Chairman Eric Williams called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The agenda was a continuation of the discussion with Concord High staff about heterogeneous classes in the content areas of science, math, English, and social studies. The discussion is timely with the pending hire of a new Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.

High school staff gave a brief review of how different “levels” of required courses in the four content areas have changed over time as staff have moved toward a single required heterogeneous course (one level) in a content area.

Staff commented that in the past, while their intent may have been to offer another course with a different instructional approach to meet a core content graduation requirement, that course became the “lower-level or ‘track’” course, and the students who selected the course were often our “reluctant” learners looking for an easier way to meet a graduation requirement. It was also noted that our graduation requirements are the minimum state requirements and, while this has helped some struggling learners, there is a question whether we need to “raise the bar” – increase our graduation requirements. It was suggested that the science requirement could be increased from 2 credits to 3 credits by eliminating physical science and requiring biology, chemistry, and physics to graduate.

The math teachers described the benefits of a blended algebra class that combines the instructional techniques currently used in separate Exploring Algebra and Algebra I classes.

The English teachers noted that English courses have the longest history of leveled classes, beginning in the 1990s. They are continually working on strategies to work with more aggressive learners.

Social studies teachers are working on a proposal to eliminate Land of Promise in the 2012-13 school year, in favor of a single American History course for sophomores.
Staff discussed the challenges of teaching heterogeneous classes; differentiating instruction for a wide range of learners (for example, varying reading levels) requires reasonable class sizes and flexible groupings of students with a variety of texts, and options/methods for students to demonstrate mastery of course competencies. This is the preferred approach. The high school continues to increase the number of heterogeneous classes.

This topic will remain on the Instructional Committee agenda in the coming year.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Williams, Chair
Rob Prohl, Recorder