

2016-17 COMMUNITY REVIEW COMMITTEE

AUDIT REPORT

May 22, 2017

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Katie Dix - Harper
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Katie Lee - Administrator for Curriculum & Instruction
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Introduction by the CRC President

According to Confucius, reflection is the “noblest” method by which one may learn wisdom.

In 2015-16, the District 39 Community Review Committee (CRC) embarked upon “A Year of Reflection,” and in doing so, conducted an “audit of its own form and function.” Among its findings, the 2015-16 CRC observed that “there is merit in future CRCs conducting audits” and recommended a “three-year auditing cycle to determine the impact of previous reports, according to the auditing protocol” established in its report. In accordance with this recommendation, a small, but highly dedicated, subcommittee of the 2016-17 CRC membership conducted an audit of the 2012-13 CRC report to determine its impact within District 39.

The findings on this score by the “audit subcommittee” are contained within the body of this report. However, these dedicated individuals did not stop there. Instead, they went on to effectively conduct an “audit of the audit,” or a “reflection of the reflection,” in that they fine-tuned the recommendations from last year’s CRC about what an effective CRC report should both look like and consist of. Their work not only informs the work of the current CRC in the generation of its report on the topic of School Climate, but it also provides sage guidance to all future CRCs.

As this year’s CRC President, I would like to personally thank the extraordinarily hard-working members of the audit subcommittee for their extremely important contribution to District 39. Joe DiCamillo, Katie Lee, Matthew Pietrafetta and Mimi Rodman have produced a report, which will impact CRCs for many years to come and in the process, will also greatly impact the experience of District 39 children as well. Indeed, the children are the reason why we do this work.

With much appreciation and gratitude,

Erin Stone

AUDIT REPORT

Last year's CRC recommended, and the Board of District 39 embraced, an updated and energized purpose statement for CRC: to advise the Board on specific strategies that help fulfill District 39's mission of nurturing, guiding, and challenging students to become creative thinkers, collaborators, and socially responsible, compassionate, and productive citizens of a global society.¹

Guided by this principle, last year's CRC sought to help future committees focus more on strategic recommendations that advance the District's mission. Specific program implementation is an endeavor more properly residing with the administration and faculty.

To improve the uniformity and quality of future reports, that CRC then created a template for writing committee reports and a rubric for auditing the extent to which recommendations became part of Board strategy. Last year's CRC also suggested that future CRCs start conducting audits of reports three years after their completion. Finally, it asked that the 2016-17 CRC "road test" the template, rubric, and three-year timing.

Consequently, we present an improved report template and audit rubric, as well as the results of our audit of the 2012-13 report entitled "Review of Technology and Learning Environments."²

Typical Life Cycle of a CRC Report



¹ "The purpose of the Community Review Committee (CRC) is to advise the Board on specific strategies that help fulfill District 39's mission. The CRC generally will select and research one topic of focus each year among suggestions solicited from District 39's Board of Education, faculty, staff, community, and CRC members. The CRC will also periodically audit past reports to assess implementation of recommendations by the Board. The CRC will present a formal report of its work and recommendations annually to the Board." CRC Bylaws revised by the District 39 Board of Education, [date].

http://www.wilmette39.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_360846/File/About%20D39/CRC/CRC%20Bylaws%202016.pdf

"The purpose of Wilmette District 39 is to nurture, guide, and challenge students to become creative thinkers, collaborators, and socially responsible, compassionate, and productive citizens of a global society. We provide an environment that supports the academic, social-emotional, and physical well being of each student by:

- Ensuring all staff are highly qualified and well supported
- Fostering strong partnerships with parents and the broader community
- Balancing educational priorities and fiscal responsibilities to best support our students and community"

http://www.wilmette39.org/about_d39/mission_statement

² http://www.wilmette39.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_360846/File/About%20D39/CRC/CRC_2012_2013.pdf

A. Improved Template for Writing CRC Reports

The following template continues to steer future CRCs to focus more on strategies rather than on implementation (the “what” as opposed to the “how”). Strategies need not always be sweeping. Even modest tweaks to existing initiatives that take into account new research, demographic changes, legislative requirements, and the like can be valuable.

