

Board of Education, Fairfield Public Schools
501 Kings Highway East, 2nd Floor Board Conference Room, Fairfield, CT

Tuesday, March 12, 2013

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Voting Summary:

Approval of Minutes

Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 26, 2013.

Ms. Iacono moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 26, 2013.” Motion passed 8-0-1 (Mrs. Kennelly, Mr. Convertito, Mr. Liu, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Ms. Iacono, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Kery in favor, Mrs. Brand abstained).

New Business

Request from FairTV Cable Advisory Council.

Mr. Fattibene moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded a motion to add an item to the agenda. Motion passed, 9-0. Mr. Fattibene moved/Ms. Iacono seconded “to appoint Thomas Flynn of 67 Sachem Road to Cable Advisory Board Region #2”. Motion passed 9-0.

Motion to Extend

At 10:40 p.m. Mrs. Brand moved/Mrs. Kennelly seconded to extend the meeting to 11:15 p.m. Motion passed, 9-0.

Adjournment

Ms. Iacono moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded the recommended motion “that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education Adjourn.” Motion passed 9-0. Meeting adjourned 11:05 p.m.

Detailed Minutes:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Also present were members Jennifer Kennelly, John Convertito, Perry Liu, Jessica Gerber, Pamela Iacono (arrived 7:35 p.m.), Paul Fattibene (arrived 7:35 p.m.), Tim Kery (arrived 7:45 p.m.), and Sue Brand. Others present were Dr. Title, members of central office and approximately 150 members of the public.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Dwyer led the Board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance and then asked for a moment of silence in memory of two students; Grace Evanko from Osborn Hill School and Benjamin Ventricelli from Fairfield Warde High School.

3. Presentation of Elementary Math Curriculum and Resources, Grades K-2

Dr. Title introduced Anna Cutaia-Leonard, Director of Elementary Education and Walter Wakeman, PK-5 Mathematics/Science Curriculum Leader.

Ms. Cutaia-Leonard stated there would be 4 parts to the presentation: Curriculum, District Textbook Review Committee, School Trials, and Data Points/Recommendations. In addition, several teachers would be speaking about the curriculum.

Part I – Curriculum

Mary Beth Giannattasio, Grade 4 Mill Hill teacher, stated that the current mathematics curriculum is robust and complete; provides for daily assessments; allows for flexible grouping; stretches math thinking; allows use of multiple strategies in problem solving; challenges students to write their own problems; and allows students to defend and share their thinking. She stated that fact fluency has improved and she has seen tremendous benefits for students.

Cara Pace, Grade 5 Mill Hill teacher, thanked the Board for adopting this curriculum last year. Ms. Pace stated that a significant advantage of this curriculum is the ability to meet the needs of all students; differentiation is vital; she stated she can support students who need it; those who grasp concepts quickly are pushed to generalize, justify, and defend mathematical thinking. This model gets students 'hooked' on learning. She stated this instructional model allows her to support all students while simultaneously exciting an entire classroom about math.

Mr. Wakeman stated this unit was developed over the summer, based on current curriculum, and introduced 2 teachers to provide comments on the glimpse-into-the-classroom-video presentation. Mary Jo French stated that the video shows active problem solving with student discourse, where the teacher is teaching 100% of the time. Ms. French stated that independent practice followed, and the teacher brings closure at the end of the lesson. Joan Robb, Grade 2 Dwight Teacher, explained the math strategy lesson in the video, where students add and subtract numbers into the thousands. Ms. Robb stated that students used mental math strategies, learned earlier in the unit, and quickly grasped the concept of re-grouping. (The video ran at this time.)

After the video ended, Mr. Wakeman began a powerpoint presentation and discussed each slide. Mr. Wakeman stated the last curriculum revision was done in 2003, and the new curriculum will align with the 2010 State adopted Common Core. This was developed with research/review, crosswalks, pacing guides, common core standards, a parent focus group, and a curriculum council. Mr. Wakeman reviewed basic facts mastery, student expectations at each level, methods in determining successful curriculum, and budget implications. After the powerpoint ended, Mr. Wakeman introduced Kevin Chase, Mill Hill Principal, to discuss the resource review.

