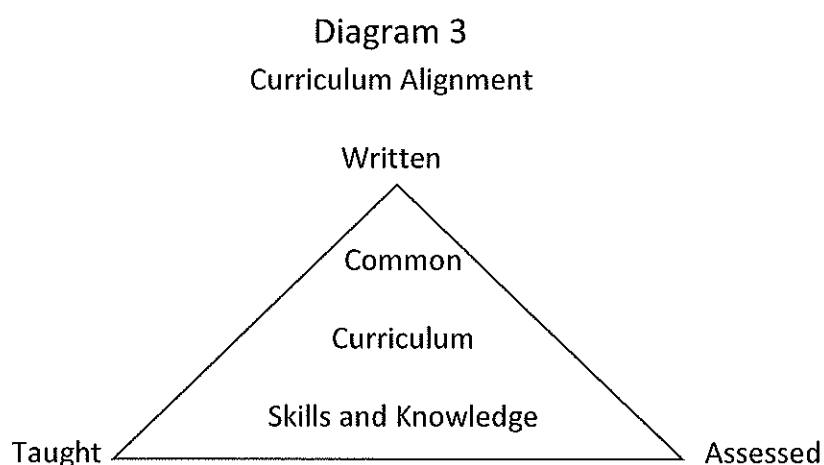
This strand has many components; most of the issues that parents, teachers, principals, Board members and community members mentioned to me fall into this bucket. Words such as “equity,” “consistency” and “fairness” were frequently used to describe some elements of the school system. In fact, aligning a system of 17 schools may be the central challenge facing us.

In the educational world, alignment can be thought of in two ways – so-called “horizontal” alignment and “vertical” alignment. Both are important to achieving our goal.

HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT

This type of alignment means that there is a consistency in the educational program and resources across the same grade level and subject area. We have horizontal alignment when the curriculum being delivered in every second grade classroom across the district is consistent. We cannot expect students to master a rigorous instructional program (that is, our curriculum) if the written curriculum is not, in fact, the taught curriculum and the assessed curriculum. A teacher may be doing a great job of teaching and assessing a curriculum, but if it is not the one approved for that grade level or subject, we do not have alignment.

Alignment of assessment is a growth area for us. Common assessments are a good way to ensure consistent delivery of curriculum without constraining teacher flexibility in how they teach. Assessments must align to the written curriculum and the taught curriculum. Diagram 3 shows this relationship.



Horizontal alignment does not require identical teaching techniques or identical resources. Teachers need some latitude in their instructional styles as long as the approved curriculum is being implemented as designed. There are limits to the degree of variability, but consistency does not necessarily mean identical. One downside to a push for horizontal alignment is that it encroaches on some staff members freedom and, as such, can generate a negative reaction those who have been able to “do their own thing” with little thought for how it impacts learning across the school district.

Horizontal alignment can also relate to the equitable distribution of resources. Technology – both hardware and software – would be “Exhibit A” of this issue in Fairfield.

Responsibility for horizontal alignment often falls to district leaders, as it is their job to ensure the implementation of the instructional program system-wide. Principals can assure such alignment within their buildings, but the roles of curriculum leaders and central office leaders fall into this arena. Well-functioning grade level or subject area data teams can also bring about greater horizontal alignment within a school.

VERTICAL ALIGNMENT

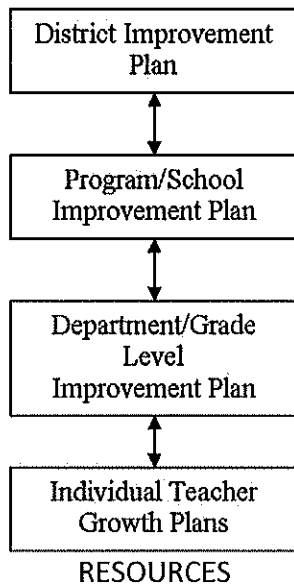
A system that is “vertically” aligned has a consistent program of instruction from grade to grade. There are no gaps in student knowledge from one grade to the next and there is no unnecessary duplication of curriculum. The growth area for Fairfield in this arena appears to be at two transition points – from fifth grade to sixth grade and from eighth grade to ninth grade. Some districts experience an issue from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten but at this point that seems to be less of a concern than the two mentioned above.

The real power of vertical alignment can be seen when improvement efforts at all levels of the system are consistent. For example, when the vision of what good classroom instruction looks like in the eyes of the superintendent, director of curriculum, curriculum leader, principal and teacher is aligned, there is a greater probability of full implementation. When teachers receive “mixed signals” about what effective instruction consists of, one will not get full implementation. For example, a teacher may get advice on instruction from her principal, reading consultant, curriculum leader or Director of Elementary Education. If all of these individuals are not “on the same page,” then the teacher is confused.

The same is true of improvement plans in general. In an aligned world, elements of the district’s improvement plan are evident in the improvement plans of the schools and in the individual improvement plans of grade levels, departments and teachers. Each of these improvement plans may differ because, if done well, they are based on student performance data specific to that teacher, grade level or school. Working toward a common process of analyzing data at the teacher, grade level, school and district level that leads to an alignment of improvement plans would concentrate our resources throughout the system on the most critical areas.

