

BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT 64

Minutes of the Committee-of-the-Whole on 21st Century Learning
held at 6:30 p.m. January 23, 2012
Jefferson School
8200 Greendale Avenue, Niles, IL 60714

Board President John Heyde called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. Other Board members present were Anthony Borrelli, Sharon Lawson, Scott Zimmerman, Eric Uhlig and Pat Fioretto. Dan Collins joined the meeting a few minutes late. Also present were Superintendent Philip Bender, Assistant Superintendents Dr. Sandra Stringer and Diane Betts, Business Manager Becky Allard, Director of Pupil Services James Even, Director of Technology Terri Bresnahan, Director of Facility Management Scott Mackall, Public Information Coordinator Bernadette Tram and members of the public.

Mr. Heyde stated the purpose of the meeting was a presentation on 21st Century Learning by Diane Betts and Terri Bresnahan.

The District 64 Strategic Plan aligns with 21st Century Learning. This is not a new initiative. By 2014, students will be held accountable to more rigorous State standards and the District must prepare students for that.

Twenty-first century learning involves active, engaged learning. It is not only about teachers and textbooks. It prepares students to be college and career ready in a rapidly changing and complex world, and will enable them to have more satisfying personal lives, more engaging civic lives and more productive professional lives. It focuses on how facts and ideas connect using higher level thinking and problem solving rather than rote memorization of facts.

Twenty-first century learning helps students develop a deeper understanding in core subject areas by integrating themes into those areas, such as global awareness, financial, economic and business literacy, civic, health and environmental literacy. Ms. Betts gave an example of how a theme might be woven into a core subject.

The 21st century student must be competent in the 4 C's: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity. Because we live in a technology-rich environment, learners must be able to access and evaluate information, use and manage information from a variety of sources, analyze media, and use technology as a tool to research, organize, and communicate information.

In addition, the 21st century learner must be flexible and adaptable, use feedback effectively, set goals and develop social and emotional skills.

District 64 must provide support systems for 21st century learning, including standards and assessments, curriculum and instruction, professional development for its teachers in this learning model, and excellent learning environments and resources to support technology.

In standards and assessments, learning will change from rote memorization of facts to deeper content knowledge, from passive to active learning, and from assessments driven by No Child Left Behind to multiple measures of mastery.

In curriculum and instruction, learning will shift from units of study to outcome-based learning, from textbook-driven learning to research-driven practices, from learning in isolation to a collaborative approach, and from being teacher-centered to a more student-centered focus.

Professional development has been a one-shot, out of context, independent learning experience, but will become long-term, job-embedded in daily work, and involve learning communities.

In the 21st century, learning environments will move from “my students” thinking to “our students” across grades, schools and District-wide. Students work collaboratively in flexible groups instead of independently. They have equitable access to technology resources and learning extends beyond the four walls of a classroom.

Education experts and politicians agree that our students must be better prepared. There is a national focus to support 21st century learning through Common Core Standards and national curricular organizations. Illinois is also committed to 21st century standards. At the township level, assistant superintendents of the feeder districts and high schools meet to discuss how they can work together to better prepare students and teachers. District 64 purposefully designed its Strategic Plan to lay the foundation for 21st century learning.

Common Core Standards address both the content and cognitive processes students need in order to be successful in the 21st century. Ms. Bresnahan provided background on National Education Technology Standards (NETS) that were developed in 1998 and refreshed in 2007. She described NETS for students, teachers, administrators and technology coaches.

For students, the 4 C's also apply within the context of using technology. In addition, digital citizenship or the ethical use of technology is key. Standards for research and information align with our LRC's, and standards must be developed for what skills students will need to operate ever-changing technology.

Teachers must be held accountable to technology standards as well in order for them to engage and inspire students. They must model digital-age learning for their students, promote and model good digital citizenship and engage in professional growth in the area of technology.

Administrators need to provide visionary leadership and create a learning culture for technology standards. They should also demonstrate good digital citizenship and excellence in their own professional practices with technology.

Technology coaches must have these same standards and become masters of technology knowledge, i.e., they must stay ahead of the newest technology.

Ms. Bresnahan gave an example of how a fourth grade language arts lesson looks using 21st century learning skills.

In District 64, the next steps will include preparing staff to fully implement Common Core Standards and establishing minimum technology proficiency guidelines for them. Professional development practices will continue to be evaluated. The roles and responsibilities of all staff, parents and the community will be examined for how they can support the movement toward 21st century learning.

The new State assessment that will replace the ISAT in 2014 will be an online test for all students beginning in third grade and use extended responses rather than multiple choice questions to test students' deeper knowledge.

The Board inquired about assessing teachers' technology proficiency, differences that parents might expect to see in their children's learning, and how the District will communicate with parents about changes in instruction and learning. District 64 is ahead of the technology curve in many areas compared with other school districts. The Board voiced concerns about technology integration, i.e., all technology need not be viewed as good just for the sake of new technology, and planning for technology purchases should be rational. Instruction should continue to drive technology; technology should not drive instruction.

Mr. Heyde concluded the Committee-of-the-Whole on 21st Century Learning meeting at 7:26 p.m., which was followed by a brief recess before the regular Board of Education meeting.

President

Secretary