Part II – District Textbook Review

Mr. Kevin Chase stated the textbook review committee was comprised of 22 people including teachers, special education teachers, math/science teachers, Central Office Administrators, parents, principals, and Southern Connecticut State University Math Professors. The committee met with vendors in

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December 2012, completed independent evaluations, asked for site visits where texts were being used, observed trials from these texts being taught in Fairfield schools, further investigated options and moved forward with 4 choices: Investigations, Singapore, Math in Focus and Stepping Stones.

Jen Colucci, a parent representative on the committee, stated she attended 6 vendor presentations over 2 full days and that members had complete freedom to ask as many questions as needed. She stated that the process was unbiased, professionally done, and that educators on the panel were very knowledgeable.

Tom Doonan, a parent representative on the committee, stated that he attended site visits at various schools where the committee was able to go into the classrooms and observe, get a good idea of how children were learning and teachers were instructing. After, Mr. Doonan stated the committee would reconvene in a conference room to discuss with math coordinators, and it was a transparent process without pressure.

Liz McGoey, Stratfield Principal, stated that the committee went on 3 site visits: Westport for Singapore, New Canaan for TERC Investigations, and Weston for Math in Focus; New Fairfield's site visit for Stepping Stones was canceled due to weather. Ms. McGoey stated the committee found the debriefing very helpful as the student/teacher roles and task rigor were discussed.

Elise Archibald, Stratfield math resource teacher, produced a chart with DRG B and DRG A schools with regards to their process in the transition of meeting the standards of the Common Core. Ms. Archibald stated that some districts adopted resources, some are still considering resources, but the majority of districts modified and supplemented the resources being used.

Part III – School Trials

Brenda Anziano, Riverfield Principal, stated she was speaking on behalf of 3 principals where trials were taught within Fairfield. Jennings reviewed Math in Focus in Kindergarten, Osborn Hill reviewed TERC Investigations in Grade 1 and Riverfield reviewed Singapore Math in Grade 1 and Stepping Stones in Grade 2. These schools provided many hours of PD participating in these trials. Each team met weekly. In addition, Math in Focus, Stepping Stones and Singapore provided an outside trainer.

Lynne Fuchs, Osborn Hill grade 1 teacher, stated that all four Grade 1 teachers participated in the trial. She stated that TERC was teacher friendly, lessons were engaging, there were clear resources, it supported a range of knowledge and each lesson included differentiation suggestions. Ms. Fuchs stated that TERC Investigations did require homework and math fact supplementation.

Cheryl Bitzer, 1st grade teacher at Riverfield, stated that her team participated in the trial for Singapore math using the unit on subtraction. Ms. Bitzer stated the unit had a clear and consistent scope and purpose. She also stated there was no evidence of authentic problem solving situations; all lessons needed supplementing with concrete examples; required the students to be working on the same task at the same time and at the same level; materials did not provide opportunities to extend or re-teach students; and the workbook format made assessments difficult.

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Sara Bocchierre, Jennings Kindergarten teacher, stated that she participated in the trial for Math in Focus. Ms. Bocchierre stated that strengths of the trial were composing/decomposing numbers, thinking about one more, and developing awareness of numbers 1-10. She stated that lessons were scripted and predictable; she needed to supplement all lessons, and independent worksheets were confusing. The resource was strong in developing skillset but Ms. Bocchierre stated that she needed to plan and add to it to give her students the math instruction that they are capable of doing.

Bethany Winchester, Riverfield grade 2 teacher with a smartboard in the classroom, participated in the trial for Stepping Stones. She stated that the lessons included a warm-up, then teacher-directed whole-group instruction with a smartboard. Ms. Winchester explained that students also used a journal page, which is Stepping Stones' version of independent practice. One of the strengths of the program is learning math with technology, and it has well formatted and easy to understand lessons. Ms. Winchester stated the shortcomings were: teachers had to supplement in order to extend and re-teach, Stepping Stones is only compatible with a smartboard, and if the internet was down the lesson was inaccessible.

