



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE COUNTY

Curriculum Advisory Committee

October 20, 2014

6:00 p.m. – Training Room D

Meeting Minutes

Mission Statement

To advise the School Board by recommending approaches to obtaining improved student achievement for all students through a coherent, rigorous academic course of study that provides the tools necessary to succeed in today's society. Emphasis will be placed on the dynamic development of a K-12 curriculum within a safe environment leading to both career and technical majors, the methods of instruction used to implement it, and the assessments of its effectiveness, together with a complementary professional development program to support it.

Committee Members Present: Mrs. Kathleen Cherasia, Dr. Connie Dennis, Ms. Shannon DiMurro, Ms. Lori Fayhee, Mrs. Susan Goldsberry, Mr. Thomas Latino, Mrs. Patti Lochner, Dr. Lois Redmond, Mr. John Steakley, Ms. Lauren Torres, Mr. John Traube, and Mrs. Sandra Worth

Committee Members Absent: Ms. Christine Cartaya, Miss Jacqui Chevalier Hill (excused), and Mr. Matt Smith (excused)

School Board Liaison: Ms. Mary Fischer

Staff Members Present: Mrs. Christy Kutz – Assistant Superintendent Teaching and Learning, Mrs. Melissa Robery - Director Curriculum Services Secondary, Mrs. Soretta Ralph – Director Curriculum Services Elementary and Mrs. Patti Elkin - Director Accountability

Recording Secretary: Mary Reider

Guests: Dr. Judy Wilkerson and Mr. Dustin Worth

Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Chair Thomas Latino at 6:02 pm. Mr. Latino thanked everyone for coming and assured a smooth meeting process.

Review /Approval of Agenda and Meeting Minutes

Mr. Latino asked everyone to review tonight's agenda and the meeting minutes from September 15, 2014. Mr. Latino stated minutes were a synopsis of the meeting and not a verbatim transcript. Mr. Latino called for corrections or additions. There were none. Mr. Latino asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Motion to approve made by Dr. Lois Redmond, seconded by Dr. Connie Dennis. Motion carried. Mr. Latino asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Motion to approve made by Mrs. Sandra Worth and seconded by Dr. Lois Redmond. Motion carried.

Board Member Report

Ms. Fischer read the purpose of the Curriculum Advisory Committee as stated in The School Board of Lee County Policy 1.18:

The purpose of the Curriculum Committee shall be to provide input, advice and support to curriculum content, materials and assessment instruments and to the school improvement process. The committee will also provide input, advice and support to District-wide technology issues and promote the integration of technology into the home and learning environments.

Ms. Fischer stated it has been noted that Curriculum Advisory Committee does more listening/receiving information than giving advice. A request has been made that district executive leadership bring forward topics for which they would like advice, presenting the issues and challenges of the District to the Curriculum Advisory Committee for their perspective to help inform the decisions the District needs. This is the role for this advisory committee. The Curriculum Advisory Committee is an experienced group of educators and community members offering their input on issues of concern.

Some of the issues in the past that have been brought up were six measures for school grades with regards to the connection between accountability and the school improvement plan process which were sent to the Board from the Curriculum Advisory Committee. The six measures are:

- Meeting annual measurable outcomes
- Addressing/resolving/using early warning measures
- Setting and achieving realistic school improvement goals
- Closing the achievement gaps for sub-groups
- Providing accommodations for all students with IEPs or 504 plans
- Making learning gains in state general education and alternative assessments

The Curriculum Advisory Committee also recommended to the Board that standardized testing be used only for measuring educational development of a child and for educational diagnosis. There is concern about the validity and tests used for purposes for which they were not designed.

Curriculum Advisory Committee recommendations were considered by the Board when legislative priorities for the upcoming year were assembled. Ms. Fischer reminded committee members that they can individually contact their legislators, and action often happens when legislators hear from more constituents.

Ms. Fischer also shared a copy of The School Board of Lee County, Florida 2014 Legislative Priorities, Talking points from Dr. Nancy Graham that were presented by the School Superintendents Association State Board of Education meeting on September 29, 2014. Ms. Fischer feels we are all saying the same thing. We need to have a clear direction that the Standardized and High Stakes testing needs to be valid and reliable and they need to be minimized in number and we need an accountability system that is designed to create fairness for the students, teachers and districts. State exams must be fully aligned with the Standard required at the time and all State mandated testing programs be covered financially by state funds.

Ms. Fischer discussed Roberts Rules of order and reminded all members to take one issue at a time, be courteous, fair, give everyone an opportunity to speak and abide by the rule of the majority. Ms. Fischer concluded her report by thanking everyone for their willingness to serve.

Public Comment – Non CAC Members

None

New Business

Discussion of Assessments Utilized in High Stakes Testing

Patti Lochner, Vice Chair shared the FEA (Florida Education Association) Resolution and New Business Item -2014 “Stop Toxic Testing, Together” for the committee’s review.

Ms. Fischer mentioned Dr. Graham’s staff came up with a problem statement about the testing and along with her collaboration with the Florida Superintendent’s Association and our collaboration with the Florida School Board Association and the Florida Education Association, she will be asking Lee County to send their own statement (Statement – The amount of Testing Disrupts Student’s Learning) to the Department of Education.

Mrs. Christy Kutz shared our District is part of a consortium consisting of 11 counties. The goal of the consortium is to move forward issues that are impacting those counties. One major issue the consortium has put forward is to use assessments for diagnostic purposes only and to reduce the number of assessments. The 11 counties represent over 50% of the students in the state and 52% of the legislature. Mrs. Kutz believes there will be a response from our Governor and our State Board of Education once we get thru the November elections.

