

## I. Call to Order

H. Kleiner, V. Jenkins, A. Odum, B. Bingham, N. Vouvalis present at 5:36 call to order  
P. Willis joined at 5:40 p.m.

## II. Past Minutes

October Board minutes are approved

## III. Public Comment

None

## IV. Teacher Presentation on Effective Instruction

Teachers from Bear River Charter School will present on effective instruction. Last Board meeting, there was some feedback about the ability groupings and teaching the students where they are at. J. Adams was tasked with returning to the faculty to learn more about the ability grouping. The whole faculty met to answer two questions: 1) what are we doing to meet the individual needs of students, and 2) what do we need to do more of or do better? The team of teachers here were selected by the faculty to bring their thoughts to the Board.

Teresa Buttars introduced the presentation. They feel it is important to meet the needs of individual students. Teachers met to determine what they need in order to teach to each and every student.

### *Background*

- Grouping students – in elementary, students are given placement tests in core subjects. Teachers group the students based on placement tests and the ability of the teacher to manage the numbers of groups. There are consistently 3 or 4 reading groups. In the upper grades, Novel Studies are used for regular- and high-performing students (not in different groups), and DI is still used with lower ability students. Math has one or two groups consistently in the elementary grades; more in the middle school grades (3-4).
- To reach proficiency, some students need more instructional times. Often, many students placed in lower-performing students stay in lower-performing groups. Students who transfer in are often also not at proficiency.
- Required time for lessons varies by level. The teachers like the DI approach; just need to spend more time with lower-performing students. In third grade, Teresa needs about 30 minutes to teach math instruction. In K-2, it takes 40-45 minutes; but only one hour is available in math. So some groups get left out of instruction based on the timeframes available. Often, part of the script gets pulled in the younger grades, and especially in math (reading and spelling – a little easier).
- Management. Having a multi-level DI classroom creates challenges and teachers need support. There is a lot of parent support here; some classes have more than others. Many teachers have aides. But the teachers also need to be trained on how to manage the groups, especially new teachers who are still really learning the curriculum.
- Core Curriculum & Deeper Understanding. The SAGE testing goes above and beyond what is included in the DI lessons. DI provides a strong foundation, but some students struggle to apply the knowledge base to different formats. For example, in math, students may understand how to answer questions about a graph, but on SAGE, they are required to make a graph and use technology to apply those skills. Another example is that some SAGE prompts allow for and require multiple responses, where the work in class focuses on single-answer

questions. If the structure of the problem doesn't look like what they're seeing in their every day programs, the students struggle. As a result, teachers are supplementing the DI material to ensure proficiency as reflected in SAGE scoring. This, of course, results in constricted time for the DI material.

- The Core Curriculum requires start-to-finish curriculum – you can't skip chapters, you can't skip lessons. And the ability groups require instruction to occur within very restricted timeframes. Additionally, high-performing students do not seem to be benefiting from the type of math instruction that is prescribed.
- Accountability and Testing. Teachers are feeling pressure to have high-achieving scores on SAGE. Those scores follow the teachers here and beyond. They feel that teaching to the test and sticking with the DI curriculum is difficult. For example, there are a lot of fiction stories in Novel Studies, but SAGE uses a lot of non-fiction, which is different for the children. The writing program used here does not teach persuasive or expository writing, but that is reflected on the SAGE test.
- Student Achievement. The teachers need parent understanding, especially on the math. If a child is scoring below 85%, the teacher is doing something wrong. The instruction is designed for students to do well. So repeated good scores coming home does not equal your child being an entire grade level above where he or she is placed.
- Teacher Burnout. There is a lot of pressure to keep parents happy and keep children excelling. This is a good thing, but it also means a lot of pressure. They are also prepping for each individual group every single day; essentially a lot of prep is occurring, and it can be challenging.

Rachel Southwick and Marianne Young presented on things that teachers have been doing.

- Multiple Groups
- Challenge Work & Extensions
- Modifying Assignments. The newer teachers in the middle school grades are modifying by taking away from some of the problems assigned to ensure that students are touching each and every concept.
- Use of technology. Utah Compose on ipads are being used, technology is being used in the classrooms.
- Ongoing Assessment. Every 5 lessons (10 in English) have a formal assessment; obviously assessments occur informally daily.
- Tutoring & Remediation. The middle schoolers who are struggling have tutors, and Title I Aides are helping elsewhere.
- Concept Maps & Guided Notes
- Differentiated Homework

Francis Kaplan: Bear River Charter School has changed substantially. The private school was started for lower achieving students. We morphed into a higher achieving student school, but now our low achieving students are more at risk. In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 9 students are not proficient in anything; that's almost half of the grade. As a school with small class sizes, we attract families that pay attention to the student:teacher ratio. This puts a lot of pressure on our classrooms and on the time that can be spent with each students. State requirements are also changing; hitting a moving target is difficult. There should be a vision for the types of families we seek to attract so the faculty can adjust.

