

Newtown Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut
Curriculum and Instruction Committee

Minutes from the Board of Education Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee held on Tuesday, April 26, 2022.

J. Vouros J. Larkin J. Fonovic M. Correia J. Bracksieck A. Uberti
D. Ramsey B. Hart C. Pierce E. Buckley F. Purcaro

J. Vouros called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m.

J. Vouros moved to approve the minutes from the 3/29/2022 meeting.

D. Ramsey seconded the motion.

Public Participation: Jennifer Padilla
32 Glen Road
Sandy Hook, CT 06482

Spoke in support of keeping the accelerated Math Pathways program in grade 5.

Continued Discussion Re: Proposed Changes to Math Pathways – Anne Uberti & Math Team

A. Uberti stated that the agenda would focus on further discussion regarding the proposed changes to the NPS Math Pathways and that subcommittee members should use this opportunity to ask any additional questions they may have. Members should then consider whether or not to recommend the proposed changes to the full Board.

A. Uberti then reviewed that Math 5 Plus covers all of the fifth grade standards with added enrichment activities as well as one unit of 6th grade math content. The proposal is to move that 6th grade unit to the advanced 6th grade class and differentiate for high achievers using the enrichment activities in Standard Math 5. She also reminded the committee that although the new Bridges Math offers a higher degree of rigor than was present in the prior K-5 program, that is not the reason for this proposal. There was not a huge difference between Standard Math 5 and Math 5 Plus before but teachers are finding that the new program is providing a lot of the added challenge that Math 5 Plus was designed to do.

A projected analysis of the current grade 4 student data, indicates that not enough students would qualify to warrant a separate class next year. Those higher performing students are achieving at a level that can be effectively accommodated within a differentiated classroom. Delaying identification until the end of 5th grade may actually increase the number of students who qualify due to more students being developmentally ready for more conceptual math. It would also eliminate the need for the 20 or so kids each year who move from Standard 5 to Math 6 Plus to independently complete the 6th grade unit.

At this time, A. Uberti suggested that the C&I members ask the math team any remaining questions.

J. Larkin asked how many students were placed in the pathway program this school year?

J. Fonovic stated 19 students in grade 5 are currently in 5 Plus and 62 students in 6 Plus

Prior to the pandemic, it was typical to have two classes of 5 Plus and three of 6 Plus. This year we have only 1 class of 5 Plus. She stated each year 20-25 students who were not in 5 Plus move to 6 Plus. These

students come from all clusters, including non-Plus clusters. This data indicates fifth grade math teachers are able to effectively and appropriately challenge students.

D. Ramsey asked if Bridges can accommodate all students.
Unanimous “yes” from the Math team.

D. Ramsey added that after two to three years the BOE should have the ability, with data, to evaluate whether this new configuration is working to the level of the original configuration or better.

D. Ramsey said that is his recommendation. As with any new curriculum, it needs to be evaluated periodically.

Anne Uberti commented that we follow a cycle of improvement - plan, implement, then check and adjust. The District Math Committee continually evaluates student performance data to determine ways we can improve. We believe that having completed a full year of Bridges (for half of the teachers this is their second year), all fifth grade math teachers will be able to effectively differentiate to meet the needs of all levels of learners. However, we would not wait a few years to evaluate. We would be monitoring this next year and if something isn't working for a student or a group of students we would provide whatever support was needed to correct it. Evaluation will be ongoing.

J. Larkin asked how high performing students would be instructed in a singular classroom block.

J. Fonovic stated that Reed has a 80 minute block. After teaching a mini-lesson, teachers engage in small group instruction. Teachers still work with stronger students. They will not be left alone to work on a computer.

J. Larkin stated that currently in K-4 students are pulled for advanced math by a specialist and wanted to know how this happens at Reed.

J. Bracksieck responded that in the past math specialists pulled small groups for enrichment because with Stepping Stones many kids needed more challenge. When enrichment teachers were added many years ago, they began to pull students to provide math enrichment on a rotating basis. It is not an advanced class.

J. Larkin asked how often Mr. Myhill comes to the classroom.

J. Bracksieck replied he is in each building two days a week. Students participate in math enrichment on a rotating basis based on how students perform in a given unit.

J. Larkin asked what would be said to the parents who have some concerns about the new pathway to make them feel more confident that all students will be challenged. And J. Vouros followed up by stating if he was a parent, he would want to know how a teacher can teach to different levels.

J. Fonovic stated that all of our students' needs are being met. The program that we have chosen allows us to do that. We have phenomenal teachers in Newtown K-12. J. Fonovic said that she has full confidence in the teachers to differentiate for all learners. That is what good teaching is. She added that even if the 5 Plus class goes away, the 5 Plus instruction is really not going away. We are enabling more students in Newtown to get what they need. We will be enriching and offering a more rigorous math experience to more students than we are now.

M. Correia added that there is no advanced math class at the elementary level. He noted that there is a misconception that students who are offered enrichment are in an advanced program and they are not. He also added that we need to trust our teachers. He expects all teachers to provide small group instruction for students at every level, including those who need enrichment. He regularly monitors to ensure that this is happening.

A. Uberti added that when situations arise where a teacher cannot meet a student's needs. That is addressed. We come together and figure out what we need to do to adequately support that student's learning.

Public Participation: Nancy White
14 Butternut Ridge Road
Newtown, CT 06470

Spoke in support of maintaining Math 5 Plus.

J. Vouros adjourned the meeting at 12:16 p.m.

J. Larkin seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Norling

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