TEMPLATE FOR WRITING CRC REPORTS

Report Section	Recommended Length; Content Guide
Cover Page	<p>1 page</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State the Report Title, Date, and Committee Members. ● Identify the Report Category. The category choices are (a) Social/Emotional Learning, (b) Teaching & Learning, (c) School Governance, and (d) Other.
Table of Contents	1 page
Acknowledgments	<p>(Optional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Note significant contributions of non-CRC members. ● Put on the same page as the Table of Contents.
Executive Summary	<p>3-page maximum</p> <p>Organize the Executive Summary according to the following categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Background (including quoting the purpose statement from the CRC bylaws and stating the problem and why the topic was selected, e.g., suggested by the Board, influenced by a large-scale public event or new legislation, or reflective of a tangible community priority); 2. Process (including a broad description of research sources); 3. Finding and Conclusions; and 4. Recommendations for Action (listed in descending order of priority); maximum of 10 recommendations.
Research Summaries and Strategic Recommendations	<p>15-page maximum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present the research that supports the recommendations and cite the sources, e.g., academic literature, interviews with experts and practitioners, and surveys. Research sources should be selected in consultancy with the Board in order to assure maximum validity, efficiency, and value in the research. ● Discuss the strategic recommendations listed in the Executive Summary. The maximum number of recommendations is 10. <p>Remember:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on strategic recommendations for consideration by the Board, not on program implementation; the “what” as opposed to the “how.” ● Strategies need not always be sweeping; even modest improvements in district initiatives that take into account new research, demographic changes, legislative requirements, and the like may be valuable. ● For each recommendation, confirm its alignment with D39’s mission, vision, and priorities and consider its feasibility, including the level of volunteer support by PTA/PTOs and other community groups that might be needed. ● Strategic recommendations should allow for administrative discretion regarding

	<p>implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best-practice descriptions of how other school districts are implementing recommended strategies are sometimes helpful. • Lists of consultants and vendors may be helpful, depending on the topic. However, contacting them generally exceeds the scope of the CRC. • Strive to write a report that will score high marks in its audit in three years.
Conclusion	2-page maximum
Appendices	Include if needed.

B. Improved Rubric for Auditing CRC Reports

The only substantive change to last year’s rubric was made with a goal of further emphasizing the importance of CRC focusing on strategy. If a particular recommendation pertains significantly to implementation instead of strategy, the recommendation is no longer scored in the rubric.

AUDIT RUBRIC

Timing of Audit	Conduct an audit three years after the report was completed and presented to the Board, unless there are extenuating circumstances.
Key Steps to Conducting Audit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CRC as a whole reads the report and confirms there are no extenuating circumstances for not auditing the report three years later. 2. CRC forms an audit subcommittee from its membership. 3. The auditors study the following key documents produced in the months following the report’s presentation to the Board, in order to determine which recommendations were adopted by the Board and to begin to assess their implementation and impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent’s Response to the CRC Report; • Superintendent Goals for the Following Academic Year; and • D39’s strategic implementation plans. 4. The auditors interview appropriate administrators, faculty, and involved volunteers. 5. The auditors fill out the audit rubric. Each individual recommendation in the audited report should be scored according to the rubric. 6. The auditors conduct further due diligence as they deem necessary. 7. The auditors write a draft four-part report as set forth below, for presentation and approval by the entire CRC.
Part 1 of Audit Report: Auditors; Report Organization	<p>1-page maximum</p> <p>List the following categories of information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Names of Auditors Title of Audited Report Date of Audited Report Date of Audit Total Pages of Report Total Pages of Body of Report

	Total Pages of Appendices Table of Contents Executive Summary CRC Members Listed Total # of Recommendations Report Category - Choose from (a) Social/Emotional Learning, (b) Teaching & Learning, (c) School Governance, and Other.
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Part 2 of Audit Report: Topic Selection & Overview of Recommendations	1-page maximum Present overview on the following features of the report. To prepare part 2, the auditors should score the report using the following criteria:
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Rationale for Topic Selection	1 No rationale provided	2 Rationale is stated but process for topic selection is vague	3 Rationale is stated and clear process for topic selection is delineated
Topic Description	1 Topic description is not succinct and includes no details	2 Topic description lacks pertinent details providing overview only	3 Topic is succinctly described and includes necessary details
Recommendations Locations	1 Recommendations are scattered throughout and difficult to find	2 Recommendations are included within each section of the report	3 Recommendations are summarized in one location for easy reference (and may also be included in each section of the report)

