

Tolland Board of Education

Curriculum Committee Minutes

February 4th, 2021

Members Present: Jacob Marie (Co-Chair), Madhu Renduchintala (Co-Chair), Christine Griffin

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Willett (Superintendent of Schools)

Meeting called to order at 3:36pm

1. Clarification of the Difference Between Curriculum Director, Assistant Superintendent, and Chief Operating Officer positions: Dr. Willett reviewed the difference between these 3 different positions. He stated that a Curriculum Director would be charged with all matters relating to curriculum design, the TEAM program, and would manage curriculum supervisors. The Curriculum Director would report to the Superintendent on matters relating to curriculum. An Assistant Superintendent would be charged with handling personnel matters and other administrative tasks. Additionally, an Assistant Superintendent could do O92 evaluations (a Curriculum Director can't do evaluations). A Chief Operating Officer could play a direct role in IC evaluations and handle personnel issues for non-certified staff members. Additionally, a COO could deal with transportation and facilities related issues. Ideally, Dr. Willett said TPS would have 2 Assistant Superintendents, one for Teaching and Learning, and one for Operations. However, Dr. Willett and the Committee agreed that a COO type position would be the best position for the district given current resources and circumstances.
2. Curriculum Review and Staffing Needs:
 - a. Pandemic Needs: Dr. Willett stated that the national NWEA study showed that only 68% of skills acquisition is occurring this year (for context, the average "summer slide" is 80%), and that a similar trend will likely be reflected in the district data as NWEA assessments are given this year. Remote learners remain one of the largest areas of concern. Although Dr. Willett respects and understands the decisions of those who have chosen to have their children educated remotely, he made it clear that a large proportion of these students will need intervention services, and some may even need IEPs. The district will be in need of Speech and Language, English Language Learner teacher, and Behavioral specialist to deal with these challenges. Finally, Dr. Willett stated that the district will need to keep up with its investment in PPE and that it would be smart to keep some ESSER II funds freed up for this purpose.
 - b. Post-Pandemic Long Term Plans: Dr. Willett laid out his ideas for curriculum improvement for the district after Covid-19 starts to subside. Revising the social studies curriculum is a top priority, with Dr. Willett desiring a full k-12 reboot and further integration with Language Arts via the Wit and Wisdom program. Additionally, Dr. Willett touched on the Lighthouse Program as it relates to Unified Arts. He expressed concern over how the UA classes lack an overarching management structure, and would like to see them restructured to fulfill a purpose consistent with STEAM. Dr. Willett also

expressed an interest in furthering the district's plan for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). He would like to keep the Skills for Adolescents class at TMS in place and make Advisory at THS more structured so that each session builds upon the last. Ms. Griffin asked if Dr. Willett could prepare a 3-year plan for each of these areas to fix places where there are issues or gaps in the curriculum. Dr. Willett said that he could do this but cautioned that changing federal and state mandates might make a long-term plan that goes too far out (e.g. 5 years) obsolete before its prescribed completion date. Mr. Marie agreed that a 3-year plan would be useful, but suggested that it should be more of a framework that we are comfortable with revisiting and changing as needed. Mr. Renduchintala asked about the vacant Assistant Principal position at THS. Dr. Willett said that they will begin looking for someone to fill the position after the budget situation for the next fiscal year becomes more certain.

- c. Measuring Student Performance: Mr. Marie asked about the NWEA test. Dr. Willett clarified that this is a diagnostic test that the district performs to measure student skill acquisition and that results aren't typically sent home to students, as this is not the purpose of the test. Ms. Griffin asked about how students with academic struggles are identified in the High School. Dr. Willett stated that there are few diagnostic tests used at the High School level and that SAT scores and general academic performance are heavily relied on to identify and help struggling students. Mr. Marie asked if the Board or committee would be able to review aggregated data on student performance to get a sense of how the district is doing. Dr. Willett was interested in doing this, remarking that he had done something similar in his Superintendent's Monthly Report when he started as Superintendent. He stressed that this year's data will not be reliable compared to previous years due to the challenges of the pandemic, and factors such as not necessarily getting compliance on NWEA testing from remote populations. Finally, Dr. Willett mentioned that IABs could be replacing the NWEA test in some or all grades, and this may be a subject that the Committee would like to discuss in the future.
 - d. Independent Evaluation of TPS Curriculum and Curriculum Structure: Dr. Willett stated that he doesn't believe that there is an outside party more qualified to assess our curriculum than someone within district and more than likely we would be paying someone to tell us information we already know. He mentioned that it would be best to give the district time to adjust after the pandemic, and revisit this question in due time, perhaps after a year, to see if we think an independent evaluation may be helpful. The Committee was in agreement with Dr. Willett's evaluation of this matter.
3. Pathway Programs:
- a. Potential Full Board Presentation: Dr. Willett would be interested in creating a 1-hour board presentation on the Pathways programs and its 3 "prongs." He mentioned May as being a good month to do this as most of the budget discussion will be over at that point.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:25pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Jacob Marie