Part IV – Data Points/Recommendations

Mr. Wakeman presented a powerpoint of the synthesized data from all reviews, and using a 4 point rubric, the Combined Rating slide showed the following scores: Stepping Stones with 1.8, Singapore with 2.2, Math in Focus with 2.3, and Investigations with 2.5. Mr. Wakeman explained, as a result of the work done, the final recommendation is to: continue to utilize resources in the district, align PK-2 work with Grades 3-5, build more resources for the home/school connection, and continue to communicate with publishers about future revisions.

Mr. Dwyer invited Board to ask questions.

Mr. Convertito thanked everyone, and stated this is the most in-depth curriculum presentation he has ever seen; he is disappointed that there is no conclusion, and asked whether other districts have the same conclusions. Mr. Wakeman responded that Westport and Weston are happy with their choice but many districts are supplementing as there is nothing out there that fills every need; an unknown is SBAC.

Mr. Liu stated this is the best presentation he has seen and is exactly what he is looking for but is also disappointed to be back at square one. Mr. Liu stated he is looking for a timeline. Mr. Wakeman stated that the curriculum document will act as the goal post, and Ms. Cutaia-Leonard stated that work will be ongoing in aligning the instructional practice with the Common Core and the new CMT. Mr. Liu asked at what point will we look again, and he is concerned with using the Scott Foresman text. Mr. Wakeman stated that the Common Core piece is bigger than CT, many states are well funded, and publishers are looking at 45 other states. Mr. Wakeman stated that the Scott Foresman text has good fact practice. Ms. Cutaia-Leonard stated that there are very specific units of study to ensure curriculum consistency, and that the unit of study is broken down by the day/week/month for teachers. Mr. Liu requested to see one that has been written for 3-5, and asked for a copy of the second portion of the powerpoint.

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Mr. Convertito stated that the textbook has 2 roles and is also a resource/reference point for parents. Ms. Cutaia-Leonard stated the communication with parents does need to improve, and the homework piece needs to be more robust.

Mrs. Brand stated that she sees 2 components in this presentation and is pleasantly surprised. Mrs. Brand requested to see the materials that will be used in lieu of a textbook, as they should be approved like a textbook. Mrs. Brand asked what the priorities are when choosing a text, and noticed that some of the PK and KDG curriculum are almost the same thing. Mrs. Brand stated that she would like a better understanding on how district assessments will take place without a text. Ms. Cutaia-Leonard offered to send her some material to further her understanding and will also forward some benchmark assessments.

Ms. Iacono thanked the team for all the work, for being open to input, and stated this is the most comprehensive presentation. Ms. Iacono thanked the team for inviting the Board to attend and observe and see the debriefing which was very helpful; she commended Mr. Wakeman for facilitating, and added that a parent resource is an important part of the process. Ms. Iacono stated she is in full support of this curriculum.

Mr. Kery echoed Ms. Iacono's praise to the team for all the hard work and stated he is pleased with where we are. In response to Mr. Kery, Ms. Cutaia-Leonard stated that the approved curriculum will remain constant regardless of the text, and that it will be re-written in 6 years or so according to the curriculum matrix in the budget book. Ms. Cutaia-Leonard stated that the team utilized a cornerstone Pre-K document and consulted with CES.

Mr. Dwyer commented that the curriculum matrix is in the budget book, for anyone wishing to know the curriculum revision timeline.

Mrs. Gerber thanked the presenters. In response to Mrs. Gerber, Ms. Cutaia-Leonard stated that the PK-2 text decision was not influenced by last year's 3-5 curriculum adoption. Mrs. Gerber asked if a Singapore text adoption would affect curriculum, as Singapore seems to be a whole program rather than just a text. Ms. Cutaia-Leonard stated that she agrees that a resource like Singapore comes with a preferred instructional model.

