

LAMOILLE UNION DISTRICT #18 BOARD
CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES
GTMCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER
OCTOBER 7, 2014

Board members present: P. Ingvaldstad, W. Sander, J. Eisenhardt, C. Szlachetka, D. Whitcomb
Others: E. Beatty, B. Schaffer, J. Teegarden, R. McCraw, W. Savery

The meeting started at 5:02.

J. Teegarden passed out a proposal which he will discuss with the RAB tomorrow morning concerning embedded credits. The Vermont State Board of Education has regulations calling for students in specific technical programs to get embedded credits in science, math, English, art, or social studies. Over the years an embedded credit system has evolved at GMTCC where we have given students embedded credits other than those sanctioned by the state. He proposes to eliminate nonsanctioned embedded mathematics credits awarded in programs at GMTCC. In programs that currently award nonsanctioned embedded math credits he proposes to implement a rigorous system that allows each student to earn a math credit aligned with Common Core and career readiness standards. The Plato online learning program would be used to deliver proficiency-based instruction and assessment. (*J. Eisenhardt and D. Whitcomb arrived at 5:09.*) This proposal would cost us nothing. We would need to ensure that each student is monitored.

W. Sander said he is overjoyed to see the direction this is going in. He has had an uneasy feeling for a while about a lot of these embedded credits. How do colleges generally react to embedded credits?

J. Teegarden said in general students will not get into, say St. Michael's or UVM, with tech math on their record, though it depends on other factors as well. In general embedded credits are not an issue at the colleges GMTCC students are most likely to attend – JSC, VTC, CCV, etc. GMTCC students are told that they are not putting themselves in a good position to attend selective colleges by relying only on the credits they can get at GMTCC.

C. Szlachetka asked what percentage of students choose to supplement as opposed to just using embedded credits. J. Teegarden said can't say what the percentage is, but he does know that quite a few take classes at CCV or LUHS etc., though many do not

P. Ingvaldstad asked if we have any programs for which the state sanctions embedded math credits and if we are still going to allow embedded credits for those programs. J. Teegarden said he is not suggesting making students do math on Plato to get embedded credits sanctioned by the state. Construction Technology and accounting in Business Administration are two that have state sanctioned math credits. It could make sense to say that we will require Plato math even for the programs that have state sanctioned embedded math credits. That would be a better way to ensure that students get the type of rigorous math they need to do well on the Accuplacer, SBAC, etc. He may change his proposal before it comes to the whole board.

W. Sander asked if we have discouraged students from coming to GMTCC by requiring algebra. J. Teegarden said no. Now sending schools can tell students they have to take algebra as freshmen

for a reason. W. Sander asked, so it is a success story? J. Teegarden said at least we have found that we can go in this direction and it doesn't harm our system.

P. Ingvoldstad said he thinks J. Teegarden has the committee's blessing on this proposal. J. Teegarden asked if he should bring it to the full board for approval as a separate agenda item or just mention it during the budget process, even though it probably won't have budget implications. P. Ingvoldstad said he doesn't have a strong feeling about that. Committee members said they thought the board would want to hear the rationale for the proposal. C. Szlachetka said he assumes the RAB will approve the proposal. If so, he recommends that the curriculum committee voice its support of the proposal when J. Teegarden presents it to the board.

R. McCraw gave an overview of common summative assessments in LNSU. He reviewed the definition of a summative assessment ("used to provide evidence of student achievement for the purpose of making a judgment about student competence or program effectiveness") and the reasons we want summative assessments that are common across classes or schools. He shared a list of common summative math assessments that currently exist in LNSU. In grades 9-12 we don't have school-wide common assessments but there is some department level commonality. The same type of work to develop common assessments is being done with literacy. We have some common assessments for science and will have some new ones in the future because new standards are coming out.

P. Ingvoldstad asked if work is being done on pretesting to allow kids to move ahead more quickly. R. McCraw said that is more typically done at the formative level. There can be common formative assessments, with a pre-test and post-test. That allows teachers to see at the outset whether there are kids who already know the material and come up with a different plan for them. For other students, teachers can compare the pre- and post-tests to see the level of growth. P. Ingvoldstad asked if we are working towards doing more formative testing. We talk about individualized studies and allowing kids to move forward faster if they can. Are we able to do that in math, science, and so forth at this point or are we able to start doing that work? R. McCraw said there has been some work done in that area but it has been quite general. There was one in service day last year about formative assessments in general. There is one in service strand now about formative assessments but the curriculum committee is not addressing formative assessments. It has its hands full with summative assessments.

C. Szlachetka asked how far down and how broadly teachers are coming together for this. R. McCraw said for math they typically meet 3 times a year and have in service days during the summer. It is similar for literacy.

C. Szlachetka said one thing he would like to be able to assess is how well the sending elementary schools are doing preparing students for middle school. He could see the benefit of having teachers from different schools come up with common tests to assess that. R. McCraw said the curriculum committees are pretty large, with every school represented, but not every grade level.

B. Schaffer said right now there are no benchmark assessments for grades 9-12 but the work of all teachers at LUHS has identified unit by unit what they are asking of kids, how they assess it, and how they respond. Teams have set individual goals for performance markers. They are measuring progress against some established curricular goals through use of formative and summative

assessments. This is work that is specific to a discipline. It is tough to summarize in a chart all the work that is being done in all content areas.

