

School Committee Curriculum Subcommittee

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

4:00 PM-5:45 PM

Remote via Zoom

Curriculum Subcommittee Members Present: Jennifer Monopoli (Chair), Helen Charlupski, Susan Wolf Ditkoff.

Other School Committee Members: Steven Ehrenberg, Andreas Liu, and Mariah Nobrega.

Staff Present: Jim Marini, Michelle Herman, Casey Ngo-Miller, Nadene Moll, Erin Cooley, Anthony Meyer, Hal Mason, Carlyn Uyenoyama, Brendan Kobus, Torrance Lewis, Patricia English-Sand, Joshua Howe, Alison Henry, Jen Buller, and Robin Coyne.

1) Update from Special Education on Disproportionality

Ms. Ngo-Miller commented that a group has been engaged in a yearlong process, as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), to examine the disproportionality in the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) and identify immediate and longer term actions to address the issues. The internal group working on this quickly identified that while the district can put in place more and different academic interventions and professional development, the real focus should be on increasing educational access and equity for the most marginalized students. The team identified how the district can begin to address this larger piece of work recognizing that much of this requires input from both the new Superintendent and new Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning. Ms. Ngo-Miller expects there will be ongoing updates at future School Committee meetings.

Co-Director of Special Education PreK-8 Nadene Moll provided an update on work to address disproportionality in special education (Attachment A). Ms. Moll reviewed data showing disproportionality and discussed possible root causes of overidentification. She discussed an action plan and target areas. In response to Subcommittee member comments and questions, Ms. Ngo-Miller, Ms. Moll, and Ms. Herman discussed the following: possible funding sources; inclusion of PreK in action plans; the importance of a comprehensive, consistent, and culturally responsive Tier One approach; measurement of effectiveness; the role of Child Study Teams, the need to consider and address the impact of trauma; the role of families in the process; the potential impact of project-based learning on student engagement, and professional development.

2) Update on 9th Grade Wellness

Brookline High School (BHS) Head of School Anthony Meyer, Assistant Head of School Hal Mason, BHS Associate Dean of Students Brendan Kobus, and Interim K-12 Coordinator for Wellness Education Carlyn Zaniboni Uyenoyama were present to discuss the 9th Grade Wellness requirement. The 9th Grade Wellness Class is a skills-based health education class that provides students with content knowledge and continuous opportunities to practice skills, aligned with the National Standards for Health Education (i.e., health promotion and disease prevention; analyzing influences on health behaviors; access valid information, products and services; decision-making; goal setting; communication; advocacy for personal, family, and community health), to enhance health and avoid or reduce risk behaviors. The course includes CPR instruction. The BHS administrators discussed the following: why the 9th Grade Wellness class was not offered this year (including the difficulty of discussing sensitive topics over Zoom);

options for making up the material (summer option, which will not be duplicative, and 10th Grade Wellness class in the fall - one semester course, two days per week); how taking the class in the fall might impact students with other demands on their schedules (e.g., would replace an elective/inclusion opportunity for students in Learning Centers; some students would have contracted out due to sport team participation); and State graduation requirements.

Mr. Meyer will report back on the following: State graduation requirements for Health and Wellness classes (i.e., whether the requirement is fitness), the feasibility of offering the summer class at no charge, and whether there are alternatives for students who have other demands on their fall schedules. The consensus of the administrators and members present was that it is important that students access the material provided in this course, regardless of whether it is a State graduation requirement.

