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**BERKELEY HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Office of the Assistant Superintendent**

**PTO Curriculum Liaison Committee**

**April 27, 2022 – 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

**Purpose:** The PTO Curriculum Liaison Committee includes parent representatives of all district schools, a representative of the Board of Education, and the Assistant Superintendents of Schools. The members discuss school improvement goals and areas where parent activities can support and augment school programs.

**Attending:** Carla Foti, Laura Kapuscinski, Sharon Lovit, Julie Nelson, Lori Piazza, Emily Ramos, Milla Trigos, Anjali Viswanath, James Finley, Jon Morisseau, Jessica Nardi, Drew Ziobro, Marybeth Kopacz, Scott McKinney

**Agenda and Minutes**

**6-12 Math and Science Instruction**

- Mr. James Finley, Supervisor of Science and Mr. Ziobro, Supervisor of Math shared department instructional strategies and practices aimed at fostering student engagement and active participation by connecting content matter with real-world applications.
- In the Math classrooms, teachers are introducing practices to “Build Thinking Classrooms” and include the use of thinking tasks that students collaborate to solve in randomly assigned learning groups of three students. These tasks are completed using dry erase boards throughout different locations in the classroom. Mr. Ziobro shared that the instructional flow of the class is student-centered with the classroom teacher facilitating the learning by providing real-time feedback. He indicated that additional professional development will be provided to the Math department to grow this initiative and sustain the positive progress taking place in the classrooms.
- In Science classrooms, teachers are building units of instruction that include phenomena-based teaching in which students are introduced to new topics or ideas through observation of real-world scenarios, problems, or experiences. Based upon these observations, students develop ‘driving questions’ that lead the students into the scientific process of discovery and problem-solving. Mr. Finley shared an example of the process in the exploration of sound waves and explained the concept of the storyline that connects science to real-world applications. Mr. Finley and his staff have been actively developing these units as part of a state collaboration and are now training other districts such as Mountainside and Chatham. The work has been focused on the 6-8 grade levels and is now expanding into the high school content areas.
- The presentation that was shared [can be found here](#).



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## Grades 3-5 WIN Program

- Mr. Jon Morisseau, Principal Mountain Park School and Mrs. Jessica Nardi, Principal Thomas P. Hughes School presented an update on WIN periods in Grades 3 through 5. The Principals reviewed the purpose and goal of WIN (What I Need) and explained how it is utilized to meet the individual needs of all students through small group instruction, academic interventions, skill reinforcement, and enrichment opportunities.
- Mr. Morisseau and Mrs. Nardi shared how the groups are formed and scheduled to maximize contact with available staff resources. They reviewed the role of data meetings in this process and how interventionists, HELP teachers, and Special Area teachers are utilized for small group instruction.
- The presentation they [shared with the group can be found here](#).

## Grade K-5 Math Update – Marybeth Kopacz

- Ms. Kopacz presented an update on the process and the recommendation of the Math Curriculum Committee to the group. As a follow-up to the discussions from previous meetings, she shared that the recommendation to adopt a new program is the result of the typical program review that takes place as part of the 5-Year Curriculum Cycle. She also reminded the group that this work was done in collaboration with our partners in Mountainside in an effort to better align the curriculum between our two districts.
- Ms. Kopacz shared the research process and how programs were selected for further research and group presentations. It was shared that the current version of GoMath! was expiring and that the new version was not completed or ready to be fully vetted by the group. An overview of the [Math process can be found here](#).
- Ms. Kopacz shared the key findings from the parent survey and explained how that guided the evaluation process in the effort to find the program that best fit the needs of our students, supported our parents, and provided teachers with the best resources. [K-5 Math Parent Survey Results can be found here](#).
- Through this evaluation process, two programs were selected to pilot in our classrooms. Teachers who piloted these two programs informed their parents and collected feedback from students and parents. At the conclusion of the pilot, the Math committee met to review all of the collected data and unanimously agreed that the district should recommend Big Ideas Math (Cengage Learning/National Geographic 2022).