Rachel Southwick addressed moving students between grades. The teachers believe that the downside is more stark than the upside of moving students up a grade. Students are missing "core" content affiliated with their grade level. A lot of time, this is missed, which means it's missed on SAGE. This also does not guarantee that they won't be bored. They

still aren't necessarily getting pushed at a higher level; the content is more difficult, but the lower-performing students are still tugging at the teachers' time, for good reason. Behavioral expectations are often not the same between grade levels, as well. Additionally, the "life experience" that becomes conceptually important in understanding the readings can often be missing. They often can't write at the same level, in terms of fine motor skills, so the lessons aren't consistently appropriate across the board for a skipped student. Management of the classroom becomes more difficult when you skip students as well. Social displacement is also occurring; the students sometimes do not "fit in" with the students they are moved into, especially where they are moved in a particular subject area. Given the right resources, the teachers think they really can meet the needs of the very high achievers in the classroom. The teachers have talked about a gifted/talented program, that would keep students occupied during times where they feel they are not being challenged. The program's "extensions" are not any more challenging, they are mostly busy work that are repetitive.

Also, keeping the subject area scheduling aligned actually harms ability grouping. A paraprofessional trained in math can only be in one classroom when there are five math classes occurring.

J. Adams discussed what the teachers need. This includes:

- Keeping students in their grade levels. In addition to the issues detailed already, this allows for efficient and effective scheduling of para-professionals.
- More qualified para-professionals are needed to work in the classrooms.
- Annual summer in-service training on differentiation strategies for new teachers and paraprofessionals using our existing programs.
- Weekly early out day to provide time for regular teacher collaboration. Every school in the valley does a late start or early release every week.
- More current core curriculum resources.
- Trust.
- Orientations for new parents and new teachers.
- Better public understanding of BRCS. The last two are pretty similar; many families learn about our ability groups and small class sizes, but don't know anything about Direct Instruction and come in with a misunderstanding about the curriculum.

#### V. Financial Update from Red Apple

Chris is leaving Red Apple. Steve Finley will be out new business manager, and he is also the business manager for Thomas Edison. He is the CEO of Red Apple, and the substitution is intended to be permanent.

We are 33.3% of the way through the year, and our revenues are 32.4% in – very close. Our expenditures are also 32.7% utilized, so our bottom line is positive. This is largely because our state funding per pupil is finalized now, and we had under-budgeted based on a lower enrollment than we actually ended up with.

The SCA has already raised more than they raised all year last year; this is a great revenue opportunity for our school.

This budget reflects the expenses for Title I expenditures, which were not reflected in the last expenditure outline. We are still at a positive bottom line.

If SCA wants its own account, they need a separate EIN. If they want a subaccount, they must just have an original signer as one of the "owners." J. Adams says the branch here won't allow that; Red Apple will work on that.

#### VI. School Land Trust Plan Amendment

J. Adams: the current school plan has six goals that were written. She's been working with the state folks, and they have determined that some of them are no longer applicable. We can amend the plan to reflect our current realities. Terry Dodds is coming next week, and some of the money goes to that. Some other money was spent purchasing new books for the library. This leaves about \$5,000. J. Adams would like to amend the plan to create a goal of supplementing our paraprofessionals and use the funds in that way.

N. Vouvalis moves to support J. Adams' amendment to the School Land Trust Plan to increase support of paraprofessionals to Bear River Charter School. No discussion; all in favor, none opposed, the motion passes.

#### VII & VIII: School policies discussion and approval; update on interventions in the middle school grades

Interventions are going well; more discussion next meeting. H. Kleiner revised a number of policies, and has a question about leave – give 9 up front, or accumulate throughout the year. A. Odum studies this, and thinks folks may underestimate their need. The current understanding is two days of leave up front, and accumulation up to 9 – that is what the policy will reflect. The Board discussed clarification on certain leave policies and gave H. Kleiner revisions to incorporate.

#### IX. Charter Review Process Proposal

Harrison has begun reaching out to people to participate in the charter amendment process. Any board members can join in on that process, which will probably take place on a Saturday in the month of November.

#### X. SCA Update

The Green Science Fair cleared over \$2000 and was very successful. Lots of science experiments and very strong parent involvement.

#### XI. Closed Session

No closed session is necessary.

#### XII. Other Business

Website. J. Adams is meeting with the new web designer tomorrow.

#### XIII. Adjournment

Adjournment at 7:50.