Mrs. Kennelly asked what is being used to create units of study. Mr. Wakeman stated that this is done using current texts and that success is measured using in-house assessments and teacher feedback. Mrs. Kennelly thanked the team, but stated that the presentation lacked research. Ms. Cutaia-Leonard stated that research and review is part of process continually, even though the powerpoint slides did not reflect this.

Mr. Fattibene thanked everyone involved in the presentation and stated that he sees an orderly progression with the curriculum and would like to see measured results.

Mr. Dwyer stated there will more discussion at next meeting. Mrs. Brand requested a walk-through of the curriculum at the next meeting, rather than a text discussion.

4. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Iacono moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 26, 2013.”

Motion Carried: 8:0:1 Mrs. Kennelly, Mr. Convertito, Mr. Liu, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Ms. Iacono, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Kery in favor; Mrs. Brand abstained

5. Board Committee/Liaison Reports

Mrs. Sue Brand stated that next Board Goals Advisory Meeting will take place on March 14 at 5 p.m. in the Superintendent’s Conference Room. At CES, Stefan Pryor spoke about the teacher evaluation process and school calendars.

6. Superintendent’s Report

Dr. Title stated there would be no report tonight due to the late hour.

7. New Business

a. Request from FairTV Cable Advisory Council

The Board discussed the appointment of a Council Member for Cable Area Council 2. Mr. Dwyer stated the by-laws allow the Chair to appoint Board members, and asked the Board for guidance on appointing a member of the public. Board Discussion followed.

Mr. Fattibene moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded a motion to add an item to the agenda.

Motion Carried: 9:0:0

Mr. Fattibene moved/Ms. Iacono seconded “to appoint Thomas Flynn of 67 Sachem Road to Cable Advisory Board Region #2”.

Motion Carried: 9:0:0

b. First Reading of Policy 5514 – Students – Administration of Medication in the Schools

Mrs. Kennelly stated first statement in the policy is the most important and has been issued with guidance of CBE and per statute. Mrs. Brand stated she also attended the meeting and supports it.

8. Public Comments and Petitions

Elena Reilly, Stratfield teacher, stated that she supports the 4th grade math curriculum, as it allows students to gain confidence, independence, higher order skills and positive growth.

Lauren Kinsely, Stratfield teacher, has been teaching this model in both 3rd and 2nd grade. She stated she has noticed an increase in rigor and students are enthusiastic about the math units.

Sarah White, Wilton Road, stated that she is a teacher in Westport, using Singapore math. She stated there is hard data showing improved test scores with this program, is concerned about waiting for a resource and recommends implementing Singapore math.

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Lindsey Howard, Riverfield teacher, stated she has observed positive changes with this new balanced model, which allows students to be successful in their own way. She stated that she supports the new PK-2 math curriculum.

Kevin Nealy, Riverfield teacher, stated the balanced math curriculum allows for natural differentiation, allows students to work collaboratively to justify and explain thinking to one another, provides exposure to many different and successful strategies, and provides a deeper understanding of math.

Rana Hilinski, Dwight teacher, stated that she supports the instructional model for PK-2; children can justify reasoning and the instructional model allows them to be in charge of math.

Martha Murphy, Riverfield teacher, stated that she supports the PK-2 math curriculum. She stated she has witnessed an amazing shift in how her students think about math, and has observed her students discussing different strategies to solve a problem. Ms. Murphy asked the Board to adopt this curriculum.

Eileen Roxbee, Sherman Principal, stated that all elementary principals, including ECC, support this model. Ms. Roxbee stated that is exciting to observe students solving problems and discussing with other students.

Matt Onderko, North Stratfield teacher, stated he is supportive of this model, and feels that his students from last year are very strong math students this year because of it.

Kristen Bruno, ECC Principal/Special Education Early Childhood Coordinator, asked the Board to support the PK-2 curriculum.

