Concord School District
Instructional Committee Minutes

School Board Committee: Instructional
Date: November 15, 2010

Committee Members Present: Eric Williams, Jennifer Patterson, Chris Casko, Clint Cogswell

Other Board Members Present: Kass Aringer, Jack Dunn

Administration: Chris Rath, Rob Prohl, Gene Connolly, Adam Osburn

Staff: Teachers Lisa Burton, Lise Bofinger, Stacie Boyajian, Chris Herr

Chairman Eric Williams called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The committee discussed four agenda items:

Sabbatical report
The first agenda item was a report by Lisa Burton on her 2009-10 sabbatical. Lisa is a 5th grade teacher at Beaver Meadow School. She shared with the committee the science lessons she had developed using Smart Board technology. All of these lessons have been posted for staff through First Class. The committee commented on Lisa’s enthusiasm and excitement to use these new lessons to engage all learners.

High school class levels
The second item on the agenda was a discussion with the high school administration and staff on the possibility of discontinuing a lower-level U.S. History class. Principal Connolly spoke in favor of the proposal. He discussed the increase in the number of advanced placement classes that have a focus of allowing all students to take a course that is a “reach” for them. The high school administration has increased the time period for students to drop a class without penalty so that students can try out a challenging course. Mr. Connolly also informed the committee that one of the standards used by NEASC, the regional school accrediting agency, is whether a school offers heterogeneous classes in each curriculum area. Like most high schools in the State, Concord High School still has some lower-level courses.

Teacher Lise Bofinger talked about her past experiences teaching a lower-level Biology class, “Biology Topics,” and how this class became a “track” for lower-achieving students. Ms. Bofinger said she was initially opposed to the elimination of this course in favor of a heterogeneous Biology class, but quickly saw how students who would have been “tracked” in the lower-level Biology Topics class were able to benefit from a more challenging course. The problem with tracked classes, commented Ms. Bofinger, is that staff could be making decisions on what students are capable of learning.
Other high school staff reported that one challenge in heterogeneous classes is figuring out how students who don’t have sufficient skills in that curricular area can be supported, while students who do have sufficient skills can be appropriately challenged. Teachers also need to educate students on the value of learning in a diverse classroom.

With the recent focus of differentiated instruction and on students’ mastering course competencies, high school teachers reported that they are becoming more skilled in meeting the educational needs of all students in classes that are heterogeneous. Teachers also expressed the desire to have more assistance from special education teachers who possess strategies and techniques to meet the needs of struggling learners as well as overachieving students.

In addition, the teachers discussed the variable of time – some students just need more time to master the competencies, but the current schedule makes this difficult.

**Update on CHS schedule**
The third agenda item was an update on the CHS schedule. A committee at the high school is in the process of developing a proposal for school year 2012-2013. Superintendent Rath explained that the District has flexibility to propose to the DOE that the school year be based on hours per year rather than days. The question was whether the District should move in this direction. In addition, it was noted that the study hall model (the high school has an 8 -period day; students have study halls and open periods built into their schedules), based on the assumption that students will complete homework reading assignments and answer questions, does not address the need for them to master course competencies. The comment was made that study halls don’t work for teachers or for students.

**Proposed 2011–2012 school year calendar**
The fourth agenda item was a review of the Superintendent’s proposed 2011-12 calendar. The 2011-12 calendar is similar to the current calendar and maintains the 180 school year with the December, winter and spring vacations occurring at the same times as this year. It was noted that to change the calendar in a substantive way would require a 4- to 5-year notice. The Superintendent will review the calendar with CEA leadership, as the calendar starts prior to Labor Day. If the CEA approves a school start prior to Labor Day, the proposed calendar will be an agenda item at the December Board meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Williams, *Chair*

Rob Prohl, *Recorder*