3) 6th Grade Team Organization at Baker School

Dr. Marini explained that the purpose of this update is to provide some context for comments made during the May 13, 2021 School Committee meeting (concerns that 6th grade educators were being assigned to teach more than one subject). Baker Principal Torrance Lewis, Vice-Principal of the Upper School (5-8) Patricia English-Sand, Vice-Principal of the Lower School (K-4) Joshua Howe, and Education Team Facilitator (ETF) Alison Henry were present to discuss the rationale for changes to the 6th Grade model and the development/implementation of this plan. Last summer Baker administrators met with the Baker Site Council, PTO and the Diversity Committee to review and get input on ideas for changing the 6th grade model (in addition, Ms. English-Sand interviewed over 41 staff members). The three groups agreed that Mr. Lewis's research backed proposal (Mr. Lewis will send relevant literature to Subcommittee members) to move to a team-based model prioritizes 6th grade students' socio-emotional learning, provides a smaller learning community in a large school, makes sense educationally and developmentally, and begins to address concerns regarding the historical difficulty of the middle school transition. Many parents have contacted the administration and School Committee to express support for the new model and Mr. Lewis's leadership.

Subcommittee members expressed their appreciation to Mr. Lewis and the Baker administrators for the update and for their efforts to provide the best possible educational experience for students. It was noted that a 6th grade team model is used in many districts, and that assigning middle school teachers to more than one subject is not new to this district (e.g., the Lawrence School has teacher teams). Members expressed support for the new 6th Grade model, which is research-based, provides more scaffolding for students, and is developmentally appropriate for young adolescents. The Subcommittee discussed forming a study group to consider a district-wide vision for middle school education that takes into consideration individual school needs and structure, opportunities for collaboration and inter-disciplinary learning, and the experience of different groups of students (e.g., special education, race, income).

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM.

Capstone Presentation

Reducing Disproportionate Identification of Black and African American Students with SLD

Nadene Moll, Director of Special Education PreK-8

Relevant District Population Data

Pre-Pandemic about 7500 students. Now just over 6800

- 1 Pre-K (190 students)
- 8 Elementary Schools (K-8 - about 4600 students)
- 1 High School (2048 students)

Additional relevant population data:

- Metco- 291 students grades K-12
- Steps to Success- 121 K-8 and 136 BHS = 257

2019 Special Education Data

- 1277 Students in Special Ed age PreK- 22
- 468 Black/African American students in the district
- Of those 468 kids, about 35% of them are on IEPs (rr 2.30)
- Next highest category is Hispanic students at 26% (risk ratio 1.73)
- All other ethnicities have a rr below 1.

How do we serve special ed students?

- Integrated PreK programs
- Learning centers K-8
- 4 district-wide programs (or versions of them) preK-22 (LAHB, TLC, ALC, RISE)

*rr = risk ratio

Data Analysis

Data analysis of disproportionately identified students

(2020-21 students n= 53)

- 45% identified when in K - 2
- 7 of the students moved in with SLD dx
- 32% identified with an SLD in all three areas
- More than half of the students are in either STS or METCO
 - Resident 27; 16 Steps to Success
 - Metco 26
- Higher number of students coming from certain K-8 schools
- 45% of students did not receive a math intervention (could have received math from CST)

Why Now?

Previous strategies have not effectively reduced the disproportionate identification of African American and Black students in the SLD category : risk ratio over 3.0 in 2017-2019,will likely be in 2020 as well

(In contrast- we changed the communication recipe and are no longer at risk)

What's changed already?

- Phonics instruction (Foundations) is finally in place in grades k-2
- District finally settled on an elementary math curriculum but instruction has been disjointed during the pilot phases

Possible Root Causes of Overidentification

Elementary Schools:

- Every school has its own structures and practices
- Black and Brown students disproportionately fall in the approaches/below expectations in reading assessments- the % does not change significantly year to year
- Inconsistencies in Tier 1 instruction across the district, within buildings, at grade levels, etc. ; Little accountability for lack of consistent practices
- Underuse of trauma-informed instruction
- Unclear understanding of diagnostic criteria of qualifying for SLD -- ETFs and evaluators
- No pathways for communication between K-8s and HS around literacy instruction

High School

- No general education literacy support for students at BHS
- Lack of reading data for students at the high school level (unless they are already receiving special education services).
- Lack of tier 1 & 2 supports
- Lack of structures for learning, pd, applied practice to support the adults that we are hoping in turn support the students to be successful in the general education environment