Diagram 4 shows the vertical alignment of improvement plans. The arrows indicate that information flows in both directions to inform our practice. For example, if “differentiating instruction” is a district-wide improvement strategy, evidence of this practice should be evident throughout the system. Conversely, evidence from the “ground up” – the individual teacher level – can and should inform department/grade level/school strategies.

Diagram 4



Without a certain level of resources, all of the skills and alignment work may be limited in its effectiveness. Resources can include class size, additional staff to support struggling or advanced learners, books, materials, technology, software, adequate facilities as well as community and parent resources. The relationship between resources and student achievement does hinge on staff trained to use them effectively, hence the emphasis on teacher and school leader skills. Without adequate resources, however, the best-laid plans for improvement may fall flat.

In an era of limited financial resources, we need to assess the “return on investment” of our resources. Again, the “return” needs to be measured in terms of improved student learning as the outcome. With limited dollars, for example, are we better off investing in technology or people? The answer is not obvious nor is the answer always binary. Without the technological resources, for example, to provide teachers and principals with real-time data about student performance, we cannot implement a solid program of student performance data analysis.

A THEME

Concentrating our resources of time, energy and dollars into these four focus areas will yield the greatest impact on student learning. One theme across all four areas is the improved use of student performance data to drive our decision-making. For example:

- Implementing a district- and school-wide protocol in the use of student performance data to improve instruction and target services to children
- Implementing school improvement plans based on student performance data
- Implementing professional development for teachers based on student performance data
- The alignment of district, school, department, grade level and individual teacher objectives/goals based on student performance data

CONCLUSIONS

The school system provides outstanding learning opportunities for students. To ensure that all students master our rigorous curriculum, we need to concentrate our change efforts in the area

that will provide the greatest leverage to improve instruction. I have identified four main “lenses” through which to view our current and any proposed change initiatives.

The district does suffer from a case of “initiative fatigue.” Sometimes this condition is caused by the district undertaking so many initiatives that none can be done well; sometimes it is caused by people not being able to understand how the many initiatives underway are tied to a bigger picture for change. I hope through this general framework for district improvement we may be able to tackle both parts of the problem. Change initiatives that do not directly and clearly address improvement in classroom instruction as outlined here can be phased out; at the same time, we can show how the remaining initiatives fit into the bigger structure by tying them directly to one of the four “lenses” outlined in this document.

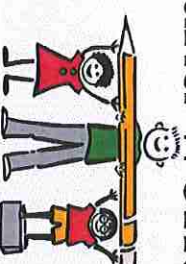
Generally speaking, fewer change efforts done well are more effective than many change efforts done not as well. Concentrating the scarce resource of time in the areas where the “return” (in terms of student learning) on “investment” (in terms of time) is greatest is critical. Time is scarce because the day-to-day managing of a complex school system takes up a vast amount of teacher, school leader and district leader time. Carving out time to implement change initiatives is an important part of leading, but if the day-to-day managing of school begins to erode, then change efforts will be sidetracked. In addition, some change initiatives are required of the school district due to changes in state or federal law.

Despite these constraints, change is necessary. Before undertaking any new initiative, the decision-makers – whether they are the Board of Education, central office leaders, principals/headmasters, curriculum leaders, teachers – need to demand that the time invested in such an effort will likely have a significant and positive impact on improving instruction and therefore lead to our reaching our goal of ensuring that every student masters the skills and knowledge outlined in our rigorous instructional program.

4

Key Instructional Improvement Initiatives

- Develop and consistently implement School Improvement Plans based on data and research-based practices
- Consistent use of data teams at district, school and grade/dept. levels
- Develop and implement common performance assessments aligned to the Common Core
- Improved intervention strategies for struggling learners including Math Science Resource Teachers, Math Resource Teachers, Language Arts Specialists and workshop classes for high school math students



4

Key Instructional Improvement Initiatives

- Develop and consistently implement updated curriculum aligned to the Common Core and State and National standards on a regular basis
- Update and consistently use texts, materials and technology to support new curriculum and assessments
- Continuous professional learning for all staff members, including Instructional Rounds
- Maintain clean, safe and secure school environments in support of the above initiatives



BOARD OF EDUCATION
FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FAIRFIELD, CT

Policy Committee Meeting

Monday, April 28, 2014
Education Center
501 Kings Highway East
Superintendent's Conference Room
4:15 p.m.

