

# QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## TEACHING & LEARNING SUBCOMMITTEE ~ Monday, May 2, 2016

A meeting of the Teaching & Learning Subcommittee was held on Monday, May 2, 2016 at 5:00 pm in the Coddington Building. Present were Mr. Paul Bregoli, Mrs. Kathryn Hubley, Mrs. Emily Lebo, and Ms. Barbara Isola. Also attending were Superintendent DeCristofaro, Mrs. Rebecca Cordero, Ms. Casey Deaguero, Ms. Marisa Forrester, Ms. Beth Hallett, Ms. Kimberly Quinn, Mrs. Laura Latini, Mrs. Robin Moreira, Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey, Mrs. Maura Papile, Mrs. Erin Perkins, Ms. Madeline Roy, Mr. Keith Segalla, Ms. Haley Shaughnessy, Mr. Robert Shaw, Ms. Judy Todd, Mrs. Ruth Witmer; and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Dr. DeCristofaro reviewed that the success of Quincy Public Schools initiatives is due to the talented staff and administrators, represented by those here to present. Mrs. Perkins introduced the reflection on the new Elementary Report Card initiative. With the second round of report cards and conferences completed, this is the perfect time to look back on how things went. Aspen Gradebook training began with voluntary summer opportunities with over 100 teachers participating. Collaboration with Aspen on developing the elementary report card format continued throughout the fall. Staff training was the focus of fall professional development, both for the Aspen gradebook, but also the standards-based rubrics. In early November, a Parent Academy was presented just before the report cards were scheduled to go live. Principals and teachers used multiple means to educate parents, including coffee hours, PTO presentations, and classroom newsletters. Information is posted on the Quincy Public Schools website, including the grading rubrics.

The first term report cards were published for parents on December 18 and conferences were held in January. A Staff survey by grade level has been opened and responses will be used to make changes going forward. The report card team will reconvene in June to look at areas for refinement, including ELA for Grades 4 and 5, where there has been consistent feedback on the need to shorten.

Ms. Cordero reviewed the grade level standard review process and how the grading rubrics were developed. Forms of evidence were submitted by staff from all schools and the team selected the best examples. Ms. Shaughnessy said the team reviewed rubrics from other school systems and the team focused on consistent language across content areas. Strategies for documenting student progress were discussed to inform conversations with parents at conference time and beyond. Ms. Forrester said that for students with IEPs or accommodations, student grades reflected modified assignments. Each student who fits the criteria for modified assignments is graded in a collaboration between grade level and special education teachers. Ms. Deaguero said that parent feedback was positive, parents liked having the report cards in advance, which gave them the opportunity to make notes and questions. Since the standards are broken down by domain, it gives teachers the opportunities to highlight areas of strength and areas of development. The timing of conferences

was an area of strong feedback, so the goal will be to hold conferences before winter and spring breaks. Mrs. Latini said all teachers used the Aspen Gradebook for posting and had the option to use it for specific assignment data including assigning standards. Utilizing this feature makes the development of term grades much easier. Next year, these assignments will be visible for teachers to re-use and edit as needed.

Mrs. Moreira said there was so much to communicate with families, the change in the report card and understanding the reasons behind the move to this new format. The development of the rubric and what the grades mean also was communicated. Finally, the changed timeline and the electronic delivery had to be communicated. Mrs. Moreira said the extensive communication made for a smooth transition, with teachers repeating the message at every opportunity. At PTO meetings, parents present were encouraged to share information in the schoolyard. Mrs. Moreira said the structure of the development team where every school had representatives from each grade level was key to the success of the initiative.

Mrs. Witmer said that as always, principals reviewed report cards. Some chose to review the cards online and others printed them out. The parent conferences were definitely more focused than in the past because of parents having the opportunity to review prior to conferences. Principals wondered whether there would be a dropoff in conference attendance, but there was no change. Many principals reported that no parents expressed concerns about the report card, the information sharing really prepared families for the changes. Mrs. Witmer said from her perspective, it was a very smooth rollout.

Mrs. Lebo said that the professionalism demonstrated by these initiatives, the teacher and principal leadership, is very impressive. Mrs. Lebo asked about “modified” vs. “accommodated”. Students with modified curriculum are graded with an asterisk. Students with accommodations are graded on the regular scale. For the most part, students with modified curriculum are in the substantially separate classrooms. Mrs. Lebo asked if Aspen allows for reporting performance on a standards basis, Keith confirmed that they do.

Ms. Isola asked if parents with older students reacted to the change favorably. Ms. Quinn said in her conferences, very positive feedback about the changes. Many parents were pleased with the opportunity to review report cards prior to the meeting, giving them time to organize thoughts.

Mr. Bregoli asked for and received confirmation that the report cards are translated. Mr. Bregoli asked about the length of conferences. Most schools have 10-minute conferences, but staff felt they were more focused because of the pre-conference distribution of the report cards.

Ms. Isola likes the idea of distributing the report cards prior to conferences. This initiative is such a successful example of collaboration, thanked everyone for the hard work.

Ms. Roy and Mr. Shaw presented a reflection on the Advanced Placement Pathways and the timeline for the initiative. Winter benchmarks included vertical team meetings and planning for 2016-2017. Mr. Shaw reviewed the differentiation of standards – the depth and complexity of instruction, high expectations for independent work, and acceleration of the pacing guide. The planning last summer had focused on moving through Bloom’s Taxonomy from the base of Knowledge, Comprehension, and Application to Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.

As teachers prepare for 2016-2017, the first group of Grade 8 Advanced Math and ELA students will be entering high school honors or advanced classes. The 8/9 vertical team meetings presented opportunities for collaboration and alignment, sharing of best practices and resources, review of placement criteria and course expectations.

For 2016-2017, students entering Grade 6 are being identified for advanced ELA and Mathematics classes at all five middle schools. Science curriculum will be the next area of expansion, for Grade 8 in the fall and Grades 6-7 for the following year. At teacher request, there will also be fall vertical team meetings for 8/9 in October and Grades 6-8 in November. Inventory and alignment of resources will continue, mathematics is well underway. For ELA, there will be continued conversations about new texts and anthologies.

Mr. Bregoli said the vertical teams are key to continuity, student success. Mr. Bregoli asked about the accommodation of learning styles at the middle and high school level. Mr. Shaw said teachers are skilled in differentiation. Ms. Roy said the collected sharing of lesson plans and ideas is helpful in assisting students with different learning styles. Mr. Bregoli suggested that the 8/9 vertical team video be shared on Channel 22.

Mrs. Lebo said she is happy to see that creating advanced Science classes is next and asked about the staggered rollout. Ms. Roy said that 2016-17 will be the rollout of the new Science standards and new curriculum, pacing and DDMs created. Once that work is completed, further work on differentiation can occur.

Dr. DeCristofaro said that these initiatives are successful because the staff and administrators know that these are improvements that directly impact students. Mrs. Hubley said it is good to see the teachers collaborating together so eagerly. Mrs. Lebo said we are clearly creating teacher leaders through these initiatives. Sharing of this important work happens in Subcommittee, would like to find a way to share with larger audience of School Committee meetings.

Mrs. Hubley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 pm. Mrs. Lebo seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.