

**INSTRUCTIONAL/SPED
SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Thursday, January 30, 2014
5:00 PM**

**School Administration Building
417 Rock Street
Fall River, MA 02720**

AGENDA

Discussion:

- Durfee High School's Program of Studies
- Implementation of an early college concept at Durfee High School
- Status of the Department of Labor Grant

MINUTES

At 5:05 PM, Chairman Martins called to order the Instructional/SPED Sub-Committee Meeting. A roll call showed that Mr. Andrade and Mrs. Panchley were present.

Also in attendance: Superintendent Mayo-Brown, Assistant Superintendent Roy, Associate Principal Tracy Curley and a member of the press.

1. Durfee High School Program of Studies

Mr. Martins noted that the first item on the agenda was the Durfee High School Program of Studies.

MOTION: Mr. Andrade – Mrs. Panchley: To discuss the Durfee High School Program of Studies.

All in favor

None Opposed

Motion passed

Discussion:

Mrs. Panchley asked regarding the weighted GPA scale what a Pre-AP course counted as.

Mrs. Curley explained that the Pre-AP has the same weighting as an honors class but in an effort to show that there is a difference between the honors and the AP level, credit wise they are given 1.25 which ends up altering the effect on the GPA.

Transcriber's Note: Principal Marshall joined the meeting at 5:07 PM.

Mrs. Panchley asked how much credit an AP course was.

Mrs. Curley said that generally speaking, the pages where credits are referenced; the credits are based on sitting time. Example being a one credit class would meet five times a week for the entire year. Those classes being offered six times a week get 1.25 credits.

Mrs. Panchley said she was very impressed with the amount of electives offered. She had a couple of suggestions maybe for the future such as adding an accounting class to the classes already offered in that area to complete and enhance the business offerings. She noted that she did not see a SAT Prep course and has heard about it from the community.

Mr. Marshall responded that they had run that course over past years and it was under subscribed. He does not object to having it as an extension course to assist students who would like to do it and can look into doing something like that. He said the same was true for Economics.

Mrs. Panchley said if those business classes are not being taken then adding another might not make sense but she thought as she was looking at the offerings, accounting was one that was missing.

Mr. Marshall said that when the business department had to be cut, they did reach out to BCC and students were allowed to do Dual Enrollment and that still exists. Rather than creating a course, they can take advantage of the courses that exist out in the community which he thinks is a better option for the kids.

Mrs. Curley explained that originally economics was offered through social studies. They had a teacher who approached them about a year long course through the math offerings. They settled on a semester course and are looking for students to partner that with courses such as a calculus course that is more applications based. They talked about introducing it and possibly extending it over time or build some other math courses that would complement it.

Transcriber's Note: Guidance Department Head, Kim Napolitano, joined the meeting at 5:12 PM.

Mrs. Panchley's last question was regarding the passing grade and asked when the failing grade became 59.

Mr. Marshall said it was about eight years ago.

Mrs. Panchley asked what the rationale was.

Mr. Marshall explained that the rationale was that it mirrored the grading system (A+ down to D-). They looked at a number of surrounding towns and it was about a 50/50 split with some doing 65 and some doing 60. They presented it to the School Committee and it has been in place since. He said it has come up several times and they are open to taking a look at it. He added that it also helps in translating the transcript of incoming students.

Mrs. Panchley asked if a number of people are graduating because of the change.

Mr. Marshall said in his opinion it is a misnomer that if it is 65 it is somehow more rigorous and a 60 is lower expectations. They have told teachers that the 60 should relate to what the 65 used to represent. His belief is that he does not like grades and thinks they are arbitrary and that they should be doing a competency model. Unfortunately, they can't because the exit point to college is based on GPA and ranking. He added that if it is 65, that is fine but 65 means they are "ramping it up" and maybe they are ready for that at this point. He added again that he did not have an issue raising it and

that for the issue for the incoming students, they will have to capture how they are going to translate their transcript.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said that they have been hearing a lot about this this both from parents and teachers and asked the Subcommittee if they feel they are at a point to survey teacher, parents and students and get the feedback to the Subcommittee on the general feeling. She feels it is becoming more of a topic and should be addressed.

Mr. Andrade said he felt it should be ramped up even from the point of perception and agreed with the survey and revisiting this topic.

Mrs. Panchley added that she is always concerned about rigor and wants to make sure it is there and that the students are performing.

Mr. Marshall said when he hands the diploma to students, he wants to make sure it means something and said he is all for it.