Agenda

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of March 31, 2014, Minutes
- III. Policy
 - Policy #5515 Students – Protocol for Emergency Medications, Epinephrine – discussion postponed to the April 28, 2014 meeting
 - Policy #5516 Students – Management of Food Allergies in Schools; review of Shipman Goodwin sample policy continued from March 31 discussion
- IV. Open Discussion/Public Comment
- V. Adjournment
- VI. Future Items:
 - Policy #5225 Students – Requirements for Graduation
 - Policy #4240 Personnel – Electronic Mail
 - Policy #3552 Business – Lending School Owned Equipment
 - Policy #5340 Students – Lost/Damaged Equipment
 - Policy #4110 Personnel – Recruitment and Selection
 - Policy #5542 Students – On Campus Recruitment
 - Policy #6511 Instruction – Special Education
 - New policy request for Monthly Financial Reporting to BOE

Future Mtg. Dates and Times: **Monday, May 12**; *Monday, June 2*; *Monday, June 16*; *Monday, August 25*; **TUESDAY, September 2** (*Monday is Labor Day*); *Monday, September 15*; *Monday, October 13*; *Monday, November 17*; *Monday, December 1, 2014*.

All meetings will be held at 501 Kings Highway East, Superintendent's Conference Room unless otherwise noted.

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Committee Meeting
Monday, March 31, 2014
Superintendent's Conference Room
4:15 p.m.

Minutes

- I. Call to Order - The meeting was called to order by Jennifer Kennelly at 4:27. In attendance were committee members Donna Karnal, and Karen Parks representing the administration. John Convertito arrived at 4:45. Also in attendance were Anna Cutaia-Leonard and Andrea Leonardi representing the administration and many parents representing the public.
- II. Approval of March 3, 2014, Minutes – Approved as submitted 2:0:0
- III. Public Comment

Due to the large number of parents present, Ms. Kennelly requested public comment at the start of the meeting. Many different parents spoke offering the comments included below. Both Trumbull and Westport have recently revised their policies and we should see what they are doing. The Consortium of Food Allergies Website has some very helpful information. Young children need snacks and when foods for snacks are restricted, it is divisive and unfair. Please do not take staff time away from children and teaching. Please do not vilify food by sending the message that everything but fruits and vegetables are bad. Please get input from parents of children with food allergies and from research so that the Jennings situation does not happen again. The rules at Jennings are too restrictive. Please find a balance that gives everyone a sense of security. We need the least restrictive environment for children with life-threatening allergies and should provide education for all parents with best practices. We should also use a system of gradual release so that students learn to advocate for themselves and educate others. Students with life-threatening allergies must request compliance from complete strangers, which is difficult for anyone, let alone children. A parent of a student with life-threatening food allergies indicated that often accommodations for students are not followed because other parents do not understand the severity of the situation and do not follow the rules. We need education and this must be a community effort. Parents must ask for as much help for their children as possible and we should address this problem with consistency across all schools and classrooms. Children with severe food allergies suffer stress from the anxiety and fear of reactions to food that may not be visible in the classroom. We must enforce nut free classrooms through education and safe food practices and not isolate children with these allergies.

Andrea Leonardi explained the difficulty in enforcing safe food practices in the classroom as opposed to the cafeteria. In the school cafeterias, students with severe food allergies sit at separate tables and students who buy lunch are able to join them. Students who bring lunch from home cannot join these tables because there is no guarantee that their lunch does not contain allergens. Tables are all cleaned between lunch waves and students wash hands before and after lunch to reduce the spread of food allergens. In the

classroom, students must eat snack at desks, wash hands before and after snack, and must wipe tables after snack with safe wipes. The problem is that since all snacks are brought from home, we must hope for compliance from parents and there is no guarantee that all students/parents will comply with “nut free” snacks. The allergens from nuts can be left on the floor, on the student’s clothes, and spread in the classroom where they can impact students with severe allergies. One parent indicated that at Jennings, where only fruits and vegetables are allowed in the classrooms containing students with life-threatening peanut and tree nut allergies, problems are continuing because many parents are not complying with the rule of sending a fruit or vegetable. That causes many of the students to go to another classroom to eat snack, often leaving students with life threatening allergies left behind and isolated in the classroom. It also disrupts learning, because instruction is intended to be continued during snack.

IV. Policy

- Policy #5516 Students – Management of Food Allergies in Schools; review of CABA sample policies

After public comment the committee members began to peruse the 4 sample policies from CABA. They agreed to work from the Shipman Goodwin sample and began discussion on language changes. Those changes will be reflected on the policy for next time. Jennifer asked Karen to number the policy pages for future meetings and also for the near future, to track the dates of changes by indicating them in different ink colors. Karen agreed to do that and to investigate the new policies from Trumbull and Westport. The members agreed to work on Policy #5515 at the April 28 meeting due to the planned presence of Joanne Ryan and continue working on Policy #5516 at the meeting on May 12, if time does not permit on April 28.

- Policy #5515 Students – Protocol for Emergency Medications, Epinephrine – discussion postponed to the April 28, 2014 meeting.

V. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 6:35.

DRAFT

April 8, 2014 FLHS Building Committee Minutes

FLHSBC Members present: Marc Donald, Rob Sickeler, Marc Andre, Donna Ertel, Joe Pagnozzi, Terri Leopold (arrived at 7:39) and Dave Weber (arrived at 7:40)

Others present: myself, Judy Ewing, Greg Hatzis, Twig Holland, Joe Costa (PEA), Tina Greco (PEA), Gram Curtis (DTC), Ryan Nealy (DTC), Aris Stalis (PEA), Peter Manning (Gilbane), Tom Bebe (Arcadis), Mike Dell'Accio (Arcadis), and the recording secretary

Meeting started at 7:37PM

Minutes approval:

The Minutes of the 3/12/14 FLHSBC Meetings were approved 5/0

The Minutes of the 3/26/14 FLHSBC Meetings were approved 5/0

Architect Presentation:

Joe Costa reviewed the design development on the classroom addition and cafeteria addition/alterations. Joe was joined by other member of the design team who described the various components of the envisioned work including landscaping, structural systems, civil work and MEP systems.