As the meeting adjourned, it was suggested that the committee consider adding a fourth meeting and setting aside two hours for future events. Mr. McKinney and Ms. Kopacz agreed to start meetings at 9:00 a.m. and to add a fourth date to the calendar for the 2022-2023 school year.

It was also suggested that the BOE revisit sending a liaison from the BOE Curriculum Committee to the PTO Curriculum Liaison Committee meetings so that they could



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hear the opinions of the PTO members and share them with the rest of the BOE as a part of liaison reports.

Due to time constraints, Mr. McKinney met with the high school representatives to provide information about the final topics on the Agenda concerning the high school population.

### **NJGPA Assessment and Discussion – Scott McKinney**

- Mr. McKinney provided information regarding the administration of the new state assessment for high school juniors. The NJGPA is a new assessment based on the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The State Board of Education recently adopted this assessment as the state testing requirement for graduation for the Classes of 2023 and beyond. This was administered during the March 2022 testing window. As per state rules, students in the Classes of 2023-2025 must take the NJGPA to be eligible to earn a high school diploma. Students who take the NJGPA but do not earn a passing score will be able to use alternative competency assessments to meet the state testing requirements for graduation. Students with disabilities who qualify for the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessment are exempt from taking the NJGPA.
- A member of the committee shared concerns about this new assessment requirement. Mr. McKinney shared that the district had a high level of participation but does not know when the results will arrive for our students. He also shared that nearly 90% of the current juniors have already met an alternative pathway and anticipates that our students will do well on this new test.

### **Counselor Parent Survey – Scott McKinney**

- Mr. McKinney gave a brief overview of the parent SEL survey results regarding format, time, and communication of parent events. Generally speaking, parents preferred the virtual program options in the evening. Direct email and Friday Folders were the preferred communication format though there was some support for a multi-layered approach. A short discussion took place about the effective marketing of these programs to increase attendance and participation. Mr. McKinney indicated that Dr. Janosko would be sharing the full survey results with the district in the near future.

### **Suggestions for Future Topics/Presentations**

- French Program and World Languages



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**BERKELEY HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Office of the Assistant Superintendent**  
**October 27, 2021**

**PTO Curriculum Liaison Committee**

**Purpose:** The PTO Curriculum Liaison Committee includes parent representatives of all district schools, a representative of the school board, and the Assistant Superintendent of Schools. The members discuss school improvement goals and areas where parent activities can support and augment school programs.

**In-Person Meeting – October 20, 2021 – 9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m.**

**Attending:** Dawn Bernstein, Carla Foti, Laura Kapuscinski, Sharon Lovit, Julie Nelson, Lori Piazza, Emily Ramos, Anjali Viswanath, Anne Corley-Hand, Brenda Marley, Marybeth Kopacz, Scott McKinney

**Minutes**

**Update on Full Day Kindergarten – Anne Corley-Hand and Brenda Marley**

Mrs. Corley and Mrs. Marley shared a great deal of information regarding the implementation of full day kindergarten in Berkeley Heights and its positive impact on our students. They shared that the additional time together has resulted in:

- More time to develop routines for instruction and build a stronger classroom community.
- Choice time as a part of learning centers. This research-based best practice allows students to develop social skills and learn through discovery. Teachers are also able to learn about the students and their learning styles through observational data collection.
- Further development of math centers that include high levels of student engagement through the use of manipulatives. Additionally, the time provides for more opportunities for differentiated and small-group instruction.
- Integrated Social Studies and Science lessons that can be provided in a cross-curricular manner tied to our literacy and math curricula.

**Questions were raised about:**

- **Consistency across the K-2 Schools.** It was shared that the district has structures in place that allow time for collaboration and articulation across the two buildings.
  - **Access to data points.** It was shared that the appropriate data will be shared with parents as necessary. Ms. Kopacz reminded the group that much of the data collected early in the year is used to inform instruction and support lesson planning. As student needs are identified, they will be shared through our normal forms of parental communication including conferences, report cards, etc.
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- **WIN Periods.** It was shared that these data points were being used to create student learning groups that would exist through the first learning cycle. WIN periods will fluctuate throughout the year as students will receive ‘what they need’ but will also have exposure to STEAM activities and other learning experiences over the course of the school year.

