

Bemidji District Curriculum Advisory Committee

Tuesday, March 17, 2015
District Board Room, Downtown Education Center

Committee Members Present: Ami Aalgaard, Vince Beyl, Brandon Bjercknes, Brent Colligan, Erin Curran, Mary Fairbanks, Dr. Jim Hess, Donna Hickerson, Drew Hildenbrand, Carol L. Johnson, Maura Johnson, Kim Kusler, Ann LongVoelkner, Kathy Palm, Brian Stefanich, Truedson, Kathy VanWert, Sonia Wadena

Guests: Brian Murphy & Tami Wesely

Minutes:

1. At 7:00 a.m. members introduced themselves.
2. The focus of today's meeting was a discussion of Bemidji district's graduation requirements for students not attending Bemidji High School. Kathy shared a handout that compared Bemidji High School graduation requirements (28 credits) to the minimum State of Minnesota requirements (21.50 credits). She also shared credit requirements for schools similar in size to Bemidji and their graduation rates. Bemidji requires the most credits and has a lower graduation rate. We are considering changing the credit requirements for the Alternative Education Center (AEC), BYLaW, First City, and Oshki Manidoo because they do not have a four-period day schedule like Bemidji High School. The 28-credit requirement is based on BHS students' ability to complete 32 credits in four years. Other Bemidji schools' schedules are not conducive for students' completing that many credits.

When asked, "What are the greatest barriers for students unable to complete their credits in four years?" Brian Stefanich replied algebra II, chemistry/physics, and attendance. The high school has homeroom and Ramp Up to Readiness, which is making a difference for more students' feeling connected to school and caring adults. The assistant principals also offer Student Support Groups to about 150 students each whom they encourage to stay in school and complete. The high school is also offering an application math course (Tech Math) this year that helps students who do not relate to traditional algebra II.

The AEC has 28-30 seniors on the waiting list and a total of 90 students waiting to start classes. They offer an independent study program for 10 hours per week because their teachers also teach at Lumberjack ALC. It takes 20 weeks to complete a course, so the AEC is planning to incorporate Compass Online Learning, so students can complete more units at home while the teachers track their progress.

We discussed the consequences of students not earning a high school diploma. We want to encourage educational success for all students. The secondary principals will discuss the graduation credits and make a recommendation to the Curriculum

Committee at our May 12 meeting. Then the committee can formulate a recommendation to the Bemidji School Board, who have the final decision.

3. We also discussed the 2014 Four-Year Graduation Rates for the district, Bemidji High School, and other Bemidji schools. We are disappointed that our graduation rates went down from 2013 to 2014, and this calls greater attention to the need for accurate data. Bemidji High School had three foreign exchange students and five students who moved out of state who were listed as “unknown” and counted against their graduation percentage. Students who complete their diploma in the summer are not counted in the four-year rate and in the five-year rate instead. Bemidji has several students who complete a little later than four years. Mary Fairbanks requested information about the 5-year graduation rates, so Kathy will send that to the committee.
4. Kathy shared the MDE Monitoring Report for Bemidji Title I & II and Homeless programs that occurred January 12-16, 2015. Overall, it was a positive monitoring, but we have to provide a Corrective Action Report for five areas. Kathy explained these areas for the committee.
5. The next District Curriculum Advisory Committee meeting is 7:00 a.m. Tuesday, May 12, 2015, at the District Board Room, Downtown Education Center.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 a.m.