(A PDF of the presentation is attached to this report)

Environmental Site Assessment – Phase 1

Joe Costa presented the committee with three proposals to conduct a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment and report. Joe explained that the assessment is required by state statute. PEA's recommendation was to select BL Companies for this task. Motion was made and passed to hire BL Companies. Vote 7/0.

Geotechnical Advisor:

Joe Costa presented the committee with three proposals to conduct a geotechnical investigation and report. Joe explained that the assessment is needed to determine soil conditions and to determine bearing capacities for the design of the foundations. PEA's recommendation was to select Halley and Aldridge for this task. Motion was made and passed to hire Halley and Aldridge. Vote 7/0.

Code Consultant/Review:

The need for a code consultant to conduct plan reviews for the various phases of the project was discussed. Because of the pending retirement of one of the two plan reviewers in the Office of School Facilities it is expected that these 'private' services will be needed at some point in this project in order to maintain the project schedule. Twig suggested that the committee approve a motion to hire a consultant at not to exceed amount of \$25,000. The actual amount is expected to be lower. This would allow the purchasing department to secure this consultant without the need of a special meeting of the committee. A motion was made (as suggested) and passed. Vote 7/0.

DRAFT

Surveying Proposal:

Joe Costa presented the committee with three proposals to conduct a limited A2 survey and T2 topography survey. Joe explained that these surveys are needed so that the various site and civil design plans can be accurately developed. PEA's recommendation was to select Cabearas DeAngelis for this task. Motion was made and passed to hire Cabearas DeAngelis. Vote 7/0.

Invoice Approvals:

Three invoices were presented for approval.

AMC - \$5,592.50

Gilbane - \$11,031.02

Arcadis - \$9,288.00

Tecta America - \$1,668.28

All four invoices were approved 7/0

Old Business:

None

New Business:

The need for a special meeting to approve the final roof plans was discussed. After reviewing the timeline and everyone availability it was agreed to hold a special meeting on 4/30/2014 at 7:30PM.

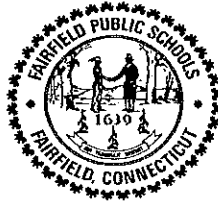
Public Comment:

None

Meeting adjourned at 9:12PM

The next meeting of the FLHSBC will be a special meeting on April 30, 2014 at 7:30PM.

Margaret Boice, Ed.D.
Director of Secondary Education



Fairfield Public Schools
501 Kings Highway East, Suite 210
Fairfield, Connecticut 06825
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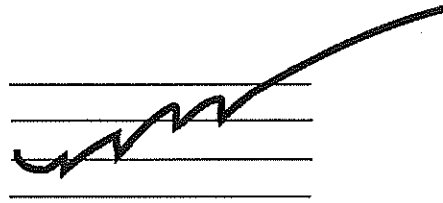
TO: Dr. David Title
FROM: Dr. Margaret Boice
DATE: April 25, 2014
RE: Tri-State Consortium Report

Attached is the report from the Tri-State Consortium following a visit to our middle schools on December 4, 5, and 6.

The Tri-State Consortium is composed of 42 school districts in the Connecticut, New York and New Jersey area. The Consortium assists its member districts in using quantitative and qualitative data to enhance student performance and to build a rigorous framework for planning, assessment, and systemic change.

We invited a visiting team of 16 educators to review our middle school writing program, focusing on an over-arching question designed by a group of teachers, "What is the writing life of a Fairfield middle school student?" Five specific questions guided the process and these are found on page four of the report.

Our teachers and English curriculum leader used the visit and subsequent report as an important source of qualitative data as we revised and rewrote the English curriculum for the middle schools. As you read the report, you will note the response to each question includes a summary of findings and areas to consider in next steps. This information guided our thinking in both the design of the curriculum as well as the implementation of the proposed curriculum in the next school year.

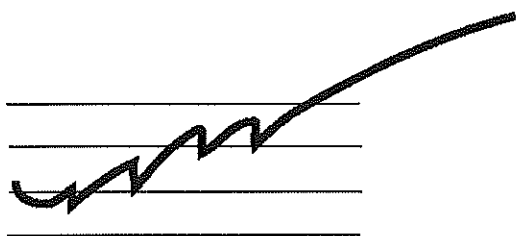


**Tri-State
Consortium**

FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TRI-STATE VISIT 2013

Writing, 6-8 | December 4, 5, 6



Tri-State Consortium

FAIRFIELD – CONNECTICUT – TRI-STATE VISIT 2013

Writing: Middle Schools (3)



December 4, 5, 6, 2013

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Terry Ellis * Thurs.

