

2018-2019 COMMUNITY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Audit Report

May 20, 2019

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Margaret Kahdeman – Past President
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Michelle Lawniczak – McKenzie
Katie Lee – Administrator for Curriculum & Instruction
Elena Ryan – Harper/Romona Assistant Principal
Lindsay Shea – Central
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Introduction

The Community Review Committee (CRC) “serves in an advisory capacity to Wilmette Public Schools District 39 Board of Education to research specific topics that will lead to improvements in teaching, learning or managing the District’s operations.” Among the recommendations made by the 2015-2016 CRC, which were embraced by the District 39 Board of Education, was that future CRCs conduct audits of its reports three years after their completion. The 2015-2016 CRC also developed both a template for future CRCs to follow when writing its reports and a rubric for future CRCs to follow when auditing its reports. In addition to presenting the results of its audit of the 2012-2013 report, the 2016-2017 CRC created both an improved template and an improved rubric for use by future CRCs. The purpose of this audit report is to gauge whether recommendations set forth in the 2014-2015 CRC report entitled, “Cultivating Growth Minded, Resilient Students” were adopted. It does not address whether that report adhered to the audit rubric, as that rubric was developed after the 2014-2015 report was written.

Audit

The 2014-2015 CRC made six over-arching recommendations in its report:

1. Expand and further implement the Characteristics of Successful Learners (CSLs) framework to include non-cognitive factors,
2. Prioritize the development of executive functions for all students,
3. Build parent awareness about CSL/non-cognitive factors,
4. Re-evaluate school start times,
5. Re-evaluate and monitor the D39 homework policy, and
6. Build stakeholder awareness about emerging best practices to cope with academic anxiety/stress

Adoption of these recommendations following the CRC report proceeded as follows:

- All of the CRC's recommendations were addressed in the superintendent's response to the CRC report in August 2015. Specifically, the superintendent's response indicated support of recommendations 1 and 3, urged increased communication about existing practices with regards to recommendations 2 and 5, advocated embedding recommendation 4 into work that had already begun in the district, and saw recommendation 6 as an incentive to renew communication efforts to all stakeholders on the subject of stress and anxiety.
- In September 2015, recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 were included as part of the strategic plan.
- In October 2015, recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 plus an additional goal regarding social/emotional programming that included Zones of Regulation (which was referred to in the CRC report), comprised part of the superintendent's specific goals.
- In June 2016, the district reported that recommendations 1, 4 and 6 had been met and that recommendations 3 and 5 were ongoing.
- The 2014-2015 CRC report noted a perceived increase in school refusal cases. Following the report, the district began examining the causes of chronic absenteeism. In the years since, regular communications to parents, as well as updates regarding student attendance at board meetings, has been ongoing.
- In April 2017, the board approved new start times that saw all six schools beginning their day after 8:20 a.m.
- Zones of Regulation is now a resource available in all D39 schools and is used as a targeted intervention for students who struggle to regulate their emotions.
- Addressing issues of anxiety and stress has been an increased area of focus over the past two years as D39 has engaged parents more in learning strategies on how to cope with these issues. A recent forum for parents on this subject was held at Highcrest in March.
- In its report, the 2014-2015 CRC noted increased teacher stress in the face of "constant and frequent" change and "shifting expectations and priorities." Since the production of this report, K-4 schools are now seeing more common planning time, particularly with the early release Fridays that accompanied the change in start times.

Conclusion

By and large, the district has adopted the recommendations found in the 2014-2015 CRC report, “Cultivating Growth Minded, Resilient Students.” This is particularly true with the change in school start times and an increased focus on addressing issues of anxiety and stress. The CRC should continue the practice of auditing its reports three years after their production in order to gauge the extent to which its recommendations are adopted.