Theory of Action

Given these conditions:

- Robust, classroom-based instruction in literacy and math in grades k-2
- Consistent grade level screening tools to progress monitor
- High fidelity, high quality interventions in areas of need for to students who require additional instruction
- Timely identification of students who are not responsive to those interventions
- Review of intervention data by teams who are well trained in the identification of SLD and evidence-based interventions

Special education teams will more accurately identify which students have an SLD vs. which students require additional instructional opportunities

District Teams Involved in Action Plan

Educator(s)	Role
General education classroom teachers, intervention specialists, and curriculum leaders	Identification of math and literacy screening tools
Math and Literacy department heads and specialists	Development and rollout of math and literacy screening measures across K-2 classrooms districtwide over a two-year period
School leaders and curriculum leaders	Standardize classroom instruction in literacy and math across elementary schools over a two-year period
Literacy and Math specialists and coaches	Provide PD to Child Study Team members to increase accurate identification of struggling students and appropriate targeted interventions (year 1 /year 2)
Special education directors	Provide PD to Team Facilitators and special education evaluators to ensure common understanding of identification criteria for SLD

Early evidence of Change by Spring 2021-22

- All K-2 classrooms will complete the same literacy and math screenings
- At-risk students will be quickly referred to time-limited math and literacy interventions, and will be referred for special education evaluation in the absence of a robust response to two cycles of intervention.
- CST and consults with classroom teachers will be used to provide feedback to classroom teachers re: continued Tier 1 instruction in math/literacy

Target Areas

Screening Targets:

- Literacy screening measures will be identified across elementary schools in grades K-2, and classroom teachers will be trained in how to conduct screenings.
- Math screening measures will be identified across elementary schools in grades K-2, and classroom teachers will be trained in how to conduct screenings.

Intervention Targets:

- Math and literacy department chairs will outline Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, assign interventionists, and delineate the intervention referral process for grades k-2.

Professional Development Targets:

- Educational Team Facilitators will review the process of identifying SLD and will create composite cases as exemplars.
- Child Study Teams will be trained in how to interpret classroom screening data and the process of referral for math and literacy intervention.
- Educational Team Facilitators will train their building-based special education evaluators in accurate identification of SLD
- New-to-Brookline teachers in k-2 will be trained in screening measures
- Teacher observations will be conducted to ensure fidelity of screening process and provide feedback regarding Tier 1 interventions

5/18 School Curriculum Subcommittee Meeting Zoom Chat

- 16:03:24 From Diane Pokorny Wilson to All panelists : Here to support 6th grade model and Mr. Lewis. -Diane PokornyWilson (Zoom account under business name and doesn't look like way to change it)
- 16:04:20 From Mariah Nobrega (she/hers) to All panelists : Robin can you promote me?
- 16:06:44 From Robert Miller to All panelists : Has the order of the agenda changed?
- 16:07:40 From Robin Coyne to All panelists : Yes. All items will still be covered.
- 16:08:28 From Helen Charlupski to Everyone : Jennifer announced it at the beginning of the meeting.
- 16:08:59 From Donald Petry to All panelists : How many of those students are in METCO? Since the school committee keeps cutting funding, perhaps METCO should be cut. You don't fund needs. Yet the SC touts all that's offered. Time to update the CORE values to reflect what we actually fund and provide.
- 16:09:20 From Marlene Goncalves to All panelists : Can this info be broken down by school if possible? And sent out
- 16:10:06 From Robert Miller to All panelists : Can you post it in the chat?
- 16:14:33 From MariahNobrega (she/hers) to All panelists : how do you know those are the root causes?
- 16:15:10 From Casey Ngo-Miller to All panelists : Identified districts were required to go through a yearlong process where we identified root causes among other processes
- 16:15:29 From Connie Clauson to All panelists : One misperception I think people hold is that METCO is NOT a program for low income students. In fact, if you look at the application process for the program, it's actually quite complex. Many people apply for METCO placement knowing their child has a disability and they are hopeful to get a seat in a district with stronger service delivery than Boston. The numbers delineating METCO vs Steps to Success seem to support that
- 16:16:43 From Danna perry to All panelists : There's a lot of focus on math and literacy. What about science, social studies and other disciplines?
- 16:18:39 From Danna perry to All panelists : Can you speak a bit more about CST and the process and timeframes for the current process?
- 16:18:52 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Is there a way to turn chat comments on so all attendees can see them?
- 16:20:59 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : If not, would whomever is answering a question be kind enough to copy and paste the comment/question and the person's name into the answer provided by a panelist? Thanks. Attendees are otherwise in a sort of a void.
- 16:28:36 From Linda Monach to All panelists : Thank you for the robust plan to address this issue - love that
- 16:29:01 From Linda Monach to All panelists : You've really worked through this as both a gen ed and special ed issue.
- 16:29:38 From Linda Monach to All panelists : I cannot be fixed without engaging and educating GenEd teachers
- 16:33:14 From Linda Monach to All panelists : Great point Susan - implicit bias is incredibly important as root cause
- 16:33:15 From Faith Dantowitz to All panelists : Well said Susan.
- 16:45:33 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Important topics that could be taught this year, maybe before the end of the year. We have short days on