Mathew Sweer, Ronald Drive, stated he is concerned about the long-term viability of TERC Investigations, but the rigor in Singapore and Math in Focus appealed to him.

Kathleen Ruppert, Jennings math/science teacher, spoke in support of the PK-2 math curriculum, as the balanced instructional model provides thoughtful dialogue in math strategies and practices.

Pam Williams, Riverfield math/science teacher, stated that this model allows meaningful math discourse, and that students discuss shared thoughts and are actively engaged.

Mary Tapia, Holland Hill math/science teacher, stated that multiple paths to a solution are encouraged, students internalize concepts more deeply, and students are accountable for fact fluency. Ms. Tapia believes in the mathematical learning that is taking place, and requests that the Board adopt this curriculum.

Anthony Abbazia, Juniper Lane, stated that he is a mathematician and businessman and that dollar amounts should be listed in the budget implications.

Sarah Bocchierre, Jennings teacher, stated her classroom is alive with discussion and wonder, and that differentiated instruction is naturally embedded in this model.

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Ann Marie Harper, Buena Vista Road, stated that she is a 4th grade teacher using Singapore math in Westport, and has also taught TERC. Ms. Harper asked the Board to consider the Singapore resource, rather than a patchwork program.

At 10:40 p.m. Mrs. Brand moved/Mrs. Kennelly seconded to extend the meeting to 11:15 p.m.

Motion Carried: 9:0:0

Susan Bellisimo, Millspaugh Drive, stated that she was taught to defend her thinking and apply her knowledge. She stated the new curriculum is teaching creative thinkers, and requested that the Board support it.

Nicola Kunar, Holiday Road, stated that conceptualizing math is a 'nice to have' and not a need; there is only one answer in math.

Jerry McCormack, Waterville Road, stated that CMT results, when compared before and after the pilot, show the new curriculum has a positive impact in some schools, and a negative impact in others, and he questioned why this difference occurred.

Tricia Donovan, Taintor Drive, stated that it is disappointing to hear so much about teaching to the test; this is the time to set the stage for Algebra.

Eileen Liu, Waterville Road stated that she created a research document that has been circulated within the community, and she feels the math curriculum is much better now. She stated this is the chance to make Fairfield rival other countries as well as Westport, and requests the Board take a look at Singapore math.

Dawn Llewellyn, Sturges Road, stated that flexible grouping occurs in Burr and Dwight, and asked why this isn't offered in other schools.

Kelly Crisp, Papermill Lane, stated that it seems TERC scored higher than Singapore based on un-weighted variables, and she is surprised that New Cannan had selected TERC.

Nadine Nizet, Mill Hill Terrace, stated that Fairfield ranks at the bottom for scores in math in 19 Towns, and that Mill Hill in 2007 was position 42 and today it is 110.

Jay Wolk, RTM District 6, wanted to thank all the teachers in Fairfield. He stated he has a 4th grader and 6th grader and if the teachers say the curriculum is working, then he is supporting it.

Kelly Jacobsen, Acorn Lane, stated that she is disappointed that there is no recommendation going forward, and the perfect answer could take forever. She stated a good option is Singapore math.

Annie Braley, Bibbins Avenue, thanked the teachers for their hard work, and is disappointed to hear that there is no text adoption, rather there will be a patchwork approach.

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John Llewellyn, Sturges Road, thanked the teachers, and wanted to point out that he observed a lot of good things happening in the class, but the results are brought forth by parents. He stated it is time to return to leveling.

Vessy Doulis, Mill Plain Road, stated that the Fairfield school system is not the best in the state.

For the record: Maureen Sawyer, Thor Place, stated (via written note) that she is in favor of the PK-2 math curriculum, and asked the Board to support it.

9. Open Board Comment

Mrs. Brand requested an update on the Teacher Evaluation in the superintendent report.

10. Adjournment

Ms. Iacono moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded the recommended motion “that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education Adjourn.”

Motion Carried: 9:0:0 Meeting adjourned 11:05 p.m.

Jessica Gerber
Fairfield Board of Education
Secretary