



MINUTES

Katie Bielski-Medina, Chairperson
John Benbow, Jr.
Troy Bier
Larry Davis
John Krings, President
Kathi Stebbins-Hintz
Julie Timm

October 2, 2023

LOCATION: Board of Education Office, 510 Peach Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI
Conference Room A/B

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Katie Bielski-Medina, Troy Bier, Larry Davis, John Krings, Kathi Stebbins-Hintz, Julie Timm

BOARD MEMBERS EXCUSED: John Benbow

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Ed Allison, Craig Broeren, Roxanne Filtz, Steve Hepp, Aaron Nelson, Jennifer Wilhorn

- I. Call to Order
- II. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- III. Public Comment – none.
- IV. Actionable Items
 - A. Peer Review Mentor Grant

Ms. Roxanne Filtz, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, shared that the District has been informed that the Peer Review and Mentor Grant to support the “New Colleague Program,” which includes a consortium with Port Edwards School District, has been approved by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in the amount of \$23,514.00 for the 2023-24 school year. This funding will help defray a portion of the costs affiliated with the New Colleague Program.

ES-1 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Larry Davis, to recommend approval to accept the Peer Review Mentor Grant funding in the amount of \$23,514.00 for the 2023-2024 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

B. ExploreLearning Reflex and Frax Math Renewals

Ms. Filtz shared ways in which the ExploreLearning Reflex and Frax computer software programs are being used in various buildings and at various levels to support math instruction. With an unusual subscription renewal date of November 1, 2023 looming, the administration recommends renewal of both programs for the 2023-24 school year to avoid any interruptions in services to students.

District math interventionists are exploring other programs that can provide similar strategies and support at a lesser cost beginning with the 2024-25 school year. The renewal proposal for 2023-24 includes both Reflex Math and Frax for elementary buildings and includes the FRAX II Missions (fractions). It would eliminate a WRAMS site license, but replace it with 20 intervention seats for WRAMS. Funding for the renewal for the remainder of the 2023-24 year would be through ESSER III funds.

ES-2 Motion by Larry Davis, seconded by Julie Timm, to recommend the approval of a 9-month license renewal of ExploreLearning Reflex and Frax, along with the FRAX II Missions software programs for our 2-5 math program for all 7 elementary buildings as well as 20 intervention seats to be used at WRAMS for a total cost of \$26,418.04 to be paid through the ESSER III budget. This will cover the remainder of the 2023-2024 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

V. Updates

A. New Course/Curriculum Modifications and Proposals

Ms. Filtz explained that the Council for Instructional Improvement (CII) Committee recently met to review new course and curriculum modifications and proposals brought forward by staff. The proposals also get reviewed by relevant CII sub-committees and building leadership committees. After the Educational Services Committee meeting has provided its feedback, the proposals will be taken back to CII for review and an advisory vote. The following staff members presented the proposals:

Stacy Moyer, Lincoln High School Math Instructor

1. Lincoln High School Math Program Modifications
 - a. Extended Algebra 1
 - b. Introduction to Statistics
 - c. College Prep Math
 - d. AP Precalculus

Abbi Wills Phillips, Cross Categorical Teacher and Students with Disabilities Dept. Chair

2. Lincoln High School – Students with Disabilities Course Proposals
 - a. CLL: Character, Life and Leadership
 - b. Work Prep and your Finances
 - c. Independent Living in a Digital Age

Jeanne Olson, Lincoln High School Music Teacher and Music Curriculum Coordinator

3. Music Proposals
 - a. America's Music History
 - b. Raider Rhythm

Amy Andrys, WR Area Middle School Health Teacher and Health Curriculum Coordinator

4. Health Course Proposal

- a. Mental Wellness and Stress Management – Dual Credit

Ms. Filtz presented the following course name change:

5. Name Change: Sports Entertainment Marketing to Sports Entertainment and Digital Marketing – Dual Credit

Details about each proposal was provided along with rationale and goals, timelines involved, and the anticipated impact if approved. Committee members had an opportunity to ask questions and expressed their appreciation for the thought and effort that went into developing the proposals.