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Narrative

“The mission of the Fairfield Public Schools is to inspire students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to be life-long learners, responsible citizens and successful participants in an ever-changing global society by providing, in a partnership with families and community, a comprehensive, rigorous educational program.”

The Fairfield Public Schools invited a Tri-State Consortium visit team to review the Grades 6-8, writing program, in its three middle schools: Fairfield Woods, Tomlinson, and Roger Ludlow, on December 4-6, 2013. The Tri-State Consortium’s mission statement, describes “...a learning organization devoted to assisting its member districts in using student performance data to develop a rigorous framework for systemic planning, assessment, and continuous improvement”. Working together as critical friends, the team, composed of teachers, school- level administrators, and district-level administrators, spent three days examining documents prepared as evidence of the writing program, interviewing administrators, teachers, parents, and students, and observing classroom instruction related to English language arts writing in the middle schools.

The goal of the visit team is to affirm and confirm the district’s efforts toward continuous improvement of student achievement results and the strength of the professional learning community. Through the examination of student work samples, curriculum documents, district and building initiatives, representative district publications, and data, both quantitative and qualitative, the visit team considered the Fairfield Public Schools’ over-arching question– ***What is the writing life of a Fairfield middle school student?*** –these five questions guided the analysis:

- To what extent does the current approach to the teaching of writing 6-8 present evidence of research-based instructional strategies that enable the district’s students to build capacity for creative and critical thinking skills?
- To what extent does the district’s 6-8 writing program teach critical and reflective thinking and develop authentic writers who can write effectively for a variety of purposes, and not just for the “next level”?
- To what degree is the district meeting its goal of balancing high standards of achievement with the educational needs of diverse learners, providing challenging, yet differentiated, writing instruction and opportunities 6-8?
- To what extent does the district use varied data to inform instruction for all 6-8 learners in the district?
- To what extent does the district’s current use of portfolios communicate levels of student performance?

The visit team was impressed by the warm welcome and hospitality in Roger Ludlow, where we were based throughout the visit. Our first day included a detailed, cogent presentation by John

Chiappetta, 6-12 Curriculum Leader for English/Language Arts and Reading, who situated Fairfield's middle school writing program into the larger district, state, and national contexts. Mr. Chiappetta, supported by the Language Arts Specialists in each of the middle schools, organized a visit that engaged the Tri-State Consortium team members in the analysis of student writing, conversations with students, teachers, parents, and administrators, and observations of all grades 6-8 language arts classes in Fairfield's three middle schools.

The Fairfield Public Schools have, among other resources, enthusiastic students, motivated parents, dedicated teachers, and outstanding leaders for the language arts. Fairfield should be proud of the writing being accomplished by its students at all grades at all middle schools; our suggestions below are intended to provide an objective perspective about how the district's approach to teaching writing could be refined, developed, and extended even further in the near future.

Essential Questions

The simple answer to the district's over-arching question – *What is the writing life of a Fairfield middle school student?* – is that it is rich, authentic, metacognitive, and rewarding. Students write in various genres and for various purposes, and they have sustained frequent opportunities to engage their minds, hearts, and souls in writing. For middle school students, growing in so many intellectual, emotional, and social ways, this writing life is clearly beneficial. Further details follow in regard to each of the five questions guiding the visit team's analysis.

During the self-study process that preceded this Tri-State evaluation, the school district developed five guiding questions to focus its preparation and to guide the visit team in its examination of the 6-8 writing program:

Essential Question #1:

To what extent does the current approach to the teaching of writing 6-8 present evidence of research-based instructional strategies that enable the district's students to build capacity for creative and critical thinking skills?

At the 6-8 level, the district has adopted a workshop model centered on developing students as writers in a variety of genres meaningfully integrated with the reading students are doing in their language arts classes. Much research validates this model for the growth of students in seeing themselves as writers, assessing their strengths and need areas as writers, setting short-term and long-term improvement goals, reflecting metacognitively on each piece of writing they produce, and conferencing with their teacher and their peers toward both creative and critical thinking ends.

Middle school student writers at work in Fairfield produce a variety of writing consistent with the intent of the workshop model. Enthusiastic students reported to the visit team about their writing process, motivation to work hard on their writing, and clear appreciation for their growth as writers over time; the students cited several specific writing tasks they recalled

meaningfully, as well as their general sense that they had ownership over various elements of the writing process in their language arts classes.

The middle school language arts teachers also described a commitment to the workshop model, which allows them to meet students' differentiated needs as readers and writers. The teachers were also aware of research-based instructional strategies to support the implementation of the workshop model.

At the same time, however, not all teachers appeared to share or implement uniform understandings of the core values of the workshop model to be implemented in Fairfield. For example, since the current schedule for grades 7-8 combines reading and writing into a relatively brief language arts period, the teachers reported concerns about the extent to which they could adequately conference with all students, engage all students in deep revision of writing. Different teachers addressed their concerns in different ways, which in some cases may be creating a lapse in fidelity to the workshop model in practice. The district may consider the value of both revisiting the core philosophical elements of the workshop model and clarifying how those elements will be operationally implemented at the various middle school grade levels. The Tri-State team encourages the district to facilitate shared understandings through collaborative conversations among all teachers in regard to both philosophical elements and operational implementation.