Mrs. Kutz, along with Mrs. Soretta Ralph, Director of Elementary Curriculum and Mrs. Melissa Robery, Director of Secondary Curriculum, and Patti Elkin, Director of Accountability shared a list of 2014-15 assessments administered to the “typical student” (elementary, middle, & high). Assessments for high school AP courses were not included. There are differences between Progress Monitoring (assessments given to benchmark along the way – not tied to grades, but giving teachers information to form their instruction) and State Standardized Tests (formerly known as the FCAT) now known as the Florida Standards Assessment. In many of the grades, assessments are tied to the school accountability. Math assessments for high school are course specific.

Q/A from Committee Members to Mrs. Kutz:

(Q) Are writing assessments now in grade 7 rather than grade 8? *Lori Fayhee* (A) Writing Assessments will be in 3rd grade through 11th grade.

(Q) How much time is spent teaching to the test? *John Traube* (A) Administration continually talks with teachers not to teach to the test, but to teach the Standards. If Standards are taught, students will be prepared for the tests.

(Q) What is the psychological impact of testing on children? *John Traube* (A) Anxiety is increased when teaching to the test. Teacher evaluations tied to the assessments have also raised the anxiety level. This will be a re-occurring theme until we have a solution to assessments.

(Q) What is the School Board’s position and Dr. Graham’s position for Opting Out? *Cathleen Cherasia* (A) Dr. Graham has been one of the leaders in consortium stepping out and creating a platform for

change. At the local level, our Board has done what they can do to get the conversation going. Ultimately, it comes down to the governor and the legislators.

(Q) You stated the Writing Test was grades 3 thru 11. Is that the FSA you are talking about? *Lori Fayhee* (A) Yes

(Q) On the Progress Monitoring (three times a year) – is that for each course? *Lori Fayhee* (A) It is for tested courses

Information from Mrs. Soretta Ralph and Mrs. Patti Elkin - Work teachers have been doing with the Concept Tests and the Math Chapter Test:

Concept tests have different titles since 2008. They were created by the District from a need by principals to have some kind of monitoring tool to see how the students were mastering the Standards. The District chose to use Chapter Tests in both Reading and Math. Over the years, these tests have been redesigned with fewer questions and extended response questions were added. Science and Social Studies Standards were also monitored (10 questions starting in grade 3). This is the concern that came to the Board's attention. The Board made the decision that teachers could choose to use the tests that were already created or choose to create their own. Most teachers felt they did not have time to create their own tests.

Last week, each school sent a minimum of two teachers from the primary areas to the District office to focus on those tests. The group spent the entire day working on ELA. Groups worked together, revised the questions and wrote the questions for primary and intermediate. They also did the same thing for Math, Science and Social Studies. Most schools have chosen to use the new tests. The group will come back to the District office in late November or early December to work on creating tests for the third and fourth quarter.

Schools have until the end of the first semester to give the tests that are in the first semester. They are not tied to a date. Teachers are encouraged not to give the tests until they are sure the students are comfortable with the material. After the test, if there are issues, teachers can go back and reteach. The goal is to make sure students are prepared. With the Academic Plan, the goal is to be very sequential where all of the Standards will be covered that students will be held accountable for by the time the State Assessment occurs.

Q/A from Committee Members to Mrs. Ralph:

(Q) Is there any reason the Chapter Tests were not used instead of creating new ones? *Lori Fayhee*

(A) Math Assessments are the Chapter Assessments. Reading tests were created because the reading textbook is used by many States and does not follow our Standards and are not sequential.

(Q) Are those tests formative or summative? *Lori Fayhee* (A) Both

(Q) Was the teacher selected assessment (until the last Board meeting) the District Assessment? *John Steakley* (A) Yes

(Q) As a parent how do I know if teachers are assessing students the same from one school to the next? *John Steakley* (A) Right now, it is a school decision – however, that is another reason teachers were brought in - to create a model to be used throughout the District. Regardless of what is used, all tests must be entered into Performance Matters and will be monitored by the District.

(Q) How will I know if my child's teacher is creating her own test or using what the District created? *John Steakley* (A) This question will be brought forward to Dr. Graham

Additional discussion ensued. Mrs. Sandra Worth would like to see more uniformity and accountability throughout the District so when children move from school to school parents will not be concerned about the difference in assessments.

Mrs. Kutz shared the Elementary Math Grades versus FCAT Performance statistics from 2013-2014 and the Common Course Exam (CCE) – Comprehensive Science 3 versus FCAT Science Performance 2013-2014.

How will we modify curriculum based on this data?

We do that all the time. The Standards are given to us by the State Board of Education and curriculum falls under local control. Curriculum choices, curricular design and anything having to do with instructional materials are within the local school board control. We continually look at, modify and make adjustments and are constantly in an improvement process. This includes assessments, academic plans and instructional resources. We also look at what other Districts are doing. We want to be responsible about how we make adjustments and base decisions on the Standards. (Mrs. Kutz)

Mrs. Kutz suggested the CAC may wish to review the presentation on Formative and Summative Assessments at the next meeting.

Mrs. Robery stated one of the District's hopes in working with our Principal groups is to develop a common understanding about the use of formative assessment and how to use the data.

Additional Discussion ensued

Mr. Latino thanked the District Staff for their presentation

Good of the Order

Ms. Fischer also thanked the staff for their presentation. She felt they answered a lot of questions and gave information that can be used to formulate recommendations from the committee to send to the Board.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. John Traube, seconded by Mrs. Kathleen Cherasia. The motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM.

The next meeting of the Curriculum Advisory Committee is scheduled for **Monday, January 12, 2015 at 6:00 PM**. Curriculum Advisory Committee meetings are held at the Lee County Public Education Center, 2855 Colonial Blvd. Fort Myers, Florida – Training Room D.