### **Update on Assessment Data and Informing Instruction – Scott McKinney and Marybeth Kopacz**

Mr. McKinney and Ms. Kopacz presented the ways in which teachers and administrators were working together to identify student needs, address curricular gaps, and identify areas that need instructional support.

They shared how student progress was being tracked using multiple data points that included formal and informal assessments across all classrooms. While this data includes assessments in a variety of formats, it also includes observational classroom data to formulate a complete picture of each student.

While many different assessments were listed, Mr. McKinney and Ms. Kopacz focused on the implementation of our newest tools including iReady, LinkIt!, and Start Strong. Each of these tools serves a different purpose:

- *Start Strong* is a state assessment tool that assesses students in grades 4-10 on their mastery of student learning standards from the previous school year in Language Arts, Math, and Science. This online assessment was administered during the state testing window and the results are available to administrators and teachers. Following the official release from the state, student reports will be provided to families. These assessments will allow teachers to fill curricular or instructional gaps as it applies to their current classes. The reports are standards-based allowing teachers to create groups for reteaching or enrichment opportunities.
- *LinkIt!* benchmarks are a criterion based assessment that focus student progress on the current year standards. These pre-test assessments help identify where students are currently before instruction has taken place so that teachers can effectively plan their lessons to meet student needs. The information will allow them to focus instruction on identified areas of concern while moving more quickly or providing enrichment in areas of identified strengths. These benchmarks will be administered throughout the school year to measure progress and further align our instruction to student needs.
- *i-Ready* is an online, individualized learning platform that provides teachers with diagnostic information and measures student progress. As it is an adaptive tool, it promotes a growth mindset and student goal-setting for all levels of students and student abilities. Through immediate feedback, students can measure their own progress and teachers can adjust their instruction accordingly. It should be noted that this tool is used in addition, not in replacement of, our established instructional practices.

### **Math Curriculum Committee-Program Review Process – Marybeth Kopacz**

In the interest of time, this topic was tabled for a future meeting.

### **Update on High School Graduation Requirements – Scott McKinney**

Mr. McKinney shared an update from the NJ Department of Education regarding the Graduation Assessment Requirements for the Classes of 2023-2025. The requirements for the current seniors remain unchanged. Students in the Class of 2023 (current juniors), Class of 2024 (current sophomores) and Class of 2025 (current freshmen) will be required to demonstrate

proficiency in English Language Arts and Math by taking the newly created New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment. This test will be aligned to NJ Student Learning Standards for Grade 10 ELA and for Algebra 1 and Geometry. The assessment will be administered on the same online platform used for the current NJSLA and Start Strong assessments. Students who do not meet the cut score on this new assessment in the spring of their junior year will be provided with additional opportunities to sit for the assessment. The student may also meet the graduation requirements through the menu of pathways available to our current students (cut scores for these alternate pathways have not been released). Finally, students will have access to a portfolio appeal process that will allow them to demonstrate proficiency through a state reviewed portfolio. To have access to these alternate pathways to meeting the state assessment requirements, students **must participate** in the newly established assessment created for juniors.

### **Suggestions for Future Topics/Presentations**

- Assessment Data Summary as it becomes available
- WIN periods at the Grade 3-5 schools
- Plans for transitioning students within the new configuration of schools
- Social Emotional Learning - How is the district meeting these student needs?