Mr. Martins echoed the comments of Mrs. Panchley and Mr. Andrade. He noted that a D+ could go to a 68, D to a 66, D- to a 65 and F for 64 and below. He noted on page 83, CTE, the last sentence of the paragraph states *most students begin a sequence of courses in grade 10 and must pass each course with a minimum of a 65 or above to proceed to the next pathway with the exception of Health Assisting which has a minimum requirement of a 70 based on Department of Public Health recommendations.* He added that for some students technical education is important and for other students liberal arts education is important and the importance to one is equal to the importance of the other. He has no objection to soliciting the input of teachers and parents as long as there is a mixed number. He feels it is something that can be implemented for September 2014.

MOTION: Mr. Andrade – Mrs. Panchley: To direct the administration to obtain additional input on having the lowest passing grade moved to a 65.

All in favor

None Opposed

Motion passed

Mr. Martins asked if Mr. Andrade had any discussion regarding the Program of Studies.

Mr. Andrade said he had an observation and they are probably aware of it but there are a few courses that meet six or seven times a week which creates a scheduling problem. He said he is not saying they should not do it and understands the rigor of some of the courses but just wanted to make them aware that it does create a problem with scheduling.

Mr. Marshall said they are aware and it was a big challenge that they faced in relation to Freshman Academy which they learned some lessons from. They recognize the fact that if they are doing more time in particular areas, it means less time for teachers to instruct a large number of students. It goes back to the number of electives they offer. He said, to be clear, this is the Program of Studies that they offer; however, once they get the course selections they go back and make some hard decisions.

Mr. Andrade asked about the removing of Organic Chemistry from the offerings.

Mr. Marshall explained that one of the reasons was current capacity within their teaching ranks. He reached out to BCC and UMass Dartmouth to be able to provide those opportunities and they are looking at ways to do that.

Dr. Roy added that she had spoken to the Science Department Head and some of the same content is covered in AP Chemistry so the students will get some exposure to it.

Mr. Martins asked how many students are attending the courses offered at the colleges and how the students get there.

Mr. Marshall explained that that is one of their challenges. BCC is in close proximity and some of the courses are offered right at the high school. "A lot of interesting doors and partnerships are opening up through the Department of Labor grant including UMass Dartmouth whose new Chancellor is looking to build a relationship as well."

Mr. Martins asked how many students were participating.

Ms. Napolitano said she believed there was one junior currently at UMass Dartmouth. UMass had scaled back this current semester because of costs and financial burdens. They also have fifty students taking classes at BCC in the coming spring semester.

Mr. Andrade asked about the history requirement changes combining U.S. and World History.

Mr. Marshall explained that it is a change in the delivery of the curriculum. Mr. Desmarais had spoken to them about paralleling what goes on in World History with U.S. History. It is going to be a three-year program. Part of the reason is that there is a lot of history in the U.S. and they were trying to get through it and students are exposed to World History in eighth grade and then didn't see it again until their junior year. It didn't make sense for them to isolate U.S. History without discussing the World impact. The standards were mapped out and rolled over three years. He said it seems like it makes a lot more sense and allows them to go deeper into the U.S. as well.

Mr. Andrade said he did like that aspect but had issue with time periods not being covered.

Dr. Roy said they spoke with Mr. Desmarais about a better scope and sequence for the AP courses. Although they have had greater participation, the passing grade in social studies has been flat. They adjusted those courses so that it will work for the high end kids as well.

Mr. Andrade asked if the AP test covered those time periods.

Mr. Marshall said his understanding was that the AP exam will be changing and have more of a thematic approach. He explained some of the course/path options and said they feel it captures more students and gives them more of an ability to get them up to that level and also gives them a more in-depth look at history in general for all students.

Mr. Andrade said his last point was to what Mrs. Panchley spoke to earlier. Business to him is a prime area. He thought talking about bringing back the business department was premature at this time but thought it might make sense to have one survey course for an introduction into the business world/something to use as a stepping off point.

Mr. Martins said he would love to see a business program put back into the curriculum. He added that he thought the word "project" should be included under STEM when referring to Capstone.

Mr. Martins continued by noting there are ample courses in the Program of Studies directly related to STEM. The student's time averages out to be about three periods a day. The time required for a

vocational Chapter 74 program and Perkins is between 50% of the student's time or 40% of the student's time. With CVTE, you just need 25% of the time which is two periods. He wondered why this program is not being pushed for CVTE approval by Chapter 74 and Perkins. He feels that there are courses in the program that could be tied with the engineering courses at BCC to have it as an approved CVTE program, thus having the funding that goes with it. He asked why it could not be pushed toward getting CVTE status.

