Concord School District  
Instructional Committee Minutes  
August 6, 2014

Committee members present: Jennifer Patterson, Tom Croteau, Rusty Cofrin  
Administrators and school staff present: Chris Rath, Superintendent; Donna Palley,  
Assistant Superintendent; Gene Connolly, Concord High School Principal; Tom Crumrine,  
Assistant Principal; Ronna Cadarette, Assistant Principal

1. NEASC Accreditation Final Report

Concord High School participated in the reaccreditation process with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) in 2013. The school has recently received its final NEASC report, which recommends continuing accreditation for the school. Concord High administrators Gene Connolly, Tom Crumrine and Ronna Cadarette presented a summary of the NEASC process, as well as the results.

The two-year process began in the 2012-2013 school year with a year-long self-study based on NEASC standards. This study culminated in a substantial report that was presented to the Association in the spring of 2013. In the report, the school identified areas of strength as well as areas they’d like to improve.

In the fall 2013, a NEASC team conducted a site visit at Concord High. In June, the district received the final report from the Association, which included a summary of commendations and recommendations.

The Association in its report endorsed most of the commendations and recommendations that Concord High described in the report they submitted to NEASC. The final report from NEASC included 25 commendations and 6 recommendations.

Some of Concord High’s commendations recognized their work to provide students with authentic learning opportunities; cross disciplinary study; after school extended learning; a variety of support services including an extensive English Language Learner program; and a robust media center. The Association noted Concord High’s use of differentiated instructional strategies, including the addition of ‘flex‘ structures, and the use of student grouping patterns that promote heterogeneity. The report also highlighted the positive collaborative environment at Concord High, its strong administrative leadership, and the effective partnerships between the school and families and between the school, Superintendent and School Board.

The Association highlighted 6 recommendations, including the need to implement a common written curriculum format and to design and implement a process to assess and report on student progress in meeting 21st century learning expectations. The
report also includes recommendations on improvements in technology infrastructure and the integration of technology tools in the classroom. The NEASC report also recommends that the school develop a plan ‘to implement a formal ongoing program or process through which the school can demonstrate that each student has an adult in the school who knows the student well’ and assists the student to meet learning expectations. Administrators noted that these recommendations did not come as a surprise, as most were included in the school’s self-assessment. The administration is embracing these recommendations and is moving forward to address them. In some cases, teams of teachers and administrators began meeting even before the report was received to plan next steps.

The NEASC report refers to ‘21st Century Learning Expectations’—members of the committee wondered what this meant. Administrators explained that there are a variety of words and phrases used to describe expected student outcomes (graduation standards, competencies, expectations, goals) and they are working to develop common language at the high school and across the district for these areas.

The school will provide the Association with a two-year progress report describing how they are addressing the recommendations.

Math Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley reported on the work the Math Curriculum Committee did last year to review various published curricula, including a New York math curriculum that closely aligns with Common Core standards. Teams of teachers have reviewed the current Everyday Math curriculum and have selected areas to eliminate and replace with New York units (modules). Each grade level, K-8, will pilot 1-3 new modules. There will be dedicated time in the fall for teachers to review the new curriculum. The Math Committee will monitor this implementation.

At the high school, the math department continues to review and refine its curriculum, with a focus in 2013-2014 on algebra and geometry.

Ms. Palley described the Ongoing Assessment Project (OGAP) that began during the 2013-2014 school year with teachers in grades 3, 4 and 5 at Beaver Meadow and Christa McAuliffe Schools and will continue this year with teachers in grades 3, 4, and 5 at Broken Ground and Abbot-Downing Schools. The OGAP training provides teachers with skills to use formative assessment techniques in key math topic areas – additive reasoning, multiplicative reasoning, proportionality and fractions. Within these topic areas, teachers study learning progressions, using an analysis of student work to determine next instructional steps.

The District will offer training in the next year in additive reasoning (grades K-2); multiplicative reasoning (3-5); and proportionality (6-8).

Ms. Palley described the Math Science Partnership Grant that the district received with Nashua and Sanborn Regional School Districts. Partners also include the University of Vermont, SNHU and the University of Pennsylvania. The focus of the grant is on
developing sustainability for OGAP in the district. The grant will pay for training for teachers, and for the development of district coaches to support teachers in using the formative tasks and deciding on instructional practices. It will also training for several of our staff members to become OGAP trainers. SNHU and UVM will offer math content courses for our teachers. The University of Pennsylvania has developed an evaluation plan so we can see the difference the OGAP work makes in our students’ achievement in math.

The grant also provides funds to expand Project SEE, giving our teachers in grades 3-5 additional time to meet in grade-level teams.

Focus Monitoring Team

Ms. Palley reported on the work done by the focused monitoring team this past year. Focus Monitoring is part of the Department of Education’s process for monitoring and approving special education programs. A district Focused Monitoring Team worked during the 2013-2014 school year to study our student achievement results and develop an action plan designed to impact the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their typical peers. Concord’s team chose to focus on gaps in math proficiency. The team incorporated the OGAP model into the plan. This year, classroom teachers will work closely with the special educator supporting their students, analyzing student work, and then designing and implementing coordinated instructional strategies to help students move along the learning progression. Teachers in grades 3-5 will pilot the work this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Palley, Recorder