

July 20, 2016 Board Culture, Climate and Learning Committee Meeting Notes

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Central Office - Room 200

IV-E

131 West Nittany Avenue

State College, PA 16801

I. Call to Order

Mr. Hutchinson called the meeting of the Board Culture, Climate and Learning Committee to order at 10:35 a.m.

Present: Amy Bader (arrived 10:39 am), Deirdre Bauer, Vernon Bock, Gretchen Brandt (arrived 10:48 am), Amber Concepcion, Mary Jenn Dorman, Dan Duffy, David Hutchinson, Bob O'Donnell, Laurel Zydney

A copy of all materials distributed to board members for discussion is included with the official minutes, unless otherwise indicated.

II. Learning Enrichment Policy Discussion

Mr. Hutchinson noted this was the only item on the agenda and need to look at in terms of what we want. The Board determines what that is and the place to put this is under curriculum. He would like to open this up to conversation for what we are currently doing and what we want looking into the future. Committee member asked what are we currently doing and felt this needed to be defined.

Dr. O'Donnell explained that we are currently doing enrichment and acceleration and he used math as an example. He explained not waiting to accelerate to the next year and noted how this is done more efficiently and sooner which was one component for acceleration. Enrichment lays experience on top of core level and students are pulled out for the experience. He would like to continue to layer the core to enrich the core, but enrichment comes outside the core currently. Ms. Bauer added there is a lack of clarity of what it is and she is working with Learning Enrichment (LE) teachers on a more defined curriculum. Committee member asked about acceleration and student is not gifted, what happens if that student would go to another District? Ms. Bauer responded that since the student was not gifted, he/she would not receive anything due to no GIEP.

Dr. O'Donnell noted the need for guidelines for this policy. Would like for teachers in core to be flexible for the group of students to engage and know what to give to each. He spoke on the high expectation piece in Pillar 2 - differentiation. Things are different classroom to classroom and teacher to teacher in core and need to know how we ensure for students to have opportunity. The base to this is that all students are appropriately challenged in the core, differentiation in class and it is OK in Language Arts (LA) but not in Math. Need to provide as much as possible without taking them out. Discussion occurred: Every child could benefit from LE experience and the pull out puts arbitrary limitations, not at the place to do this, short-term need to build criteria, gifted will happen from GMED process, more people may desire the evaluation to get outside the core, LE go into

core with respectful tasks and serves dual needs, small number of teachers for K-8, the ones we have will address students labeled gifted, do we sacrifice or provide financial assistance, not enough resources to do this, and need to know needs and commit to this. LA will give respectful tasks everywhere, gifted may not need to be pulled out of core, could struggle in math, looking at long term, professional development of teachers and teachers being able to differentiate, and there will be a time we need more. The coaching model is coming together, right now frequency for LE is low and feedback opportunity is slim and need to hammer out the direction and vision. The number of students with GIEP for the start of the school year, we are covered in terms of state ratio, more clarity to families, spoke on the High School process and working well, they can map out plans and different from other levels.

What communication needs to go to parents? Parents in K-8 feel their student(s) are not being challenged, parents need to go to the closest source - teacher or principal, need to be more transparent about the process, communication for how we approach acceleration, and what is currently communicated to K-8 and do we want to do the same or different? Spoke more on High School LE, teacher connect with parent and resources, so many options at High School level and comes back to respectful tasks. The social-emotional level for kids and being pulled out they get to know each other, group students in the classroom, provide rich concepts and more complex, for some parents acceleration is not enough, and do need more concepts and complex rich ideas. Not sure that if gifted need to be broken off, bring all subsets of tools together for LE teachers and work with coaches. Spoke on the website and what people see, the need to communicate the gifted piece, seeing the scarce resource model, and the percentage does not show.

