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Loudoun County School Board, Curriculum and Instruction Committee Meeting, Monday, August 28, 2023

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[00:00:02] Good afternoon. I call to order this August 28th, 2023 meeting of the Curriculum and Instruction Committee of the Loudoun County School Board. We'll begin with item two on our agenda, which is public comment. We have one speaker signed up for public comment today, so I'll be allocating five minutes per speaker. The first and only speaker is Andrea Weiskopf, and Ms. Weiskopf, you can start whenever you're ready. Good evening. I was looking at policy 5080 in lines 40 to 42. It states that

[00:00:41] there should be a division-wide ratio 24 to 1 for English classes. This ratio is found through averaging. The question is, is this average the mean, median, or mode? They are not the same.

[00:00:59] If there are three gen ed English classes of 30 and one self-contained class of five, the median is 30, the mode is 30, but the mean is 23.7 and brings you in line with your policy.

[00:01:18] If you are working with the mean as your average, you're just manipulating statistics, and especially if this includes gen ed and inclusion class, I'm sorry, self-contained classes or EL classes for English, which may only have five kids in them.

[00:01:41] Thank you, Black Lives Matter. Thank you. And that will conclude public comment for this meeting. We'll now move to item three on the agenda, which is the approval of the draft minutes from the

June 5th, 2023 meeting. Is there a motion? I move that the committee approve the draft minutes from the June 5th meeting.

[00:02:10] I will second. Is there any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favor, please raise your hand and say aye. Aye. Aye. That motion will pass unanimously of board members present with Ms. reason absent for the vote we will now move to our action items starting with 401 recommended deletion of policy 5-1 philosophy dr ellis anything to add to this since it was an information item or went out for public review no nothing to add thank you i will move that the curriculum and instruction

[00:02:46] committee recommend the deletion of policy 5-1 philosophy to the school board seconded by miss Sogadeg Bay. Is there any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favor, please raise your hand and say aye. Aye. Aye. That motion will pass unanimously with Ms. Reeser absent for the vote. We'll now move to 402, recommended deletion of policy 5-17, access to programs, courses, and activities. Dr. Ellis, anything that staff has to present or add to this after the public and committee review process?

[00:03:25] nothing to add. Thank you. I will move that the curriculum and instruction committee recommend the deletion of policy 5-17, access to programs, courses, and activities to the school board. Seconded by Ms. Okedegbe. I will just mention, I didn't mention it for the previous item, that both of these are old policies that had been subsumed by newer policies that have been put in place. So we're not losing anything. The content that was found in these policies is just uh now found in in newer policies that have since been adopted by the school board

[00:04:01] so any further discussion seeing none all those in favor of recommending the deletion of the policy to the full school board please raise your hand say aye aye that motion will pass unanimously of board members present with misreader absent for the vote and our last action item for today is 403 policy 5080 class sizes dr ellis any anything to present as a result of the policy review process or any other staff-recommended changes?

[00:04:35] No staff-recommended changes based on the policy review process or the feedback that we received. I will just briefly address public comment because I do know the response. The average class sizes are not inclusive of self-contained special education classrooms or sheltered EL classes.

[00:04:56] So how do they factor into the averages, or are they just considered separately? They're separate. Okay. They're separate, so the average is just the general education English classes. Okay, thank you.

[00:05:13] Any questions regarding this policy or any changes to it? No, I appreciate the clarification on that. I know when this was an information item, we discussed in the first paragraph, including some additional detail about where on the website, basically where on the information the operating budgets are so that people can find the average class sizes or the recommended class sizes, the staffing standards that have been adopted by the board.

[00:05:44] I don't see that in the red line version. I have a brief amendment I can add, but I just wanted to make sure I wasn't missing anything or that wasn't put anywhere else. Okay, so I'll make the base motion first. I'll move that the curriculum and instruction committee review and approve staff recommended revisions to policy 50-80 class sizes seconded by Ms. Okadegbe. And I'm going to make sure I have the right document. Okay. So I'm going to move to amend by adding to or changing the

[00:06:19] last sentence that's on lines six and seven of the red line so that it would say targeted average class sizes are lower than the maximum class sizes and established through staffing standards for student to teacher ratios which are adopted annually by the school board in the yearly operating budget which can be found on the lcps website at www.lcps.com budget is there a second seconded by miss okadagbe and just my goal here is just to point people to a little with a little

[00:06:57] more specificity to where on the website that information is in case because all we have laid out in this policy are the maximum class sizes. So if someone is trying to find, well, okay, what are we, what is our goal? What are the staffing standards then? Without calling out, okay, it's in appendix A or appendix B, because that might change every year. At least they'll have the right URL to go to to start double second. Okay. Any further discussion? Seeing none. All those in favor of the amendment to change the first paragraph to include the URL, please raise your

[00:07:34] hand and say aye. Aye. That motion will pass unanimously of board members present or committee members present with misreads or absent. And now we are back to the base motion as amended. Is there any additional discussion or amendments? Seeing none, we'll place the motion to a vote that the curriculum and instruction committee approve policy 5080 class sizes as amended and recommend adoption by the full school board. Please raise your hand and say aye. Aye. That motion will pass

[00:08:06] unanimously of board members present with misreads are absent for the vote we'll now start on our information items starting with policy 50 60 textbooks furnished free thank you mr sirak and i'll take this one so just as a reminder since it's been a while since we last met this policy was reviewed in the cni committee as information items in june and on the 5th and then was scheduled

[00:08:39] to be early in August and it was posted for public review and that information is attached. It was posted for the public from June 7th through June 21st. We did receive a couple of comments.

[00:08:57] None of the comments were necessarily game changers in terms of policy revisions so we're not recommending any policy revisions based on the feedback. we are ready for any additional discussion that the committee might have, but feel good about the policy draft as it's written. And just as a reminder, this was just up for its regular review.

