



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, May 4th, 2022 – 12:00pm

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

Trustees:

Jennifer McKee, Committee Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Trustee
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee

Others:

Rex Weltz, Superintendent
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Brian Cummings, Assistant Superintendent
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Candice Delvaux, Executive Assistant
Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Administrator
Kaitlyn Hess, HSD TOSA
Abigail Nyhof, Music Teacher
Jennifer Skogley, Music Teacher
Justine Alberts, Hawthorne Principal
Tia Wilkins, Warren Principal
Jonna Schwartz, Instructional Coach
Lona Carter, Jefferson Principal

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 12:03 pm by Committee Chair, Jennifer McKee.

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 committee reviewed and approved the minutes from the 04.06.22 Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting.

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

A. Follow-Up Q and A for Music K-5

The Teaching and Learning Committee had a follow up discussion regarding the K-5 Music Curriculum. Siobhan Hathhorn, Trustee, commented that she loved the format of the new curriculum, and that it is very concise and clear. Jennifer McKee, Committee Chair, commented that music education in the District has always been excellent, and it is great to see the new curriculum even more improved and refined. Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Administrator, commented. I want to give a shout out to Nick Radley who helped facilitate the work with this group. His help has been incredibly beneficial.

B. K-5 Standards Based Grading Update

The committee moved on to discuss an update on K-5 Standards Based Grading. Mrs. Davidson commented. These folks have taken the lead in the elementary with standards based grading. It was an initiative we wanted to try starting a year and a half before COVID. We put together a task force and it was an application process for teachers and administrators who wanted to be part of that work and take the lead on it. We had one meeting and then COVID hit, and we had to let it go for a while. We reinitiated that work this winter again to get ready for next year, and we've also brought some professional development in to guide us.

Lona Carter, Jefferson Principal, commented. We were trying to figure out a way for us to really focus on standards with kids and we had something like eleven different elementary report cards, and there was really a difference in how students were being given the marks that they were being given. We wanted to facilitate a process that made sense to teachers and that would serve kids and families. When COVID hit we had to figure out a way to report to families the work that we did with our students that spring, because we couldn't do the traditional report card as we weren't in a traditional setting. So that's when we came up with what we called the remote review. We focused on our ELA and our math standards and had more of a narrative of how students did during that time. I think it was remarkable what we were able to do that spring and summer for our families and our students-going to one-on-one technology, having small group instruction online, and keeping kids connected to their classmates and their schools. When we moved into 2021, we had the hybrid model, which also was a very challenging model, but we really felt like it was a way for us to take that next step into standards based grading. We felt like this was something that we could really tackle together and put in the time and the effort to make sure we walked out of COVID with standards based grading and curriculum so that we really would have a good idea of how kids were progressing with great emphasis placed on making sure our students didn't have significant gaps in learning given we were surviving a global pandemic. When we came back this year, we had the opportunity to bring our coaches on board, and they have been a tremendous asset to all our buildings. We did some formatting of the standards based report and called it a progress report this year, because we didn't feel like we were in a place where we could really say this is a report card. We still had work to do on it. The

amount of time and work that folks put into the summer of 2020 was incredible. They were a tremendously dedicated group of folks that wanted to make sure that what we had in place was going to serve our community's kids. In my opinion, this is a better tool to have a student where they are and seeing where they can go rather than comparing them to everybody else.

Ms. Carter commented. The work that we've done this year has been focused on Math first because that's the area that we feel like we need to shore up solidly given our historical data. We've also talked a lot about how kids have come back to us with some pretty significant developmental gaps. Our goal is at the end of our conversation with folks next Wednesday, we will have a really solid draft that we will be able to share with our administration and our teachers for that last big conversation to make sure that they don't feel like we're missing anything as we walk forward because we need this to be in place for next autumn. The last piece I'll touch on is with standards based grading they talk a lot about how you have to have more touch marks with families. Historically we have open house, and I know that there's a lot of opportunities for us to connect with our families throughout the year and these are going to be a bit more intentional in that. We have had parent teacher conferences right after a marking period, and so that conversation has been about where your kid is at and we're focusing on paper. We're going to instead have those parent teacher conferences at those same times but they're really going to be having those check ins with families to see how their student is doing, if there are other supports we need to wrap around the student and the family, and whether or not they have any concerns about how the school year is going. Not that we won't talk about the academic piece, but we really want to make sure that we're making those connections with our families. We will do our reporting on the trimester marks, which will include a narrative which will be a little bit different than the traditional report card.

