Concord School District
Instructional Committee
April 12, 2017

Committee members present: Alana Kimball, Chair, Pam Wicks, Jennifer Patterson, Maureen Redmond-Scura

Other Board members present: Tom Croteau, Clint Cogswell

Others: Terri Forsten, Donna Palley, Rebecca Proulx (CHS Senior)

Committee Chair Alana Kimball opened the Instructional Committee meeting at 5:31 p.m. and turned the meeting over to Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley.

The agenda focused on personalizing education in the District with a strong focus on high school opportunities. Ms. Palley reviewed the agenda for the meeting: Independent Studies, Dual Enrollment and PACE Update.

Ms. Palley described several different independent studies at Concord High School (CHS). Over 50 students are participating in Independent Study courses, ranging from Philosophy, Introduction to Ancient Greek, Advanced 3-D Applications in Autodesk, What Does It Mean to be a Modern Society, Advanced Ceramics and Topics in Cell Biology, Epidemiology and Oncology. She offered a description of each of the above independent studies.

CHS senior Rebecca Proulx, student representative to the Board, spoke of her aspiration to become a Pediatric Oncologist, influenced by her work with CHS science teacher Jane Voth. She described her independent study with Ms. Voth, including books she had read, growing stem cells, and literature reviews. She described the value of the literature reviews as a skill that she will use in college. Rebecca shared how she used Google Classroom to use feedback from teachers and to post her work throughout this process. She also completed interviews with pediatricians and other practicing professionals. Board members expressed how impressed they were with the depth and quality of Rebecca’s work.

Maureen Redmond-Scura reflected on her son’s previous successful work in an independent study course. Pamela Wicks asked how a student might initiate an independent study course. Ms. Palley noted a variety of ways that independent study courses are initiated: sometimes a teacher may initiate an independent study course as is what happened with Introduction to Ancient Greek; a teacher who had an interest in this topic approached students to see if they were interested. At other times, a student might initiate an independent study when a course they would like to take does not fit into their schedule; or a student may initiate an independent study based on their interest in a specific topic.

Ms. Palley moved into a conversation about dual enrollment at CHS. There are 35 courses at CHS in which students who are enrolled in a course may also be dually enrolled at a college to receive college credit. The District has agreements with four different colleges: New Hampshire
Technical Institute (NHTI), Manchester Community College (MCC), Lakes Region Community College (LRCC), and Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) for this. The student takes the class with CHS teachers and pays $100-$150 per course; scholarships are available for students who need financial support. 494 students are currently taking courses under the dual enrollment process. The college professors visit the high school class once a year to connect with teachers and students at CHS. These college credits are portable for the student, utilizing articulation agreements with over 150 colleges and universities across the country. Students earn between 3 and 5 credits per course.

Ms. Palley offered an update on Performance Assessment of Competency Education (PACE) as another part of the District’s system to personalize education. PACE is at the forefront of the State Board of Education’s conversation with new Commissioner Frank Edelblut. Ms. Palley offered testimony to the State Board last week, speaking about how PACE has positively impacted teaching and learning in the District. PACE has been integral to work in District classrooms over the past couple of years.

Ms. Wicks shared that she had also spoken to the State Board of Education that morning with Ms. Palley. She described her son’s excitement as he prepared for the PACE assessment last year: he created a solar cooker and was very connected to the process and thinking carefully about how to be successful in his work. Her other son had come home recently having taken the Smarter Balanced Assessment on the computer, and was not nearly as engaged in the process of taking that test as his brother had been with the PACE assessment.

Ms. Palley handed out samples of this year’s PACE assessments; sharing an English Language Arts test in grade 4, a Mathematics test in grade 5, and high school assessments for Geometry and Chemistry. She described the value of having teachers score the assessment, review the students’ work, understand their performance, and consider instructional implications. District teachers enjoy these professional conversations as they work to understand how to support student learners.

Tom Croteau asked for clarification on which grades are undergoing which assessments. Students are participating in PACE, Smarter Balanced Assessment and NECAP Science. District Art teachers are also creating performance assessments independent of the state accountability process. CRTC Health teachers are also creating performance assessments.

Ms. Palley noted that PACE has received national recognition and is gaining in its work across the state and the nation. Concord School District will be hosting the PACE summer work for educators from all the PACE school districts.

Clint Cogswell asked about the District’s work in Civics and Social Studies. Ms. Palley shared that teachers have been looking at the new Social Studies Standards, called C3 Standards. She explained that state accountability assessments have not included Social Studies; therefore, it has been several years since state standards have been reviewed for Social Studies.

Ms. Palley said that she will be sharing information with the Instructional Committee in May around assessment results. There are some early results that show school districts using the PACE process have had greater positive results on Smarter Balanced Mathematics.
Ms. Kimball asked whether PACE was expanding across the state. Ms. Palley explained that there are 11 additional districts which are joining the PACE project next year.

Ms. Palley shared a slide with topics for future meetings: post high school plans, Smarter Balanced Assessment, SAT and PACE Assessment results, the new elementary report card, development of a new middle school report card, and the kindergarten planning process. She asked about other topics that may be of interest to Committee members. Ms. Redmond-Scura said she was pleased to see the State Board of Education firmly supporting the recently adopted Science Standards. Ms. Palley spoke to Science curriculum development within the District. Ms. Patterson asked about Title I funds and asked for information focus of that grant for a future meeting. Ms. Kimball asked about the proposal the Committee had received from a CHS student, for Mandarin Chinese to be added to the Program of Studies. Ms. Palley noted that this student has been guided to work with CHS teachers and administrators to further develop his proposal. The administration anticipates that this may come forward in the fall as a course to consider for 2018-2019.

Mr. Cogswell asked whether the purchases of textbooks have been impacted by students having greater access to technology. Ms. Palley spoke to how the District is using software to support students.

Ms. Kimball congratulated the high school robotics team, which is raising funds and heading to the World Championship later in April. Board members who were present were very happy to hear this news. There were several comments about successful District students and CHS alumni: students at Mill Brook School who had recently participated in a talent show, and a newspaper reporter and CHS alumnus who is writing a series of articles in a local newspaper. All agreed that there is much to be proud of in the Concord school community.

The Committee voted 4-0 to adjourn (motioned by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Ms. Redmond Scura).

The meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alana Kimball, Chair

Terri Forsten, Recorder