[00:09:27] Thank you, Dr. Ellis. Committee members, any discussion or questions regarding the changes to this policy? Ms. Ogedekbe. This may not be specifically for this policy, but it's more of an overall question. I know that we have many provisions in different areas around the possibility for a student or their family to get a waiver if they're economically disadvantaged. And this one specifies also if they're undergoing an economic hardship. But are there mechanisms through which we can automatically waive fees if we know, for example, a student's eligible for free or reduced

[00:10:07] lunch so that they don't have to come and ask for that? I would have to do some research. I don't know the answer to that question off the top of my head. I know that schools are very good about working with families they know are eligible in all areas, whether it's textbooks or any other type of fees, but I don't know if there is a way to automate that process. Okay, and that doesn't change the policy, but it's just more of a mechanical question. Other than that, I don't

[00:10:41] have questions. I'd be interested in that as well. Also, even if a school does a good job of internally tracking that for an individual, I'd be curious to know whether that they notify, like if they're

graduating from elementary and going to middle school, if they notify the middle school of students who have been approved for free and reduced things or how that process works.

[00:11:05] I would say that the information related to free and reduced lunch is highly confidential and guard it quite closely. I believe principals have to sign a waiver in receiving that information that they're not going to share it or disclose it publicly.

[00:11:21] And so in some ways, principals have to find ways to support these families. So we could definitely get some more information, but the information isn't just out in the open for anyone to access because it is considered confidential. Oh, I apologize if that was taken as we want to post that information publicly or anything like that.

[00:11:41] I was certainly not suggesting that. I was thinking about when students graduate and go to a new school, is that information being conveyed to their new school? Or do families just have to start the process over again and talk to the school leadership at the new school and how that process worked?

[00:12:05] I had one other thing. So we had the conversation last year about consumable materials and whether the music books were included in that. And I know we made a change this year to start providing the music workbooks for free for the beginning music classes, which I've received a lot of grateful feedback from our middle school music teachers.

[00:12:29] But I was thinking about how to, because we didn't change the policy to do that. I think we just kind of reinterpreted the regulation and provided some additional funding in the budget to do that. So I was thinking about whether it would be appropriate to add some kind of language to the end of the consumable materials paragraph that would say something like, in no case shall students be charged for the primary instructional resource for a class.

[00:12:58] But I'm happy to kind of take feedback from staff on that and work on the wording for that to make sure it doesn't have any unintended consequences. If there are lab classes in high schools that we provide specialized material that would not be covered by that. But I'd like to just, I was just trying to think about how to prevent something like that from happening again for those types of workbooks or materials that we wouldn't want to charge students for.

[00:13:24] My initial reaction to that is when you use the word primary versus a supplemental, while those consumables and music classes may be considered primary, They're supplemental in that music teachers have a choice.

[00:13:39] One music teacher may like this particular resource, and so they make a decision to bring that in, and they charge the fee. The more you centralize and standardize purchasing, the less autonomy individual schools may have when it comes to what the primary instructional resource is.

[00:13:57] So that being said, we could definitely work on some wording for the next time we bring this back. Okay, and like I said, I'm happy to do that. I know it was just an information item tonight, but that was my initial thought, My initial thought was that we should add something there just to prevent that kind of situation from happening again in the future, since I think the school board's given direction on that.

[00:14:18] Any other discussion or thoughts regarding either that topic or anything else regarding this policy? Okay. So I think this was a first reading for the information item, so we'll send this out for the policy review process from here? Or no?

[00:14:35] That's already happened. This is the second review. When did we get this? Back in June or earlier? Yeah. Okay. I had not forgotten that. Okay. So we'll, I'm happy to work on the wording for that one ad with staff. And then I think absent any objections, we can bring this back as an action item for next meeting.

[00:14:56] Okay. So that'll conclude 501 and we'll move to 502, deep dives into measures of academic progress. Thank you, Mr. Srockin.

[00:15:16] At this point, Dr. Tyler is going to start with his presentation. Good evening. over the next few minutes we're going to take you through a summary of our latest round of map growth data next slide please so as you know map and other indicators are woven into 11cps our strategic plan which we're now entering the second year of the five-year plan as you see they're listed in goal one preparing students be knowledgeable and to have those 5c skills that we've referenced

[00:15:53] throughout the years next slide and it's one of the measures of the effectiveness of a certain strategies that include the profile of the graduate, culture-sponsored instruction, and having evidence-based instructional strategies that yield outcomes where we maximize student growth with this indicator, and a particular map.

[00:16:18] Next slide, please. And if you remember, when we actually set the baselines for many of the indicators, we have, again, the SOLs, a criterion reference assessment that looks at proficiency. The students know what they need to know to be ready for the next grade.

[00:16:35] MAP looks at growth from fall to spring. It's normative, meaning it's not necessarily a measure of whether a student has mastered the content, but how they're performing relative to other students, to other peer groups. And then, of course, we have VALS, which is evolving now into VALS, and we have other indicators.

[00:16:53] We'll be focusing on MAP today as the indicator of growth, considering that there are other indicators to look at other key outcomes. Next slide, please. So this gives you a snapshot of the baseline for growth that you see in the second column, which we'll actually reference again as we go through the results from this last year.

[00:17:20] So for the 21-22 school year, whereas 50th conditional growth percentile is what's considered typical, based upon our tier one students who are not in need of any supports for reading, we're actually slightly below the national norm. For math, we were above it, 48 for reading, 53 for math.

