

Newtown Board of Education  
Newtown, Connecticut  
Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee

Minutes from the Board of Education and Instruction Subcommittee held on Tuesday, November 24, 2020.

Also present Board of Education member Deborra Zukowski.

J. Vouros called the meeting to order at 11:07 a.m.

J. Vouros moved to approve the minutes from the 11/10/2020 meeting.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

**Public Participation:** None

**Presentation of Conversations on Race – Amy Deeb**

Amy Deeb shared that this course was originally approved in 2004 and that she has been teaching it since she was hired at Newtown High School in 2005. She has been teaching it ever since and it has evolved. With the racial strife that has occurred, particularly over the summer, the revision of the course is very timely.

This course primarily focuses on black and white relations within the United States. There is a different course at the high school which encompasses a variety of races.

She summarized the four units that comprise the course:

1. Perspective
2. Inequality
3. The Historical Roots of Racial Inequality
4. Course of Action

She provided an outline of the types of activities and kinds of discussions that are sparked with in the course. She shared that she is able to watch students' beliefs and understandings transform over the semester.

J. Vouros asked A. Deeb to comment on how students perform in the course. A. Deeb shared that students have a lot of choice in the course and typically do well.

M. Ku commented how the presentation of this course fits well in terms of what is happening nationally and wondered if those events changed her approach to the course and to her teaching. A. Deeb stated that it did change her teaching, specifically regarding discussions about if things have really changed and how the Black Lives Matter movement compares to the Civil Rights Movement.

M. Ku appreciated the description of the course, specifically for the unit Historical Roots of Racial Inequality, and wondered how this compares to the information that is included in the course description for students. She commented that perhaps this should be included with all curriculums that move forward.

A. Uberti shared that A. Deeb has a passion for the course and this came through in her presentation to the social studies committee as well. They were able to provide additional feedback to her as well.

### **Assistant Superintendent Updates – Anne Uberti**

A. Uberti shared updates to the curriculum approval calendar for December and January and noted that she will not move any curriculum to the Board in January in order to allow for the added time needed for budget discussions. The December 8<sup>th</sup> agenda will only include the presentation by T. Einhorn on the proposed new schedule for Newtown Middle School.

A. Uberti also updated the subcommittee on the schedules connected to the recent move to a fully remote learning model. She shared that following the adoption of the Re-entry Plan in July there was a call from parents and staff for more specific information on what the school days would actually look like if we were in each of the models. The Models for Instruction document that was sent out in early August was developed based on input from the spring surveys of parents, students and staff, guidance from the Instruction and Technology Subcommittee of the Reentry Committee, recommendations from the CSDE, specifically Addendum 12 that outlines what days could and should look like, and the Congrove Distance Learning Model that was shared by the CSDE with school districts and built on their recommendations and guidance to date. The schedules that were included in the Models for Instruction document were sample schedules because there was no way to know what exactly to expect as the year unfolded. The schedules were never intended to decrease instructional time. They were intended to provide flexibility for teachers in order to provide effective instruction without over-relying on screen time. The fully remote learning days were meant to be full school days with time allocated differently than it would be if students were onsite. Again, this reallocation of time was intended to improve the experience for students compared to what occurred in the spring. However, since August, a lot has changed and our staff has become incredibly adept at utilizing a variety of tools to effectively deliver a balanced learning experience even when teaching fully remotely or in the hybrid model. The current remote learning schedules will be in place for six full days which will allow us to receive meaningful feedback. F. Purcaro and A. Uberti will continue to seek feedback to ensure an optimal learning experience for students under this challenging and continually evolving situation.

M. Ku appreciated the information and noted that much has changed.

J. Vouros asked if students in a particular grade level are having comparable learning experiences. A. Uberti agreed that this extremely important and hoped that the clarifying email to parents and follow-up communication with staff will ensure this. She also noted that the days are full days and parents should know that their students will be online for the full day with breaks in-between and even if the schedules shift, this should not impact parents greatly.

**Public Participation:** None

J. Vouros adjourned the meeting at 12:03 p.m.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Norling

THESE ARE DRAFT MINUTES AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE.