

## Curriculum Committee Minutes

January 10, 2018

Attendees: Deirdre D'Albertis, Edwin Davenport, Jennifer Hammoud, Steve Jensen, Marvin Kreps, Joe Phelan, Jaclyn Savolainen, Laura Schulkind

### College Connection Concurrent Enrollment

Dr. Davenport informed the committee that RHS is looking to expand its pilot College Connection Concurrent Enrollment program with Dutchess Community College (DCC). This program allows high school students to take college level courses during the regular school day, on the high school campus, taught by high school teachers who are also approved as adjunct faculty at DCC. Earned credits may be used towards a DCC degree and are frequently transferrable to other colleges, as well. The only cost to the district is for textbooks (which are selected by DCC). Our students would have full access to DCC resources, including academic support services, the writing center, and the library. We are looking to offer ENG 101 & 102 (each is a one semester course) to seniors, replacing one of our 40 week sections of English 12. They would be taught by Sarah Wheeler, who has been approved by DCC as an adjunct. We already have a concurrent class in Statistics.

The rationale is that about a third of our students attend DCC, with the balance attending a four year college. We offer two AP English classes but the overlap between DCC-bound students and AP students is almost nil. Adding these proposed classes would expand college level offerings to a wider segment of students. Also, some colleges won't accept credits from two high school AP classes in the same discipline but might accept these.

The plan is to add these classes to the course request list to see how many students would be interested. Interested juniors would sit for the Accuplacer test and would have to meet the minimum standards for the courses.

Questions asked in committee:

- Could community members take this class? No, these courses are intended for current high school students.
- Does DCC pay part of the instructor salary? No.
- Will AP courses still be on our course list? Yes.
- Is this separate from the bridge program? Yes, bridge students attend classes full time on the DCC campus and get both high school and college credit. Those students pay tuition to DCC and do not attend classes at RHS.

Jaclyn noted that many concurrent programs send their students on field trips to DCC for a library instruction session and tour of the campus.

After this discussion, Dr. Davenport left the meeting.

## **iMacs, PCs, Chromebooks and iPads**

Steve Jensen conducted a review of prior research regarding the question of whether there is a significant favoring of Windows vs. Mac laptops in K-12 settings, and found nothing meaningfully different. The bottom line is that the two operating systems are neck-in-neck. Macs have a higher resale value, but that doesn't apply in our situation because we never sell our machines. (We have two laptop carts that are 8 years old and still usable and circulating.) In general, we feel that it is healthy to diversify platforms and teach the students to use both. Students should have as broad an experience as possible. However, there are definitely situations where an individual department would benefit more from one system than the other, and we can work with that.

Steve also reviewed the question of iPads vs. Chromebooks. He shared an article with 5 Pros and Cons of Chromebooks.

### **Pros:**

1. Low price
2. Seamless Google ecosystem
3. Android apps available on your laptop
4. High speed performance
5. Long battery life

### **Cons**

1. Plastic build is less durable than metal
2. Complete reliance on internet connectivity (they can't do much without it)
3. Some apps aren't available (only Google developed apps, not Adobe Creative Suite)
4. Printing problems (printers must be compatible with Google Cloud Printing or else you need to keep a desktop available as a workaround) - we have about 45 printers that were donated that are not compatible
5. There is almost no storage on the Chromebook (storage is Cloud based)

Also, Google doesn't support individual Chromebook models after 5 years. Chromebooks likely don't have the longevity that other laptops have, so we have to think about funding new machines relatively soon down the road. We don't want to buy throwaway machines but also don't want to buy "Cadillacs" and underutilize them. Joe noted that feedback from other schools indicates that Chromebooks aren't durable. Jaclyn said that there are 10 Chromebooks in the DCC library which haven't had to be replaced in at least 4 or 5 years, but they are locked down to a laptop counter so they don't have occasion to be moved, dropped, or abused.

Security issues are the same for Chromebooks, Macs and PCs; there isn't a product with a perfect filter.

In summary, most school Tech Directors feel Chromebooks work for some purposes but not others. The high school tech committee is cautious because of concern about applicability for the whole faculty and also questions whether we want to give HS students computers that do less than their phones.

Laura pointed out that two years ago, we had a 1-to-1 model proposal but we didn't have the money for it, and Steve agrees that this isn't a likelihood in the next 5 years, so we don't need to be thinking about a standardized platform for this purpose.

There seemed to be consensus in the room that we don't need to choose a single platform or machine type for the whole district or even a whole school. We need an understanding of what each department needs and wants, and how they would use it. Instead of meeting with just department chairs, it would help if Steve could meet with full departments to get a better idea of how they use technology on a daily basis. Steve agreed to make this a priority in the next few weeks. Joe noted that we want to make sure each department completely understands what each system will and won't do. Chromebooks may be fine for most English classes, but Journalism classes may need layout apps which are not available on Chromebooks. PCs or Chromebooks are probably fine for Math and Science, but Photography Art and Music may have special needs requiring Macs.

There was also interest in the room in looking at the needs of each school again, as we look at the needs of the high school. If, for example, the HS needs mostly word processing, perhaps some of their iMacs could be repurposed in CLS or BMS and replaced by Chromebooks. There is usually a waiting list for the laptop carts at both RHS and BMS, which means there is high demand. Maybe with declining enrollment at CLS, some of those machines could be moved to the other schools.

Each CLS and BMS teacher has been issued a laptop -- that is a situation which probably doesn't make sense for Chromebooks. Steve also shared a summary of how many and what types of computers are in each of the schools. CLS has slightly more total units, and BMS and RHS have about the same numbers, which means BMS has the greatest number, proportionally. We may need to consider a replacement plan longer than the optimal 5 year scenario.

Steve recently asked faculty what technology topics are of interest to them (for discussing at Superintendent's Conference). He was pleased to see the topics are now wide ranging and more detailed and informed than in the past.

Laura also asked if we could find out the status of Smartboards in each building. Steve said people are moving away from using projectors but that large screens (which can connect wirelessly to computers) like the one in this conference room are about \$1,000. Interactive screens are about \$4,000 but last 10 years. As more upper level students are collaborating and annotating with Google apps, there is likely less call for interactive screens like Smartboards. The Smart brand products we have are no longer being supported.

Steve will present to the full board the results of his talks with departments at the first meeting in February. Main questions to be answered: what are the department needs and what will the board need to assess as related to the budget?

Jennifer Hammoud came to the meeting to observe because a faculty member reached out to the Rhinebeck Science Foundation for a possible grant for Chromebooks and Jen wanted to find out the district plan. She left after this discussion.

### **Smart Schools Bond Act Funds**

We had to replace our server out of the general fund before the Smart Bond money was available, so that frees up some funds for another use. The fiber optic connection project is about \$80,000 and that leaves about \$100,000. We are looking for long-term one-time purchases, not things that will need more money down the road.

### **Middle School Curriculum Update**

Marvin sent requests to each of the BMS computer teachers and principal for an update on the implementation of the new computer science curriculum. The three courses meet every other day for 40 weeks. All classes seem on track to move through the full curriculum by year's end. Marvin will visit each class for their culminating unit and will schedule meetings with the teachers to see how they're doing. For next year, he may revisit the matter of curriculum sequencing and discuss best practices with the teachers.