

MSA Academics Committee Meeting - Notes  
Wednesday, October 7, 2015, 8:00am, Rm 10

**In attendance:**

Romelle Pornschloegl, John Gawarecki, Steve Pullar (Science), Hannah Kostichka (SPED), Cathy Moos (SPED), Maria Sustic (Spanish), Maggie Burggraaff (English), Molly Molitor (PE/Health), Jen Heydt-Nelson (Art), Noelle Haland (Chair)

**Discussion:**

Our main goal was to lay out some of the issues that our committee will be working on for this school year and start prioritizing.

1. Our authorizer has requested the creation of a documented school-wide curriculum map & collaboration plan. There were various concerns and questions:
  - a. How will this look and how will we implement it?
  - b. Admin will do documentation (Romelle)
  - c. Some concern about needing flexibility/freedom to alter sequencing of curriculum to different times of the year or change parts altogether (eg. if students have mastered material faster than expected)
  - d. We need horizontal & vertical collaboration, ie. clear planning within departments and among different departments. Examples are certain science concepts dovetailing with certain math concepts or MLA format being used in health classes concurrently with English classes.
2. Professional development
  - a. Teachers need more days than currently offered for professional development days (only 2 now versus more in the past).
  - b. Suggestion to return to "Department Days"
  - c. Suggestion to investigate "flexible learning days" for students, eg. working from home online for most students for these days
  - d. Desire voiced to return to "quality over quantity" in number of days students are present in seats (like during Paul Simone's tenure)
  - e. How many days of students at school are required?
3. Discussion of "final grade" versus semester grades and of students repeating one semester or the full year of a course
  - a. Romelle suggests we stop using a "final grade" and only give semester grades because it confuses parents and students.
  - b. If students do poorly in semester 2 but did better in semester 1, their "final grades" are averages of both semesters, which paints a distorted picture of how well they mastered

- the course's material, especially for courses that build on content throughout the year (most courses).
- c. If we give a student credit for a year-long course (ie. with a "final grade" above failing, even if the semester 2 grade was an F), we cannot force him or her to repeat the entire course. We can only strongly make that suggestion, which is often unpopular among students & families in this situation (Romelle).
  - d. Data Driven Instruction can help us make strong recommendations that families may be more likely to accept (Steve).
  - e. Should we investigate identifying year-long courses as 2 semester long "courses?"
  - f. A student's repetition of only one semester (often semester 2, as this is when material is often more difficult) would be highly problematic in some disciplines (eg. English and Spanish)
    - i. For Spanish, taking so much time off from the language has been linked with poor achievement
    - ii. Students may have holes in content delivery, especially if there is movement of parts of curriculum from one semester to another (eg. English, Maggie)
  - g. Curriculum mapping will be crucial for clearly communicating with parents.
  - h. Would there be an appeals process for families? (Steve)
  - i. NEXT STEPS:
    - i. Can we define "failing grade" as a C- or below? (*ACTION ITEM: Noelle will investigate with MDE.*)
    - ii. Suggestion to table discussion until January 2016, so that any potential changes affect 2016/17 school year.
4. World's Best Workforce
- a. Document outlining movement on last year's goals is due December 1, 2015.
  - b. Some confusion about where WBWF was left after Jenn Reichl and Dan Keller left MSA
  - c. *NEXT STEPS:*
    - i. Noelle will contact members of last year's WBWF Taskforce (from old email chain).
    - ii. John and Noelle will share any notes or documents about WBWF.
    - iii. John will investigate reporting requirements.
5. Science graduation requirements
- a. John is concerned that MSA does not require 4 years of science & that our requirements for Biology, Chemistry and Physics are not that much "better" than many other schools.
  - b. Our science sequence starts earlier than other schools.

- c. Wrapped into curriculum sequencing and PSEO -- students must take a PSEO science class if they finish with Physics in 11th grade
6. Discussion of possible prerequisites for AP courses and PSEO
    - a. Many of this year's AP Chemistry students have dropped the class, even though it's now a "3 semester" course this year - are they underprepared having not taken "regular" Chemistry before? Should we consider prerequisites for AP Chemistry? AP Biology? (Steve)
    - b. Should there be coursework or grade prerequisites or other eligibility standards for PSEO?
      - i. Concern that some PSEO courses are of lower rigor than MSA's offerings and/or that some students take PSEO courses even though they didn't pass MSA's equivalent
      - ii. Other districts limit to top 10% of students, though Romelle is not suggesting we do that.
      - iii. If a PSEO course has the name of the course (eg. "Physics" or "Spanish") in its title, then MSA must give credit for it, even if the course's rigor is lower than MSA's offering. (*ACTION ITEM: John will investigate a court ruling within the last ten years from Hibbing, MN, which has bearing.*)

**Potential topics for future discussion:**

- Data Driven Instruction (DDI)
- Expansion of AP and/or CIS offerings
- Waivers
- Teacher/Staff development opportunities
- Enrollment of upper HS grades -- Retention & Incoming Transfer HS students

**Next meetings:**

Wednesday, 11/4/15, 7:45am (room TBA) (focus = WBWF)

Wednesday, 11/18/15, 7:45am (room TBA)

Wednesday, 12/2/15, 7:45am (room TBA)

**\*\* Standing meeting will be the first Wednesday at 7:45am. \*\***