[00:17:39] and for students in need of additional supports you remember from my multi-tier system of support tier two students in need of supports uh short term to get them back on path tier three in need of significant supports we actually within our schools we see greater than expected growth or typical growth meaning these students are able to accelerate and catch up so what we're going to do now is you see there's preliminary 2023 data we're going to look at the final data next slide please And remember the goals were set, in particular for MAP, looking beyond what is typical to what is needed.

[00:18:17] The idea of if Mr. Sorokin is a high-achieving student and he's at the 80th percentile for achievement, maintaining him at that level. It's wonderful to get him to accelerate, but we definitely want to have that goal to maintain that. And as you can see from our division-level data, that's a room for growth for us.

[00:18:34] It's maintaining students who are at a high level of readiness. And then, of course, accelerating students in need of extra supports, Tier 2 and Tier 3, which is actually a common practice here. So that's how those targets were set. Not based upon what's typical, based upon what's needed. Next slide, please.

[00:18:53] And the next slide. So this gives a little background into what MAP is. We discussed it in detail when we were talking about our baselines and our different indicators for our strategic plan. MAP is not a measure of mastery. That would be our SOLs.

[00:19:10] It's really a measure of growth and relative to peer groups of students, so norm reference versus criterion reference, and you see a visual showing the RIT scores and how over time, not just how you grow relative to your own growth, but how you grow relative to peers with the same starting point in the fall.

[00:19:28] Next slide, please. So whereas a criterion reference assessment may look at proficiency and you look at, say, an achievement percentile if you're a high achieving student you may be at the 90th percentile your growth percentile is looking at how do you grow relative to students who had the same starting point in the fall same grade level about the same time of their school year so 50 is what's typical but as we talked about we set different growth goals based upon need so the next slide will take you to another example again we can go in more detail if needed but it gives you an example what

[00:20:07] it looks like if you have a group of students starting at the 67th achievement percentile. This would be typical for about sixth grade, I believe. If you have normal growth, you'll maintain that 67th achievement percentile, seven points. If you have tremendous growth, that achievement percentile actually accelerates. But if you regress or lose ground, not only will you have lower growth, but your achievement percentile will drop correspondently relative to your peer group.

[00:20:35] Next slide. So you see here our final results for the 22-23 school year fall to spring growth and you see there for reading just below the 50th conditional percentile which is what's typical and it's higher for math. As you look at reading overall 49.6 and math is 54.0. You may see a slide earlier in the slide deck it had preliminary 22-23 data so this is the final data for last year for growth. And you see we had differences between student groups and you may wonder what do these

[00:21:12] differences mean. If you have a group that is at the 52nd condition growth percentile and another group is at the 45th condition growth percentile, that not only means that you have different growth but you may see either a closing or an expanding of an achievement gap. If they're starting at about the same starting point, one group grows at a faster pace, you may see an expansion and a gap in achievement or a closure of that. So we have different growth levels depending upon key student groups, and we'll get back to our conversations about meeting the needs of English learners and

[00:21:46] kids of IEPs, as you see there. So when you're looking at reading only, and you look at a longitudinal view, if you remember 2018-19, our last kind of carefree year before the pandemic, we did not have spring data for 2020, which is why you don't see 2019-20. You see the hybrid year of 2020, 2021, and then the last two years. You'll see that for reading, we're not quite to the levels of pre-pandemic, right around 50 conditional growth compared to 53rd conditional growth overall. And you see there, there's still differences between the student groups. The next

[00:22:26] slide will show you the same data for math. Now, what you see here is that we're very close to the levels of performance or growth pre-pandemic, 54th conditional growth percentile for the last two

years compared to what it was the pre-pandemic 54.1 and still seeing some growth between the differences in growth between the student groups. Next slide please. So now we'll look at the levels we've seen a bit of a pivot where before the pandemic we saw higher growth at the middle

[00:23:01] school level for reading 55 compared to 52 for elementary and it's shifted a bit where it's actually a little higher for elementary compared to middle school. The next slide, you'll see the same data for math.

[00:23:19] Significantly high growth for math for middle school compared to elementary before, and it's shifted a bit since the pandemic. And you see for high school, that's a subset of students. Those are the students who are not in an accelerated math path, but we administer math for math at the high school level to ensure that we are accelerating students at the high school level as needed.

[00:23:47] So now you get a chance to see the actual data relative to the growth goals by tier. So you see here, not quite at the levels as you see before the pandemic for reading, but very close to the growth goals for tier two, especially for tier two, exceeding the growth goal of 55 at 56 in additional growth and not quite there for tier three.

[00:24:13] So not meeting our growth goals for reading for Tier 1 or Tier 3 students. If you move to math, you'll see in this case, we're actually exceeding it for Tier 1 and Tier 2 and approaching it for Tier 3. So the next slide will, there's a link there in the actual slide deck that'll take you to the data.

[00:24:38] There are many attachments that you see in board docs for this session. All of those documents that include breakouts by school, by overall, by English learners, students of IEPs. That's also on the research office website where you can access that information and you can see the growth data from the previous year.

[00:25:02] And finally, when we discuss addressing areas of opportunity, and you go to the slide after this, I think it's the last one. There's different uses of MAP that have been pretty consistent. I guess we're in our eighth year of utilizing it. And it serves many purposes, helping to determine when we need to scaffold or differentiate instruction, feedback to students and families on growth.

[00:25:26] Teachers and principals use of setting growth goals, often for certain student groups that we're trying to serve in our equity work. And it's one of the indicators, not the only one, one of the indicators used for identifying whether students are in need of interventions.

[00:25:43] So that is a summary of the MAP update. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you, Dr. Tyler, for the update.

[00:25:58] Committee members, questions regarding the presentation? Ms. Okadegbe. Thank you. So, specifically more in the reading area, there seems to be a drop comparatively from the last year. So, we made some gains in 21-22 and then 22-23 we seem to regress.

