

Newtown Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut
Education and Instruction Subcommittee

Minutes from the Board of Education Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee held on Thursday, September 2, 2021.

M. Ku A. Uberti L. Rodrigue
J. Vouros F. Purcaro

Also present Board of Education member Deborra Zukowski.

J. Vouros called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

Public Participation: None

A. Uberti provided a brief background of the District's use NWEA MAP Assessments that were implemented in October, 2013. The District had not previously utilized a universal testing platform. Over the years, administration of the test has occurred two to three times per year, typically for students in grades from Kindergarten through eighth, although the number of times and grades tested has varied. The District has invested in considerable training for staff in order to increase the usefulness of the test for informing instruction. NWEA provides information about how students are performing compared to other students national and district norms rather than providing information on the skills students have and have not mastered relative to math and ELA standards. In speaking to teachers, most have found the test is limited in terms of helping to identify specific areas in need of support. Given that many students will likely be presenting this fall with gaps in learning, A. Uberti began to explore what other platforms could more effectively identify specific learning deficits, as well as provide tools for teachers to use to accelerate growth. I-Ready is NWEA's major competitor and they were invited to present their product to A. Uberti and F. Purcaro over the summer. I-Ready provides much of what NWEA does but also has many features that NWEA does not. A. Uberti believes that its implementation throughout the District will provide teachers with what NWEA never has – clear information about a student's and a class's performance that includes specific areas of strengths and weaknesses, as well as easy-to-access tools for instruction.

Presentation by F. Purcaro: [Assessment, Instruction and Intervention: Current Practices and Proposed Changes](#)

Questions asked by J. Vouros and M. Ku following the presentation:

Q: When will the testing occur?

A: Late September or early October will be the first administration.

Q: Can you clarify why it is so difficult for the teachers to apply lessons to areas that are necessary?

A: Because the test is norm-referenced it does not give information specific to individual students. The RIT score tells what a student with that RIT score may be ready to learn next, not what an individual student has or has not been mastered. Teachers need to then go to a "Learning Continuum" to see what that student may be ready to learn next but it does not provide any recommendations for what the teacher can use to support that learning.

Q: When will this go to the Board for approval?

A: Preferably at the September 8th meeting so that the product could be purchased and training can be provided in time for a fall administration. That would allow teachers to use this for instructional purposes beginning this fall.

Q: Have we effectively evaluated NWEA and how will we evaluate I-Ready?

A: After 8 years, A. Uberti believes NWEA has been thoroughly evaluated. There are benefits that we would like to maintain but are seeking a platform that provides greater usefulness in terms of informing instruction. I-Ready essentially does what NWEA does but more. It provides teachers with a list of standards and clearly shows how students performed in relation to those standards as well as provides resources to support further instruction. Instructional resources are provided for students performing at every level, including those with advanced performance, and may be implemented by paraprofessionals under the direction of certified staff.

Q: How do we know that this is going to effectively serve our needs?

A: I-Ready is the main competitor in the market to NWEA right now. F. Purcaro has experience with I-Ready and attested to it being positively received by teachers and parents and noted that the results provided useful information for the Board. In addition, while using it in his prior District, they saw substantial growth in student performance.

Q: Does the State offer something that can be used in between Smarter Balanced Assessments instead of either of these?

A: The State does offer interim assessments. They have been used in District but the information garnered does not compare to either NWEA or I-Ready. That are not nearly as comprehensive in terms of student learning or predicting performance on Smarter Balanced.

In conclusion, A. Uberti noted that the District would only be signing a one-year contract so 21-22 could be considered a pilot year. That would enable us to gather feedback from staff as well as parents on I-Ready through the school year. J. Vouros and M. Ku agreed that this made sense.

Future C & I meetings will be held in Council Chambers to allow for more room for in-person meetings along with a streaming option for presenters.

Link to Recording of C & I Meeting: [C & I Meeting 9.2.21](#)

Public Participation: None

J. Vouros adjourned the meeting at 12:11 p.m.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Norling

THESE ARE DRAFT MINUTES AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE.