



## NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### Teaching & Learning Committee

February 17, 2021

Online

**In attendance:** Dr. Joyner (Chair of Committee), Ivelise Velazquez, Dr. Paul Whyte, Tessa Gumbs-Johnson, Lynn Brantley, Ken Mathews, Sequella Coleman, Eugene Foreman, Gyna Grant, Kristina Crivellone, Gina Raucci, Lynn Accatiano, Katherine Hopkins, Vincent Squeglia, Jessica Atnes, Jennifer Grasso, Mary-Lynn Gambardella, Taylor Geohghegan, Marisa Asarisi, Tristan Ward, Adrian Huq, Caitlin, Owens, Kiana Flores, Conner Cahill, Karen Lorde, Jennifer Sarja, Jessica Haxhi.

Dr. Joyner called the meeting to order at 4:30.

#### **1. How do we conduct this meeting respectfully and effectively? Dr. Joyner**

Dr. Joyner welcomed everyone to the meeting and emphasized that everyone in the meeting is valued. We are better when we work together as an organization.

#### **2. How are we supporting students to grow and apply their knowledge of mathematical concepts?**

*Assistant Superintendent Velazquez and Mr. Ken Mathews will present information on a math pilot conducted to assess and recommend new materials for use districtwide in K-5th grade.*

Please see the attached PowerPoint that was presented at the meeting. The math department piloted two new texts in grades K-5: Big Ideas and Ready Math. The current program, Math in Focus, has been out of print for a year. They piloted Ready Math in Troup and Davis. They piloted Big Ideas at Hill Central and Quinnipiac. Teachers in grades K-5 completed two units. The results were presented to Dr. Tracey and the Executive Team and they decided to move forward with Ready Math. It is published by Curriculum Associates, copyright 2020.

Teachers reflected that the strength of Ready Math is that it has a “universal screener” that comes with it, in English and Spanish, so that you can use it to target instruction for students. Ready Math has a focus on engagement, a wealth of resources, and is very interdisciplinary, with a lot of social studies and science. Ms. Velazquez reached out to other districts and asked them about Ready Math and Big Ideas. Please see the attached PowerPoint for specific feedback from those districts.

Eugene Forman, Principal of Troup School, and his teachers discussed their pilot of Ready Math. As an administrator, he liked being able to see how students were scoring on the diagnostic tool. Gyna Grant, kindergarten teacher, found that the diagnostic tool and the goal-setting was effective. It gave clear expectations on what the learning expectations and strategies were. Kristina Crivellone (1<sup>st</sup> grade), thought the program taught a lot of base skills, number talk, and strategies. She has never had such a successful group of students in terms of being able to talk about math strategies. She also used the program’s “interactive tutorials” and found them to be engaging. Gina Raucci, third grade teacher at Troup, noted that the math games are at their level and targeted to what they need. Because students feel so successful and enjoy the games, they are often asking “can we go on iReady?” Lynn Accatiano, 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher commented that the program is very data-driven. It is user-friendly for

children, there is online support, manipulatives, and students are able to guide themselves. It does not “stress children out” as they try to figure out how to use it. Katherine Hopkins, fourth grade teacher at Troup, noted that the program reduces ways might feel self-conscious because only the student and the teacher can see if students have uncompleted work. Vincent Squeglia, Math Coach at Troup, commented that the representatives from the company have been very responsive and helpful over email, often within 30 minutes.

Sequella Coleman, Principal of Davis Street School, introduced the teachers from her school who piloted Ready Math. Jessica Atnes, Math Coach, also mentioned that students are using different strategies to solve problems. She also noted that the diagnostic really allows for differentiation. Jennifer Grasso, first grade teacher at Davis St., said she can pull up a report when she is working with small groups so that she knows what to work on with each individual student. The program has videos and games that can also be used in small group instruction. Mary-Lynn Gambardella, second grade teacher, talked about how Ready Math teaches the solving of word problems. It helps students to look carefully at the word problem and consider different ways of how to solve it. She reiterated that students really enjoy the “My Path” games that are included. Taylor Geoghhegan, fifth grade teacher, also noted that she likes the way it teaches students to solve word problems, how it teaches differentiation, and how students can see their own progress when they enter the “My Path” area of the program. Marisa Asaris, Assistant Principal of Davis St. thanked the teachers and coaches for their hard work in piloting and implementing the program. She liked the way the program gives students choices of how to solve a problem.

