

# QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## TEACHING & LEARNING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, December 7, 2015

A meeting of the Teaching & Learning Subcommittee was held on Monday, December 7, 2015 at 5:00 pm in the Coddington Building. Present were Mr. Bregoli, Mr. Noel DiBona, Mrs. Kathryn Hubley, Mrs. Anne Mahoney, and Ms. Barbara Isola, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent DeCristofaro, Mrs. Mary Fredrickson, Ms. Beth Hallett, Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey, Mrs. Maura Papile, Mrs. Erin Perkins, Ms. Madeline Roy, Mr. Keith Segalla, Mr. Robert Shaw, Ms. Judith Todd; Quincy Education Association President Ms. Allison Cox; Mr. David Blaton and Mrs. Courtney Perdios from the Citywide Parents Council, and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Senior Curriculum Director Madeline Roy presented on the Beyond the Bell E-Day (Enrichment, Development, Advancement, Year-Long Learning) Resources, a collection of links to enrichment opportunities for students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 outside the school day. This new page on the Quincy Public Schools website currently has 60+ links, including options for CVTE, Special Education, and ELL. The Curriculum team's goal is for over 100 links to be posted by early January. For families without internet access, schools will have enrichment packets available. These enrichment opportunities feature a full array of concepts and topics, are related to grade-level curriculum topics and offer opportunities for exploring student interests. The online resources are free, and principals and SLT members have recommended these websites. Student support resources are included, on such topics as internet safety for all grades and SAT preparation, career & college exploration for high school students.

Ms. Isola asked about the rate of internet access for Quincy Public Schools families. This information is requested on contact cards, so a report can be generated from Aspen. Mr. Keith Segalla will follow up with a report.

Mrs. Mahoney asked if this is part of the plan for snow days or will Quincy Public Schools provide more specific materials along the lines of "blizzard bags" that other towns have been piloting. Ms. Roy said the DESE curriculum mini-units could be utilized for more specific student assignments. Ms. Isola said a conversation needs to happen about expectations for students on cancelled school days, is there a certain number of days that need to be cancelled before school work is required. Ms. Isola requested this be an item on the next Teaching & Learning Subcommittee agenda.

Dr. DeCristofaro introduced the Advanced Program Pathways, and asked Elementary School Curriculum Director Erin Perkins to begin with elementary. Mrs. Perkins researched opportunities for elementary advanced learners by beginning with contacting the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. DESE's last report is from 2002 and they acknowledged a lack of funding and

exploration in recent years; the DESE team has not met in a year and a half. Mrs. Perkins compiled information on local programs from the Massachusetts Association of Gifted Students, by researching public school websites, and contacting school districts directly.

Mrs. Perkins reviewed her research: many districts are focused on instructional differentiation within the classroom, rather than pulling out at the elementary level. Coaches are common to assist teachers in differentiating instruction. Mrs. Perkins reviewed that QPS uses Integrated Learning Teams to plan differentiated instruction for all students and to review them throughout the school year. Through the Walk to Read and Walk to Math model, students are grouped by ability, so above level students are together with teacher during these large blocks of time. The expectation for all students is to provide

Mr. Dave Blaton asked if differentiation is for all learners. Three tiers of instruction address below, on, and above level learners. Mrs. Perkins explained that the Integrated Learning Team meetings happen three times per year, each student at every elementary school is reviewed.

Mrs. Perdios asked if there are minutes for the Integrated Learning Team meetings and whether all students are discussed. Mrs. Perkins said that the class is being discussed as a whole, and shifting students between tiers of support, including Literacy, ELL, and Student Support.

As a point of order, Ms. Isola asked that this topic be discussed in a general way, not specific to a school or student.

Mr. Bregoli asked if a student would be allowed the opportunity to move up a grade level for certain subject instruction. Mrs. Perkins said this is rare, but it would be discussed in ILTs. A move like this requires careful consideration, especially when a student is approaching transitioning to middle school or high school.

Ms. Isola asked whether there is a giftedness assessment for K-1 students or if we know how many students are working at a very advanced level. Mrs. Perkins said Benchmark Assessments, such as DRA and DIBELS would indicate students working above level. Mrs. Perkins said developmental appropriateness is important, giftedness is not always displayed in the curriculum area, it can be based in the arts. Dr. DeCristofaro said we can look into this, but testing does not seem to be a component of what other towns are doing. Mrs. Perkins said the direction seems to be towards in-classroom supports and away from testing. Ms. Isola said if a student requires a more challenging environment, parents can request a meeting with their principal.

