

## CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES February 17, 2015

Attendance: Laura Schulkind, Richard Walker, Deirdre d'Albertis, Joe Phelan, Marvin Kreps, Steve Jensen. Visitor: Jen Hammoud.

Steve Jensen reported on **Curriculum and Technology Integration**.

**Chancellor:** Carts with iPads have been deployed in grades K-2 and with MacBook Air in grades 3-5/library at CLS. Faculty have been working to get used to these tools; there are printing and saving issues, for instance, at present. Alison Vaccarino is assisting with logistical challenges. Steve spoke about wanting to provide the best type of in-service PD in the form of walk-in support for teachers. The question is how to arrange this?

Steve has purposely stayed out of **curriculum development** thus far. His mantra is that curriculum should drive instruction, instruction should drive software, and software should drive hardware decisions. Moving forward, he would like to work with teachers this summer on technology integration into the classroom. The rest of this year is about gaining familiarity and growing capacity. He would like to promote an experimental approach; there isn't an app for everything and it is important to explore these platforms to discover what technology makes possible for each user. He described the best kinds of trainers as those with a lot of pedagogical experience and knowledge, helping teachers to build their skills from a shared focus on real-world instructional concerns.

He acknowledges that **CLS is facing logistical challenges**. Existing printers are old, for instance, so that the new devices no longer work well with current saving and printing practices. Each individual teacher is different. Some have moved over to Mac Air completely already, others are hesitant. Decisions will need to be made about installing USB hubs. There needs to be a general plan for printing access. Steve plans to canvas the faculty to learn their needs.

Questions were raised about how students **transition from CLS to BMS**. What must children know leaving the elementary building? Joe reminded the committee of **ISTE standards** for students and teachers (<http://www.iste.org/standards>). Technology is no longer a separate curriculum but should be built into learning at each grade level across the disciplines. Marvin agreed but pointed out that professional associations of teachers in the content areas (such as English-- <http://www.ncte.org/>) also draw up standards for "multiple literacies," comprehending technology skills. Rhinebeck has chosen to work within the frameworks offered by more than ISTE, in other words, to develop its own curricula.

Steve is concerned with **sustainability**. There is a danger with ISTE standards, for example, of forgetting that technology use/learning is an iterative process. Skills learned at one grade level need to be revisited and reinforced at later points. The CELT

audit pointed to inconsistencies within the district in terms of equipment, deployment, and instruction. Our goal is to address and overcome such inconsistencies. That being said, we will continue to see a lack of uniformity over the next few years in the preparation of 6<sup>th</sup> graders coming up to BMS. The system is in transition. There are also challenges in terms of variable practices within homes (some families embrace a plethora of devices, others do not, for elementary school children) and even questions of economic equity. The schools need to provide a safety net for students in the early grades who may not have access to technology outside of school. Steve mentioned some after-school extra help models he likes and might want to propose here in Rhinebeck.

As technology learners, all members of the school community fall along a continuum. Steve very much understands that we are beginners, intermediate, and advanced users at this point in time. Laura asked if there are “easy entry points” in K-5 to compensate for variable teacher knowledge in the domain of technology. Marvin replied that we have a significant challenge in the district at this time. Diffusion of innovation has been our strategy, but we are talking about “a giant systemic change process.” So no, there is **no easy entry point**. Mitigation plans do need to be in place. BMS teachers will continue to encounter students for the next few years that will need extra support with their use of technology.

It was noted that problems of access and use actually occurred during the **Superintendent’s Conference Day devoted to Technology**. Steve explained some of the reasons for issues with the equipment. In this instance, it was a traffic problem that caused the glitch rather than a network issue. More importantly, Steve pointed out, we have not hired the infrastructure staff person approved by the board for this year. **We need increased technical support**. These issues are very real and directly impact the trust and creativity teachers bring to the learning process.

Overall, there has not been a “command and control” approach to technology integration in Rhinebeck. Steve embraces a “let’s learn together” model. To that end, using Gen-Yes tech support (by students) has worked well in many environments.

Jen Hammoud asked how best to communicate to teachers that it is OK to experiment, not be the expert in the classroom, when it comes to technology? Deirdre observed that in the current climate of APPR and Common Core, teachers may well balk at the idea of “learning on the job” with all the risks that might seem to entail. Marvin stated that as of today we have “**over-built, deployed technology**” without adequate support for teachers. We are unable to offer “just-in-time” tech support—if we are not comfortable with that scenario, we should rethink our planning. Steve and Michelle have inherited this problem; how can we move forward?

**Bulkeley:** Steve spoke to the Middle School situation next. As already noted, with a transition from the former technology “lab model” to an infusion model, we need mitigation strategy to make sure all students have the basic skill set they need in grades 6-8.

### **Tech integration and curriculum discussion (continued)**

Due to interest among BMS staff to learn more about Google Apps, the technology visioning session with the staff was postponed to a later time. Steve shared a document with the staff outlining what a meaningful visioning session should look like and the questions that should be addressed (attach Steve's documents to minutes).

In the High School, the teachers are looking beyond students' High School experience to college and the workplace. To that end, they spent their professional development uncovering the possibilities of Google Apps and how it can be used to promote collaborative student work. Tech integration, in some ways, is easier at the High School level since the staff works in content-specific areas and have taught themselves more about the ways technology can address their needs.

One of the focuses at this level is honing student research skills so that they become discerning investigators. The Library provides a variety of paid databases for use. Diane Linenbroker undertakes an annual review of these programs to determine which are being used. At the end of the year, she polls the staff to let them know which programs seem the least useful and gathers feedback from teachers prior to renewing the subscriptions.

### **Project Lead the Way**

Marvin pointed out that in all our discussions of technology, it is important to remember the successes of Gateway To Technology (BMS), Project Lead The Way (RHS) and our newest courses "Launch" at Chancellor. These are all rigorous programs reaching a great number of students in the district.

There have been lengthy discussions about the 2 PLTW courses in the High School. Intro to Engineering and Design has been approved by NYSED as an Art credit. It will also be called Design Drawing for Production (DDP) which can serve as the single art/music course taken in a student's high school career or as a rigorous add-on to an Arts concentration.

Principles of Engineering can satisfy a Math credit as it is a rigorous Applied Mathematics course. The purpose of allowing these courses to earn alternate credit is to attract more kids (especially girls) who may not necessarily see themselves as Engineers. It will also serve as a way for students to incorporate more courses beyond the core requirements in their already full schedules. Marvin is beginning the research whether or not the PLTW courses can earn college credit. There are a number of conditions attached. He will report back as he knows more.

PLTW Launch has been piloting the next 2 elementary units this school year. We currently have this course slated with a .5 teacher. There is a Wish List item to expand this position to 1.0 FTE. The additional units will lead to better continuity in the lead up to GTT in the middle school and provide the pipeline for students into the PLTW courses in the High School.

**Scarsdale Center for Innovation** (<http://www.scarsdaleschools.k12.ny.us/domain/798>)

Marvin and Steve will be attending an open house in Scarsdale on March 12 to learn more about this district's Center for Innovation. Teachers and Administrators were charged with changing the dialogue around public education and promoting schools as Centers of Learning. As such, Scarsdale brought some of the top "thought leaders" in education to meet with staff, administrators and community members to create the Center for Innovation. *"This Center would showcase the work of teachers who are interested in using leading edge technology to improve instructional practices and reimagine teaching and learning."* The Center along with Scarsdale's private education foundation provide funding for proposals developed by teachers.

**March 24 Agenda**

- Update on Curriculum documents
- Update on Scarsdale visit

Respectfully submitted,

Deirdre d'Albertis and Laura Schulkind