

QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

TEACHING & LEARNING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, March 30, 2015

A meeting of the Teaching & Learning Subcommittee was held on Monday, March 30, 2015 at 5:00 pm at the Coddington Building. Present were Mr. Paul Bregoli, Mrs. Kathryn Hubley, Mr. David McCarthy, and Ms. Barbara Isola, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent DeCristofaro, Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey, Mrs. Mary Fredrickson, Ms. Beth Hallett, Ms. Maureen MacNeil, Mrs. Maura Papile, Mrs. Erin Perkins, Ms. Madeline Roy, Mr. Keith Segalla, Mr. Robert Shaw, Ms. Judy Todd; Ms. Allison Cox, President of the Quincy Education Association; and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Ms. Isola called the Teaching & Learning Subcommittee to order at 5:00 pm.

Ms. Roy introduced the **Middle School Technology & Engineer Program Update**, currently a pilot middle school program for Grades 7 and 8 taught by specialists. Given the complexity of the Science & Technology standards, this program is a way to have students engaged in hands-on experience and build pathways to high school STEM and CTE programs. The specialists are offering a standards-based curriculum developed by Science teachers and integrating literacy standards around reading and writing.

Mr. Keith Segalla reviewed that the Middle School Technology/Engineering team was formed last fall to create the course syllabi and pacing guide. The program recently received a grant from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center for \$50,000 that will provide for technology and curriculum materials to enhance this course; technical training will be provided over the summer.

Ms. MacNeil reviewed the benefit to students in increasing technical literacy, which assists with all subject areas; the support of science standards and increased academic rigor; and open-ended problems that emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork. Atlantic's recent STEM fair highlighted the integration of engineering across the curriculum; students who had previously struggled with science concepts were enthusiastic about creating engineering projects. The program encourages higher-level thinking that can be used across all subject areas.

Mrs. Hubley asked if the program would this be enhanced by having a full-time staff person in each building. Ms. MacNeil said that would relieve some of the pressure the Tech Engineering teachers feel about adequately covering standards and it might allow for expansion into Grade 6.

Mr. Bregoli asked about the laboratory setting; Ms. MacNeil said that the computer lab is the home for the Tech Engineering program at Atlantic. There are tables that allow for group projects, along with the computers. Ms. Roy said that other schools have dedicated classrooms and access to computer labs.

Mr. McCarthy asked for clarification on the current staff; 2.5 staff members are split over the five middle schools. Atlantic, Broad Meadows, Point Webster, and Sterling have this course at Grades 7 & 8. At Central, Grade 8 only, given the number of students per grade.

Ms. Isola asked if there was an increase in staff, would there be an option for an elective, more in-depth Tech Engineering class. Ms. Isola noted that since there is an issue with attracting girls into the STEM fields, this early exposure is key.

Ms. Roy then presented an update on the **Middle School Foreign Language** program. Ms. Roy said that Grade 8 students are offered the option for Spanish or French language instruction; this was the first year French was offered at all middle schools. Two high school teachers are teaching sections at Atlantic and Central; an additional French teacher covers Point Webster and Broad Meadows. Highly proficient students are recommended for a Level 2 high school course. For 2015-2016, each principal sent home a letter to Grade 7 students to gauge interest. Once again, 4 of 5 middle schools have enough interest to host a French language class.

Mr. Bregoli asked about re-introducing Latin at the middle school level, since it is the basis of much vocabulary. Mr. McCarthy asked how French was selected as the alternate language; QPS staff was available to teach French and this is the common offering at middle schools in neighboring towns. Mr. McCarthy asked about Mandarin, since this better fits the demographic of Quincy. Ms. Hallett said that Mandarin is very different and complex to learn; no cognates and a completely different system of writing.

Ms. Isola asked how many more staff members would be needed to bring the language instruction to Grade 7. The current middle school Foreign Language staff would have to be doubled. Ms. Isola would like to see how many students in this year's Grade 8 French classes go on to French in high school and how many take Level 2.

Ms. Hallett and Mr. Shaw presented on re-establishing **North Quincy High School's Renaissance Program**. Mr. Shaw said the program is an integrated creative arts program where students identified major and minor areas of artistic study. The goal was to challenge students creatively and expressively, develop creative problem solving and interpersonal skills; explore art forms they may not be familiar with. Major areas were art, film/video, vocal music, instrumental music, theater. At the end of the year, a showcase of student art and performance was hosted. The program would be for Grades 11 & 12 students, and a cross section of arts and humanities teachers would be involved, two periods per day. Exploring multi-culturalism in the arts would be a new focus for Renaissance 2.0. Mr. Shaw is very interested in the revival of the program, this was a very popular program.

Mr. Bregoli asked about what happened to the program. Dr. DeCristofaro said it was affected by budget and Ms. Isola stated that staffing changes eroded support for the program. Mrs. Hubley asked if additional staff would be needed. Ms. Hallett said that there are areas where additional staff

time is needed. Mr. Shaw said that there are existing electives in art, photo, voice, and band that could be re-focused.

Mrs. Hubley asked whether there were any negatives associated with the program. There was a scheduling issue in the past where electives conflicted with double lab periods once per cycle, but that would not be an issue for the new schedule introduced at North Quincy this year.

Mr. Bregoli asked if dance would be considered to be part of the program. With so many dance studios in Quincy, there would be much student interest. Mr. Shaw said that is the hardest course to staff, since the schedule calls for 1-2 class per day. Mr. Shaw said dance would be easier as a minor, where students rotate through for one quarter during the course of the year. Dr. DeCristofaro said that the revival of this program would need additional staff and would like to see it budgeted properly.

Mr. Bregoli asked if this will be part of the upcoming budget discussion and it will be one of the options presented. Ms. Isola said that it was a rigorous program; as a parent, she was heartbroken to see that it was not valued or supported in the face of other priorities. Students were academically and artistically successful and the program was a distinction for students applying to college.

Mrs. Fredrickson shared the **Data pyramid**, reviewing the different types of assessment and the associated issues of data collection and storage. Applications have been reviewed, including Aspen's Assessment module, DESE's Teaching and Learning site, Learning Analytics through Baseline Edge, and TestWiz. Learning Analytics will be piloted in two elementary schools this spring; technology specifications are being explored to roll out for Integrated Learning Team meetings. Spreadsheets are also being utilized by teachers voluntarily in order to transition to electronic formats for teachers.

Major changes are underway in the Assessment world. Nationally-normed Assessments that are Common Core-aligned are under development and these may be utilized to assist at the district level for programs such as ELC. Northwest Evaluation Associates (NWEA) is one vendor, with an enormous item bank. In reviewing their measures of academic progress, it is possible this tool will replace the GRADE. NWEA is consulting with PARCC and Smarter Balance on online assessment; their norms are being updated for 2015. QPS is moving towards piloting with NWEA and a presentation is scheduled for principals on Wednesday, April 1.

Another possible option is the Education Records Bureau, the author of the Independent Schools Exam (ISE) and Comprehensive Test Program (CTP). Student progress can be measured beyond grade level using these tools, assisting evaluating students who are moving at an accelerated pace.

Mr. Bregoli asked if we would implement both tools. Mrs. Fredrickson said she would like to pilot both, since there are different student groups that could benefit from both these tools.

Ms. Isola asked that the Assessment Team let School Committee know about their needs for the upcoming budget process.

Mrs. Hubley made a motion to adjourn the Teaching & Learning Subcommittee Meeting at 6:00 pm, seconded by Ms. Isola. On a voice vote, the ayes have it.