Instructional Committee  
October 23, 2013

Board Committee: Instructional

Date: October 23, 2013

Committee members present: Jennifer Patterson, Tom Croteau, Barb Higgins

Board members present: Kass Ardinger

Administrators present: Chris Rath, Superintendent; Donna Palley; Assistant Superintendent; Gene Connolly, Concord High School Principal; Jack Dunn, Business Administrator

1. Enrollment and Staffing Report

Superintendent Rath reviewed the October 2013 District Enrollment Report, which is a key document as the administration begins the budget process. She provided a summary of overall enrollment trends. Over the last 10 years, the District has seen a decrease of 658 students across the District. This fall, the largest decrease was at the middle school, with 55 fewer students. Concord High has 27 fewer students, and the elementary enrollment numbers increased slightly, by 17. Overall, there are 65 fewer students this October than last.

Class sizes have stayed on the relatively small side, in some cases on the lower end of the District guidelines. It was noted that administration has been responding to enrollment reductions over time, with reductions in number of teachers.

At Rundlett Middle School, there has been a steady decrease in enrollment in the last 10 years. The incoming 6th grade this year was the smallest in recent history. For the next few years, enrollment at RMS will fluctuate around the 1,000 mark.

At RMS there are large classes in several world languages. Projecting RMS enrollment in world languages is difficult as students must sign up in winter, before they all have had the introduction to the world language program. The world language staff is shared with the high school, which creates constraints in scheduling. At RMS, there continue to be strong numbers in chorus, orchestra and band at the secondary levels.

At Concord High School, there has been a slow, steady decline in enrollment over the past 7 years. Deerfield numbers are also declining. The current CHS enrollment is the lowest since it became a four-year high school. Class size averages at the high school represent Semester 1 classes. The class size averages are on the smaller side. There is more than the usual number of classes running with enrollments under 15. These are partly the results of scheduling constraints. Freeing teachers to collaborate has been positive but reduces flexibility in the system, resulting in more constraints on the master schedule. In addition, several classes with higher enrollments when the year started have had several students drop the class.
The total number of students taking courses in the CRTC is consistent, though there are fewer students from Concord High enrolled.

The percent of students receiving special education services has stayed constant over the last several years, and approximately 6% of Concord students are receiving direct services from the ELL program.

Almost the exact same number of students has transferred into the District as has transferred out.

The last part of the report provides information about changes in staff. In total, two teachers have been added at the elementary level. Middle school was reduced by two teachers. In the high school, there was a net decrease of 4.

Information from this report will be used to analyze staffing and programmatic needs for 2014-2015. Superintendent Rath described several areas under review, including the increased needs for behavioral supports and services as well as time for staff to collaborate.

2. Common Core Reading Standards

Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley reviewed the major shifts represented in the new reading standards, including building knowledge through nonfiction and informational text, regular practice with complex text and academic vocabulary and reading grounded in text. It was noted that the increase in reading non-fiction text will take place in Social Studies, Science and other content areas.

Ms. Palley explained the categories of Reading Standards – *Reading Standards for Literature* and *Reading Standards for Informational Text* – and handed out a copy of the graduation standards or college and career readiness anchor standards for reading. These are categorized as standards about key ideas and details; craft and structure; integration of knowledge and ideas; and range of reading and levels of text complexity.

The Committee reviewed the progression of standards from kindergarten to grades 11-12. For example, for Anchor Standard 3 (*Analyze how and why individuals, events and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text*):

- At kindergarten, students will be expected to, with prompting and support, identify characters, setting, and major events in a story.
- At grade 3 students will describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
- At grade 7, students will analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g. how the setting shapes the characters or plot);
- At grade 11-12, students will analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g. where the story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed.)

There was a brief discussion of the development and implementation of competencies that has taken place at the high school and the ongoing work on competency assessment. Committee member Barbara Higgins noted that she is involved in a major
project underway at the statewide Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS) developing competency assessments to provide students the opportunity to achieve competencies in alternative ways.

Ms. Palley distributed a handout published in the Common Core documents that listed sample texts that might be used at the different grade levels. Finally, Ms. Palley shared sample performance tasks that have been developed to assess student achievement on specific standards. She also showed an outline of the Comprehensive Literacy Framework, which outlines the expectation, and includes materials made up of teacher-directed reading (small group or whole group reading), independent reading, word work and writing. The next presentation will be on the Common Core English Language Arts standards for content teachers.

3. Elementary Specials

Ms. Palley explained the program of specials that take place at the elementary level – Art, Music and Physical Education. Each student has a 45-minute specials class every day. Elementary classroom teachers have a preparation period while their students are at specials. She also explained the Project SEE program that provides one period a month for collaboration, and the Integrated Arts program that BMS is experimenting with. Once a month, the arts staff work with a full grade level of students while the grade level teachers have an extended period of 90 minutes for collaboration.

Committee members asked where students are learning keyboarding and use of such programs as Microsoft Word. Ms. Higgins voiced her concern that all students are not getting the same level of direct instruction in specific computer skills such as keyboarding and library instruction, as well as lack of literacy arts instruction in some of the elementary schools.

The Committee adjourned at 7:05 p.m.