B. Gifted and Talented Educational Services (GATES)

Kelly Bluell, District K-12 GATES Coordinator, provided an update on GATES program initiatives. Sharing student success stories from 2022-23, Ms. Bluell explained that the Noetic Math Contest from fall and spring had 11 elementary students earning National Honor Roll awards and 107 earning National Honorable Mention. Additionally, 22 students in grades 6 and 7 from the middle school earned Honorable Mention. Another middle school student in grade 6 won the logo contest for the Wisconsin Association for Talented and Gifted (WATG) under the theme "Golden Opportunities, Engaging Minds, and Empowering Success" and 3 Lincoln High School students were recognized nationally in Art and Music.

Ms. Bluell described other opportunities available to students in elementary through high school to enrich and expand their learning. Talented staff help support GATES programming, and Math Interventionist Lisa Laatsch-Sullivan is being honored with the WATG "Outstanding Educator of the Year" award which is provided to individuals who have made significant contributions to educate and/or advocate for the needs of Wisconsin's gifted and talented children.

In terms of the future, the goal is to expand the "Math 24" regional competition beyond intra-district schools by opening up competition with other area schools who have expressed an interest. Excitement around the competition has also sparked the interest of donors willing to contribute toward prize awards, and the upcoming year will hopefully see Math 24 expanded to include 3rd and 7th grades in some capacity. Additionally, a recent DPI grant award of \$33,217.00 will help boost GATES programming by providing increased engagement and enrichment opportunities in Science, Technology and Engineering through the use of classroom robots.

C. Auto-Enrollment into Mid-State Technical College (MSTC) for WRPS Seniors

Ms. Filtz explained the *60 Forward* initiative is a partnership involving the University of Wisconsin System, Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and Wisconsin Technical College System and supported through a grant from the Lumina Foundation. *60 Forward's* goal is to move Wisconsin to a postsecondary education attainment rate of 60% by 2027. Mid-State Technical College and the District have partnered to advance the *60 Forward* initiative by

removing admissions barriers to MSTC by admitting all graduating seniors from WRPS to MSTC beginning with the 2024 graduating class. Parents of graduating seniors will receive communication regarding this new partnership.

D. Act 20 Update

Ms. Filtz and Jen Wilhorn, Assistant Director of Curriculum & Instruction, reviewed the impact that 2023 Wisconsin Act 20 has on districts across the state as it requires schools to provide science-based early literacy instruction in universal and intervention settings. The bill will have an impact on the District curriculum acquisition cycle, professional development with classroom teachers and elementary administrators, and District assessment practices.

Ms. Wilhorn reviewed a detailed overview of various components needing to be completed to meet compliance requirements of Act 20, and the subsequent impact on WRPS. The document presented by Ms. Wilhorn is fluid as guidance and clarification around Act 20 continues to be provided to districts day-by-day. Specific items noted include:

- Instruction is to be systematic and explicit, consisting of the following: phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, building background knowledge, oral language development, vocabulary building, instruction in writing, instruction in comprehension, and reading fluency
- Early literacy teachers are already familiar with these nine components; the biggest change in instructional practice from Act 20 is that staff are no longer able to use materials that utilize the "3-cueing system" which is using meaning, structure and visual cues, or MSV, to teach a pupil to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues or memory
- Due to these changes, no new District materials purchases have been made for the 2023-24 school year for reading intervention or core instruction
- A State appointed Early Literacy Curricula Council is responsible for reviewing early literacy instructional materials used in universal curriculum to create a list of recommended early literacy curricula – a draft is to be developed by December 1, 2023 and the actual list is due to be released by sometime in January, 2024
- The Council is also responsible for recommending early reading diagnostic assessments
- This Council will include 3 members selected by the State Superintendent, 3 members selected by the Speaker of the Assembly, and 3 members selected by the Senate Majority Leader
- District leaders and staff members are reviewing interventions during the 2023-24 school year and will implement any changes in 2024-25
- The timing of when a list of recommended curricula becomes available from the Council may impact the District's acquisition timeline and materials pilot options
- State-funded grants will become available in January, 2024 and cover up to 50% of the cost to purchase early literacy curriculum from the recommended list – the grants will be prorated based upon the number of applicants, and it is unlikely that districts will receive up to 50%
- Funding received by WRPS will supplement curriculum referendum dollars for materials acquisition
- DPI is responsible for publishing and maintaining the curricula list and diagnostic assessment list; DPI Office of Early Literacy is responsible for administering grants
- Office of Early Literacy identifies school literacy coach needs and collaborates with CESAs to place coaches in eligible schools as defined in Act 20; they will manage all aspects of contracted literacy coaches (contracting, training, monitoring of work)