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 19, 2022**



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**BERKELEY HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Office of the Assistant Superintendent**  
**January 20, 2022**

**PTO Curriculum Liaison Committee**

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**In-Person Meeting – January 19, 2022 – 9:30-12:00 p.m.**

**Attending:** Laura Kapuscinski, Sharon Lovit, Julie Nelson, Emily Ramos, Milla Trigos, Anjali Viswanath, Ashley Janosko, Madison Rowohlt, Marybeth Kopacz, Scott McKinney

**Minutes**

**1. Supporting Students Through Social-Emotional Learning**

- Dr. Ashley Janosko and Madison Rowohlt presented a [slidedeck highlighting the integration of SEL](#) into our classrooms to support students and staff. The presentation included an overview of SEL competencies, the CASEL framework, and how these competencies are applied in an age-appropriate manner at each of our school buildings. Dr. Janosko then shared specific examples from the K-2 schools, 3-5 schools, Columbia Middle School, and Governor Livingston High School. She then shared how professional development for the staff members supported this work and emphasized the importance of ongoing training to maintain momentum in this area. Finally, Ms. Rowohlt took the time to explain her role in supporting students and provided an overview of the many activities and resources that are available to our students as well as our parents.

**2. Update on Assessment Data – Start Strong Results**

- Scott McKinney and Marybeth Kopacz provided a short overview of the Start Strong Assessment. The presentation included a description of this



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new state assessment and how it was administered to our students. Mr. McKinney and Mrs. Kopacz shared that this data was a snapshot of one moment in time and to effectively use this information it must be considered alongside many other data points to paint a full picture of what our students need to recover from the lost instruction during the pandemic. While overall the results are what the district expected, the information helped target our efforts to identify curricular gaps and the individual needs of the student populations. As expected, the populations of students who struggled the most prior to the pandemic were the populations of students who were most negatively impacted by the remote and hybrid learning environments. And through the use of multiple assessments, our staff has been working to meet these identified needs among these populations. Some general findings:

- Language Arts results outpaced Math and Science results. This is most attributed to the lack of hands-on activities and learning opportunities created by remote instruction.
- In Math, the Grade 8, Algebra 1 results are skewed by the state test assignments that did not align to the district course progression.
- In Science, students were tested on the three prior years of state standards. This is a new assessment that none of our students had been exposed to as students prior to this test administration.
- As we approach the mid-year point, the next round of benchmark assessments will take place providing teachers with data on student progress and will inform instructional planning for the second half of the school year.

### **3. Math Curriculum Committee Program Review Process**

- Mrs. Kopacz shared a short update on the process used to review K-5 Mathematics programs for the elementary students. She quickly reviewed the stages of the curriculum cycle and shared what the Math Curriculum Committee had been working on this year. Mrs. Kopacz shared the steps of the research process, the articulation with teachers, administrators, and the Mountainside School District. She also shared information about the programs that the committee was evaluating as well as the timeline for selection and budgeting process.

### **4. Program of Studies Update - Middle School/High School**





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- Mr. McKinney shared an update on the planning for new courses at the 6-12 level. While the pandemic has shifted focus to supporting students and recovering from the prior year, there will be some minor changes and additions proposed to the BOE. The updates include:
  - A revised Civics curriculum at the middle school. In addition to the 7th grade cycle class, Civics instruction will also be integrated into the 8th grade Social Studies curriculum with a focus on the constitution. This revision will allow our existing curriculum to meet new state requirements in an age-appropriate manner that fits within existing structures.
  - AP Art 3D at the high school. Currently, the high school offerings include the AP 2D and AP Portfolio classes. Based upon the qualifications of the new instructor, we will now be able to offer the AP 3D, further providing opportunities for our students who excel in the Arts.
  - An Asian Studies elective course at the high school. A semester elective that focuses on a contemporary study of various Asian societies and cultures. This course was developed to meet student interest and will provide an examination of different Asian religions, philosophies, and cultures as well as trace historical relationships among Asian nations and regions.
  - Financial Literacy and Personal Finance. To meet the high school graduation requirement in financial literacy, the high school is expanding the courses that will meet this 2.5 credit requirement within the Math department. Currently, the requirement can be met through the Business Management (Business Department) and Intro to Economics courses (Social Studies Department). This new course will expand the offerings allowing Math teachers to instruct students and meet these requirements.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 27, 2022**

SM/lk