

Newtown Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut
Education and Instruction Subcommittee

Minutes from the Board of Education Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee held on Tuesday, March 23, 2021.

M. Ku A. Uberti M. Hiscavich B. Nolte
J. Vouros F. Purcaro P. Beierle M. Correia

Also present Board of Education member Deborra Zukowski.

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

J. Vouros moved to approve the minutes from the 3/9/2021 meeting.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

Public Participation: None

Presentation of Data Collection and Analysis: Where We Were, Where we are, Where We Are Headed – Frank Purcaro

F. Purcaro started the by presenting the types of data we collect.

- Anecdotal data – Information gathered through surveys, focus groups, “listen and Learn” formal and informal conversations with students and staff, information collected in the classroom observations and learning walks
- Quantitative data – Numeric information gathered through state and local assessments

F. Purcaro went on to explain:

- Purposes of Anecdotal Data Collection
- Collecting Anecdotal Data
- Purposes of Quantitative Data Collection
- Collecting Quantitative Data
- Data Collection: 2019-2020
- Data Collection: 2020-2021
- Data Collection: 2021 and Beyond
- Reporting: Types of Data and Collection Method
- Storing and Analyzing Data: EduClimber

M. Ku asked if students are still doing testing on desk tops, lap tops, or chrome books.
answered students primarily shifted to the chrome books.

F. Purcaro

M. Ku asked NWEA testing are we doing it twice a year?

F. Purcaro stated that assuming the state will require Smarter Balanced assessments, we didn't want to do NWEA three times plus SBAC assessment which would further reduce instructional time.

We gave NWEA in the winter and we will give SBAC in the spring.

Below is the link for the full Data Collection and Analysis Presentation:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1DCo4vSSNp9kVo6KvZhgQjJ4X2kTff0Bfy0mR1e1YcWE/edit?usp=sharing>

Anne Uberti added that F. Purcaro met with our school-based team to help them interpret results in order to use the information to address any gaps or learning loss.

Presentation: Revisiting First Year Band Pathways – M. Hiscavich, P. Beierle, B. Nolte, M. Correia

M. Hiscavich started the presentation by stating that they started with the band pathway at the middle school. We used that as a model for what our goals are, what direction we want to take it, and how we think it can benefit students. We are trying to create balanced bands. We are trying to create successful pathways for all students. Students sometimes pick an instrument that is not a good fit. They then want to give up. We are teaching them about perseverance and not to give up.

P. Beierle explained that they are trying to help first time instrument students make a choice for the right fit when choosing an instrument. Students sometimes pick an instrument that is too heavy for them. They explored how different school districts approach this and found a program in Lynnville, Wisconsin that offered flute, clarinet, trumpet, low brass and percussion. After the first year add saxophone, French horn, add more specialty instruments. Modeling this approach will hopefully fill out the band and achieve what we really need all the way up to the high school for more balance. It may also help keep students in the band because the numbers really drop off after Reed. While we want to encourage the best choices, we will not say no to any of the choices the students make the first year.

B. Nolte added that this will result in fewer groupings which allows them to give specialized instruction, for example, the beginning flute players. Right now we would group the clarinets with the flutes but they are totally different. Students are easily discouraged when they are not as successful as their peers on other instruments. We are trying to re-structure the pathways in the 5th grade level, so that more students are successful with their instrument at the 6th grade level.

M. Hiscavich stated that the hope is to get students to continue on with their instrument into 6th grade, then onto 7th and 8th grade. We want the students to be happy and successful with their instrument. As they gain mastery over an instrument, we would encourage them to try others.

Assistant Superintendent Update – Anne Uberti

- A. Uberti revisited the discussion from the last meeting regarding math 5 placement, particularly the placement test. Previously, she stated it would be an assessment designed to measure mastery of 4th grade content and wanted to clarify that while we are expecting students to demonstrate mastery of 4th grade content they will also be assessed on their understanding and knowledge of some 5th grade content since the plus class is designed for students at an advanced level of mathematical understanding. The assessment would help identify students who have not only mastered the 4th grade content but for those whose skills and knowledge extend above and beyond grade level.

Previously, Mr. Vouros had requested to have the Math 5 Plus teachers to present to C & I prior to the end of the school year. A. Uberti agreed that a presentation is due but thinks it makes more sense to have that presentation in the fall. There are a few reasons for this. There are no planned changes for 5 Plus next year but there may be future considerations as we change the math program. Teachers have noted that both programs are much more rigorous than our current programs and we need to give our 5 Plus teachers time to look at how this compares to what we have been doing with our 5 Plus students in the past. We also only have one teacher who has been teaching math 5+ for more than a year. Matt Dalton joined Jon Hull as a Math 5 Plus teacher in his first year of teaching grade 5 Math and his first year teaching a Plus section. A. Uberti thinks it would be good for them to finish out this year and then to come together with Jess Fonovic, Reed Math Specialist, put together a presentation on where we are in terms of our plus class in 5th and 6th grade late next fall.

We are currently working on a plan to deliver tutoring support struggling students in grades 7 thru 12. The high school model will resemble what was done last summer by pairing a tutor with a student. The pair will connect a couple of hours each week, not necessarily working on content, but rather assisting the student in staying on track with assignments and directing them for help as needed. This was very successful for students last summer. At NMS, we are offering students to stay at the school during the lunch/travel period in order to receive additional support in that time window as well as logging in for their last class remotely from within the building. This will help students stay on track with work completion, get needed support and ensure they actually join the last class. We are working on securing transportation to make this happen. A full update will be provided at the next meeting on April 27th.

M. Ku asked if summer school will be different this year? Are there any plans?

A. Uberti stated that is still under discussion and will include that at a future time.

J. Vouros thanked A. Uberti for the Math Plus explanation. Requested that when you present between now and June, include Matt and Jonathan on the curriculum they are using next year.

A. Uberti stated that she is not planning on them to present between now and June and again reviewed the reasons why she believes it makes sense to wait until the fall. She reiterated that during frequent classroom observations of the new math programs, the increased level of rigor is striking. This increased rigor will have a positive impact on student achievement and we will need to consider what will that rigor mean for our highest achieving math students.

J. Vouros asked if there is a time when Jess Fonovic, Matt Dalton and Jon Hull currently collaborate on what they are doing and provide input based on the program they are working on?

A. Uberti answered that she is not part of those conversations but she assumes that there is.

J. Vouros asked if the fifth grade teachers will have an opportunity to collaborate with the fourth grade teachers in the selection of the program.

A. Uberti answered yes. We have already provided multiple opportunities for them to collaborate and that will continue after adoption.

Public Participation: None

J. Vouros adjourned the meeting at 12:14 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