Part 3 of Audit Report: Adoption & Implementation of Each Recommendation	5-page maximum <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain whether individual recommendations were adopted and discuss their implementation. 2. In preparing part 3, the auditors should use the worksheet below to help them evaluate each individual recommendation made in the report. 3. The auditors should determine how extensively to present the evaluation results for each individual recommendation. Factors to consider are the scope of each recommendation and their total number. There has been extensive variability in this regard over the years across CRCs.
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Recommendation:	(Describe here)		
Recommendation Pertains Significantly to Implementation	(If recommendation focuses on implementation rather than strategy, it is not scored. Describe rationale for arriving at this conclusion if necessary.)		
Feasibility of Recommendation	1 Unrealistic in terms of	2 Partially realistic in	3 Realistic in terms of

	finances available, resources (including staffing), and timeline	terms of finances available, resources (including staffing), and timeline	finances available, resources (including staffing) and timeline
Alignment of Recommendation with Existing District Priorities	1 Represents a totally new initiative	2 Partially aligned with current practices or recent initiatives	3 Completely aligned with current practices or recent initiatives
Volunteer Support Required by Recommendation	1 Requires high volunteer support	2 Requires minimal volunteer support	3 Requires no support from volunteers
Action Steps for Recommendation	1 Does not provide for administrative decision-making regarding implementation action steps and/or outcomes	2 Provides some district discretion regarding implementation action steps and/or outcomes	3 Provides over-arching recommendation that requires district decisions about action steps and/or outcomes
Implementation of Recommendation	1 Administration did not accept recommendation	2 Administration partially implemented recommendation	3 Administration fully implemented recommendation as stated in report
Part 4 of Audit Report: Closing Audit Remarks	Closing remarks including recommended next steps, if any.		

C. This Year's Audit

Part 1: Auditors; Report Organization

The 2012-13 Report entitled "Review of Technology and Learning Environments," turned three years old this year, triggering its eligibility for auditing. This year's CRC determined there were no extenuating circumstances to keep the committee from auditing the report, and it formed an audit subcommittee of Joe DiCamillo, Katie Lee, Matthew Pietrafetta, and Mimi Rodman.

The 2012-13 report falls under the category of Teaching & Learning. It is a total of 71-pages in length: 44 pages for the body of the report, and 27 pages of appendices. It lists 17 key recommendations although arguably there are only 14 because there were three incidences in which pairs of recommendations were similar to each other so the report grouped them. The report lists its committee members and has a table of contents. While the report does not have an executive summary, the President and the Vice-President/Secretary wrote an "Introduction/Comments from the CRC Officers" section that has a similar function.

The CRC that year took an atypical approach of separately balloting each recommendation and listing the voting results. One CRC member dissented from the recommendations.

Part 2: Topic Selection & Overview of Recommendations

The report notes that the topic of teaching and learning environments is "a timely and important issue that is relevant to all District 39 schools and student" but does not indicate, for example, if the Board requested that CRC study this topic or a particular incident that year made the topic particularly compelling.

Report recommendations are prominently listed on the second page of the report, even before the committee members' names or the table of contents. Several recommendations focus more on implementation than strategy, but it is clear that overall tenet of the report – to bring more technology-based learning to the students of District 39 – has been warmly embraced by the Board and the district.

Part 3: Adoption & Implementation of Each Recommendation

As part of the audit, the auditors studied the Superintendent's Response to the CRC Report, the Superintendent Goals for the Following Academic Year, and D39's strategic implementation plans. They also interviewed Dr. Lechner (D39 Superintendent), Principal Cindy Anderson (Romona School), Principal Rebecca Littmann (Central School), and Tony DeMonte (D39 Director of Technology and Media Services). Katie Lee (D39 Administrator for Curriculum and Instruction) is a member of the audit subcommittee and also has significant relevant knowledge.

The audit rubric indicates that recommendations focused on strategy should be scored on a scale of 1 to 3 in five categories. Recommendations focused on implementation are not to be scored because implementation is the purview of the faculty and administration.

The auditors determined that five of 17 recommendations from the 2012-13 report were heavily focused on strategy and therefore scored them. The five fell into two broad categories -- 1:1 Learning and Learning Spaces, so we scored them by these two categories. Each received a score of 14 out of a possible 15, indicating the high level at which these recommendations were implemented.

a. 1:1 Learning

Recommendations:	These two recommendations were similar and therefore scored as if they were one. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pursue 1:1 Device Availability in the District ● District 39 should pursue a 1:1 learning environment
Recommendation Pertains Significantly to Implementation	Somewhat
Feasibility of Recommendation	3 Realistic in terms of finances available, resources (including staffing) and timeline
Alignment of Recommendation with Existing District Priorities	3 Completely aligned with current practices or recent initiatives
Volunteer Support Required by Recommendation	3 Requires no support from volunteers
Action Steps for Recommendation	3 Provides overarching recommendation that requires district decisions about action steps and/or outcomes
Implementation of Recommendation	2 Administration partially implemented recommendation
TOTAL SCORE:	14 out of possible 15

The 1:1 Learning recommendations embodied research on how 1:1 programs support the District’s CONNECTED Strategic Plan and its five program goals.