W. Savery said content teams at the middle school meet 3 times a month. They create pre and post tests and exit tickets (3 key questions students have to answer before they leave class to make sure they got the gist of the day's learning objectives.) Teams are working on common unit assessments in all content areas. Now different teams have developed similar essential questions and learning objectives. She is encouraging assessments that test learning and understanding more than rote memorization. At the middle school she hasn't seen a lot of data broken out town by town, but with VCAT as we determine what assessments we want for our district we can look at areas where it makes sense to break results out by school and we can see what feedback elementary schools want. With this new assessment we have the opportunity to look at that in a thoughtful manner. We wouldn't want to look at everything by town; we would want to be deliberate about where that would be most useful. She has started conversations with elementary principals about what feedback they want.

W. Sander said we only recently got a common curriculum across LNSU. When that takes hold better we will be able to do better on common assessments. It has been a struggle to get to this point. There was tremendous resistance. We have historically seen differences between sending schools but he thinks that is due more to socioeconomic status than to the schools. W. Savery said based on informal discussion with teachers she would agree. Academically we see consistency across LNSU, in both good and bad. Now LUMS is most concerned about writing. Many students are coming to LUMS at about 4th grade level in writing. Teachers hear writing is not emphasized much in the upper grades. But she is getting good feedback about reading and vocabulary skills of those arriving at LUMS. She has been having conversations with elementary principals.

C. Szlachetka asked if something like this might be used for teacher assessment. J. Teegarden asked what he means. C. Szlachetka said we will be looking at student performance across the board. It will be normalized across teachers. They will all be teaching and testing the same stuff. If we have a teacher whose students continually score lower, do we question if something is not right in that class or if something is right in other classes?

P. Ingvaldstad said he thinks that is dangerous territory. Sometimes a particular class of kids presents more of a challenge. He is worried about socioeconomic differences between communities. Are you going to fire a teacher because of economics? C. Szlachetka said it just becomes one measure we might use in an assessment. We can use it to compare teachers in a single town.

B. Schaffer said part of the current evaluation system demands that we view collection of data and use of data as a performance indicator. Do we fire due to end of year assessment scores? He doesn't think that is appropriate for our setting, but we do have to look at our outcomes and how teachers are using data to improve outcomes.

C. Szlachetka said he is not saying it would be a one shot deal but if a teacher's students score below expectations year after year, does the bell go off?

E. Beatty said learning is cumulative. We do have some other ways to assess effective instruction. A lot of data on teacher effectiveness does not support testing being used in this way.

J. Teegarden said he tends to agree with C. Szlachetka. He thinks we could create a growth model, knowing where kids start and looking at progress. He thinks we should quit backing away from this problem.

C. Szlachetka said it feeds into P. Ingvoldstad's goal of setting up a process where we advocate during a students' whole learning career.

R. McCraw said he thinks it is inevitable that student performance will become part of teacher evaluation. He thinks it will be mandated by the state in the future. A lot of research is being done on this. It gets into value-added models, but these models fail a lot more than they work. A lot of work is being done on an alternative approach, student learning outcomes. He thinks the state is interested in that model, but it doesn't scale down well to small groups (10 or 15 kids.)

C. Szlachetka said where he used to be employed performance evaluations were based on measurable objectives. This appears to be a way of measurement. He would love to see something like this. He would like to correlate test scores in middle school with the town kids come from to see how well each district is preparing students.

P. Ingvoldstad said he is interested in how this committee is going to work toward setting direction. He thinks the board should be looking at Policy B2 (Board Goal Setting and Self-Evaluation.) He passed out copies of the policy. In two weeks there will be a policy committee meeting and he thinks the committee should look seriously at Policy B2 and also at whether we are going to set direction through policy. At the end of the last board meeting he tried to get interest going in doing a visioning session, but got no interest. If that isn't the way we want to do it, is it going to be through policy? Should we be working with policy with regard to curriculum?

E. Beatty said some of this work may be appropriate for the LNSU board. But a part of it is for this board. It might be time for the full board to revisit the charge for the curriculum and policy committees so the committees don't have to try to make up their own purpose.

B. Schaffer said he hadn't realized policies were considered optional. Policy B2 was put in place for the board and the board might want to respond to it.

P. Ingvoldstad said he has already talked to D. Whitcomb about his plan to suggest that the board start reviewing policies one at a time. The assignment from the policy committee last time was to review all required policies. He, C. Szlachetka, and B. Schaffer did that.

P. Ingvoldstad said he learned a lot from teachers about how iPads are being used at the recent open house. People who weren't there missed a great opportunity. He would ask if possible that we use this committee time to ask teachers to come in and talk. A month from now, could the middle school and high school each have one teacher come in and talk about the topic of how they are assessing? B. Schaffer and W. Savery said they can ask. W. Savery said at the October 21 board meeting Jean Sequeira, Jacie Kendrew and Kathy Richardson are planning to give a presentation to the full board about the transition to algebra. W. Sander said when teachers come

to an evening meeting they are going beyond what is required in the contract. P. Ingvaldstad asked if there is an issue around that. B. Schaffer said it is challenging. It is tough to come to a meeting after a full day of teaching. He would encourage board members to come to school during the day to see teaching in action. That is the best way to get the flavor of what is going on. He is happy to host board members. W. Savery said she supports that. It has to work both ways. Open house was the perfect opportunity for board members to learn about what is happening. She will make a point to get information from teachers about special things that are happening and invite the board to them. P. Ingvaldstad said we will do it that way then instead of asking teachers to come to committee meetings.

The meeting ended at 6:05.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths