Concord School District
Instructional Committee Minutes

School Board Committee: Instructional Committee
Date: December 14, 2011

Committee members present: Eric Williams, Chair; Jennifer Patterson, Clint Cogswell
Other Board members present: Kass Ardinger

School Staff: Superintendent Chris Rath; CHS Principal Gene Connolly; Assistant Principal Steven Rothenberg, Assistant Principal Ben Greene, Athletic Director Steve Mello, teachers Tamara Hatcher, Kristina Peare

1. Proposal for Fire Science course at the Concord Regional Technical Center
Assistant Principal Steven Rothenberg provided information about the Fire Science course. One class section is proposed for the 2012-13 school year, with two classes the following year. Mr. Rothenberg anticipates that approximately 50-60% of the students in the first year will be from sending school districts, with 40-50% from Concord High School. The course will be primarily funded by the Perkins grant for the first three years. Instructional materials will be needed, with funding through the CRTC Trust. Approximately $2,500 would be needed from District funds in the first year for basic school supplies and to support transportation from Concord High School to other sites (Concord Fire Department, State Fire Academy and other fire sites). Mr. Rothenberg anticipates being able to use CRTC’s sending schools’ buses for this purpose, as they are already in Concord picking up and dropping off their students.

Mr. Rothenberg reported that the task force to develop this program continues to meet. He noted that a representative from Globe Manufacturing, one of the leading manufacturers of fire suits, is a partner on the task force. Connections are also being forged with all 24 fire departments in the CRTC catchment area. The Fire Science program will ultimately have an advisory board made up of educators as well as fire personnel from local and state organizations.

Students from all sending school and Concord High were recently surveyed about the proposed program and the results indicate significant interest among the students.

Kevin Shyne from the NH Department of Education spoke to the committee. He described three criteria that the DOE will be looking for in this program: that it offers a national certificate (in this case, Firefighter I), that it is able to be articulated to colleges and universities, and that there will be a third-party assessment to determine that it is worth doing. He indicated that all three of these criteria are being met by the CRTC’s proposed program. Mr. Shyne noted that the national employment outlook in the fire sciences is good. The model being used for the CRTC program is a replica of a successful model already in place.
Mr. Rothenberg will be submitting the Fire Science course proposal to the NH Department Education for approval by mid-January. There is potential for college credit to be available to Fire Science students through the Running Start program.

Eric Williams appointed Kass Ardinger as a member of the Instructional Committee given that member Chris Casko was absent.

The committee voted 4-0 to recommend to the full Board that the Fire Science course be listed as an offering of the Concord Regional Technical Center, beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, and contingent on approval by the Department of Education and availability of funding.

2. Booster Club Guidelines for Booster Clubs

Superintendent Rath explained that the idea of booster club guidelines originated from input given to the School District by its auditor, who raised concerns about how booster clubs and student activities were being managed. Several months ago, a document with proposed booster club guidelines was distributed and discussed at a Communications Committee meeting. Feedback was provided by booster club representatives; this feedback was used to draft a second set of proposed guidelines. A meeting was held with booster club members, with significant input from attendees resulting in further revision of the guidelines. This revised set of guidelines was reviewed by Dr. Rath, Steve Mello, and Business Administrator Michele Croteau and sent out again to all the booster clubs. Superintendent Rath highlighted the main issues in the Guidelines for Booster Clubs draft document:

The first item focuses on issues related to non-profit status. Booster clubs are required to obtain federal tax ID numbers and to register with the State as non-profit organizations. Obtaining 501(c)(3) status is not required, and can be expensive. Depending on how much money is raised by the individual club, costs can be as high as $850. Booster club representatives had expressed concerns about this cost.

Eric Williams noted that there is no charge to a booster club for obtaining a federal tax ID number and that there is a fee of $25 to register as a non-profit organization. A larger cost is associated with seeking 501(c)(3) status from the IRS. Booster clubs are not required to seek 501(c)(3) status. However, if a club doesn’t have 501(C) (3) status, donations to the club cannot be used as tax deductions by the donor.

Steve Mello researched and found a model used at Timberlane High School, where an Athletic Council was set up as an umbrella organization for all booster clubs. Under this model, the booster clubs remain as independent groups, with their own fundraising, checkbooks, and programs, and can choose whether to join the Athletic Council.

Under the Athletic Council model, this umbrella organization would obtain a federal tax ID, non-profit and 501(c)(3) status, and booster clubs joining the Council could choose to be covered by these rather than pursuing their own separately.

Booster clubs choosing to join the umbrella organization would pay a membership fee. Several options for assessing this fee were discussed, including one based on the
number of students associated with a club. Steve Mello noted that hockey, for instance, has only 20-25 students involved and raises a significant amount of money, while field hockey might have 35-40 participants but not raise as much money. He suggested a flat fee to join the Athletic Council.

The second item was not addressed in the original guidelines and involves liability insurance. The booster clubs are separate legal entities and so don’t necessarily have coverage under the school district’s insurance policy. It is reported that one booster club was unable to hold a recent planned fundraising activity because it didn’t have the required liability insurance.

Ms. Croteau researched an organization that provides a variety of resources to booster clubs: the North American Booster Club Association, in addition to providing support, education and information to its member clubs, also provides liability insurance for $89. The Athletic Council would obtain the required insurance to cover booster clubs that elect to join the Council and are interested in purchasing insurance.

Superintendent Rath described a third item involving bylaws and election of officers. Bylaws would address issues of concern, including issues of separation of duties in handling finances, and gifts to volunteers working with the teams.

Item four involves developing guidelines for purchasing uniforms and safety equipment. There are currently no written guidelines.

The fifth item focuses on developing a list of current and common booster club major fundraising activities. Clubs would not need approval of individual fundraisers if their activities were included in the approved list.

Item six states that booster clubs will not make supplemental payments to staff who are already under contract for a coaching position with the District. The last guideline asks booster clubs to submit financial records to the Athletic Director at the conclusion of each season.

The expectation is that these guidelines will make it easier and less expensive for Booster Clubs to operate.

Several representatives of booster clubs in Concord commented. Dick Ford, from the Nordic Booster Club, noted the importance of having more than one member of a booster club involved with financial transactions.

Becky Lawrence, with the Cross Country Booster Club, emphasized the importance of making membership in the Athletic Council be voluntary. Booster Clubs that elect to become part of the Athletic Council could choose whether or not to participate in the 501(c)(3) or insurance offerings.

It was emphasized that belonging to the Athletic Council would be voluntary. The Athletic Council would provide 501(c)(3), Tax ID and non-profit status only for those booster clubs interested in this. A booster club could maintain its own taxpayer ID but choose to join the Council to obtain liability insurance. On the other hand, a booster club could dissolve its current taxpayer ID and work under the Athletic Council’s
designation. The next draft of the guideline document will further describe the Athletic Council and options for participation.

Concern was expressed about the restriction that school employees not serve as treasurer of a booster club. It was noted that this was meant to refer to the coach of the team supported by the booster club. Members of a booster club (parents of student athletes, for example) who also work for the district in a capacity other than coach of the booster club sport may serve as treasurer.

Sean Sullivan, with the Basketball Booster Club, asked the committee if booster club bylaws will need to be submitted to the Athletic Council for approval. Mr. Mello and superintendent Rath indicated that booster clubs are expected to be self-governing, and bylaws will not need to be approved. The District does want to ascertain that each booster club has an articulated structure.

Beth, from the Volleyball Booster Club, noting that there is a great deal of change within the booster club membership, as students graduate and new parents become involved, guidelines will be useful for less experienced parents. The Athletic Council could provide technical assistance to the booster clubs.

Mr. Mello will revise the guidelines per this meeting’s discussion and will plan another meeting with the booster club group to ask for further feedback. The revised guidelines will also provide guidance about who will constitute the governing body for the Athletic Council.

3. Proposal to eliminate the Discovering Algebra I course from CHS course offerings beginning with the 2012-2013 school year.

Gene Connolly, Principal; Ben Greene, Assistant Principal; Tamara Hatcher, High School Math Facilitator; and Kristina Peare, Special Educator, presented information about a proposed change in the course offerings. The high school currently offers two different algebra courses: Algebra I and Discovering Algebra I.

Currently, many of the students in the Discovering Algebra I class are struggling math students. This homogenous class approach has not been successful at Concord High, and the department now proposes to eliminate the lower level course, called Discovering Algebra I. It is noted that this course was first introduced as a class that was comparable to Algebra I in terms of competencies covered, but one that emphasized a hands-on, inquiry-based approach to learning. Over time, it has evolved into a remedial algebra course, and student outcomes have not been strong.

The department proposes to offer only a single Algebra I course in order to offer instruction in heterogeneous classes. They will embed certain teaching practices used in the Discovering Algebra course, including inquiry-based and hands-on learning, into the Algebra I course. The department has recently begun a series of professional development activities designed to help teachers integrate effective instructional strategies and differentiated practice into their classrooms. This work will continue into next year, providing teachers with coaching and support to teach a range of learners. Collaboration between regular and special educators will continue, using a
co-teaching model in select classes. The teachers recognize that some students need more practice and longer periods of instruction and exposure to materials, so some students will be provided with supplemental blocks of math instruction.

The committee voted 4-0 to recommend to the full Board that the Concord High School Discovering Algebra I course be combined with Algebra I beginning in the 2012-2013 school year.

District In Need of Improvement, First Quarter Report
Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley provided data report from the 2011-2012 first quarter report from the schools. She reviewed data collected about student achievement in reading and math and the progress of students receiving reading interventions, as well as information about communication between school staff and families.

At the end of the first quarter, 75% of CSD second graders were reading near, at, or above grade level. At grades 1 and 3-5, the number of students reading near, at or above grade level ranged from 59% to 66%.

The district set a goal that 85% of students in grades 1-6 will demonstrate proficiency on the secure skills at the end of each unit of instruction in the Everyday Math program. Of the 12 units reported at the end of the first quarter, our students met the goal in 6 of the 12 units, with the strongest performance seen in grades 1-3 and 6. Improvement was noted over student performance of last year on these same units.

The district set a goal that 60% of our students who are receiving literacy interventions will reach their growth target set within the AIMSweb assessment system. At the end of the first quarter of this school year, 60% of the students are at or near their growth target.

Ms. Palley also provided information about the various ways that school staff are communicating with parents about their building improvement work. Principals noted that information is provided and solicited at PTO and Title I meetings, as well as through the website, newsletters and open houses.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Williams, Chair
Donna Palley, Recorder