

Virtual Curriculum and Achievement Subcommittee Report
Monday, March 4, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

Called for the purpose of discussing for the purpose of an update on and discussion of the Level Up program. This meeting will end by or before 6:30 pm.

Subcommittee Members Present: Member Weinstein (Co-Chair), Member Harding (Co-Chair), Member Hudson

Other School Committee Members Present: Vice Chair Hunter, Member Rachel

Also Present: Dr. Lendozia Edwards, Chief of Academics; Dr. Nicole Gittens, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools; Jennifer Hamilton, Dean of Curriculum and Program, English Language Arts; Dr. Chad Leith, Director of Professional Learning & Leadership; Tanya Milner, Dean of Curriculum and Program, Social Studies; Desiree Phillips, Coordinator for Upper Schools and High School, Office of Student Services.

The meeting started at 5:01 pm. **Co-Chair Weinstein** welcomed the group and began the meeting by reading the call of the meeting and discussing the meeting's objectives.

Co-Chair Weinstein shared the agreements of the meeting's structure which included:

- Speak and listen from the heart (respect)
- Step up/step back (watch airtime)
- Progressive Stacking approach to conversation
- Expect and accept non-closure (work in progress)
- Bike rack (list of things that are important but should be addressed another time)
- Public comment participants three-minute limit to present, after which time they will be muted by the Confidential Secretary.
- If people want to speak again, they will need the chair to call on them and be unmuted.
- The aim is to foster greater back-and-forth, which is valuable for subcommittee meetings

Co-Chair Weinstein shared his enthusiastic support for Level Up as both a parent and a former classroom educator. He passed the floor to Ms. Milner and Ms. Hamilton who have the following slide presentation which can be found on this [website](#).

Highlights of the presentation included:

- As the history of Level Up within the English and history departments
- A comparison of landscapes before and after Level Up's implementation
- History of graduation rates by student population segments
- Students taking AP exams by demographic groups
- 2019-2023 ELA MCAS results of students meeting/exceeding expectations
- Percentage of 11th and 12th grade student taking advanced coursework
- ELA advanced course completion rate SY18/19 - SY22/23
- Professional development opportunities SY23-24

Ms. Hamilton and Ms. Milner shared that prior to the Level Up program, there were glaring inequities in the classroom especially as grades became older. Students were siloed by race and demographics and the ELA honors course was not a true honors classroom experience. Ms. Milner described the current World History classroom experience under Level Up. She noted that students discussed the agency of individual groups, systems of power and oppression, and the importance of elevating all student voices. A quarter of the students in Level Up classes have an IEP and the teachers are happier having thought-partners and the opportunity to build strong student/teacher relationships. In addition, the graduation rate has increased along with the number of AP test takers.

Member Rachel inquired about the MCAS data related to Level Up. Ms. Hamilton noted that the first year of MCAS data highlighted that white students saw the most growth, but that all students are doing better. Both Ms. Hamilton and Ms. Milner noted that all students (including those on IEPs) are eager to participate in AP courses and advanced learning opportunities available at Bunker Hill and Lesley. Ms. Phillips shared highlights of professional development opportunities related to Level Up. She noted positive results of the triad teaching experience, increased collaboration among educators, and student TA opportunities. She noted CPSD's unique landscape and the importance of teachers understanding their biases. Ms. Hamilton highlighted that CPSD is serving as a Level Up role model and that other districts are reaching out to them.

Member Hudson asked about lessons learned and important takeaways regarding implementing Level Up for a math curriculum. The presenters and Dr. Gittens shared the following highlights.

- The unique challenge a math curriculum presents due to the importance of scaffolding and building upon the mastery of lower curriculum levels.
- The importance of professional development opportunities and allowing teachers ample time to work through curriculum and preparation time.
- The challenges of coordinating high school schedules.
- Importance of teachers presenting a united front in identifying rigor to skeptical caretakers.
- The district's adoption of a common math curriculum (Illustrative Math) will help support the implementation of a Level Up curriculum.

Co-Chair Harding shared his experiences with Level Up as both a parent and as a School Committee member. He highlighted the instrumental work of the Committee in 2014. He encouraged the presenters to continue their partnership with the School Committee in seeking out resources.

Vice Chair Hunter inquired about hiring a consulting firm to offer instruction in the co-teaching model. She noted that the firm could begin its work with the district to start in the summer as part of this budget cycle. Ms. Phillips highlighted her expertise in this area and, with additional time and space to do so, she advocated for her role as a trainer. Dr. Leith expressed his appreciation for Vice Chair Hunter's support but shared that the CPSD sometimes overlooks local expertise.

Co-Chair Harding highlighted the success of the Level Up program and believes that this story should be more widely shared. He suggested that a short presentation at the School Committee level might be warranted.

Co-Chair Weinstein expressed his appreciation to the presenters and closed the meeting. (6:35 p.m.)