

Coventry school officials present strategic plan

By **KENDRA LOLIO**

klolio@ricentral.com

COVENTRY—The school department presented a draft of its Strategic Plan during a school committee meeting at Coventry High School Monday night. The plan is a collaboration between more than 40 school officials, teachers, staff, parents and students on the Strategic Planning Committee to create a solid outline for the goals of the district.

“This is a framework, not a linear plan,” said Coventry Superintendent Craig Levis during his presentation. “We want the community’s perspective on what’s important for our students. We are trying to be open, honest and transparent and have a dialogue with the community. Our staff needs to see that we’re taking step toward that.”

The plan is intended to guide the district over the next three years and is broken down

into 5 main areas: curriculum, instruction and assessment; early learning; professional development; community partnerships and finances/facilities.

The school department is also planning to revamp and better align its curriculum for certain subjects over the next several years. They also hope to explore and possibly develop a new world language pathway.

In terms of early learning the district plans to work on expanding its Pre-K programming and marketing and has already taken a step toward improving access to technology. This past September students in the elementary schools were given Chromebooks to work on.

“Their access has greatly increased at the elementary schools,” according to Lynn Burke, director of educational

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technology and information systems.

Another goal is to implement more effective and interactive professional development for not only teachers but also parents looking to help their children with school work.

"We want to find ways to deliver professional development for staff to engage in learning on different platforms," said Don Cowart, director of curriculum, instruction and assessment. "Before this year professional development has not always been our strongest point but we have had pockets."

This year the district empowered the individual schools and staff to find out which professional development works best for their particular group. Cowart said this platform has been well received and teachers find it more personalized.

Also included in the plan is the fact that the district will be creating an official Coventry Public Schools Facebook page. Right now each individual school has its own page.

Levis said he would like to involve Coventry alumni in the school happenings going forward as part of their goal for community collaboration.

"We could try to have an event where we bring alumni together,"

said Levis. "It's such a powerful resource. We believe they would welcome the opportunity to give back to their community."

According to Coventry Schools Finance Director Sarah Mangiarelli, this year the district will also need to start ramping up its Career and Technical Education program to be more competitive with others in the state.

"We need to put Coventry on the map and we need to get everybody engaged in doing that," Mangiarelli said on Monday.

Also on Monday night Cowart gave a presentation on his plans to update the district's curriculum across all content areas. He explained that the Curriculum Council, made up of teachers and local school

department employees, has had an expert eye on what changes need to be made.

"When I got to this job people said 'there's no curriculum you've gotta start from scratch,'" Cowart said. "It's all over the place."

Cowart proposed the district update its curriculum one subject at a time and in different phases and steps.

"The pushback is going to be doing it differently than what's been done," he said. "It's going to look different."

The council is still tweaking the schedule by which the curriculums for different subjects will be revised. Areas such as social studies, physical education, science and math will

the main areas they start revising this year. Of course, the biggest hurdle in revising the curriculum will likely be money.

"I think as a committee we need to think about where we can get resources to start these other programs," said school committee member Ann Dickson. "ELA needs to be jump started now. We need to find a way to make that happen."

Cowart said a more streamlined curriculum for subjects across elementary, middle and high school will be more effective for students transitioning through different subjects.

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