

LAMOILLE UNION DISTRICT #18 BOARD
CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
GMTCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2009

Committee members present: P. Ingvoldstad, W. Sander, D. Osborn, K. Roberts, D. Baker, S. Reber. Others: B. Schaffer, C. Hindes, D. White, J. Teegarden, D. Taylor, D. Whitcomb.

The meeting started at 5:33.

D. White gave an overview of curriculum work going on at the LNSU and secondary levels. He described the work of the LNSU curriculum committee that is being formed. Science and math curriculum content groups will be starting up in fall or winter. W. Sander asked, how much groundwork is already out there? D. White said he thinks a lot. There is some from our own teachers. A lot of work has been done by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. There is work by Lynn Erickson around concept-based curriculum. Our job will be synthesizing the previous work and deciding on core values for our students.

At the secondary level, all teachers from the middle school, high school, and GMTCC recently gathered to work collaboratively. Staff were introduced to the concepts of Schooling by Design – start with desired results, then develop action plans to move you there. Teachers were asked, what would be evidence that students are achieving our mission statement goal? They worked in groups to come up with a list of items forming a picture of what an LNSU graduate should look like. Teachers are very anxious to work together. C. Hindes said his faculty were excited. The trick will be harnessing that excitement and controlling the momentum so we stay on track. B. Schaffer said he, C. Hindes, and J. Teegarden will be having some joint faculty meetings. They will be setting the framework of Schooling by Design, and working on aligning with GE's. Monday he gave the first opening presentation to his staff. He talked about 21st Century Transformation goals, LNSU goals, LUSD goals, and the commissioner's required actions. It was a very positive start to the school year.

W. Sander asked, are faculty enthusiastic about the planned curriculum work? D. White said everyone he has talked to so far is. (*D. Whitcomb arrived at 5:54.*) S. Reber asked what will be the product of the curriculum committee? D. White said there will be documents, and professional development that aligns. The committee will identify a core set of non-negotiable learning goals for the different elementary schools. It won't be all-inclusive, just a core set to provide continuity, allowing schools to expand on that. If we have those goals across the SU, we need to determine what might be some common assessments we can use to measure achievement of those goals – SU level assessments and local (school level) assessments, as well as formative assessments that teachers use in classrooms – that's where professional development comes in.

W. Sander asked, what is the state of the science regarding available assessment tools? D. White said first we need to identify what we value for our students. Assessments need to align well with that. There is quite a bit we can draw on. There are some good item banks. Developing assessments from scratch can be time-consuming, so we want to see what's already available first.

P. Ingvaldstad asked what kinds of things teachers were talking about when they worked on their "Picture of the Graduate." Should we be looking at different "majors" or levels of graduation? D. White said individual groups met and identified their priorities, then everyone looked at other groups' priorities. There are some very down-to-earth, specific skills that people felt were important, like being able to write a letter and balance a checkbook. There were also some higher-order things like a sense of civic responsibility, empathy, and pride in the community. It is easier to see how to teach and assess the more concrete things; the others are harder. Except for math and literacy, there was not a lot of emphasis on arts, language, or particular subjects, but not because the teachers are not passionate about those subjects. In this discussion they were thinking, *Putting my content aside, what would I want students to have?*

D. Osborn asked how will you design assessments for the more intangible things, and how will you keep them from becoming another area for struggling kids to be marked down in? D. White said he has talked to J. Teegarden about identifying employability skills. He and his staff have developed a rubric to look at those skills. J. Teegarden said his staff went through a list of employability skills – attendance, initiative, etc. – and built a rubric that kids ought to be able to stand up to. The rubric is on the wall in every classroom, and they intend to create progress reports for kids based on it. The progress reports will come out 8 times per year. They will go through where each kid stands on the rubric, and say whether, based on the above info, the teacher would or would not recommend the student for a job, for a co-op experience, or for another year at the center. The rubric will probably be refined in the first year.

D. Baker said she went to this school district. She asked C. Hindes and B. Schaffer whether she possesses a lot of the qualities the teachers listed. C. Hindes said we have to look at childhood development, and think about what an independent thinker looks like at different ages. He thinks she does possess a lot of those qualities. You don't pass or fail these things; you acquire them gradually over time. K. Roberts asked how many kids leave without these skills? Right now, it is probably a large number. How is our curriculum going to begin to address these skills while still addressing content? D. White said that's a challenge. B. Schaffer said this "Picture the Graduate" list is just the beginning of a process, not a board-approved document.

D. Osborn said she hasn't heard as much about the instruction part that will happen after curriculum and assessment development. She wonders which students who are in school now will benefit from this improved process, and which grades are too late to benefit. D. White said he thinks there are very good instructional practices happening. What we're proposing is pulling together consistency, taking advantage of resources that might not be shared, and aligning better. It is a refinement process. The instruction going on now may

be very good, but we can look for gaps and see if we are not reaching some goals as well as we could, and look at what is known about best instructional practices. There will be ongoing tweaking. He is impressed by what's already going on. There were recent workshops in math and science. The instructional practices modeled were research-based and cutting-edge.

D. Taylor said one of the challenges we all face is that we have been identified and that sets a certain tone and public face. There are a number of ways schools respond in that situation. One is teaching to the test, which we won't do. One is looking at research about helping students grow. That's the route we're taking. When it comes to immediate impact, there is a huge momentum; teachers are engaged. She believes we have established a fine framework for moving forward. We are going about it properly, not in a reactive way.

C. Hines said a teacher here once said, "Too much, too fast won't last." He thinks 3 to 5 years is our track, but many of his teachers have completed courses in differentiated instruction, and the conversation has changed as a result. Since the first day of school, they are already talking the language. We're seeing that students are instantly benefiting from differentiated instruction. The curriculum process is deliberate and well planned out, and we should see some changes happening this year.

K. Roberts asked D. White how he sees us continuing the momentum of the curriculum work without going so far down a particular track that, if external change is imposed, everyone gives up. D. White said close communication is important, and they're committed to that. At the LNSU executive committee meeting last week, he talked about communication that goes both ways. LNSU board members bring information back to their local boards, and administrators bring information to the community and boards. The LNSU board will talk about having a member on the curriculum council. K. Roberts said that due to VT Transformations or national standards, we can do a lot of work and have a 3rd party change things. (*D. Whitcomb left at 6:27.*) We should not have people get so vested that change becomes difficult. D. White said hopefully third parties will also come up with research-based ideas. If we keep in tune with research, we should be okay. The work of the National Math Panel should be very much in tune with whatever new product comes out. There is similar work in science. We'll take advantage of those, and keep our eyes on what's developing nationally. B. Schaffer said we have to understand we are in a constant mode of change.

The meeting ended at 6:29