



The Helena Public Schools educate, engage, and empower each student to maximize his or her individual potential with the knowledge, skills and character essential to being a responsible citizen and life-long learner.

Board of Trustees – Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 6, 2021 – 12:00pm

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

Trustees:

Sarah Sullivan, Committee Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Committee Member
Jennifer Walsh, Committee Member
Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair

Others:

Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Director
Justine Alberts, Hawthorne Principal
Dave Thennis, CR Anderson Principal
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Christine Roberts, member of the public

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 12:02pm by Committee Chair, Sarah Sullivan.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested to the agenda.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the December 2, 2020, committee meeting were reviewed.

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

A. Draft 2021-2022 High School Course Offerings

Mr. McKay provided the committee with the steps required for approval of a new high school class offering, which began with a teacher proposal and ended with superintendent approval and addition to the course catalog.

Mr. McKay described four new classes that had completed the series of steps and would be added to next school year's course offerings: Unified Art, Philosophy, Carpentry 3, and

Foundational Fitness. Mr. McKay clarified that once the courses had completed the approval process, either high school could incorporate them into the course catalog regardless of who submitted the proposal.

Ms. Hathhorn mentioned college students and graduates have told her they wished there were coding classes offered at the district. She asked if there was interest within the district in adding coding classes. Dr. Ream answered several coding languages were offered as part of the business curriculum. He offered to provide Ms. Hathhorn with a list of those coding languages as part of a board update. Mr. McKay added there had been a focus on internships through Helena WINS pre-pandemic. Ms. Hathhorn replied she was more interested in establishing a certification program, adding there was grant money and canned programs available to certify students upon completion of the course.

Ms. Sullivan asked if teachers and students were consulted in the class addition process. Mr. McKay answered proposals were submitted by teachers based on surveys completed by students.

Ms. Sullivan asked how course offering were impacted by the potential decline of enrollment. Dr. Ream answered Mr. McKay monitors the entire process of the viability of classes – interest from students and availability of certified staff. Classes may not be available due to declining enrollment or declining interest.

Ms. Hathhorn noted the district's ability to offer a variety of classes was an advantage over surrounding smaller districts.

B. Assessment Platform Update

Dr. Ream provided background information on the decision from January 2020, to transition from STAR to i-Ready. Last winter an alternative to STAR was sought to better inform instructional design and to better monitor progress. Mr. McKay listed i-Ready features as follows:

- tools and resources to help educators respond to individualized levels of mastery
- a student-specific, cross-grade report showing levels of mastery, and needed areas of intervention
- recommended small groups with educational technique suggests best benefiting the learners of each group

Ms. Sullivan asked how the smaller groups affected pacing – how students who have not mastered a topic draw nearer to mastery. Ms. Ridgway replied that WIN (what I need) or intervention time was built into the instructional day. Ms. Alberts provided additional context to the committee by describing the instructional day: 60 minutes were dedicated to core instructional time. Extra 30-minute blocks were added based on needs for each small group needs. For those extra blocks, paras and educators worked with students on increasing their levels of mastery. She added buildings and grade levels relied upon peers and instructional coaches who excelled at scheduling to provide guidance and best practices.

Ms. Hathhorn asked if teachers were happy with the change in assessment platforms. Mr. McKay replied the pandemic made training more difficult, but educators have done an exceptional job adapting. He added professional development on i-Ready would continue to be offered to teachers. Ms. Alberts replied the change took awhile to work through – there was a learning curve, but educators have learned quickly and appreciate the additional tools available. She and her building educators appreciated the versatility of the program and the ability to look at students’ progress from a grade level and school perspective.

Ms. Hathhorn requested confirmation that overall data would still be viewed. Dr. Ream replied composite data would be examined across the district to see progress, what changes needed to be made, and what resources should be allocated to specific buildings.

C. Brief Overview of Performance Matters

Dr. Ream suggested postponing the Performance Matters discussion until a future meeting. The committee agreed.

Dr. Ream mentioned he heard from trustees that they were interested in a high school math discussion. He agreed to determine when that could be discussed with the committee.

VI. BOARD COMMENTS

No additional comments were offered.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:06pm by Ms. Sullivan.