It is, of course, possible that certain operational structures may interfere with the workshop model. One example may be the relatively brief language arts period for grades 7-8; another example may be the inclusion of world language within the grade 6 language arts block, which the visit team observed to be disruptive to the continuity of the language arts reading and writing process, particularly when the world language instruction is scheduled during the middle of the block. The clear value of the writing (and reading) workshop model may require conversations about how structures such as these two examples might be modified to provide stronger operational fidelity for the philosophical elements of the workshop model.

It may also be important to examine how the assignment of teachers at the grade 6 level can best support the workshop model. Currently, all grade 6 teachers teach language arts, as well as one (or more) other subject(s). This practice leads to individuals with a wide variety of background expertise teaching a critical subject – language arts – within a model – the workshop model – that necessitates strong initial and ongoing professional development. Some grade 6 teachers expressed a sense of hesitation in terms of teaching language arts. If the district continues this staffing model, additional professional development opportunities for grade 6 teachers centered on the writing (and reading) workshop model may well be necessary; however, since grade 6 teachers in this model are also responsible for teaching other core subjects, an alternate grade 6 staffing model would support efforts for more frequent and focused professional development opportunities.

Essential Question #2:

To what extent does the district's 6-8 writing program teach critical and reflective thinking and develop authentic writers who can write effectively for a variety of purposes, and not just for the "next level"?

As discussed above, the district's 6-8 writing program is founded on a model of critical and reflective thinking; a core part is authenticity. The middle school language arts teachers make a clear, conscious, and productive effort toward these aims. Students, as noted above, see themselves as writers who get to make decisions about various aspects of the writing process. Additionally, students and parents reported growth in their students' writing ability over time.

The use of writer's notebooks, observed in classrooms a core part and discussed by students in interviews, is a clear element of this writing process in which each writing task is part of a broader picture, not simply a means to a short-term, discrete end. Students collect their writing in writing portfolios, which are in the process of migrating to an electronic platform, and in many classrooms students provide evidence in their portfolios of metacognition, describing themselves as writers. For each student to ultimately see himself or herself as a writer who has a writing life of energy, passion, and motivation – not just one motivated by teachers and tasks

– the importance of authenticity and metacognition cannot be underestimated. With these goals in mind, ongoing professional development for all teachers of language arts is important.

In most districts, the transition between grade 8 and grade 9 is a major one, and can provide both opportunities and challenges. In terms of each Fairfield's student's writing life, the opportunity is in place to help each student writer see how his or her developed engagement, motivation, metacognition, can be energized toward goals and tasks that look at least slightly different by the high school level. Parents expressed some concern to the visit team regarding students' writing preparation for the high school grades given the workshop model focus of the middle school grades. By clarifying the philosophical and operational elements of the workshop model, sharing the information with stakeholders, including parents and high school teachers, it will be obvious that writing in grades 6-8 language arts can, indeed, bridge effectively to the writing in grades 9-12 English. Additionally, perhaps shared, professional development for teachers on each side of the grades 8-9 transition may be beneficial.

We think that the creation of common assessments, preferably authentic, performance-based assessments, would enable the district to monitor student progress in writing, particularly relating to the variety of purposes the district has identified. A district set of rubrics would be helpful as well, especially to those teachers in other subject areas. Finally, it would be useful for the district to engage the faculty in developing a definition of authenticity as it relates to writing ... so all staff, not just those teaching English Language Arts, will know it when they see it.

Essential Question #3:

To what degree is the district meeting its goal of balancing high standards of achievement with the educational needs of diverse learners, providing challenging, yet differentiated, writing instruction and opportunities 6-8?

Balancing high standards of achievement for all students, while providing the appropriate levels of differentiation and support, has been an ongoing goal of the Fairfield Public Schools. In the district's opening presentation, the visit team was informed that the district de-leveled middle school language arts classes in favor of the current heterogeneous approach to teaching reading and writing. The district is commended for de-leveling these classes, and by doing so, raising the expectations of achievement for all students in writing.

Parent and student groups reported to the visit team that student writing needs were being met to differing degrees. Discussions with students at the seventh and eighth grade levels suggested that teachers spend more time conferencing with students who need more support. Some high-achieving students indicated that they rely more on peer feedback when their teacher does not have enough time to conference with them. Interestingly, at the sixth grade level, where there is a double block of language arts, there was more evidence to suggest that teachers were able to conference more frequently with all students. The discrepancy between grades may be due, once again, to the structural constraints of a single versus double block structure.

To support the implementation of a differentiated 6-8 writing program, the district has dedicated a Language Arts Specialist (LAS) to each building with the intent of supporting teachers with their writing (and reading) instruction. These positions serve as valuable resources for the district to achieve its stated goal. Through interviews with language arts teachers and each LAS, the visit team learned that these positions function differently in each building due to the amount of time required for them to conduct educational testing for SRBI, and perhaps due to differing expectations for use of their time by each school. Teachers reported that they would like to have greater access to their LAS to support lesson planning and writing instruction as they view them as valuable resources.