Ms. Coleman notes that one of their magnet themes is “inquiry.” This program encourages students to start with a question and inquiry, in alignment with their way of teaching at the school.

Ms. Velazquez asked how differentiation works with English Learners or students with IEPs. Ms. Crivellone explained that when a student has a particular area of need noted on their IEP, you can choose that they receive more instruction in that area when they are doing their independent work.

Dr. Joyner noted that the task analysis and sequencing seemed to be correct in terms of the materials; therefore, it makes it easier to differentiate in the classroom. He talked about the challenges of teaching in general, and of differentiation in particular. He asked what it is about the development of this particular textbook that has taken into account the varied learning abilities and paces in the classroom and that students need to be stimulated by engaging images when they are learning.

Lisa Cattaruzza from Curriculum Associates, Inc. and iReady noted that they are committed to making classrooms better for students. She introduced Danielle Sullivan, Director of Implementation and Content. Both of them thanked the teachers and administrators for their hard work and comments about the program.

Dr. Joyner expressed his appreciation for the teacher teams that piloted the program, as well as the administrators and the representatives from the company. He commented that he hopes that in the future, mathematics can be used as a vehicle to ensure equity. He emphasized the importance of integrated learning, as well as reading and writing across the curriculum. He reiterated Ms. Coleman’s mention of the importance of getting students to “think” when problem-solving and interacting in any real-world situation. He noted the advantages of being mathematically literate.

Ms. Velazquez asked that Dr. Joyner support their Recommendation to the board that Ready Math, iReady Math and the screener be purchased by the district. Dr. Joyner expressed his support.

Ms. Velazquez thanked everyone for coming and for their work on the pilot.

**3. How are we supporting students to promote solutions to combat climate change?** *Members from the New Haven Climate Movement, Climate Education Committee will reintroduce the Climate Justice School Initiative and provide an update on their collaboration to date with administration.*

Ms. Velazquez introduced the following students to speak about the New Haven Climate Movement and the Climate Justice Schools Initiatives. See attached related documents and their website at <https://www.climateeducationnh.org/>

*Tristan Ward, 10<sup>th</sup> grader, New Haven Academy, New Haven Climate Movement*

Tristan introduced the Climate Justice Schools Initiative proposal described in the attached document. They also created a petition for the Climate Justice Schools Proposal that received over 1,000 signatures.

*Adrian Huq, 2020 graduate of New Haven Academy, New Haven Climate Movement*

Adrian is passionate about Climate Change and would like to make a difference in climate change education in the district. She shared the summary and proposal attached to these minutes.

Please see attached proposal, including a number of initiatives they would like to have adopted and implemented in the coming year(s). They are proposing a pilot program in 5 schools.

They have been meeting with the Curriculum Supervisors to talk about curricular adjustments and implementations as well as meeting with the NHPS grant writer. They have been hosting student and community webinars as well.

*Caitlin Owens, Senior at Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School, New Haven Climate Movement* are went over the benefits of the Climate Justice Schools Proposal (see attached).

*Kiana Flores, Senior at Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School, New Haven Climate Movement* explained that the New Haven Board of Alders voted unanimously to pass the New Haven Climate Movement's "Climate Emergency Resolution." Kiana explained that this initiative, as well as all of their others, are essential to fulfill the components of that resolution. She discussed the data on Connecticut and New Haven Climate and presented a letter to the Board of Education.

*Conner Cahill, Junior at Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School, New Haven Climate Movement* requested that this proposal be accepted and implemented this year and then took questions from the Committee.

Dr. Joyner commended the New Haven Climate Movement students for recognizing that this is an interdisciplinary issue. He noted that the budget is currently operating at a deficit and that funding is a consideration. He was pleased that the students are talking with the NHPS grant writer about this.

Dr. Joyner requested that Ms. Velazquez talk to Dr. Tracey about potential funding sources, as well as ways that we can begin the parts of these initiatives that do not have costs, such as looking at whether our purchasing is "green." He encouraged students to look at other school systems considered to be "cutting edge" to see if they are having an impact. He asked to have a point person in the district who is looking into

this. He asked what we can do currently, given our limited resources, and then what can we do to find resources to translate the proposal into actions.