Wednesdays.

16:50:13 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : The new integrated wellness class planned for next year will not allow students to use the credit for playing sports instead of health.

16:52:21 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Thank you Anthony.

16:54:25 From Diane Pokorny Wilson to All panelists : as parent I agree important, but you do not explain WHY wasn't delivered THIS year. especially bc the reason given is that it is important to culture of BHS. but you've now allowed 1/4 school to go without for a year so it feels like a post excuse. it should have been offered virtually.

17:00:02 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Carlyn, with all due respect, you just said the Health component is required for graduation, in answer to Steven's question. It was established earlier in this meeting that that is NOT required. We all understand it's desired. But if it was so important, why was it cut this year? The problem is in pushing this back onto the community in the form of fewer electives and a \$400 fee.

17:00:13 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Yes students who need more support are impacted

17:00:33 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Which is not inclusive :(

17:01:32 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : I would love to see more flexibly in the summer offering. Right now there is a single session being offered for \$400 for students who want to get this off the table and free up an elective in the fall. It would be nice if the summer was more flexible than that, especially in this circumstance. Is there not ESSER money that could go the the high school?

17:01:38 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Sports is a great way for kids to feel included socially

17:01:49 From Diane Pokorny Wilson to All panelists : maybe move the most important pieces of it to advisory. not perfect, but nothing is going to be perfect at this point. missed opportunity to not carry on during virtual learning (also not perfect but nothing was this year)

17:03:27 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : But in the summer it's remote

17:03:55 From Anthony Meyer to Everyone : I will add one thing regarding access to electives.

17:03:57 From Anthony Meyer to Everyone :

http://bhs.brookline.k12.ma.us/uploads/8/0/1/5/801512/bhscatalog_21_22.pdf

17:06:38 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Thank you Steven.

17:06:42 From Linda Monach to All panelists : That would be a great question to have a detailed answer to. Thank you Stephen

17:06:59 From Connie Clauson to All panelists : As I said yesterday, I am equally concerned for students with special needs not being provided with essential wellness curriculum elements such as healthy relationships and sex education. This is a huge and complex issue.

17:08:00 From Connie Clauson to All panelists : Especially for students who's IEP's include social emotional skill building, opting them out of conversations about healthy friendships and relationships could have impact. I have no strong opinions either way. I only want to say this is a very tough balance for everyone.

17:11:58 From Connie Clauson to All panelists : Thank you for a thoughtful conversation (as always) of the need to balance instruction for students in special education.