Tia Wilkins, Warren Principal, commented. We have a leadership team that focuses on student and family engagement, and they just loved the onboarding because open house can be very chaotic and it's all about the supplies. We all know how that feels when you have multiple families in the classroom and you're not able to connect and that doesn't really feel like the goal of open house. You want to create those connections. The leadership team at Warren was talking about we don't love that as our first touch with families. We want to be able to provide more time if they have concerns. We are hoping to do this before school starts. I've written a proposal and we would like to have a full day where families can come into the building and we're going to use something like Sign-Up Genius where they can sign up for a half hour to 45-minute time slot. That way they can have more of that one-on-time and can tour the building.

Justine Alberts, Hawthorne Principal, commented. Dr. Thomas Guskey came in and visited us twice and helped us find a purpose for reporting and measuring student performance and walked us through the different considerations we can have when forming reporting documents. What he presented to us was taken back to the taskforce and discussed. The committee really liked the narratives, so this reporting document is going to house a lot of individualized student comments, and looking at reporting on more concise areas, such as domains instead of what we're doing right now which is individual standards. We want to make sure we're aligned in what that looks like across all buildings so we're consistent in what we're using to report on and measure student performance, as well as looking at pulling progress, process, and performance apart from each other on the reporting document. A lot of the work has been teachers sitting at the table talking about standards and asking: what are we learning, what tools do we have to

support these standards and the assessment of them, and what can we use together. It's a really great collaborative conversation.

Ms. Carter commented. Our previous grading reports had a rating of one, two or three. That was really frustrating to many teachers and families because the two was so big and broad. A one is not meeting standard, a two is progressing, and a three is met standard. This year what we've done is we're doing a one through four scale: one is they're not meeting the standard and they are not able to do it independently, two is they are making progress, three is they are able to do it with support and sometimes can do it independently, and four is not advanced or beyond grade level but it is being able to do something independently and that you have mastered the skill. We think this new scale is really going to help our families and our teachers have those conversations.

Ms. Wilkins commented. Going through the pandemic was a lot for our teachers, our students and for our families. The feedback from teachers is how to have those conversations about learner skills, and study skills and how students are performing within the school setting. Teachers also want to be able to provide a roadmap for families to give them a guide on the progression of certain student skills and motor skills. So that has also been part of this work, and what we are doing is we are creating a Pre-K through five learner skill rubric to help educators to be able to have those conversations with families on how their child is performing in that moment of time, and to be able to then have more guided conversations around goals and next steps. Our kids are coming in with different needs and we need to be able to have more pointed and intentional conversations.

VI. BOARD COMMENTS

Committee Chair Jennifer McKee commented. I wanted to acknowledge and congratulate everyone who's been involved in this committee. You all represent people who have done great work and this year has been such an extraordinary year. It's been such a year of growth and innovation. It's been awesome to see the intent, the intelligence, and just the labor that has gone into the school year. I want you to know that it is very much appreciated, acknowledged and seen. Thank you so much.

Kaitlyn Hess, HSD TOSA, commented. I want to thank and recognize the Union, Jane Shawn, Jonna Schwartz, and the other Instructional Coaches for their work they have done in writing a grant for grading practices.

Superintendent Rex Weltz commented. The efforts that you had mentioned have been brave and bold to do something out of the norm. The simple and easy thing would have just been to do what we always do and have eleven different report cards, but to put out our efforts to change—that is the hard work, but I think it is the right work and it is a testament to who is sitting in front of us, and the leadership from Curriculum. I would like to acknowledge that as well. This is not an easy task.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:09 p.m. by Trustee McKee.