

## **CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES**

### **June 23, 2015**

Attendance: Laura Schulkind, Deirdre d'Albertis, Joe Phelan, Marvin Kreps.

#### **ELA District Curriculum: Grades 4, 5 and 6**

Marvin presented the group with detailed curriculum documents (akin to those already reviewed for K-3) for the ELA curriculum in grades 4, 5, and 6. He explained the different format for middle school unit planners and the group discussed exactly how “granular” the review process could (and should) be with the board moving forward. Joe noted that it would be less than ideal to submit every learning activity and assignment for review and we all agreed. The board, it should be stressed one last time, will review and adopt the curriculum only at this more comprehensive level. Marvin noted a break with earlier practices of curriculum development that featured broad standard K-12 format documents. This time around we are seeing an organic process of development and revision undertaken by Marvin’s office and participating teachers. As has been reiterated frequently, Rhinebeck is not interested in adopting curriculum “in a box.” The goal is to strike a balance between best practices (to be adopted by all) and teacher flexibility. This labor intensive process is well worth sharing with interested parties. So although the board will not approve every document individually, it will need access to enough information to come to an informed decision. Making supporting documents publically available on the website seems practical.

Deirdre asked about **the role of imagination, creativity, aesthetic appreciation and expressive arts in the CCLS**. Marvin declared that he himself holds what might now be seen as a somewhat radical opinion: aesthetic awareness and attention to pattern/structure (both central to the arts) are important components in public education. Apparently the architects of the CCS do share this view. That being said, Rhinebeck has a strong tradition of bringing the arts into conversation with learning across the curriculum. So too, Marvin observed, visualization and imagination are cognitive resources required in all domains (not just the arts)—developing these capacities in youngsters need not be in tension with “traditional” academic growth. Arts in Education initiatives (for instance, ENTA’s recent Book’s Journey project) are and should continue to be treasured in our district. Marvin spoke to the important role of “convergent” (as opposed to “divergent” or isolated disciplinary) thinking in the new curriculum. Also, and this bears repeating, CCS is NOT driving what we do every day in our schools. RCSD seeks always to promote the richest possible learning experience for our students and that means not “teaching to the tests,” no matter what recommendations are made by those Marvin memorably referred to as the “Standardistas.”

#### **Next Steps.**

The group is committed to meeting over the summer at least once, possibly twice. Finalizing grades 4 and 5 along with 6 should not take long. Marvin would like for us to

aim for a **July 28 deadline to approve K-5 (entire CLS) ELA curriculum** at the board meeting scheduled for that date. He is working toward **August 18 or early September for grades 6-8**. A tremendous amount of curriculum planning is slated for the next two months. The high school English faculty is hard at work on their curriculum as well.

In closing, the curriculum committee would like to acknowledge the heroic efforts of Rhinebeck teachers in all grades to meet this challenge over the past few years. A great deal of professional development has accompanied these efforts. So too, Marvin and his colleagues have retained a crucial focus on preserving and extending all those aspects of our local practices that not only support but go well beyond the Common Core Standards.

**Agenda:**

Members are asked to return their (overflowing) binders for revised text at our next meeting in July, during which we will aim to finalize the elementary school documents in time for full board review.

Respectfully submitted,

Deirdre d'Albertis