

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Academic Achievement Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday February 10, 2022 at 8:00 AM

Location

Join Zoom Meeting <https://vpcs-org.zoom.us/j/3161659740>

Committee Members Present

A. Clark (remote), A. Errichetti (remote), J. Crowell (remote), L. Doherty (remote), R. Sela (remote)

Committee Members Absent

D. Janes, R. Romano

Guests Present

N. Gauthier (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

R. Sela called a meeting of the Academic Achievement Committee of Veritas Preparatory Charter School to order on Thursday Feb 10, 2022 at 8:09 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

L. Doherty made a motion to approve the minutes from Academic Achievement Committee Meeting on 01-13-22.

A. Errichetti seconded the motion.

The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

II. 8th Grade Academic Data Review

A. 8th Grade Academic Data Comparison

Amy will present key take aways re: 8th grade data 2022.

8th graders are struggling the most because they had key years missed due to COVID. We are now focused on what's really going on and how can we help?

Academic Data:

ELA Anet

2019 56% Anet Average

2021 50%

Not a huge difference. Were not that far off right now even though we're not tracking exactly the same.

Math Anet

2019 63%

2021 44%

That is a huge difference and we feel it and we can tell. Kids are struggling more than they ever have before. Missing those foundational skills means we will need math intervention supports set up in the High School.

Tier 2 Reading Interventions

51 8th graders have a mild to severe decoding deficit.

6 students need a significant reading intervention because they are on a 1-3rd grade level

From the MA DESE website:

What causes decoding problems?

Difficulties with fluent work reading can stem from different underlying causes. Lack of knowledge of the sounds associated with letters and letter patterns will result in weak

decoding which can contribute to difficulties with fluent work reading, and in turn, often cause problems with comprehension.

Ann asks if there was no pandemic would this be happening?

Amy says yes but one silver lining of the pandemic is that it has forced us to reimagine the way we are approaching teaching. For math we definitely believe we would be in a better place.

Rebecca says this is happening everywhere, not just at Veritas. The ruthlessness of the cumulative nature of math makes it very difficult to miss any year especially 6th and 7th.

Amy describes our plan to address this loss of learning. It will take years for schools in general to get back to "normal". The mask mandate is being lifted.

Culture Data:

Discipline pre-pandemic was really good. Currently, 8th grades are right in the middle of where we are seeing discipline incidents at the school overall. We have found out so much about kids and their needs, interacting with one another, bus issues, social media, etc. post-pandemic. Our suspension numbers are no higher than they were in 2019 but if you look there are a lot of 8th graders on this list where we typically did not see that in the past. We are now navigating a whole new set of things that are effecting our kids and their behavior on a daily basis.

Rebecca asks what is your counseling/culture staff look like?

Amy says we have 3 school counselors and 2 interns. We have a Director of Culture and two people on the team. We have added one more person and are looking to hire two more culture members one of which will shift to the High School with 8th graders.

Ann asked if suspensions were out of school.

Amy said yes. OSS were about 2% and ISS were 1.5%.

Lisa asks if we have any idea how this lines up with other schools.

Amy says she doesn't know exactly but she has heard that other places like Longmeadow are also struggling.

Rebecca says they are seeing a really big difference in 7th graders at Springfield Prep academically and socially. They are impacted even more than the 5th and 6th graders.

Amy says we've seen a lot of unsafe social media use whether it be sexualized content or violent content/threats of physical harm.

Ann wonders if this is something that can be remedied or if this will stick with these kids as they move forward.

Amy doesn't think all is lost but she thinks it will take the first half of 9th grade to get them back on track. The High School team has put together a Student Leadership Team to help make decisions about the day to day operations of the high school. They have an excellent, thoughtful presentation about what they want to see in the high school. They have matured since the group started so its exciting to think about what is possible for the high school.

What we're doing:

February Break Academy (math intervention)

Hiring additional math interventionists to work with 8th grade (hired one that will become a teacher next year)

Hire additional culture team member to focus on 8th grade

Intentional planning with high school team

Ann asks if teachers are discouraged by any of this?

Amy says it ebbs and flows. There were two buckets of people returning teachers and new teachers. Some panicked and we've had some turn over in 8th grade. It's been a challenge.

Rebecca asks about teacher recruitment.

Amy says it's hard people are so day to day. She doesn't have them same pulse on it as she usually does. Certain teams are fairing better than others. Some folks will be going to the High School. Our biggest need next year, she thinks, will be ELA lead teachers which is different than what we've seen in the past. No math teachers have resigned and 4 ELA teachers have resigned. We are currently fully staffed. We have tapped into a great group of paraprofessionals from the district who are doing great as lead teachers.

Rebecca confirms that in the example of why charter school flexibility is good is because we have more leeway to hire teachers like paraprofessionals that maybe haven't passed their MTEs but we can hire them without and support them through the process.

Amy is also thinking about the mask mandate. Springfield has the opportunity to extend theirs. She not sure how our teachers are going to feel about this.

Rebecca thinks its very wait and see. Masks have made adults feel very safe. Now that we're no longer doing all the things that made people feel safe (contact tracing, etc.) it will be interesting to see what will happen over the next several weeks. At Springfield Prep they will be using the next few weeks to take the pulse of their staff and see what's

happening with students. With masks the burden has been on schools when the transmission has been happening outside of school. To our discussion about social interaction, facial cues are so important. Also just because the mask mandate goes away doesn't mean people can't wear masks. This is very complicated.

III. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
R. Sela