Mr. Marshall explained that they need to change the sequencing. He has spoken to Dr. Sylvaria and they have to keep the title as Project Lead the Way (PLTW) for the proprietary curriculum but they are also going to add engineering 1, 2 and 3 which is the sequence. They have not looked to certify it because they are in the infancy of the program. This is their second year of PLTW. PLTW is supposed to be entry level engineering and biomedical for all students. One of the things they started this year at the middle schools is the Gateway to Technology courses. They are providing the opportunity for the pathway but need to build it up. He noted that if they receive the Department of Labor grant it will slingshot them forward to be able to add a lot of the offerings for students. It will all depend on the number of staff members they need to have and how many students they can service. As an elective course that is accepted through PLTW, there is an end of the year exam and 150 colleges and universities that accept those courses and provides preference for admissions and scholarships and in some cases, credit for the courses. Doing it the way it is prescribed gets students to that end point. He is not objecting to it and is trying to take a look at what the impacts would be. They do collect it as a Perkins program because it does have those sequences.

Mr. Martins asked if they report all the students in STEM.

Mr. Marshall responded "absolutely." What they haven't done at this point is to go for the full Chapter 74 certification which he is leery about from the standpoint of being able to staff it and how many students they can serve. If they are increasing the number of hours spent in English and math, they are also going to have to reduce the number of sections teachers can teach. If they are going to increase the number of periods, they are going to need more teachers which is going to be a cost to the district. He understands that it potentially brings in more money but they will need to do a cost offset to see how much is coming in versus going out. He used their cosmetology program as an example. He added that the PLTW/engineering program is an expensive program to run but from a district standpoint he feels they are doing it the right way. They are investigating it and he has instructed Dr. Sylvaria to do the cost outlay. He added that they did not want to do the engineering in place of the core science so students are still going to be required to take the lab sciences. There are only so many hours in the day and offerings they can give.

Mr. Martins noted (responding to Mr. Marshall's cosmetology reference) that scheduling is an issue but that they do not have to move as a class even though they are in the same program. If there is a concern as to whether these programs can be considered CVTE programs, scheduling is going to be a problem but would have to be worked out.

Mr. Marshall said that as a city and district they have limited resources to do all of these things especially with certain requirements they have to meet. He is all for the Chapter 74 programs and sees what it does for the students. He is not objecting to investigating it. He had asked for legal counsel regarding the cable contract and hasn't heard back yet.

Mr. Martins said he spoke with the Mayor regarding the cable contract and it is funding that comes through the City of Fall River. It is his understanding that the expenditure of those funds are at the Mayor's discretion.

Mr. Marshall said they were waiting on legal counsel for that but he has directed Dr. Sylvaria to investigate the requirements; how many students they can service; and how it affects staffing to see what the best way to service a larger amount of students to leave high school with those credentials would be. Dr. Sylvaria will be getting the regulations down for each program and he would like to set up a time frame to come back to the Subcommittee with their findings.

Mr. Martins suggested that they have someone from DESE come look at what they want to do and see if it is feasible.

Mrs. Panchley asked for some clarification of the programs.

Mr. Martins explained that a regular vocational education program is three periods (40% of the student's time). CVTE is two periods (25% of the student's time).

Mrs. Panchley asked if they are talking about letting additional students take advantage through CVTE.

Mr. Martins said they could take advantage of it.

Mrs. Panchley was thinking they could not have additional students taking advantage because there is no additional time to service them.

Mr. Marshall added "or staff." In order to go to the model Mr. Martins is talking about, they would have to add additional staff.

Mrs. Panchley "So this is different. Chapter 74 is more staff, less kids."

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said that was correct.

Mr. Marshall added that it is not just staffing but room as well.

Mr. Martins said that regular education is funded at about \$7K per student; CVTE is funded at about \$10K per student.

Mrs. Panchley said it would be a matter of making sure that additional money went to fund these programs.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said that is where the challenge is.

Mr. Martins asked for an agreement instead of a motion that they will come back to the Subcommittee in a couple of months with their findings. He then asked if there was any other discussion on the Program of Studies.

Mrs. Panchley asked regarding World Languages if a student coming out of middle school having taken (for example) French 1, could go into the next section (French 2) when entering as a freshman.

Dr. Roy said they could.

Mrs. Panchley noted that the Program stated grades 10, 11, & 12 for those courses and did not note that.

Ms. Napolitano said that could be corrected.

Mr. Martins asked if a student comes from a fluent family, if they can test out of the course and receive credit.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said they could test into the appropriate level.

Ms. Napolitano said there are Heritage Language Learners courses which focus on sharpening their skills.

MOTION: Mrs. Panchley – Mr. Andrade: To forward the Durfee High School Program of Studies to the School Committee as a Whole with the administration researching the CVTE programs.