17:12:12 From Anthony Meyer to Everyone : I was going to speak to the waiver on

graduation requirements we articulate in our BHS Course Catalog. They are: two Elective Pathway Alternatives, Academic Support Alternative, and a Waiver of Graduation Requirements. These exceptions to graduation requirements give us flexibility but each of these alternatives also have costs. We are beginning a process to review our graduation requirements and pathways during the 21-22 school year.

17:14:41 From Connie Clauson to All panelists : Thank you Anthony. Yes, special education students NOT on a diploma track certainly have more alternatives for electives than those who require support to achieve all academic requirements for graduation.

17:15:24 From Diane Pokorny Wilson to All panelists : Been very exciting from a parent perspective too

17:20:37 From Faith Dantowitz to All panelists : It's much more hospitable to students with social pragmatic issues, they have more interaction with same peers.

17:20:43 From MariahNobrega (she/hers) to All panelists : Jen i have qs when you get to the full SC

17:20:45 From Linda Monach to All panelists : Have we considered trying the opposite? Increase transitions in 5th grade to start working on those skills earlier. My concern is that I have heard that many of our 8th graders struggle when they go to BHS. I think it's great we are thinking about these things, just wanted to throw aa thought out

17:21:16 From Faith Dantowitz to All panelists : Also very helpful to new students join the community.

17:21:43 From Jessica Levasseur to All panelists : If teachers need to prepare more lessons by teaching multiple subjects, how does the increased need for planning work in the schedule?

17:21:48 From Julia Lanham to All panelists : Torrance has the support of MANY MANY parents at Baker. I am on this meeting to show my support for Torrance and his team. We appreciate his thoughtful and innovative process. Torrance is a true leader and a strong administrator and it feels really important to support him in his decisions. ESPECIALLY after this incredibly difficult year (note that COVID began in his first year as a principal and first year at Baker). Note that we also really appreciate the teachers and all they have done this year. PLEASE support Torrance's leadership and decisions. Thank

you. -Julia Lanham, parent of 8th grader and BHS 10th grader who also went through Baker

17:22:19 From Faith Dantowitz to All panelists : Huge for students with ADHD for learning in a smaller group of peers to transition well.

17:23:05 From Linda Monach to All panelists : Thank you Mr Lewis for thinking so creatively in support of Baker students!

17:24:46 From Christine Moodie to All panelists : Did you interview the teachers who are doing this model this year? Where will the extra collaboration time for teachers come from?

17:25:02 From Marcy Sacks to All panelists : As a Baker parent of 5th, 6th and 8th I just want to thank Principal Lewis for this 6th grade model. I experienced the old model with my 8th Grader and am very pleased with this change. Many 6th grade parents have been very happy with this change. THANK YOU!

17:25:28 From Susan Balogh to All panelists : Teachers need to be heard now.

17:25:36 From Eileen Pushee to All panelists : What about 7th? Me. Lewis keeps skipping 7th.

17:26:08 From Susan Balogh to All panelists : Baker teachers were told on the last two days of school last year that this new model was rolling out. We had no input.

17:26:25 From Linda Monach to All panelists : Absolutely on point

17:26:25 From Marlene Goncalves to All panelists : How does this model square with the Tier 1 and 2 interventions needed? It's hard to plan and deliver interventions if one isn't an expert in a subject?

17:26:34 From Brandon Chan to All panelists : Hello! I'm not sure if I'm allowed to ask questions as an attendee, but I will ask just in case. If a 2-person teacher team has an ELA/SS and Math/Science teacher, how does this work in a 3-person teacher team, which Mr. Lewis mentioned?

17:27:48 From Marlene Goncalves to All panelists : Thanks, Mariah!

17:27:57 From Heather Pritchard to All panelists : I'm sorry, but my impression is that the perspectives of middle school teachers at Baker are not being accurately represented in this conversation. Their voices need to be heard too...actually HEARD.