Mrs. Mahoney suggested that students who are presenting as gifted at Kindergarten may be on-level at Grade 4 when more challenging material is present. Parents want to be sure that students are appropriately challenged and suggested having a presentation at School Committee for a larger

audience or maybe a Parent Academy. Mrs. Mahoney said it looks like the E-Day Learning Resources presented earlier can assist with challenging students.

Dr. DeCristofaro then introduced the Middle & High School Advanced Pathways, noting that while the Grades 5 ELC program to the Grades 6-8 APC at Central program is one route to Advanced Placement classes, at high school, many more students are instructed at the Advanced level.

Ms. Roy explained that after meeting with middle school principals, it became apparent there were academically talented students at all our middle schools who would benefit from Advanced programs for ELA & Mathematics. Middle school and high school teachers met in the spring and summer for vertical planning of a continuum of expectations from Grades 5 through 12. The Advanced middle school program is fluid and students can enter and exit at any term or any grade.

Planning work was completed this summer to differentiate middle school classes for standard, Advanced, and APC instruction, in terms of depth and complexity. All courses meet the requirements of covering all the Common Core state standards while advanced classes are integrating higher order thinking skills and more complexity of thinking and writing. Any Grade 5 student can be invited into a middle-school advanced class, depending on their classroom performance.

For Mathematics, APC students who successfully complete Algebra 1 will have the ability to enter Geometry in Grade 9. Advanced Math classes will require critical thinking and problem solving at a higher level, and a faster pace, while completing the Grade 8 math course. In terms of transition, Grade 8 and 9 teachers are working together this year on analyzing topics, areas for coverage.

The summer planning work began with the Common Core Standards and discussions on differentiating existing lessons, selecting a more complex text. ELA teachers created sample lessons, prepared a binder of resources, including instructional activities. Mathematics teachers incorporated the standards for mathematical practice, rigorous pacing, and also instructional resources. Habits of the mind embedded in instruction, defend problem-solving and reasoning. In terms of pacing and alignment, a standard classroom might do 2 chapters, while the advanced classes would do three. There are different formats for problem sets and assessments for standard and advanced learners with the *Big Ideas* math program.

Professional Development for Advanced Class Teachers will include the Vertical Team meetings throughout the year and opportunities for assessing how the year has gone and making adjustments to the pacing guides as needed. System Professional Development Days will have targeted workshops focused on improving teacher practice and student learning outcomes.

Ms. Roy shared the two year Advanced Pathways initiative timeline. For next steps, at the school level, progress reports are shared mid-way through each term. Teachers communicate with parents about student adjustment to the faster pace and confer during parent teacher conferences at the end

of Term I. Placement reviews will be scheduled as needed throughout the year and at the beginning of each term, expectations are reinforced. Next steps include updating the Quincy Public Schools website and the Middle School POS will be revised and posted for parents.

Mr. Bregoli asked about High School Honors classes, Mr. Shaw said these would fall between the CCP/Standard and Advanced levels. Mr. Shaw said the difference of the three levels is content (complexity of text, expectations for end products) and pacing.

Mr. Bregoli asked about continuity of instructors – sometimes assignment change and how could that change the vertical team and preparation. Mr. Shaw said this where the Department Head is important at the high school level, they ensure continuity within the course framework.

Mr. Bregoli asked how many students are in ELC program, currently 85 students. Mr. Bregoli asked about the possibility of expanding the program by hiring more teachers so that students had the ELC program more than once per week. The current model has been in place for close to 20 years. Dr. DeCristofaro said that at one time, there were site-based instructors who moved between schools.

Mrs. Mahoney suggested that the course descriptions should be more specific for parents. The descriptive language makes it difficult to determine the expectations for students. Mrs. Mahoney suggested posting a syllabus to accompany the course descriptions.

Mrs. Hubley agreed that specific examples will assist parents. Mrs. Hubley asked about the possibility of extending the ELC program to Grade 4; this will be a topic for a future meeting.

Ms. Isola thanked the presenters, we do our students a great service by having these clear paths from Grade 5 through high school. The information allows parents and students to plan. Ms. Isola said in the past, high school students were encouraged to pick a subject and move up a level for the next school year. She suggested that if this is presented as taking an acceptable risk, students may rise to the challenge and take the leap.

Mrs. Hubley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 pm. Mrs. Mahoney seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.