

## **PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

### **Special Meeting Minutes**

**Special Meeting Title:** Presentation to Review Middle School ELA Plans

**Date:** Monday, May 3, 2021

**Time:** 5:30 PM

**Place:** Virtual Meeting

**Attendees:** Kathy Wells, Chair; Rebecca Martinez and Becky Tyrrell

**Also Present:** David Levenduski, Asst. Superintendent, Melissa Orfitelli, Aimee Roberts, Erin Georgini

**Members Absent:** Crystal St. Lawrence and Deborah Hardy

**Early Departures:** None

Chair Kathy Wells called the meeting to order at 5:37 PM.

Melissa Orfitelli stated that the curriculum proposal, in conjunction with Teachers College, is a review of the new Middle School's English/Language Arts plans which includes changes to curriculum, its connection to the elementary level and its impact on students. Mrs. Orfitelli began by announcing the Mission Statement of Teachers College Middle Grades Curriculum, which states: "We want our students to carry with them, for their entire lives, the invisible knapsack of privilege that is literacy. We want the lifelong choices they make (courses in High School and college, career paths) not to be mitigated by their reading levels, rather, we want students to feel confident that they can tackle any reading task with vigor and expertise."

After reviewing the districts Vision statement, she stated that the Middle School is striving to create a strong Pre-K-High School alignment. The Middle level, grades 6-8, will create alignment of the K-8 literacy curriculum by piloting 6-8 Reading Units of Study and a workshop model.

She then articulated the next level of work for the ELA Department which was the focus of the Board of Education/Central Office Instructional Rounds of October 25, 2019, prior to COVID. The levels were discussed as follows:

- ▶ to increase the rigor of the learning targets (often the work students were actually engaged in was more rigorous than what the stated Learning Target reflected)
- ▶ to dive into text—use mentor texts or authentic student writing to teach specific skills in context
- ▶ to think about ways to let the students do more of the work through inquiry
- ▶ to think about ways to differentiate within the classroom work to meet the needs of diverse learners (reading level, skill deficits, etc.)
- ▶ Some missed opportunities to allow students to read and interact with each other and the text rather than the teacher reading and leading the majority of the lesson
- ▶ to begin the process of learning more about the structure of mini-lessons/book clubs/remedial reading

She then discussed Program Information Research which includes:

- ▶ Effective implementation in grades K-5 in Plainville
- ▶ Consultation with CT State Department of Education Literacy Director, Melissa Hickey

- ▶ Colleagues in other districts: Partnership with Newington Public Schools, Sarah Whalen
- ▶ Staff Development Trainings from Teachers College
- ▶ Each grade level piloted one or more Reading Units of Study this year

Mrs. Georgini discussed Smarter Balanced Assessment showing the target area and how many students aren't meeting standards, from SY2016-2019, and discussed overall placements in i-Ready.

She then discussed the goals of this curriculum program:

- ▶ Develop "flexible, resilient readers who read for pleasure as well as for academic purpose."
- ▶ Students can access a toolkit of strategies when experiencing reading difficulties
- ▶ Students are "knowledgeable on a range of subjects from nonfiction reading and empathetic and nuanced in their interactions with others from their reading of literature"
- ▶ Students can "read broadly and deeply, alert to the intricacies of texts and to the power of language"
- ▶ Save teachers hours of planning (creating) and disseminating information to teammates, increasing time for studying student work and working with small groups/ individuals
- ▶ Teachers have leveled resources (exemplars, anchor charts, bands of text complexity) that act as a big toolkit ready for every student need that arises.

She also discussed what research says adolescent readers need, i.e.:

- ▶ Are publications dates diverse? Are books representative of a wide range of generations?
- ▶ Are authors diverse in gender, generation, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, views on the world, etc.?
- ▶ Are characters representative of all students in gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, etc.?
- ▶ Do the levels of mentor texts match the rigor readers need in each grade level to grow?

She then showed photos of students and how they are engaged in reading and also showed a video of student responses on what they liked most about this year's English/Language Arts program. She also reviewed positive feedback from various ELA teachers.

The meeting was concluded with a list of challenges and needs for success. Mrs. Roberts concluded by letting Board Members know that they can create their own Shelfie's to share with the Middle School and can also read one of the new mentor texts to book talk with the Middle School. Discussion ensued.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY BECKY TYRRELL TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY REBECCA MARTINEZ. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.** Meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joan Calistro  
Recorder of Minutes