Adrian Huq noted that curricular changes don't require funds, but events, stipends for coordinators and student interns would require funding. They are looking into whether the City can provide some of funds that had been set aside for Climate Change. Adrian asked if the Committee would approve bringing the proposal before the full Board of Education.

Dr. Joyner responded that curricular changes could have a cost because teachers may require some professional development. He asked that we examine the following:

- What are we currently doing?
- What are the highest standards for curriculum in this area?
- What are we doing at the school-level now?
- If no one else is doing it, implement it ourselves.
- Develop a phase-in plan (stage 1, 2, 3, etc.) for project-based learning around this area for all grades.
- If certain schools have a pilot project, especially interdisciplinary, that would be a great way to start.

Dr. Joyner said that the Climate Justice Schools Initiative proposal could be shown at the Board meeting after this coming one. He asked that the group forward them their proposal, including a plan for progressive change and institutionalization of the climate-related project-based learning.

Dr. Tracey praised the group for taking action. She noted that climate change education could be easily integrated into the content areas. Students could take on projects to take action, such as recycling projects, etc. The Biden Administration has also made Climate Change one of their priorities. She asked Ms. Velazquez and the Academics team to work to integrate Climate Change lessons into the curriculum.

Adrian Huq thanked Dr. Tracey. Dr. Joyner thanked the group and offered them his contact information.

**4. How will we manage requests for international trips given COVID restrictions?** *Ms. Jessica Haxhi will review the guidelines for trips.*

Ms. Haxhi presented the following proposal for how international trip requests will be handled this spring.

- Postpone the normally scheduled May 2021 (for 2022 trips) trip approval process.
- Monitor the outlook for international travel in 2022 over the summer of 2021.
- If international travel seems safe and possible, run the 2022 trip approval process in October 2021.
- Encourage schools to plan trips for spring 2022 and, even better, summer 2022.
- As always, we will not allow schools to take any deposits from students until the trips are approved by the Board. Most companies are currently running risk-free and deposit-free planning of trips.

Dr. Joyner approved this course of action.

**5. How has the district moved into teaching “in-person” learners and “remote” learners?** *The curriculum staff will provide an update.*

Ken Mathews introduced teachers to talk about in-person learning at the K-8 schools and remote learning at the high schools.

Karen Lorde, Math Coach from Roberto Clemente, explained that in-person learning is going well. They have been working hard to close the achievement gap. She sees some difficulties with remote students not engaging; some students are “soaring” and some are not producing in the manner that they would if they were in-person. She has observed some teachers using technology such as Pear Deck and other paper-based activities (shown in the camera) to be respectful of students not wanting to show their faces in the camera. She is looking forward to when everyone can be in-person together so that it can be more equitable.

Lynn Brantley, Literacy Supervisor, introduced Jennifer Sarja from High School in the Community. Ms. Sarja said that high school students and teachers are eager to get back into the buildings. It is challenging for the high school students because they are responsible for younger siblings, or working full time to assist in supporting their families. It is encouraging how many students show up to the classes in Meets, even though they are not showing their faces on the camera. At HSC, they are trying to be innovative with “breakfast clubs” and other off-hours gathering times for students. They reach out to families every other week to check in. She emphasized that it has been a real challenge for students and that there is definitely a gap in learning for students. In her English department, they spend a lot of time talking about how to make texts relevant for students and bring in current events. She is looking forward to a return to in-person learning.

It was decided that, due to time constraints, the rest of the invited guests would be asked to return to the next meeting.

Johanna Samberg-Champion announced the “Day of Hope and Healing” on February 24<sup>th</sup>. Workshops will be held from 10:00-2:00 for family, students, and staff. It will include activities such as Zumba, yoga, and other wellness topics. They currently have over 60 presenters. There is a brochure with a description of each session. She asked that they

**6. How is the district organizing to support the new Policy on Race and Equity on teaching and learning?** *Ms. Velazquez will show a brief video on the Black and Puerto Rican curriculum project.*

This was tabled due to time constraints.

## **7. Closing Remarks**

Dr. Joyner thanked everyone again.

- **The meeting was adjourned at 5:55.**

**The next meeting is scheduled for March 17, 2021.**

**Future meetings 20-21: Apr. 21, May 19, Jun. 16**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica Haxhi