APPROVED

Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Academic Achievement Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday December 14, 2023 at 8:30 AM

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

Committee Members Present
A. Errichetti (remote), L. Doherty (remote), R. Sela (remote)

Committee Members Absent
M. Freeman

Guests Present
A. Clark (remote), J. Swan (remote), N. Gauthier (remote), R. Romano (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 Dec 14, 2023 at 8:36 AM.

C.

Approve Minutes

L. Doherty made a motion to approve the minutes from Academic Achievement Committee Meeting on 09-14-23.
A. Errichetti seconded the motion.
The committee **VOTED** to approve the motion.

D. Approve Minutes

A. Errichetti made a motion to approve the minutes from Academic Achievement Committee Meeting on 11-09-23.
L. Doherty seconded the motion.
The committee **VOTED** to approve the motion.

II. Academic Achievement

A. FY 24 Goal Review with Calendar

Amy shares the FY24 goals that the committee discussed recently. She also added a planning calendar that has monthly topics as well as potential presenters.

Rebecca wonders about presenters attending Board and committee meetings and having an understanding of the audience they are presenting to.

The committee reviews the planning calendar.

Lisa asks about a second data testing point other than ANet?

Amy says yes, MAP testing. We don't talk about it very much but Amy will think about this topic. We do MAP testing twice per year.

Rachel thinks about MAP testing as growth testing (measuring a students' growth over time) - could be used as a historical look back. Maybe at some point an exercise could be to look at the MAP beginning, MAP middle, and SGPs.

Amy says it could be a good project because MAP growth in an area doesn't always translate to improved MCAS scores.

Lisa asks Rachel to remind her about the third party we hired to build out our data dashboards.

Rachel says yes we had a third party called Open Architects build some data dashboards that we can share a future meeting and we also hired a Data Analyst, Jules Tucher.

Lisa would love that to be a topic/presenter for a meeting in the future.

Rachel says this person is not yet analyzing our academic data (doing more of a clean up of current data and getting used to our systems) but when they get there, we will bring them in.

Lisa said as she listens it seems there is a need to build the infrastructure for data analysis and presentation; making sure the data is analyzed in a way that informs our goals and the attainment of those - she is hoping the data analyst could do this.

Rachel says maybe Jules attends these committee meetings so they can begin to learn what academic data we discuss here and use it as a learning opportunity to move toward the analysis of academic data on a higher level next year.

Rachel talks about the other data points that they measure in between ANet assessments.

Rachel says as she looks at the planning calendar there are some great folks lined up to present to this committee but she's thinking about the rest of those Board members missing out on this great information. She is thinking about the other committees and how they should be structured moving forward.

Rebecca says she needs to be thinking about the headlines (Board share-out) after these presenters attend so she can help make sure the Board members are still receiving the information.

Lisa asks if we have a planning calendar like this for the Board?

Rachel says we don't have one - what we do at the Board meetings are naturally mapped by approvals and votes that happen annually (i.e. budget approval). Rachel and Ann will make one for the Board meetings.

The committee also talks about inviting any Board member who wants to to join the academic achievement meetings where there are presenters.

B. Curriculum Purchases

Amy informs the committee that there is a potential that we will be spending more money on curriculum over the next few years than ever before, We have always written our own curriculum with help from consultants here and there. During the pandemic, we did purchase some curriculum but over the years our curriculum has lost its rigor. Our lesson plans are looking more like agendas. All of this led Amy to wonder who is writing their own curriculum anymore? It is very large organizations that have a team dedicated to this. Amy thinks it is time to purchase a curriculum. We have started this in ELA and are looking into Wit & Wisdom. She doesn't think we will be able to achieve academic success without a new curriculum. We will have to buy all new texts - the first year of

implementation is very pricey. We're also looking at a new curriculum for Math at the High School. For Science there are a lot free lessons but you need to materials to go with those lesson plans. For History, there is no curriculum to purchase.

$70,000(low end) to $154,000 (high end) annually (at least in the first few years) is what we are looking at spending on curriculum moving forward and that's more then we ever have.

Lisa asks if we make that investment, do we then have that curriculum for several years?

Amy says yes, we need to buy the texts and they last for a few years and then the online resources are not that pricey but we want printed materials for students as well.

Lisa says, in theory, don't we want four years of curriculum - like for the middle school?

Amy says we want to pilot the new curriculum in one grade next year.

Rebecca asks about how early college plays a role in the curriculum we choose?

Rebecca says we may want to wait to purchase until 2025 but we can pilot next year.

Amy thinks it will take us years to get good at implementing the curriculum. Back to Rebecca's thought on early college impacting our curriculum choice, this is why we're leaning towards Wit & Wisdom because it makes students think more.

Ann asks what will we get from purchasing a curriculum that we don't already have?

Amy says our lesson plans right now are just about the what they need to teach and not any deeper than that. We need more depth for us to move the needle for students. We need to know what students need to know at the end of a lesson and how teachers get them there.

Rachel says there is too much room for interpretation.

Rebecca says there is a bigger Board teaching point here - what has changed in the field of education that has led to the need for us to have High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) that are aligned to the standards? This isn't just Veritas making the decision for our school but also a shift that is happening in education everywhere. If we have the HQIMs, then we can put time and effort into the how we get students to the outcomes. Also, East Longmeadow is using Wit & Wisdom - maybe we could visit.

Ann asks about how locked in we are once we choose a curriculum?

Amy says 3-5 years - she doesn't see us not liking the new curriculum.

Lisa asks how teachers will feel about a very structured curriculum?

Amy says our curriculum is currently pretty structured - it won't be a huge shift for them.

Rebecca talks about including the School Improvement Team in these discussions so they can provide the teacher perspective.

C. 8th Grade Math Support

Amy noticed that our learners are completely dependent on their teachers - we need to teach our students how to think and not just the content.

The gap in our high school and middle school math is huge. Our 9th graders are struggling.

Two great things going on related to math supports:
1.) Department of Education is offering free online tutoring (12 weeks). We will be taking advantage of this.
2.) Working with a consultant to revise our 5-8 math so students can be prepared for high school math.

III. Other Business

A. Debrief Principal's Report to the Board in November

Rebecca said everyone appreciated hearing from the Principals.

Ann agrees. The Principals did a very good job presenting the information. They both seemed very invested in the success of the students and the school. For many of the Board members who don't hear this academic information as much as the committee members do, it was very valuable.

Amy asks if there is anything that should be followed up on?

Ann said nothing in particular but she thinks its important that they talk to the Board on a regular basis.

Rachel says she thinks the right amount of times for the Principals to report to the Board would be twice a year (maybe May and November).

The committee talks about Special Education as an area that the Board could learn more about.

Ann asks if the number of special education students is typically larger in urban schools?

Jonathan and Amy says yes - often students in these areas are mislabeled.

Rachel says in Springfield there is a lot of social services involved in a student's education and there is a tendency from social service folks to ask for special education services right away when they hear a student is struggling without knowing what that means and looks like. There are a lot of misconceptions about special education. Folks sometimes think that special education is better because it's individualized instruction but really it pulls students out of the general population and the classroom education that their peers are receiving. Can become problematic. At Veritas, we have some great emerging leaders in the area of special education but also some very novice teachers.

IV. 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 9:35 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
R. Sela

Documents used during the meeting

- Academic Achievement Committee Goals for FY2024.docx