17:29:30 From Diane Pokorny Wilson to All panelists : those are staffing decisions and staffing should not dictate important policy decisions

17:30:35 From Linda Monach to All panelists : We need more thoughtful efforts to ensure that 9th grade transition improves - closer working between K-8 principals and BHS leadership

17:33:02 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : I appreciate the essence of Mariah's question about whether some teachers will continue to do *only* what they've been doing. But we know these teachers are doing work that aligns with their license, and Mr. Lewis is putting student needs first. The staffing will have to work.

17:33:14 From Susan Balogh to All panelists : Baker teachers are not on board with this. 11 of us signed a letter to Superintendent Marini, Torrance and SC about it. We are ready for CONVERSATION.

17:33:45 From Brandon Chan to All panelists : Follow-up question: Based on Mr. Lewis's example (a 3-person teacher team with Science/Math/SS teachers who also teach ELA), would the team receive extra time/support to teach ELA? I imagine the other content teachers have limited/no experience teaching ELA to the same level/rigor as the original ELA teacher

17:36:03 From Yasameen Sharif to All panelists : The Baker middle school teachers would appreciate an opportunity in a future meeting to share our experiences with the process surrounding this model change and with working within this model.

17:36:16 From Linda Monach to All panelists : I nominate Torrance to head that committee!

17:36:33 From Marcy Sacks to All panelists : The 6th grade teacher at Baker was new to teaching English this year and she did a great job! I know it was a shift for her and the parents were very supportive. The benefits for this model are significant and I hope the teachers can adapt and also understand that the parents support them. I so appreciate Mr Lewis' thoughtful vision for middle school education!

17:37:31 From Linda Monach to All panelists : or a 5-8 model

17:37:31 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Thank you, Dr. Marini for articulating this.

17:38:42 From Emily Singer to All panelists : Baker 6th grade teachers are stakeholders in this conversation. It's frustrating that we can not speak or have our thoughts heard.

17:39:51 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Thank you, Mr. Lewis! I'm a former and current Baker School parent and am so grateful (well, envious for future parents and kids, at this point) we have a principal who is thinking so deeply about the unique needs of young adolescents. Tremendous.

17:40:04 From Julie Jette to All panelists : As the parent of a child with executive function challenges on an IEP at Baker, I cannot agree more with Ms. Henry (as well as Mr. Lewis, Ms. English-Sands and Mr. Howe). The team teaching has been hugely helpful for him. I haven't heard anything negative about it from any parents. I was hoping it was being extended to 7th, in fact, but I understand the need to transition kids through the grades.

17:41:17 From Marcy Sacks to All panelists : I know that 6th grade parents would be happy to share our feedback on what worked with this model

17:41:19 From Brandon Chan to All panelists : As a middle school teacher at Lawrence, I think the 7th ELA/SS and Math/Science teacher team were licensed in both of their content areas and applied for the job knowing they'd be teaching 2 content areas. I'm concerned about the transition for current staff who are teaching their primary content area and being asked to teach a new subject one might have no experience with

17:42:13 From Brandon Chan to All panelists : I have to leave because of a prior commitment. Thank you for taking the time to read my comments. Have a great day

17:43:03 From Torrance Lewis to All panelists : amle.org

17:44:14 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Is it possible for the chat to be made public after the meeting?

17:44:31 From Marcy Sacks to All panelists : Baker parents are so grateful to have such a thoughtful educator in Principal Lewis and the Baker team!

17:44:34 From Yasameen Sharif to All panelists : it's hard to get on the same page when you aren't involved in the conversation.

17:44:55 From Chloe Hansen to All panelists : Runkle implements a Study Skills class in addition to Advisory on a weekly basis in the sixth grade. Runkle is a 4 teacher team and Study Skills does a fantastic job at bridging the gap.

17:45:40 From Emily Singer to All panelists : There are benefits to this model, but also risks. Teachers would like to be talked to instead of being talked about

17:46:16 From Susan Wolf Ditkoff to Everyone : Thank you all for being here. I have appreciated all of the written public comment sent to us as well.

17:46:25 From Marcy Sacks to All panelists : THANK YOU Alison, Pat, Josh and Torrance!