



Board of Trustees Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting

Wednesday, February 5th, 2025

12:00pm

Lincoln Center & TEAMS

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

Trustees:

Jennifer McKee, Board Vice Chair
Rachel Robison, Trustee
Siobhan Hathhorn, Board Chair

Others:

Rex Weltz, Superintendent
Jane Shawn, HEA President
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Justine Alberts, Curriculum Director
Candice Delvaux, Executive Assistant
Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs Director
Lona Carter, Student Health Services & Special Education Director
Karen Ogden, Communications Officer
Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Tia Wilkins, Bryant Elementary Principal
Brett Zanto, Capital High School Principal
Cal Boyle, Helena Middle School, Principal
Kayla Dunn, Bryant Title Specialist
Bridget Butler, Bryant Title Specialist

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m. by Board Vice Chair Jennifer McKee.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no general public comment.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested to the agenda.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The committee reviewed and accepted the minutes from the 1.8.25 Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting.

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

A. Winter Benchmark Data Lead In

Ms. Justine Alberts, Curriculum Director for Helena Public Schools, informed the group that the Teaching and Learning Committee will be reviewing winter benchmark data at their upcoming meeting next month. Additionally, this data will be presented at the full Board of Trustees meeting next month. Today, the committee will hear presentations from principals at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, who will provide insights into their data use and analysis.

B. Data Use & Analysis from Building Leaders (Elementary, Middle School, and High School)

Ms. Tia Wilkins, Principal of Bryant Elementary, along with Ms. Kayla Dunn and Ms. Bridget Butler, Title Specialists at Bryant, presented on the use and analysis of data at the elementary level for Bryant Elementary School. Principal Wilkins began by emphasizing the value of having Facilitator Diane Groves conduct consensus training with the Bryant staff. This training helped the team set goals and engage in discussions about their collective mission and objectives. Ms. Wilkins emphasized the importance of ensuring that all members of the Bryant community—parents, students, grandparents, and other stakeholders—feel welcomed and involved in the school. Several strategies to enhance communication with families were highlighted, including weekly newsletters from teachers, and the use of ClassDojo. Next, they reviewed the progress of the school's intervention process, which is designed to support students who are struggling or not making adequate progress. This process has been strengthened to ensure timely interventions. Three School Leadership Teams (SLTs) are in place to focus on various areas: Family and Student Engagement, Math and Science, and Reading and Writing. These teams have been instrumental in aligning efforts to improve student outcomes. Another important area of focus was refining school routines and structures. Ms. Wilkins discussed the importance of clarity in how students are greeted upon arrival, how behavior is managed, and how these practices contribute to a positive school environment. This consistency in approach is integral to fostering a welcoming atmosphere for both students and parents. Ms. Butler acknowledged that all of

these foundational efforts were essential before diving into data analysis. The data collected thus far has shown promising results, with significant progress in both math and reading. For the first time, all grade levels are implementing a dedicated "WIN" (What I Need) time for both math and reading, ensuring that every staff member is involved and committed to addressing student needs. For math, the focus for the first trimester was on developing students' number sense, with tailored groups across all grade levels. For reading, the primary focus was on phonics for younger grades, while older grades worked on book applications when phonics were no longer necessary. Ms. Dunn provided an overview of the school's data tracking system, which organizes student groups, "I Can" statements, goals, and supporting files in a way that allows staff to easily update and review student progress. Weekly meetings with grade-level teams provide time for teachers to reflect on and analyze data, including winter assessments from tools like iReady and Acadience, to determine whether instructional adjustments are needed. Teachers also use data forms during PLC meetings to assess individual student performance and consider changes to tier one instruction when necessary. At the school-wide level, academic scores for reading and math are compiled to track student growth, and those not meeting expectations are identified for Tier 2 or Tier 3 support. Principal Wilkins discussed the approach to analyzing data by focusing on the whole child rather than just academics. The goal is to align student data with the building-wide objectives established by the SLT team, addressing both social-emotional engagement and academic performance. Recognizing that a student's ability to access learning can be impacted by their overall well-being, the school aims to identify students who are not making growth and flag them for additional support. If a student is not progressing, a conversation is initiated to determine what further interventions or support are necessary, ensuring that no student falls through the cracks and all students receive the support they need to succeed. Principal Wilkins and her team addressed questions the Teaching and Learning Committee had regarding the information presented.

