

**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Maxine Brisport, Chair**

**Organizational Meeting**

**MINUTES**  
**November 18, 2009**

***Present:***

Maxine Brisport	Sean Inglee	Donna Phillips	Matt Weinheimer
Joe DiCaprio	Susan Look	Gary Putman	
Tonya Federico	Deborah Maxwell	Pedro Roman	

***Committee Members***

Jane Baldauf	Frances Giordano	Cheryl Olson	Lee Satterlee
Danielle Bouton	Ron Hamelin	Donna Phillips	Paul Scampini
Maxine Brisport	Sean Inglee	Gary Putman	Alison Taylor
Gary Comley	Susan Look	Lynn Rafalik	Matt Weinheimer
Joe DiCaprio	Mary Maitino	Bernice Rivera	
Tonya Federico	Deborah Maxwell	Pedro Roman	
Vincent Giordano	Jeanne Myers	Jerry Rosen	

**Future dates:**

12/9/09	2/24/10	4/14/10	6/9/10
1/13/2010	3/17/10	5/12/10	

Diane Wilkinson gave a presentation on the Home Access program through which parents can view their child's enrollment, attendance, discipline and grade information at the secondary level. At elementary level the same information is available, but the gradebook feature which provides day to day grades on assignments and such is not in use at that level. We viewed the information that parents see for their particular child. As of October 15<sup>th</sup> we have 3269 students represented by parent emails in the Home Access System. This represents about 33% of the students in the district.

Discussion included the kinds of problems and feedback we have received so far. There is a bit of a learning curve on the way to interpret grades that haven't been recorded yet and the pacing of publication of grades from gradebook, but overall the feedback has been quite positive. There has also been discussion of how to grant greater access to teachers for information they may have versus information that they shouldn't. At this point they cannot access transcript information for their students to see how they have done in the past. It has been a very good communication tool with parents as there is a direct link to email the teacher whenever there are questions.

Discussion of how broad access is for our students at home. Ms. Wilkinson shared that an informal survey, conducted across all the ninth grade students at the high school library, has shown about 90% have access.

Based on discussions with the Middle Level Principals, Mr. Comley for Schenectady High School and the content area coordinators, Mr. Weinheimer proposed a change in policy for final exams to

reflect current situation with NYS testing and best practices in assessment be forwarded to the Policy Committee (attached).

Discussion regarding the high school approach to final and regents exams was held. There will no longer be attendance for local finals only during the final several days of school before Regents Week. This will allow review for those Regents classes closer to the administration of the exams and bring us into compliance with direction from the SED. We are also looking at alternatives approaches to mass Regents exams in the gymnasium.

There is a committee of staff meeting to look at issues of Digital Citizenship and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and the implications for policy and procedures. We will invite that group to share their thoughts with our committee at the February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. We will invite the members of the Board of Education Policy Committee to join us for that presentation.

Respectfully Submitted,

*/s/ Matthew Weinheimer*

Matthew E. Weinheimer  
Assistant Superintendent  
for Curriculum and Instruction

## **POLICY CHANGE FOR FINAL EXAMS**

NYSED is currently testing all students in grades three through eight in the months of April and May in the areas of ELA and Math. While this achievement testing may not correlate directly to a summative assessment for the courses at each of these grade levels in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> it makes little sense to subject these students to a final examination one month later.

As a district we have been moving to the use of formative assessments and benchmarking at shorter intervals as more appropriate strategies to both assess student learning and inform instruction accordingly. With the institution of vertical teams we have developed a strong and consistent dialogue about our courses and approaches.

There are courses for which a written examination may not be the most appropriate assessment. In visual art, music, or dance it may be much more appropriate that the students demonstrate their knowledge in other ways.

The intent in current policy is to ensure consistency of curriculum over multiple locations for the middle level. These concerns are now addressed with state testing in eighth grade for Math, Science, Social Studies and English and Math and English at seventh. The current Board of Education Policy as written is overly restrictive, does not align with best practices and no longer reflects the current configuration of the district.

For the above reasons we recommend the following:

### **7210 STUDENT PLACEMENT AND EVALUATION**

#### **Student Examinations**

- The line that reads "Final Examinations shall be given in all middle school and high school subjects." be eliminated.
- In the second line strike the word "final" and add "and high school" and change "in all three middle schools" to read "across the district".
- Change from "how examinations are to be made up" to "how exams are to be developed" and change the final word from "mark" to "course grade".

The proposed changes in the section Student Examinations shall read:

The Board is strongly supportive of the development and use of common assessments in all middle school and high school subject areas, and expects that such assessments will be used across the district after a period of development, piloting, and review and modification. The Superintendent shall instruct the staff to present a plan for determining how exams are to be developed and what mathematical procedure is to be used in combining the examination grade(s) and quarterly grades in arriving at a final course grade.