

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Academic Achievement Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday May 9, 2024 at 8:30 AM

Location

Join Zoom Meeting <https://vpcs-org.zoom.us/j/3131719731>

Committee Members Present

A. Errichetti (remote), L. Doherty (remote)

Committee Members Absent

M. Freeman, R. Sela

Guests Present

A. Clark (remote), N. Gauthier (remote), R. Romano (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

A. Errichetti called a meeting of the Academic Achievement Committee of Veritas Preparatory Charter School to order on Thursday May 9, 2024 at 8:37 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

II. Academic Achievement

A. Wit & Wisdom

Amy informs the committee that we were noticing that the ELA curriculum we had been using lost a sense of coherence, it wasn't aligned to the standards, it wasn't rigorous across the board. We began the conversation this time last year and we ultimately decided to implement a new ELA curriculum in 5-8. We did a lot of research and picked Wit & Wisdom which is a significant investment but we are very excited about it.

Amy talks about the article highlighting the benefits of a weak curriculum and the way it can be a barrier for students and how a strong curriculum can make good teachers even better.

Amy shares the Wit & Wisdom ppt. Kali Vadnais, ELA DCI at the middle school, shared this ppt with the team to discuss the launch of the new curriculum. Kali narrated over the history of our curriculum and why it worked before and does not work anymore. Wit & Wisdom is rigorous but achievable. It has embedded supports for special needs students.

Rachel talks about the costs associated:

- Professional development/capacity building (approx. \$15,000). Rachel feels really good about bringing in professionals to provide PD to our teachers around this curriculum, we've never had that before.
- Buying the actual curriculum books (i.e. novels) (Approx. \$59,000)
- We hope to use some of this year's surplus to purchase the books and pay up front as opposed to pay over three years.
- Rachel will review the numbers with Lynne and we will bring the final number to finance committee.

Rachel talks about how teacher burn out has been related to curriculum in the sense that writing and revising our own curriculum has been overwhelming for teachers. This new curriculum will also help with retention.

Lisa asks if we have talked to other schools who are using this curriculum?

Amy says we have read about it but not talked to other schools. One thing we learned is there is a lot of guidance for teachers so we will need to learn where to focus and what to use as additional resources.

Lisa encourages us to talk to other schools currently using the curriculum.

Ann asks how long are we locked into this curriculum?

Rachel says we are buying the license for three years and plan to stick with it for the foreseeable future.

Amy mentions we are looking at some curriculum changes for the high school but those resources are open and free.

B. High School MCAS - Biology

Amy informs the committee about some current staffing changes:

High School Principal is on paternity leave.

Bianca left her role as DCI at the high school for TFA.

Shannon, Director of Talent, has resigned from her position.

Amy shares some preliminary MCAS results. Passing MCAS is a high school requirement. We have our 9th graders take the Biology MCAS and they need to pass a 10th grade ELA and Math before they graduate.

Last June, 9th graders took Bio and 75 % passed. This February, anyone who didn't pass retook the Biology test. Anyone who didn't pass in February will re-take again in June. We learned a lot about the first re-take. 10th graders are taking a test on a subject that they took in 9th grade.

The actual results are still embargoed but Amy shared highlights:

- Some students disenrolled since last year, so that's why they did not pass.
- 4 more kids passed the Biology test in February.
- Amy is putting together a 2 week boot camp for the rest of the students who need to take the second re-take in June.
- Our students who didn't pass on the first re-take struggled most with Ecology and Genetics.
- A passing score is 470 and most of the kids are very close, one student was only one point away.

Lisa asks what happens if they don't pass in June?

Amy says there is a waiver but they will have four additional opportunities (February of 11th and 12th grades and June of 11th and 12th grades). We are staying on top of it which is the most important. She also mentions that we are changing our science curriculum next year to one called OpenSciEd and that should also help our students prepare for the Biology MCAS in the future. 75% of students passing on the first try is good but we want them all to pass the first time.

Ann asks if the tests are all done electronically?

Amy says yes and all students take the test on June 3rd and 4th. Amy shares what she has developed for their review unit (boot camp).

C. High School MCAS- ELA

10th graders took ELA MCAS in March and we have preliminary results. The results are rolled up by content/question. It doesn't give us a sense on how each individual student performed yet but it does show how we did on certain standards compared to the state.

Amy shares highlights:

- We don't have essay results yet because it has not been scored yet.
- We need to make sure our curriculum addresses certain areas that were scored low. We are adopting a new ELA curriculum in the high school that should address most of these gaps. It will help students prepare to take tests like this as well as provide more practice with writing. We are using this data to make sure we are addressing the low scores moving forward.
- We also beat the state in some areas i.e. sentence structure.

Lisa says she remembers last year we were excited about preliminary scores and then we got the writing scores and it was crushing.

Amy says that did happen in the middle school last year. This is the first time we've had high schoolers take the test. We have done so much work with writing at the middle school this year, so we will be very surprised if the results are not at least better than last year. We have also seen major improvement in writing on the most recent ANet.

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 9:19 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
A. Errichetti

Documents used during the meeting

- curriculum-literacy - May Meeting.docx

- Intro to Wit & Wisdom - May Meeting.pdf