[00:26:20] Has there been any analysis to understand what happened? And then more specifically, what are we doing to try to address that going forward? So at an analysis level, and I'll ask my colleagues to chime in on the practices, we've looked at some of the differences between schools and encourage collaboration between schools around what are certain strategies that schools that are getting stronger outcomes utilizing to achieve that.

[00:26:49] And I know that we had this initial conversation when we gave our student achievement update last year in the idea of focus on CLTs and well-planned and delivered instruction with differentiation for English learners, students of IEPs.

[00:27:07] There's always a strong MTSS system of interventions that are more research-based. My colleagues may have more details on specific strategies we're engaging in to address reading. - So Dr. Tyler provided a nice summary.

[00:27:24] I would just add on and emphasize the work on supporting teacher collaboration within the CLT process. And that's really grounded in informed decision making based on assessments. So one of the conversations we're having with principals this fall is on the use of assessments to make instructional decisions in the classrooms.

[00:27:43] So in elementary school, looking at the map data, matching what that information is telling us about the individual student need. this from a bigger picture we're looking at our work in early literacy when it comes to the science of reading and evidence-based practices teachers are learning how to use new resources and we're providing coaching and professional learning about those resources the school board recently invested in additional math resource teachers in our math program we have placed in our high schools and additional intervention tools that schools are just now starting to use and learn about and be supported with.

[00:28:20] So those are a number of examples of how we're trying to address this. So my other question is, so I've heard feedback from principals as well that they think that the information that they're getting out of the MAP assessments is actually very helpful.

[00:28:41] So there have been concerns about new assessments coming out from the state. And so I'd like to ask if there are any updates in that area and what are our options for continuing to use an assessment that's actually helpful and informative for work in the classroom.

[00:29:07] So you might have heard recently that the state continues to refine the Virginia growth assessment and they notified us that for this year's administration of the fall, they're looking back to students' point as far as the previous school year as a readiness level and not their current year, meaning last year, in the last cycle, we looked at fourth graders and the window was set for their fourth grade year, beginning of their fourth grade year.

[00:29:36] They pivoted back to looking at, in this case, fourth graders and their third grade level readiness. So that's an example of how the state is still refining the BGA. Until they get to a point where there's a level of, the same level of rigor and testing and validation that we have with MAP, we feel that it's too soon to move away from the MAP assessment, hoping that one day the state will get there, and it's only the second full year of implementing it.

[00:30:03] So right now, that's where it stands. We also know that there will be changes coming in the cut points, and there will be changes coming in the accreditation system, kind of tangential to this. So MAP is over 40 years old at this point, 40 years old as an assessment internationally, and we've been utilizing it for eight years.

[00:30:22] there's a different level of comfort with it so we're still waiting to see how the state evolves with the Virginia growth assessment. The only thing I would add to Dr. Tyler's summary is that I also think there is an opportunity through the legislative priorities that the board sets to continue to talk about a

balanced assessment model with VDOE and so staff You'll see staff recommends that we keep a legislative priority around balance assessment

[00:31:00] and the recommended language will specifically mention growth assessments like MAP. So that's another way that we can continue to address this issue at the state level. And then in the meantime, are our students having to take both assessments?

[00:31:18] Yes. Yeah. Okay. And then finally, one just question again on the kind of the downward trend, especially on the on the reading scores is it possible that some of that is also influenced by kind of as our students who were in preschool in kindergarten are now in higher grade levels in elementary school but had that loss when we were remote are kind of continuing that downward trend where that's impacting students who were kind of lost out in that year i don't know if you've thought through

[00:31:55] that I'm just trying to figure out any and all ways to understand the data I would just broadly say we need to think about our students whole experience and that's inclusive of the pandemic and so while we're trying to put that in the rearview mirror we're also still very cognizant of what our students are coming into our school system with and that's why it's so important us for us to have an aligned system of support for our students thank you so the thing that

[00:32:30] jumps out to me on this topic trying to look at the data and try to figure out what happened is the tier three average being significantly lower than tier two and for FY23 which is really weird like I've never I've I've never seen that before or all other things being equal you would expect that the more interventions you provide a student the higher their their growth would be and that's

[00:33:07] always been true in the past where you have the tier one average tier two is higher and then tier three is highest so that big of a drop specifically for tier three this year is what's I want to try and understand what's happening there and and what caused that because it's not something we saw in the past at least not to that dramatic degree that seems like something new that happened this year I'd like to understand what that was. That's certainly something that we can look into and have conversations about. And to clarify, you're looking at, I'm sorry, could you finish up,

[00:33:47] Ellis? To clarify, you're speaking to reading, which is, and you're looking at the three-year trends, and you see that it's at 56 conditional growth for tier two and 52 for tier three. Is that the slide? Okay. Yes, that's right. And that drop is not there for math, but the math numbers are kind of exactly what I would expect that trend to be. But for reading, it's tier three is significantly lower and four points lower than it was last year that's that that requires an explanation for what happened and if that hadn't happened then perhaps the overall everything

[00:34:25] averaged together would have been you know slightly lower or the same as last last year's but it would not have been as dramatic of an overall drop as it was as it was uh talked about that. Okay. The other question, back when we were adopting the strategic plan and the metrics that went along with that, we had some discussions about why our, let me get to the right slide,

[00:34:59] why our CGP goals for tier one were exactly 50% instead of being above 50% as a high-performing school district. And I wanted to bring that back up because I still feel the same way, or I have not yet been convinced that I should not feel that way. And when I look at the math scores being 53 or above 53 for a division-wide average, that's, I'm sure we can still be higher there, but that's what I would expect, where we can have a division-wide average that is significantly