In light of the feedback from teachers, the district may want to review and update the role and responsibilities of the LAS to reflect the needs of the system. If the district would like to dedicate the time and expertise of the LAS to support instructional coaching with the workshop model, then it may need to determine how other positions may be better suited to address the need to conduct SRBI testing. With more time for coaching, the LAS would have flexibility to be in classes to conduct demonstration lessons for teachers, provide them with non-evaluative feedback on their lessons, and facilitate regularly scheduled common planning meetings within the school day.

Essential Question #4:

To what extent does the district use varied data to inform instruction for all 6-8 learners in the district?

The visit team learned that the Superintendent of Schools has established a vision for implementing data teams throughout the district to analyze student performance data and employ it to inform instruction. The three middle schools include many promising practices with respect to using varied sources of writing data to inform instruction. Benchmark assessments and writing prompts have been established within the curriculum and serve as potential sources of data. In addition, there is a tremendous repository of writing housed in the student writing portfolios that may serve as the basis for horizontal and vertical teams to examine student work and have rich discussions regarding student learning.

However, there appears to be a need for a more systematic and systemic approach to data teams across the middle schools. Each school looks to be in different places in terms of implementation based on the visit team's conversations with educators in the middle schools. Perhaps, it would be helpful if the district were to review the purpose of the data teams with teachers and solicit their feedback regarding the process that has been in place. This may be an opportune time to do so considering that building level and central office leadership overseeing the middle schools has turned over significantly in recent years. Having clear protocols for meetings, such as looking at student work guidelines, as well as a shared understanding of how the data teams will evaluate their overall effectiveness will increase the likelihood that the process will yield desired results going forward.

The visit team also wondered about the specific data being analyzed – do these data speak to the key questions of concern to the teachers? If not, the team wondered if those questions could be surfaced so the district might begin to think about ways to generate data relevant to those questions.

Additionally, students are identified for honors placement during the transition from eighth to ninth grade. In light of the district's goal to employ varied data to inform decision-making, it would be beneficial to examine the honors placement criteria for ninth grade English to determine to what extent writing data is considered in the process. Feedback from teachers regarding the transition process from grade five to six was very positive. Many sixth grade teachers indicated that students, in general, were well prepared in writing when they entered middle school.

Essential Question #5:

To what extent does the district's current use of portfolios communicate levels of student performance?

For several years, the district has had in place a writing portfolio process at the middle school level. The visit committee reviewed sample student portfolios and conducted interviews with students, teachers, and parents. The portfolio consists of a collection of student writing, including a valuable student metacognitive piece in which students reflect on their progress as writers.

It is clear that there is a high level of commitment to the portfolio process as evidenced by student and teacher interviews and parent feedback. When speaking to students, they expressed pride in their writing portfolios and discussed going back to look at old writing pieces to track their growth. Teachers also valued the portfolios as a means for demonstrating student progress in writing over the course of the year. However, parents expressed concern that they did not see the writing portfolio until the end of the year. Perhaps, the district's transition to electronic portfolios (with Google docs) will offer teachers and parents more frequent opportunities to view the portfolio and review student progress in writing in grades 6-8.

While there is a strong foundation for employing portfolios within each grade, a formal plan is not yet in place to communicate levels of student performance from year to year. Teachers in receiving grades, including ninth grade teachers, indicated that they rarely review the folders at the beginning of the school year to inform their planning. It is interesting to note that students assume their portfolios are read by their receiving teacher when they move on to the next grade. Occasionally, teachers may have a question about a student's past performance which prompts them to go back and examine the folder, but there is no formal process for receiving teachers to examine results upon receiving the portfolios.

The district may want to consider reviewing the purpose of the portfolio and including teachers in the development of a plan for the communication of levels of student performance within and between grade levels. As mentioned above, the portfolio data may offer the district a rich source of information to be discussed at data team meetings and for professional development purposes.

Summary

The Fairfield Public Schools should be proud of their student writers and the ways in which they are developing. At the middle school level – the focus of this visit team's study – student writers are reflecting on important narrative moments in their lives, analyzing literary elements in their reading, presenting research on current events and topics, and metacognitively reflecting on their strengths and future goal areas. These are students for whom writing clearly makes a

difference, and Fairfield's ongoing interest in extending its fine work even further is to be commended.

We recommend that the district consider ways to generate broader teacher ownership of the approach to writing. The staff is interested in becoming more engaged in these decisions, and they have productive ideas that can help move the writing program forward. The timing for greater involvement is propitious because the Common Core standards are on the horizon and will affect both curriculum and instruction.

Finally, the Tri-State team thanks John Chiappetta, Curriculum Leader, Grades 6-12, and the Steering Committee for the thoughtful planning of this consultancy. The Roger Ludlow Middle School staff was most attentive to our needs; principals and teachers in all three schools were receptive and welcoming. On the final day of our visit, we facilitated a conversation between members of our team and representatives from Fairfield's three middle schools. This conversation was guided by a protocol designed by the National School Reform Faculty; it is a collegial exchange of our impressions and questions, helps to clarify areas that we identify as needing more detailed information, and is a final opportunity to share our esteem and gratitude to Fairfield for the careful preparation, reception, and highly professional dialogues.