All in favor

None Opposed

Motion passed

2. Implementation of an early college concept at Durfee High School.

Mr. Martins said he feels it is time for them to move this issue along and have dialogue with BCC.

Mrs. Panchley said she knows there is a charter school application out and asked if BCC was partnering with them.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said BCC is partnering with them. She believed the Board of Education was taking a vote at February's meeting as to whether or not either charter school would be getting approved.

Mrs. Panchley questioned if BCC would want to wait until they knew what was happening with the charter schools before having a conversation with FRPS or if they have the capacity. She noted she is all for anything to get students college credits, at no cost, and leaving with an Associate's Degree. She is not against approaching BCC but wonders where their thinking is.

Mr. Andrade said they do not know and thinks they should make the attempt now.

Mr. Martins feels that becomes a decision of BCC. The New Heights Charter School is still in process and he doesn't know what the relationship or commitment is between them and BCC but he feels they have gone long enough and does not feel they should hold off any longer.

MOTION: Mr. Andrade – : To recommend to the full Committee that a subcommittee be set up to meet with officials at Bristol Community College for discussion on the implementation of an early college concept at Durfee High School.

Discussion:

Mrs. Panchley said before proceeding she would like to know the administration's opinion on this.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown responded with Mr. Martins permission by saying she is in favor of an early college high school and thinks it is a terrific model to offer the students of the City. Anything they can do that creates more options for students, the better for the kids. She believes they have success with both of their high schools because they are able to offer a variety of options and this would be yet another option. She believes it is worth pursuing and thinks BCC is the right place to

start. She added that she would like to talk to the Committee after they assess BCC’s capacity to do it or not, as to what the layout of those steps would look like in terms of planning. She felt there was a lot to talk about regarding what the model would look like, etc.

MOTION: Mr. Andrade – Mrs. Panchley: To recommend to the full Committee that a subcommittee be set up to meet with officials at Bristol Community College for discussion on the implementation of an early college program at Durfee High School.

All in favor

None Opposed

Motion passed

3. Status of the Department of Labor Grant

Mr. Martins asked the status of the grant.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said it was signed, sealed and delivered.

Mr. Martins said when he first saw this grant it said \$100M going to a maximum of 40 recipients. If all 40 were funded, it would be \$2.5M. A month ago he heard they needed to incorporate the WIB and Taunton and Attleboro High Schools. He thought that was okay because chances may be better as a region. Now this evening, Mr. Marshall mentioned UMass Dartmouth (UMD) and he asked their relationship to the grant.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown asked Mr. Marshall to explain the components of the grant.

Mr. Marshall said that it is a great opportunity and they feel strongly about their chances given their partnership with UMass Dartmouth, BCC, WIB and business partners. It is very much around the STEM areas (H1B). These are typically jobs that have not been filled by American citizens because capacity had not been built as a country. They are targeting different areas and the area they chose was the STEM areas in relation to the budding engineering program and biomedical. It also mirrors the exit points for students to go to either college. The director of the engineering program at UMD is very excited about it and they are excited about their entry point into UMD. It has really opened up those conversations as to how they can get students there. The current community partner in Massachusetts for PLTW is Worcester Polytech. Mr. Marshall noted that it is a great University but a number of students are still going to UMD because of local appeal and cost savings.

He continued that if the grant goes through, it is a four year grant and a four year roll out. The idea is that students would be doing the PLTW program along with doing the Gateway to Technology program in middle school. Instead of having to go through a discovery, their hope is that students come into freshman year going into the program. The idea is to get them through the curriculum to access the courses offered through BCC and UMD. They ended up “purchasing” ten courses in each college so it would service upwards of 500 students being able to access the courses. It would also increase the dual enrollment opportunities for students. Their mission at Durfee is to have all students exit at the highest level in the world of education, work, or service. The grant ended up being a significant chunk of money and would slingshot them forward to be able to outfit the shops, training teachers, etc.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown asked Mr. Marshall to give them the bottom number and noted that they see this as being able to support the early college high school as far as buying courses and creating this pathway.

Mr. Marshall said the number is \$3.75 million.

Mr. Martins asked “for Fall River?”

Mr. Marshall said yes and Mr. Martin was happy with that number.

Mr. Marshall said again that they feel very strongly about the grant and the people coming together to pull it off were phenomenal.

Mr. Martins asked if he could have a copy of the grant.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said they would get the grant out to Committee members.

Mr. Martins asked when they would receive word of approval.

Mr. Marshall said March. They would look for them to be up and running in September. The good news is that they already are up and running with certain things. Mr. Marshall noted it included RPS as well.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown asked Mr. Marshall to give some information on the Career Academies Planning Grant continuation.