[00:35:38] above that 50% threshold. So we're not there for reading yet. We clearly have more issues that we're trying to sort out. But I wanted to bring that back up to see whether there have been any additional discussions about setting those CGP benchmarks in the strategic plan higher than 50%, and if not, why we're not doing that. So if you remember, when we set those, it was not only general

[00:36:14] recommendations and conversations with the vendor, those were the same growth goals from the previous strategic plan. So whether that was a justification for continuing them, they were familiar. And there's also the fact that they were familiar to our schools. The idea that if we set different goals for the strategic plan that were different than the ones the schools utilized, it gives you an explanation as to why we were familiar with them and utilize them. The question is, I believe we had talked about in the second and third year of the strategic plan the idea of upgrading or

[00:36:47] resetting goals that we've met early on and maybe extending those goals and I know Dr. Singel has mentioned that there would be a process for that revisiting goals that say for example we expected to meet in years three and four that we've met already so there's a history behind them I think there's support for considering what the new goals will look like we would want to align those with the general guidance we provided for schools too so that there's consistency and not one set of growth goals for individual schools and a different one in the strategic plan. Okay that's and that's

[00:37:23] I didn't realize that they were the same goals that had been in the previous strategic plan so I think that's helpful context as far as why at least why it was set this way initially but I I think the phrase we kept throwing around were we wanted to set bold but achievable goals or something to that effect. So looking at reading versus math, we clearly see that that's an achievable goal on the math side. It should be an achievable goal on the reading side as well.

[00:37:54] So I would really like to see that. Of course, I'm only one board member, but I would really like to see that reevaluated for where we are now and where we would like to see that be for the remainder of the strategic plan? Ms. Oginekbe? I think, and this, I wasn't here for some of the strategic plan rollout, so I missed a lot of the conversations, but I think one of the questions particularly for this one that came up for me is why in a multi-year plan the goals are the same year-to-year. Oftentimes for goals they kind of incrementally increase, and again, understanding

[00:38:33] they need to be attainable but um just i would also encourage some second looks at that as well and just context uh we got the same question from uh mr hornberger if you remember from the previous set of school board members that we could revisit growth goals over time so familiar and we can definitely discuss that i think that was i ran through my question list also any additional questions or discussion okay uh thank thank you for the overview i'm looking forward to

[00:39:07] getting some additional information as we as we progress and with that we'll move to 503 middle school honors and update on rigor thank you mr zrock and i appreciate mr gus martinez being here tonight to take the lead on this presentation i also want to recognize a few middle school principals in the audience we have the speaker at trailside mr roundsley from willard and will waldman mr waldman from smartsville middle school missed anyone else as we talk a little bit about rigor in the middle school. So, Mr. Martinez. Thank you, Mr. Slevin. I'd also

[00:39:45] like to mention that there's several members of teaching and learning as well as professional learning with us as we've been collaborating with them for a long time now. Good to be back. We haven't seen you since about December of 22, so we're here to give you an update on rigor. Next slide. As you can

see, the middle schools are aligned in all strategic goals and core values, but today we're focusing on how we align to rigorous teaching and learning to further empower students and ensure the academic excellence of each and every student.

[00:40:20] Just to remind you of the initial steps we took since it was a while ago since we've spoken, the initial steps we took were, let me put my reading glasses on, we started the discussions with honors, looking at honors in the middle school.

[00:40:36] We immediately had stakeholder feedback from teachers, principals, et cetera, letting us know that the conversation should be elevated to rigor of all students, including EL and SPED and not just honors. We saw that there was very little difference when comparing honors models and we'll talk a little bit about that in a second and we also defined rigor and developed initial supports for teachers and principals. What continues happening and the collaboration that continues happening with teaching and learning and professional learning is the iterative process.

[00:41:07] You see that we continue to gather and analyze data points. We continue to use various data points especially to target professional learning you can see down the we gather feedback from stakeholders we continue to do that over and over to make sure that they feel supported and then we refined our focus and we're very clear of our school leadership focus and as we align with the school improvement plan and teacher and principal evaluations just as a reminder even

[00:41:43] though this slide says that we've had a mix of models for over 10 plus years it's really closer to 15 years that we've had our schools having traditional heterogeneous and blended classrooms. Schools have had the autonomy to place these because Loudon is very unique in that we have various populations in various parts of the county. These terms are local definitions that our principals use to determine how they respond to their specific students needs. Next slide.

[00:42:16] This should look a little familiar. The same definition of rigor in the one LCPS strategic plan is the through line in other lcps documents such as the deeper learning overview and the what is rigor document just as a reminder again rigor is about the level and type of thinking or cognitive demand a fundamental part of the professional learning and support for schools leaders and teachers in this work has been to develop a common understanding of what rigor is and what it is not

[00:42:46] so i'm going to speak to some common misperceptions about rigor rigor does not mean giving students a ton of extra homework. It does not mean increased difficulty or an increased workload.

[00:43:08] It also means that students, as Mr. Martinez spoke about, different students, such as EL or even students with disabilities, can have high expectations and with supports have exposure to rigorous instruction. And in the slide deck as well, there is a link in the notes for the what is rigor document which is very helpful and some people think rigor is not for everyone and we disagree with that next slide please so what could

[00:43:47] rigor look like in a classroom and again the information of what is rigor from slide 5 is also in the notes for this slide for you to review students need to be challenged and their thinking can be new and interesting and meaningful we We want to challenge their assumptions and question those as well.

[00:44:13] We want students to think deeply rather than just memorizing facts and regurgitating. Students need to build authentic connections, make it meaningful for them. We want students to solve problems, to

think strategically, extend their thinking and to develop critical thinking skills and to prove it and to use evidence.