Riverfield School Building Committee Meeting Minutes

A regular business meeting of the Riverfield School Building Committee was held on Tuesday, April 8, 2014 at 7:30pm in the Riverfield Library Media Center.

Attendance

Members Present:

Tom Quinn, Chair
Lawrence Ratner, Secretary
Dan Graziadei
Bill McDonald
Scott Thompson

Members Absent:

Christine Messina, Vice Chair
Harry Ackley
John Shaffer
Maureen Sawyer
Pam Iacono, RTM liaison
Marc Patten, BOE liaison

Also Present:

George Katinger: Ken Boroson Architects; Peter Manning: Gilbane Building Company David Rojas: Strategic Building Solutions; John Fallon: RSBC attorney; Sal Morabito: FPS Manager of Construction, Security and Safety; Twig Holland: Town of Fairfield Director of Purchasing; Judy Ewing: Liaison from the office of the First Selectman

1. OPENING

Mr. Quinn called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. APPROVE MINUTES FROM 3/4

Minutes approved as written.

4. APPROVE INVOICES

Motion made by Mr. Ratner

and seconded by Mr. Thompson to approve the following invoices:

Payer Service	Invoice Date Invoice #	Amount
Frederick P. Clark Associates, Inc. Reimbursable expenses	February 12, 2014 000871	\$1,380.00
Gilbane Building Company Pre-Construction Phase Services	March 11, 2014 8	\$12,522.21
Van Zelm Engineers Commissioning	March 7, 2014 0039486	\$4,774.00
Van Zelm Engineers High Performance	March 7, 2014 0039487	\$7,125.00
Kenneth Boroson Architects Construction Documents, Expedited Fees	April 7, 2014 3137	\$17,627.26
Strategic Building Solutions, LLC DD through Construction, Reimbursables	March 31, 2014 12102	\$12,110.00

Motion carried 5:0:0

5. UPDATE PROGRESS/NEXT STEPS

LOCAL APPROVALS- TP&Z

Mr. Fallon reviewed the status of the local approvals. The draft wetlands certificate has been issued. The "encroachment condition 3B" was removed and Mr. Katinger is working on completing the remaining revisions needed to obtain the final certificate.

Due to a delay of another scheduled hearing regarding affordable housing, the Riverfield School Building project hearing has been pushed back. April 22, 2014 is the next scheduled TP&Z meeting and if the project is not heard at that meeting, and if everything else is ready regarding all other required approvals, the RSBC will consider requesting a special TP&Z meeting.

STATE APPROVALS

Mr. Katinger reviewed the status of state approvals. OSF signed off and the project is in the hands of the local reviewer. Mr. Katinger has begun responding to initial comments.

EPA APPROVALS

Mr. Katinger advised DEEP received our application on March 21, 2014 and expects a response within 30 days. He is following up with Woodard & Curran regarding the 20 year flood plain.

6. KEY ISSUES

Mr. Katinger made the requested changes to the kitchen and nurse's office. Lastly, he plans to set up a meeting with the tree warden to review the site plan and address any concerns.

7. ADOPT TOWN SHARED SAVINGS PROGRAM

Ms. Holland reviewed the "shared savings" clause that historically has been in every town contract but is not currently in the Kenneth Boroson Architects contract. Its purpose is to incentivize cost containment by sharing the savings. Construction Management receives 25% with a maximum of \$240,000; Architects receive 10% with a maximum of \$90,000 and the remaining 65% is returned to the town. Ms. Holland asked the committee to consider adding the clause to the KBA contract and to restate the clause in the Gilbane contract.

Motion made by Mr. Thompson

To add a shared saving clause to the Kenneth Boroson Architects contract in the amount of 10% of the savings not to exceed \$90,000.

Motion seconded by Mr. Ratner. **Motion carried 5:0:0**

Motion made by Mr. Ratner

To reassert the shared saving clause in the Gilbane Building Company contract in the amount of 25% of the savings not to exceed \$240,000.

Motion seconded by Mr. Graziadei. **Motion carried 5:0:0**

8. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Quinn stated the next RSBC meeting is scheduled for April 29, 2014 at the Riverfield School Library at 7:30pm and after that date, all RSBC meetings are scheduled to be held at Sullivan Independence Hall.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

10. ADJOURN

Motion made by Mr. Ratner and seconded by Mr. Graziadei to adjourn.

Motion carried 5:0:0

Mr. Quinn adjourned the meeting at 7:53pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen C. Grande
RSBC Recording Secretary

These minutes are subject to review, correction and approval by the Riverfield School Building Committee

April 25, 2014

Please use the following link to access the DRAFT English/LA Curriculum Documents:

http://fairfieldschools.org/curriculum_instruction_english_la.htm

(Scroll to the bottom for the DRAFT documents)