Do we still want to provide LE to students that we no longer need to provide, if we take out could be more manageable for teachers, better organization of time with pull out ESL, LE etc., could focus with smaller group where they need the extra help, and best utilize supports for grade levels. Need an opening piece that this is going on, operating as we evolve the system we are heading toward, there are some strengths in what we currently do, and Dr. O'Donnell spoke on challenges with math. Science is not as rich as it could be and it is being worked on. The High School model opening in the Middle Level and use AREA better. AREA is off the block, 40- minutes daily and need to take a look at, could challenge the music groups, and need to offer more rich things to students. With the structure of the day, need to be aware of losses, reading time needs to be there but doesn't want students to loose curiosity and drive.

III. Public Comment

Mr. Hutchinson called for public comment at this time:

-- Dan Duffy spoke on Zone Optimal Development that applies to teachers and staff as well. It takes time and can be a long process. There is a limit that the system can absorb for change. He spoke on the second level of LE being advocates for those stepping up and the value for a layer of counseling. LE can advocate for students, a social dynamic. He spoke on assessment for identifying students for LE, predict performance of an individual but not for differential. Should not use OLSAT or OTIS LENNON because they are not for grouping practices. Rely on teachers more than the tests for grouping.

-- Ms. Brandt noted a concern about test for for cutting off access to LE, IQ tests are correlated with socioeconomic status and not doing the job it is supposed to be doing. At 15% you get services but at 16% you get nothing. We need to be honest in our communication on the website, let people know this is a work in progress and people appreciate the level of transparency.

Further discussion occurred: Dr. O'Donnell spoke on access for LE and testing is more for the screening for gifted; do not want to mis-use. Ms. Bauer would double check just to evaluate. Being honest in the communications is a better way to go. This is a transition to making things better for our District and it is a good thing. Could also add to please sign up for updates or be part of a focus group for the future.

Next Steps

Define for people what the District philosophy is, an overall comprehensive philosophy to give a base. Mr. Bock spoke on his District, in Virginia, going through this three years ago and they had 26% identified gifted. They allowed enrichment across the classroom, took time to communicate to parents, saw a rise in expectation and instruction in the classroom. Committee member noted maybe no special program is needed, just make teachers a whole lot better, can enrich classroom experience, the development of LE curriculum now and be in tool kit for use with all students for differentiation. Ms. Bauer spoke on the Unit on Debate - written for a pull-out, but gave examples of what could be done in 5th grade. Maybe students could opt-in, be in classroom for core, maybe not choose but could have the opportunity to do so. Dr. O'Donnell added that for short-term there is a small number of teachers now with Chapter 16 and GIEP, can see what community wants in another year. GIEP will play into supplemental experiences, not a lot due to frequency, and long-term needs to happen with core curriculum. All were comfortable with next steps to include reviewing the long-term direction of the program. The quick step is communication.

Dr. O'Donnell added and spoke on conversations for parents to come in and talk about this; what does testing allow, expectations moving forward, possible changes in curriculum policy, the Strategic Plan being longer than three years, but must do Chapter 16 for three-years, and curriculum and professional development plans for structure change.

There will be a finalist to bring forth Monday night for the Director of Gifted/Learning Enrichment. This person comes from the elementary world and it will be good to have another person on the team. A specialist coming into core classroom - differentiation.

Dr. Bader left the meeting at noon.

IV. Future Agenda Planning

Dr. O'Donnell spoke on the High School Graduation Requirements Policy and this will come forward next time with Mr. Johnson and Ms. Martin. We have more slots than credits and evolve how this may look for the Learning Community. Could create a Base Diploma and have a Diploma of Distinction. We hope to accomplish this by the end of October for course selection process for the following year. We will also look at Athletics Policy-123.

- Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 17 - 10:30 a.m., Nittany Ave - Room 200

V. Adjournment

Mr. Hutchinson adjourned the meeting of the Board Culture, Climate and Learning Committee at 12:03 p.m.

Submitted by,

Mary Jenn Dorman
Board Secretary