[00:44:38] Next slide please. So we included a sample of some resources that are shared with history teachers where they could look at Webb's depth of knowledge level one or level two, three and four, and as you go from one to four, it is going higher into rigor.

[00:45:00] But this is helpful for students, or for teachers rather, when they are planning to talk about what is appropriate for planning and deciding what different rigorous activities might be present in a lesson in a classroom. So depth of knowledge one, we're asking students to just recall facts and reproduce those. Depth of knowledge two, we want students to, of course, show skills and concepts, but also compare them. And then depth of knowledge three, with this,

[00:45:37] they could compare and solve something from the past to the present. And then depth of knowledge four, again, it's more creative, show evidence, and potentially prove an argument about what you think are the empires of today. Next slide, please. So one thing that's also important to realize is that one depth of knowledge level is not better or more ideal than the other. And sometimes we have to start at levels one to introduce a new concept or explain something to students and even

[00:46:16] depth of knowledge too. Sometimes we have to have our students manipulate a new concept in order to learn it and with scaffolding and building the scope and sequence we go from levels one and two into three and four and sometimes when we do a classroom observation or a learning walk not all students are at levels three or four. They may just be at one and two but they will eventually get to extended thinking and next slide please so to explain some initial

[00:46:50] supports mr. Martinez did speak about this about where we started there's just a plethora of resources that have been offered to building level teachers and to our leaders from the content offices and from the professional learning department and we started with these last August of 2022, offering these as resources for our staff members, and as well, the resources were highlighted at the principal meeting that we held in November of 2022, and then as a

[00:47:30] middle school office in the summer of 2023, we did extensive training with our principals on rigor in the middle, and what we're doing is also extensive planning for this upcoming school year with a focus on rigor and deeper learning and at this time I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Tyler. So there are questions regarding what about outcomes? Did we see any significant differences in student outcomes based upon the model? So you go to the next slide.

[00:48:03] So understanding that when you're looking at a middle school and our middle school principals know this much better than I do, there's so many factors that will influence outcomes you would expect to see. So we're not controlling for all of the instructional factors, we're just looking at schools based upon the model they're implementing. Mr. Martinez described the different models.

[00:48:24] And if you see a difference of 48 conditional growth in the yellow column for the blended model, 47 for heterogeneous, 49 for traditional, and you're thinking, are these significant? There's statistical significance, and there's what you may call real-world meaningful significance. The vendor has told us that a conditional growth difference of five points or more, you could see differences over time, maybe two or three years in a group of students.

[00:48:49] To see differences of one or two conditional growth points is relatively minor, especially when you're looking at, if you're thinking about whether a particular model is making an impact. So that was data from two years ago, data from last year on the next slide.

[00:49:07] And you see, again, conditional growth for schools in the blended model, and this is reading, 48 conditional growth for blended, 47 for heterogeneous, 48 for traditional. These are very minor differences, even if we could determine that the actual honors model was the actual fundamental difference between the schools, seeing differences of one or two points at that point is not enough of what we converted that to an effect size.

[00:49:36] It wouldn't be enough to argue for a value added for that particular model. So if you go to the next slide, so that's reading. Now, math, we did see differences there, 53 compared to 50, blended compared to heterogeneous, compared to traditional, 53, 50, 51, a difference of maybe three points there.

[00:49:59] But what's interesting here is that when we look at the actual math, map test that they took, as you know, they're students at the middle school level taking algebra one, geometry, algebra two, we did see some differences between the model blended to heterogeneous, as you see there, for both kids, taking the geometry and algebra two assessments, but you see it inverses itself.

[00:50:22] So are we seeing, from our perspective, significant differences between the models that would indicate that something about the honors model is giving us different results, or are there many other factors in a middle school that are determining the level of growth you may expect to see?

[00:50:40] The last item I will offer here is that you can see different levels of growth based upon whether students are accelerating. You see students who took the math six plus, we saw lower levels of growth at the middle school level in math, and you see definitely much higher levels of growth for students who are accelerating, meaning they were in algebra one and they took the algebra one math assessment.

[00:51:05] I think the next slide will take us to Mr. Martinez. - So we continued studying and reshifting supports as we conducted learning walks at each middle school. We had about, what was the number? about 500 visits.

[00:51:22] The growth area in what we learned in those learning walks is that our learning walks should be more targeted rather than just happenstance of when we walk into the classroom. Like Mrs. Robinson stated, if you walk in at the beginning of the classroom, you're going to see DOK-1 because the teacher's giving direct instruction, and if you wait until the end of the period or the middle of the period, you'll see collaboration, et cetera, and more deeper learning.

[00:51:45] We're asking that teachers and administrators have a goal for their year-end evaluations that support our middle school focus on deeper learning and one LCPS goals of rigorous teacher and learning. Next slide.

[00:52:01] At this time school level leaders will continue to be giving the autonomy to place students in honors level courses in a way that meets the needs of their community. During this school year LCPS will continue to support the various models of honors implementation at the middle level by continuing to monitor growth data.

[00:52:19] Next slide. We continue collaborating with professional learning and the content offices as others in teaching and learning to conduct targeted learning walks. Content offices are learning around

Karen Hess's Rigor by Design, so all contents are joining us in this work.

[00:52:39] Schools, along with division-level resources, will provide targeted and differentiated professional development around rigor. And we are embedding rigor in discussions in the lesson planning stages of each professional learning community. And that, we have found, is very, very important because it doesn't just happen in the classroom, it happens at the planning level. So the rigor discussions are happening there. Next slide. One thing that we may do is explore cluster grouping for gifted students. We are going to continue monitoring access to honors and advanced courses

[00:53:16] at every middle school. And like I mentioned before, we're going to focus on rigor at every middle school through the school's school improvement plan, teacher goal setting, and school administrator evaluation setting just to clarify the last bullet uh it really this level of accountability isn't about pointing out flaws but rather it's about improving teacher performance and ensuring student engagement and rigorous learning experiences and with that we're open to questions and we have principals in the audience as well if you'd like to ask them

[00:53:49] thank you all right thank you really appreciate the overview uh all i've got i'm gonna go first on this one. I've got a bunch of questions. When we talk about, you know, statistical significance or, you know, one or two point difference versus five point difference, I think I've taken just enough statistics classes to be dangerous. It's got to depend on your sample size, right? I mean, it can't be a blanket statement where one or two points is not significant, but five points is.