Ms. Alberts shared information on behalf of Principal Burton for Jefferson Elementary School, as he was unable to attend the meeting today. The team at Jefferson Elementary reviewed their winter benchmark data, focusing on comparing last year's progress to this year's, particularly in reading. They were pleased to see that 52% of students had already achieved their expected annual growth, which is a significant achievement, especially as this is the second year of the new reading curriculum. Ms. Alberts emphasized the importance of tracking typical growth trends to predict future proficiency levels. While there wasn't a major change in data from last year, they noted the high quality of instructional materials and recognized that if these trends persist, further reflection on tier-one practices will be needed to increase student achievement. Ms. Alberts also pointed out that the new curriculum has reduced time spent on MyPath within iReady, which could impact scores, though they continued to focus on reading WIN time as a key success factor. Moving forward, grade-level PLCs will focus on SMART goals and identify specific students to target for growth, with action steps to be developed based on their analysis of the data. Ms. Alberts addressed questions the Teaching and Learning Committee had regarding the information presented.

Next, the Teaching and Learning Committee heard from Mr. Cal Boyle, Principal of Helena Middle School. Principal Cal Boyle discussed the challenges of balancing academic achievement and

student engagement in a middle school environment. Principal Boyle highlighted the importance of maintaining student engagement, especially for those who are significantly below grade level. He noted that middle school is a critical period where keeping students connected to school is

key to their long-term success. To address this, the school is focusing on targeted interventions for students in the "yellow zone"—those approaching proficiency but needing additional support, particularly in vocabulary for reading and math skills. The school plans to pilot an intervention program using iReady to provide focused support for these students. At the same time, they will continue to offer rigorous opportunities for high-achieving students, ensuring that all students, regardless of their current academic level, are supported and challenged appropriately. Principal Boyle discussed the challenges associated with the MAST testing, particularly the frequency and timing of assessments. The testing schedule has resulted in significant instructional time being lost, as students are repeatedly assessed without clear results that can guide intervention efforts. Principal Boyle discussed the importance of using multiple data sources, including iReady and teacher PLC feedback, to make informed decisions about student interventions. He emphasized that the key to effective support is tailoring interventions to meet the individual needs of each student. As a Title school, Principal Boyle highlighted the challenges posed by socio-economic factors, noting that basic needs must be addressed before academic interventions can be effective. Principal Boyle addressed questions the Teaching and Learning Committee had regarding the information presented.

Next, the Teaching and Learning Committee heard from Mr. Brett Zanto, Principal of Capital High School. Principal Brett Zanto began discussing two main topics during his presentation: intervention time and MAP data. He explained that intervention time is designed to provide students with dedicated support to catch up on missed work, make up tests, or receive help with assignments. To help students stay organized, the school implemented universal late work deadlines, set for the first Tuesday of each month, which aligns with the first Monday of intervention time. This initiative aims to prevent late submissions at the end of the quarter and help students stay on top of their work. Principal Zanto also discussed how the school has been using data to refine its intervention efforts. Initially, the school relied on grades as the primary data source, particularly focusing on freshmen and sophomores. Freshmen who were failing classes were assigned to the teacher of the class they were struggling with, while sophomores with fewer than five credits were assigned to teachers for the classes they were failing. These interventions began in the first quarter, and students continued with their assigned teachers into the second semester. Looking ahead, Principal Zanto mentioned the possibility of incorporating more data-driven strategies. He expressed interest in using standardized data, such as performance percentiles and specific areas where students are lagging, to make more informed intervention decisions. By working with PLC teams, the school hopes to identify key areas where students need additional support. Although the current intervention model is still relatively new and primarily based on grades, Principal Zanto emphasized the goal of refining the process in the future to ensure more targeted and effective interventions.

Principal Zanto discussed how Capital High School used MAP data to guide student placement. On the first day of freshman year, students took the MAP assessment in math and reading, allowing for immediate adjustments to their schedules. Significant growth was observed in algebra scores, with the percentage of freshmen scoring below the 60th percentile dropping

from 54% in the fall to 42% in the winter. However, reading scores showed less improvement. Principal Zanto noted that high-achieving students showed more growth than struggling learners, highlighting the need for more targeted interventions. Principal Zanto addressed questions the Teaching and Learning Committee had regarding the information presented.

C. Revisit of Action Plan & Priorities

Due to time constraints, the informational item titled *Revisit of Action Plan & Priorities* was not reviewed. As a result, the Teaching and Learning Committee has decided to defer its discussion to a future meeting.

VI. BOARD COMMENTS

There were no further board comments.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:11 p.m. by Board Vice Chair Jennifer McKee.