Concord School District
Instructional Committee minutes

Date: September 18, 2013

Committee members present: Jennifer Patterson, Chair, Clint Cogswell, Tom Croteau, Barb Higgins (arrived later)

Administrators present: Chris Rath, Superintendent; Donna Palley, Assistant Superintendent

Committee Chair Jennifer Patterson opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley explained that the administration would address one aspect of the Common Core standards at each of four Instructional Committee meetings this fall. This night’s meeting was focused on writing standards.

Ms. Palley explained that the major shift in the writing standards is the emphasis on students’ providing evidence in three different types of writing: narrative, explanatory/information; and argument/opinion. Ms. Palley reviewed the anchor standards, which are what students at the end of grade 12 need to know and be able to do to be college- and career-ready. The ten anchor standards are organized into four categories:

- text types and purposes (three types of writing);
- production and distribution of writing (including process writing, which our students have been doing for some time);
- research to build and present knowledge (gathering information from multiple sources);
- range of writing (expectation that students do a lot of writing).

Ms. Palley distributed a sample of how one standard – writing arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence – progresses from the kindergarten level to the high school level. Clint Cogswell pointed out that much of what is included in the Common Core Standards is not new, and Ms. Palley pointed out the good connections between these new Common Core standards and the New Hampshire Language Arts curriculum expectations that have been in use for many years. In response to a question from Tom Croteau about the future assessment of these standards, Ms. Palley explained that New Hampshire will be using the Smarter Balanced Assessment to assess students’ writing, as well as reading and math skills. She explained the pilot assessment that was used in the district last spring through grade 9; the pilot was based on the new Common Core standards. In the spring, following the assessment, teachers worked in teams to learn the scoring rubric and then used the rubric to score the student papers. This past
summer, teams of teachers selected exemplars from the pilot assessment to
demonstrate the range of writing expected at each grade. These exemplars will be
helpful to our teachers as they prepare students for a follow-up assessment this spring,
and eventually for the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

Ms. Palley led the Committee through an exercise in which the members reviewed
several samples of student writing with the task of identifying which of the three types
of writing the sample exemplifies, and the grade level of the student writer.

Ms. Palley explained the new units of writing that were purchased this year for use in
grades K through 5. The materials provide rubrics, exemplars, samples of language to
use in instruction, and specific mini-lessons to be used at each grade level. She noted
that the district has hired a retired teacher who has been trained with Lucy Calkins at
Teachers’ College, one of the authors of the writing units, to provide coaching and
support to our teachers as they begin to use these new units of study. Currently the
materials are available through grade 5, but units are anticipated to be published for
the middle grades in the coming year.

Superintendent Rath explained the impact on Concord of the federal ESEA waiver that
was granted to New Hampshire last spring. Under the waiver, there are no longer
Adequate Yearly Progress targets and schools are no longer identified as Schools in Need of
Improvement if their subgroups or population do not make the AYP target each year.
There is no longer school choice or supplemental tutoring services. Under the waiver,
however, there will requirements for Title I schools’ annual objectives to reduce the
numbers of students in subgroups scoring below proficiency. There also is a
requirement for Title I schools and districts to align their teacher and principal
evaluation procedures with the state model, which includes student performance
measures in the final evaluation of teachers and principals. One of our schools, Beaver
Meadow, has been identified as a “focus school” due to the gap in NECAP results
between the general population and two subgroups of students at Beaver Meadow –
students with IEPs and students with both IEPs and in the SES (economically
disadvantaged) subgroup.

Ms. Palley described the district’s Title I grant, the kinds of programs and services for
which the district is using Title I funds and the requirement for a 10% set-aside for
services at the “focus school.”

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Patterson, Instructional Committee Chair
Chris Rath, Recorder