[00:54:25] I think it has to depend on whether you're just comparing two individual students or comparing two classrooms or comparing a third of the division to another third of the division. So, I mean, is it really a blanket statement from the vendor that we should never consider differences of one or two points in CGPs to be significant? Or is there some amount of nuance there? And I'm just thinking about during the previous information item when we were really scrutinizing two or three point differences between math and reading or between tier two

[00:55:00] or tier three support, so yes, in some cases when we're looking at two-point differences in the CGP averages between the traditional or heterogeneous models, it may seem small, but we're seeing that consistent small difference year over year over year.

[00:55:21] So at some point, I have to think that that gets harder and harder to ignore. So I'd appreciate it if you could speak into at what point, if we keep seeing, even if it's only one or two points, if we keep seeing it over and over again, we have to start taking that seriously at some point, right? Like we can't just wait until there's a five-point difference if we're seeing it consistently. So thinking about your question, there's a difference between research that says if you look at salaries and you have millions of people, you can find a statistically significant difference between a person who makes \$50,000

[00:55:55] dollars and a person who makes fifty thousand and fifty dollars. It's statistically significant if you have millions of people because the chances of that being the same, the idea is that you can do a statistical test. Now is there a significant difference in having fifty more dollars of salary fifty thousand compared to fifty dollars? That's what's called a real world practical meaningful difference. Meaning if you and I start the school year with the same achievement percentile of 70 and you grow up the 51st percentile and I grow up the 50th percentile,

[00:56:31] it may take five or six years for us to separate from 70 to where you get to a 72 or 73. You can see the difference, but a teacher wouldn't necessarily see an instructional difference between us over those first few years. A five-point difference in growth may create a separation where you get to the 75th or 77th or 78th achievement percentile, and a teacher can see that we're performing at different levels. So it's the difference between with a large enough sample size, you can find a statistical difference with a statistical test, but a practitioner or someone

[00:57:09] looking at those two individuals wouldn't see a difference in performance. Like an SOL assessment, you may have an SOL scale score before they were converted of 400 compared to 405. The idea of getting an additional question correct on a 50 item assessment, you may not actually be able to see a difference in performance in classrooms. So statistically significant is important. The idea is the number of years you have to replicate that to actually see separation, maybe three, four,

[00:57:41] five, six years. So it's meaningful. The idea is that when you think of a major program and a shift in practice, the question from a school board perspective is, is it worth a major shift to get a minor difference or a minor change is the question. So it's not from the vendors saying, it's not the vendors saying, given a recommendation about one model being more effective. They're saying, if you're looking at the impact on students, 55th conditional growth percentile creates a separation more quickly between students who have the same starting point.

[00:58:17] Okay, that's helpful. And so we now, year two of looking into this, we have twice as much data as we did last year. And so I don't know, like I said, I don't know at what point we get to that three or five year mark and we say, okay, we're seeing the same thing every year. But I'm definitely seeing the same thing in the FY23 data as I saw in the FY22 data. So the consensus in the

[00:58:49] data seems to be growing, at least for me. One of the things I had asked for to be included in this was, if we had it, what the data looked like specifically for students identified as gifted.

[00:59:06] So I wanted to see whether that data was available, or I don't see it in the presentation, but I wanted to see if we have that data or we can put it together. I wanted to see what the difference looked like for for that cohort specifically between the uh the different honors models we have an initial report without any analysis so if you just want to look at broad numbers we could talk about that now would you like to see we could project them sure and then we could make sure it's uploaded into board docs okay that's fine um so we did the research office helped us by looking at a cross-section of specialized learners as they describe them

[00:59:41] looking at our english learners looking at our iep students economically disadvantaged as well is gifted. So Dr. Talley, I don't want to put you on the spot, but this is your chart. Would you mind walking us through what we're looking at here? So as Mr. Slevin had explained, you remember the previous model would have had it broken out by like grade level or the actual math assessment they were taking. This is the same data by model based upon whether that we identified them in the CIS as English learners, students of IPs, economically disadvantaged, and gifted. And you

[01:00:16] see there for example for gifted for blended you see it's the 52nd condition growth percentile 51.8 rounded up and it's right at 50 a little above 52 for heterogeneous and 53 for traditional and again there are slight differences there and I understand what Mrs. Sorokin is saying I mean there are consistent differences of a few points sure statistically that matters but if you're seeing over time slight differences there what is it telling us so this is the data that you recommended or you requested, and you see different

levels of growth depending upon the student group and whether there are any differences based upon the model they're in, and that is reading.

[01:00:58] So this is for reading, the one that's up now? Okay. And that's math. And you see the same data for math.

