

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES
March 8, 2017

Attendance: Laura Schulkind, Deirdre d'Albertis, Deirdre Burns, Joe Phelan, Marvin Kreps and invited guest Brett King.

Kindergarten Entrance Age: CLS Principal Brett King met with the Curriculum Committee to share data he has been gathering as we continue to study the impact of cut off dates for Kindergarten registration. Do children who make a “young” start in school appear with higher frequency on the rolls for AIS? The pros and cons of a later cut-off date were explored. Deirdre Burns pointed out that the question may not be “are kids ready for school?” but rather “are schools ready for kids?” With shifting expectations for K-1 students since the advent of Common Core, it may be argued that our youngest pupils are being pushed too hard, too early. Teachers observe that they have less time to help kids learn to tie their shoe laces than they once did: tasks previously tackled in grades 2-1 are now being presented to 1-K children. As Brett King put it, this is a “heavy hit” for many youngsters.

The group agreed with Brett that it would make sense to trace the progress over time of a subset of students (for instance those receiving AIS math instruction) from K-5 to gain an even more detailed sense of the impact of starting Kindergarten close to the cut-off birthdate of December 1st. So too, the group considered the impact of a date change on enrollment patterns, budget planning, family expectations/schedules, and a host of other issues. As Joe commented, parents have every right to “give the gift of another year” to children if they are concerned about the pressure of starting school on the young end of the spectrum (Kindergarten is not required by law, in any case). Perhaps the District can do more to make families aware of the power of choice as they enter the K screening process.

At this juncture, the Curriculum Committee would like to continue assessing the possible impact of any change, while recognizing that no other district in our area is contemplating such a shift. In other states, there has been a move to create September or October cut-offs, but New York seems fairly uniform in its approach to this issue. There is no pressure, in other words, from the State, from parent groups, or from other districts to adjust the December 1st guideline. Even so, we would like to continue to learn more, listening to a range of voices on the matter as we invite comment from concerned teachers, parents, community members. We will continue to keep the board updated; no decision for next year is anticipated. The group will meet again with Brett as he collects more information.

CLS Health Curriculum: Brett King also reported on the highly successful implementation of K-5 curricula by the Center for Prevention of Child Abuse in Dutchess County (<http://www.thecpca.com/>). The educators at CPCA work carefully to prepare lessons that are developmentally appropriate, coordinating their visits with teachers and the principal to ensure that the program is responsive to feedback from the communities they serve. The entire CLS staff very much wants this program to continue, sharing with Brett their extremely positive response to the work as it was observed in all age groups. CPCA is prepared to offer its curriculum in Spanish and English. Amy Quinn, Director of Educational Services, debriefed with the Principal at both the beginning and end of the day; communication was excellent.

Budget Planning and Curriculum/Professional Development: Marvin was asked to speak to the impact of holding steady on the budget line for PD next year (no increase over 16-17). He is optimistic that he can get a lot of work done with that level of funding, but he did point out how uncertain the landscape is

moving forward in terms of curriculum development. Currently, there is a moratorium on Math and ELA at SED while the work of reviewing standards and assessments is underway. 2019-20 will be the first school year for testing of the revised curricula. Overall, he expects change to be slower now than it has been over the past few years. So too, he anticipates that the new standards will allow for a broader developmental range than has been the case in the past. Marvin also shared with the committee work going on in the elementary school with teachers and a consultant to discuss best practices for selection of a new math curriculum. Members of the group asked Marvin to continue to share his concerns, ideas, and opportunities as we face a punishing budget season together.

Agenda:

--**Online or “machine” learning**—Marvin was asked to share his professional expertise as we attempt to consider/confront claims being advanced in this arena of K-12 instruction. What are the costs, benefits, and “cascading effects” of rethinking education in this way? Should such conversations be motivated first and foremost by budgetary concerns or by pedagogical goals? Are the two approaches necessarily distinct?

Next Meeting:

March 27 at 8 AM in the District Offices.

Respectfully submitted,

Deirdre d’Albertis