- Early Literacy Curricula Council recommends potential candidates for Director of DPI Office of Early Literacy; State Superintendent appoints the Director
- 64 contracted FTE literacy coaches will be hired to support implementation of science-based early literacy instruction; coaches must have experience with and knowledge of science-based early literacy instruction as defined in Act 20 – the DPI anticipates a shortage of qualified staff members being available to fulfill these roles
- The potential for WRPS to work with a coach from the DPI is currently unknown
- Ms. Wilhorn described the differences in DPI License #316 Reading Teacher and #317 Reading Specialist; the 64 state literacy coaches will be required to have a #317 license, for which there is currently a shortage. WRPS currently has two positions in need of #317 licensure that are being filled through long-term sub assignments
- Ms. Wilhorn shared historical information relative to early literacy assessments utilized throughout the years at WRPS, including the use of PALS up to the point of it sun setting
- A single reading readiness screener will be administered to Wisconsin students in 4K through grade 3 beginning in school year 2024-25 which will be procured by the DPI who will also provide oversight, direction, and guidance on the assessment
- The assessment must be administered to 4K students twice per year and three times per year for 5K through grade 3
- The District will be responsible for providing professional development on the new screener for all 4K-grade 3 teachers
- Children scoring below the 25th percentile of the reading readiness screener must be administered a diagnostic reading assessment within 10 days after the reading readiness screener and no later than the 2nd Friday of November
- If an educator or parent suspects a child has characteristics of dyslexia, they may request a diagnostic reading assessment which must be administered within 20 days of the request
- The District will choose a diagnostic reading assessment from the recommended list provided by the Early Literacy Curricula Council and train staff that will be administering the assessment
- Any child who scores below the 25th percentile on the reading readiness screener receives a Personal Reading Plan containing various components as outlined in Act 20 – the vendor of reading readiness assessment determines 25th percentile, as does the vendor of diagnostic readiness screener
- District staff will be reviewing the Multi-Level Systems of Support (MLSS) Handbook to update as necessary
- Forms in EduClimber will be updated
- Professional development will occur for reading interventionists and K-3 classroom teachers on the topic of writing Personal Reading Plans
- The District will continually monitor all aspects during implementation to ensure that the components of Act 20 are in compliance, including the development, publication, and implementation of an early literacy remediation plan for students in 5K through grade 3
- The District will create and disseminate parental notification communications as required under Act 20
- Parental notification around reading results currently occurs, but there will be additional communication under Act 20 that will be required that will likely more significantly impact buildings with higher poverty levels
- If a child is promoted to 4th grade without completing their Personal Reading Plan, parents must be notified in writing along with a description of the reading interventions that child will continue to receive
- Student data reporting tied to Act 20 initiatives will be required and collected through the DPI – the District will utilize EduClimber to gather local data
- By July 1, 2025 all individuals employed as a 5K-grade 3 teacher or reading teacher must complete a reading training that meets Act 20 criteria, and individuals employed as a district reading specialist or principal also must complete training as outlined in Act 20

- The District is currently using LETRS for Early Childhood with all 4K/EC teachers and a group of 10 staff members are taking the LETRS training
- 2 WRPS staff members are receiving Keys to Beginning Reading training
- The District will determine which approved training will occur for staff, identify a funding source for the trainings, and implement a tracking system to ensure that all training requirements are in compliance
- The administration believes it is crucial to train 4th and 5th grade teachers as well in case they are moved or transferred to the 3rd grade level or below
- The non-funded trainings are very robust spanning as many as 4-6 days and not something that could be covered in a half-day increment on a regular professional development day; as such, balancing the timing and cost of the trainings will be crucial
- The DPI will be publishing a model policy by January 1, 2025 that includes specific criteria for students promoted to 4th grade who had a Personal Reading Plan during 3rd grade that was not completed; the District will use the DPI model to write, adopt, and implement a policy by July 1, 2025
- Wisconsin educator preparation programs will be modified to incorporate the science-based early literacy instruction components and requirements of Act 20; educators seeking an initial Wisconsin teaching license on July 1, 2025 will be impacted
- DPI will modify the educator licensing process to ensure candidates meet Act 20 requirements
- A Wisconsin Act 20 timeline was shared, with dates for many steps in the process still to be determined

Ms. Wilhorn explained that changes coming as a result of Act 20 are beginning to be explained and discussed in district and building level leadership team meetings, and will also be shared with staff members in the coming weeks. While the focus is on early literacy, there are aspects of the changes that will make their way into different grade levels and impact professional development plans moving forward. She shared that the District and its staff have always done what is necessary in the best interest of students over the years, and she has assured teachers that this is what will continue to be the focus. Additionally, teachers will continue to receive the necessary support and professional development to help them be successful. Lastly, the implementation cycle will be rolled out in manageable stages to the degree possible given the statutory timelines, to help staff not be overwhelmed and experience high levels of anxiety over the implementation of Act 20 requirements.