[01:01:24] And, okay, I will, I'm going to open it up to questions while I take a little time to process this. But the last question I had was when, Mr. Martinez, when you talked about looking into cluster grouping for gifted students, could you elaborate on exactly what that means or what's being proposed? So cluster grouping, and Mr. Slevin can jump in, cluster grouping is where you take gifted students, and instead of putting them in a spectrum class, as we all know that they're all in there together and they're tracked together, you actually, research shows that if you sprinkle students into academic honors, depending on what model you have,

[01:02:03] so there's four or five gifted students together in a classroom uh that they benefit more than if they were just isolated or sheltered uh so we're exploring that to see if that will work i we haven't started that exploration um and i haven't i haven't partnered with teaching and learning yet on that uh but that's not on top of our minds based on what research shows i just would add just be careful with language i believe mr martinez said instead of we are not making any plans to change spectrum right now in addition to giving guidance to schools on how to specifically schedule gifted students if they're in a blended

[01:02:42] or heterogeneous model, making sure that we're being thoughtful about the placement of students in the schedule. Are they in a class with additional students that have been identified as gifted? So in addition to our spectrum offering, trying to think about ways we could strategically schedule students because research shows that there's a benefit from that.

[01:03:02] So that's something we've talked about early on in this process, looking about the needs of our gifted learners in our middle school. And so as this continues to come up, we realize it's an additional step we could possibly take. And the reason why, just for some context, the reason why I had asked for that data that you showed is, I know one of the theories or methodologies behind the heterogeneous model as the rising tide lifting all boats.

[01:03:35] And when we started this discussion two years ago, it really wasn't focused on the differences between the three models or intending to make any changes there. It was just talking about are honors classes in middle schools rigorous enough in general?

[01:03:54] And is there enough of a distinction or enough rigor in them to engage our gifted learners or the students who need it. Because in middle school, for the academic classes, that's all they've got.

[01:04:09] There's no advanced placement or DE or anything else like when you get up to the high school level. But that's why I asked for that data, just to make sure, okay, regardless of what it is for the student body at large, what is the difference in model doing to the gifted students who are in those classrooms?

[01:04:33] So that's interesting data. I think there's, I want to take a closer look at that, but it seems like, especially in math, there's quite a large gap between the models for gifted students in particular. I've gone on long enough. Ms. Ogadugbe. Thank you.

[01:04:50] I had a question, again, about the numbers. So is there, in terms of the ends in each type of model, are they fairly evenly distributed or do we have, because these are locally determined how they're

approaching this, do we have a higher number of middle schools that are operating on one or another model?

[01:05:13] I can certainly ask some of the principals that are in the audience. We see, I don't know the exact number or percentage of how many are heterogeneous versus blended versus traditional, but we have found that in some communities, it actually hurts students and it's not equitable uh when you have such a small number of students that would choose academic versus honors when 90% of the school would be honors then those students will be tracked and it really would be detrimental to their own learning which is why the decision was made for those schools over a decade ago uh the principals continue to analyze that um but I

[01:05:51] can get you the exact numbers of what schools are or what model I think it would just be helpful in understanding the differences between the groups what the differences and sizes of those groups are And I wanted to ask, when I walked in, I said, what was the exciting thing on the agenda tonight?

[01:06:10] And the thought was that it was this topic. So I wanted to ask, if you don't mind, and we're over time, but the committee's mine. So at 6, we've got another committee. I'm fine with starting late. Yeah, that's okay.

[01:06:26] I'm fine with that. So I wanted to ask if there's any feedback from those who are in attendance with here today around this topic or things that you think would be helpful for us as committee and board members to be thinking about on this topic, because I think this is the thing that brought a lot of people here.

[01:06:48] So open mic night. Thank you, Mr. Waldman. So I think mine was a comment and a question specifically towards Dr. Tyler in the presentation that while at my school we do have heterogeneous classrooms, we have heterogeneous classrooms in science, in mathematics, and in history.

[01:07:24] But we don't have heterogeneous classrooms in mathematics. Well, did I misspeak? English, science, history are heterogeneous. Mathematics is not. Mathematics is placed by content.

[01:07:41] So those aren't heterogeneous other than the fact that those are the classes that they were placed in based on the scores that they received on MAP assessments and from teacher recommendations. So I think I'm not sure the purpose for including that into the presentation because the model is the same across the board for mathematics.

[01:08:05] Is that true at all schools or just at that middle school? For math, it's true at all schools. Okay, got it. That's helpful. Thank you. So really, I mean, just curious, because there's a lot of folks here.

[01:08:30] Any other thoughts that people have that you wanted to share? Again, like a unique opportunity, open mic night. Thank you. Hi, I'm Bridget Buechler. I'm the principal at Trailside Middle School. So this is my 15th year. Before I was at Trailside, I was at Eagle Ridge.

[01:08:47] And as Mr. Martinez and Mrs. Robinson talked about, every community is different, and I think that's why you see the different models. So where, in my experience, with selecting honors or academic, it's always, historically, it's been parent choice.

[01:09:08] And what I've seen in the two middle schools that I've been here in Ashburn is that it was quite a separation between, it was two-thirds honors, one-third academic between my experience at both

schools.

[01:09:28] And what that impacted them was a lot of tracking of the students who were in the academic sections. I did make a shift, and this was right after the pandemic, where we looked at much more teacher recommendation and data points for teacher recommendations into honors level.

[01:09:48] So I moved more into a traditional model because it was the right decision for my community. And since then, it has shifted where I have more one-third in honors level and two-thirds in academic.

[01:10:05] But we also shifted our language, too, because academic has a negative connotation to it for many families and looked at it more as grade level instead of academic and honors.

[01:10:22] And we looked at multiple of data points. I think the main thing in all of this, though, and just want to emphasize, is that rigor is in every single classroom. in addition to my program students and my ID and autism, is that you want to be able to make sure that you're scaffolding so students can be successful at every achievement level for them.

[01:10:55] So, appreciate you listening to us. Thank you. Thank you so much. Okay, any additional discussion or comments? Okay, and I did not know that we had a committee after this, So my apologies for who we're holding up.

[01:11:19] With that, we'll move to item six on the agenda, new business, is there any new business tonight? Seeing none, we are adjourned. Thank you.



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