- Goal 1: To transform students from consumers of information to creators of content
- Goal 2: To provide access to “anytime anywhere learning”
- Goal 3: To increase student engagement and ownership in learning
- Goal 4: To support the information literacy requirements of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the National Education Technology Standards (NETS)
- Goal 5: To promote the District 39 CONNECTED Strategic Plan

b. Learning Spaces

Recommendations:	These three recommendations were similar and therefore scored as if they were one. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue the Development of New 21st Century Learning Spaces in the District • Create a new 21st century learning space in each school in the District • Establish a District 39 Incubator for Technology Enabled Learning Environments
Recommendation Pertains Significantly to Implementation	No
Feasibility of Recommendation	3 Realistic in terms of finances available, resources (including staffing) and timeline
Alignment of Recommendation with Existing District Priorities	3 Completely aligned with current practices or recent initiatives
Volunteer Support Required by Recommendation	3 Requires no support from volunteers
Action Steps for Recommendation	3 Provides overarching recommendation that requires district decisions about action steps and/or outcomes
Implementation of Recommendation	2 Administration partially implemented recommendation
TOTAL SCORE:	14 out of possible 15

The Learning Spaces recommendations were instrumental in encouraging the Board to renovate school libraries into what are now known as “Learning Commons” -- flexible spaces combining traditional libraries with technology labs and makerspaces that expand the learning experience. These open, vibrant spaces help the schools focus student learning and rely on the four C’s of collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and communication.

The first Learning Commons was built at Central School. Since then, they have been built at Harper School and Wilmette Junior High School. This summer, construction will begin at McKenzie and Romona Schools. A space study is being conducted at Highcrest Middle School and the Learning Commons will be a part of those plans.

c. Implementation-Heavy Recommendations

The auditors determined that nine recommendations were implementation-heavy and therefore did not score them. The lack of a score does not suggest that the work was not valuable or not realized. Indeed, many components align with practices undertaken by District 39. This scoring system, which was created only last year, is designed to nudge CRCs over time toward focusing more on strategy to better support the Board in its governance of the District.

The nine implementation-focused recommendations were:

- Maintain focus on Technology Enabled Learning Environments Training for Educators
- Engage parents and students as stakeholders in the process of adopting new technology
- Include youth in the planning and design of new learning spaces
- Explore possible partnerships for funding and curriculum support
- Prepare the network infrastructure where necessary to support a pilot program
- Identify electronic curriculum content and other resources for 1:1 learning devices
- Develop technology training and support systems for parents and students
- Establish a technology enabled learning environment communication plan
- The district should develop a formal staff development plan for 1:1 learning environments

The auditors further determined that three implementation-related recommendations were not rolled out:

- Establish a technology-enabled learning environments travelling committee*
- Develop an exploratory committee and travel to local and national sites*
- Open up District 39 technology resources, spaces and learning opportunities for the broader Wilmette community*

The first two recommendations were not pursued because it was too expensive to travel across the country; however, descriptions in the CRC report on how other schools use technology were helpful. The third one, opening up District 39 technology resources and spaces to the broader Wilmette community, was deemed to be beyond the scope of the District and already addressed by the Wilmette Public Library.

Part 4: Closing Audit Remarks

The 2012-13 CRC report on technology and learning environments was an important impetus for the 1:1 Learning Initiative of the District and for the Learning Commons/renovated libraries that are at several schools and will soon be in all District schools.

D. Conclusion

Doing a CRC audit is like eating vegetables: sometimes interesting, sometimes not so much, but important for one's health. For over forty years, the CRC has been a central part of District 39, uniting community volunteers and district educators in fulfillment of the District's mission. With so many hours and so much energy collectively directed to this endeavor, it was imperative that the CRC operate with efficiency and impact. We believe the improved report template and the practice of regularly auditing reports will serve future CRCs and the District well. We appreciate the opportunity to have engaged in this effort.