Mr. Marshall said the grant was to implement PLTW and it was also a planning grant so they wanted to make sure they got in line in case there was implementation money available as well. They gave an additional year to apply for the planning grant. The idea is to set up an academy within the larger high school. All of the things Mr. Martin has been talking about and all of the things they have been trying to do at the high school, in concert with trying to bring up the whole school, is right in line. The end result could be students entering into the academy of engineering at the high school. Part of the grant that was written was to create a small learning community with the idea of taking the core standards and trying to align them with what they will be learning in the shops.

4. Common Core

Mr. Martins said he has heard a lot about common core and did some research in regards to the standards. They haven’t heard much about this other than what he has been reading and some meetings he has gone to. MASC is having a session on it as well in March. He asked if the school administration had any information they could share.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said the common core was adopted by the State of Massachusetts when they revised their curriculum frameworks. The State released curriculum frameworks in mathematics and English Language Arts in 2011. Those frameworks contain the common core standards. The State adopted about 80% of the common core standards. The district’s curriculum - which is reflected in the AIP and all the school improvement plans beginning in the year 2012-2013 - were all aligned to those 2011 frameworks which contain the common core standards. The district continues to revise the curriculum around those areas and offer PD in the instructional shifts that the common core is requiring. The amount of informational text that students need to be exposed to has changed. At the elementary level, teachers are asked that at least 50% of the text that students read be non-fiction or informational. As students enter high school, that expectation changes to about 80%.

Mr. Martins said when he asked the question of what class level in ELA is considered as an entry level to college, the individual could not provide an answer to it or one wasn't developed yet. He asked if there is a course for ELA (like Algebra 2) that is considered to be college ready.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she would think that is all four years of their courses.

Dr. Roy said it is not a course but it is literacy standards. It is a certain technical ability to read and write in a complex way to get them ready so that they do not have to take any kind of remedial classes in college.

Mr. Martins asked what the determination of that is.

Dr. Roy said PARC will be determining that and they are working on that assessment system.

Mr. Martins asked about the recording of student data. He understands that there is some very personal data that is going to be extracted from students such as family income, religion, party affiliation, etc.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said they do not ask any of that information. They will see the first PARC pilot this spring and will see what types of questions are asked. Nowhere in her two years of working with the State on common core has there ever been any suggestion of collection of that personal data. She would alert the Committee if that is the case.

Mr. Martins said it is scary if it is true and he intends to go to the MASC meeting in March and ask the question in regards to this.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said the State collects now, income based on free and reduced lunch applications and they know race and the information supplied to the State on an annual basis.

Mr. Martins said that is sufficient personal information currently being collected and doesn't feel there needs to be anymore.

Mr. Andrade said he does have a couple of articles that he could share with the Superintendent if she was interested.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she would be and explained that they are utilizing the common core because it is part of the Massachusetts State Standards. The State has adopted them so they are required to implement them. They feel they are doing it in a way that makes sense for students in the context of the district's schools but they are fully implementing the common core based on the standards.

Mr. Martins asked about student testing. "MCAS is still going to be on and the PARC test. Are they taking both?"

Superintended Mayo-Brown responded yes. For this year, students will be taking both. Not all students, just those engaged in the pilot. They had the option of having students just participate in PARC and not participate in MCAS. She did not take that option because she does not want to lose the historical data on MCAS.

Mrs. Panchley said she thinks part of the whole pilot is the rigor of the test. If they take both, they will be able to really see what that test is bringing. She felt having the kids take both tests is an important barometer.

Mr. Andrade asked about the schools participating.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she believes they have five schools participating. The high school has to do it. She noted it is a couple of classes within the schools and not the entire school. They felt it was a very manageable pilot and will be done by paper and pencil. The intent is they get it to a place where the students take it solely on technology. Superintendents have said that is a huge expense for districts and they really need to be thoughtful about it and consider how the State could support districts with funding that. It is a two-year paper and pencil test with anticipation in the third year that it may become an online assessment.

Mr. Martins asked that the Superintendent share any other information as it comes along.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown agreed.

Mr. Martins asked what the status was of the one-year follow-up study for the Class of 2012.

Ms. Napolitano said the survey had been completed and they just needed time to pull together the results.

Mr. Marshall said it should be available to them at the February meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Andrade – Mrs. Panchley: To adjourn.

All in favor

None Opposed

Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:26 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca L. Caron
Interim Administrative Assistant
for School Committee Services

Please note: A videotape/DVD of this meeting is on file in the School Committee Office and is available for review by contacting the Interim Administrative Assistant for School Committee Services.