Ms. Filtz explained that District leadership is reviewing the current acquisition cycle to consider ways in which certain acquisitions can be moved up (such as in the case of Science which will not be very different than what teachers are currently using), to avoid introducing too much simultaneously. Besides Science, the next content area up for acquisition would be Social Studies, but not until around 2029 which means teachers should have the time needed to focus on the Reading modifications and updates generated by Act 20.

Committee members had an opportunity to ask questions about the components and implementation cycle of Act 20. Commentary was made around:

- The requirements affiliated with Act 20 that will not be fully funded by the State
- The possibility of improved reading scores and closure of achievement gaps if the initiative is successful
- The goals are admirable, but there is a great deal of pressure and potential stress that may be tied to the Act 20 implementation
- Approaching the requirement with an open mind since schools have little choice given these new legal requirements

- The elementary language arts acquisition was about to occur, so the timing is actually better for the District compared to where others may find themselves
- Ms. Wilhorn made mention of a conversation involving the Language Arts CII group where there was commentary around “we can either choose to be overwhelmed, or invigorated” and Ms. Wilhorn sees the value in choosing to be invigorated
- Questions around the 3rd grade promotion piece and the impact on Board policy were discussed – Superintendent Broeren stated that initially the changes centered around the state of Mississippi’s approach which only had retention as the option. Research shows little benefit with this approach. The conversations have been tempered with more aspects of language captured in the 4th and 8th grade retention policies being considered. More will be known when the DPI releases their policy model templates.
- Mr. Broeren made mention of the political and historical ideologies involving reading that trace back to the 1970s and before, which makes it no surprise to have the current legislation enacted; districts can lament having to implement such sweeping legislation, but have little choice other than to follow the law which was the intent of legislators
- Clarification was made around the “3-cuing” technique being banned from curriculum materials purchased; however, proper reading instruction includes the use of many strategies, including this approach. Ms. Wilhorn provided additional commentary around instructional practice versus materials purchased, and gets the impression that MSV would be VSM or VMS to prompt toward the visual cues first to cover the phonetic piece, followed by the structure and meaning
- One component of the strands of State Standards in reading and literacy are foundational skills; this doesn’t mean the rest of the Standards and strands won’t be covered or that they will be replaced by foundational skills only since they are also very important
- Conversations continue around whether to expand any of the literacy modifications made to grade levels beyond the required K-3
- There has been some critique around the make-up of the Curricula Council since a diverse representation spanning all demographics seems to be missing
- Questions were raised around how the law will ensure families are engaged in the reading process since family engagement is critical to student success; and also whether families will be able to opt their children out of the mandated testing and if so, whether this somehow penalizes the school or District – Ms. Wilhorn believes there is no opt-out of the reading readiness assessment piece, and conversations are being had around how to get parental signatures on everything that will be required.

Committee members expressed their appreciation for the positive approach and great effort being made to ensure decisions are made in the best interest of students and staff while adhering to the requirements of Wisconsin Act 20.

E. Wisconsin State Assessment System (WSAS) Results for 2022-23

Ms. Filtz stated that the DPI will not lift the embargo on 2022-23 WSAS results until October 10, 2023 which is a day after the regular scheduled Board meeting coming up. As a result, a full report will be provided to the Board through the November Educational Services Committee meeting.

VI. Consent Agenda Items

ES-1 Wisconsin DPI Peer Review Mentor Grant

ES-2 ExploreLearning Reflex and Frax Software Program Purchases

VII. Future Agenda Items/Information Requests

The Committee reviewed the following future agenda items:

- New Course/Curriculum Modifications and Proposals – Decision (November)
- ECCP/SCN Applications (November)
- Innovation Mini Grant Recipients (December)
- Open Enrollment Space Determination Limits for the 2024-2025 School Year (January)
- AGR Mid-Year Report (February)
- District Strategic Plan (February)

Ms. Medina adjourned the meeting at 7:33 p.m.