

Newtown Board of Education  
Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee  
3 Primrose Street  
Newtown, CT 06470  
Minutes from March 8, 2016 Meeting

Present: J. Evans Davila, M. Ku, J. Vouros, A. Uberti, D. Hall, K. Violette, E. Holst-Grubbe and L. Rodrigue (J. McEvoy, Recording Secretary)

Item 1: J. Vouros called the meeting to order at 10:03 am

Item 2: J. Vouros made a motion to approve the February 23, 2016 minutes and M. Ku seconded.

Item 3: Public Participation: None

Item 4: Grade 5 and 6 Math Curriculum Update (A. Uberti, D. Hall)

- A. Uberti said that she and D. Hall would give a review of what they've done. At the end of L. Gejda's tenure as Asst. Superintendent, she requested D. Hall to create a calendar and put it in front of the curriculum document in Rubicon. He brought the calendar he created to share with the Committee.
- D. Hall stated that it has all 4 programs – Math 5, Math 5 Plus, Math 6 and Math 6 Plus. He's not able to edit the names in Rubicon. The Committee told him to see Joanne Morris, Business Office Coordinator, about how to do that.
- J. Davila then asked if Rubicon does the Pacing Guide for you? D. Hall said "yes" and A. Uberti stated that they "refer to" this Pacing Guide. J. Evans Davila stated that she is reluctant to approve setting the precedent of adding a different calendar.
- A. Uberti said that it's her preference to go with Rubicon and make sure everyone has the same educational experience. Then they don't have to create it every year and update it.
- M. Ku said that it's too bad that D. Hall's calendar can't be updated. A. Uberti stated that perhaps D. Hall's could be used as a tool for new teachers. J. Evans Davila agreed that the color-coding on his calendar would be helpful for someone new.
- D. Hall stated that in starting a larger math unit, he had to revise his calendar to match that.
- M. Ku said that the C & I Committee should make the decision to take D. Hall's calendar out and use Rubicon. Everyone agreed that the Pacing Guide that is automatically populated from the curriculum document as entered in Rubicon should be used.
- J. Evans Davila asked if the Reed Math Curriculum has gone to Curriculum Council? A. Uberti said that she wasn't sure. J. Evans Davila shared that the process for curriculum approval needs to be: 1) Math Committee, 2) Curriculum Council, 3) BOE – Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee and 4) BOE. She and M. Ku stated that the district needs to have that parity and oversight for curriculum. J. Evans Davila said that we need to set the date for the Reed Math Curriculum to be reviewed by Curriculum Council.
- J. Vouros then asked how the students are doing in the Math program at Reed? D. Hall answered that they are "trending up." A. Uberti stated that so far the changes with the Math Plus courses have worked out well. They had a meeting with L. Rodrigue to align it with the Math Pathways group. A. Uberti said that they also met with the Middle School Math team and asked "Are we able to advance more kids?" They came to the conclusion that they weren't ready to be advanced. She said that at Reed they are looking at

students with a new lens and asking the question, “How do we create more opportunities for kids to advance in Math?” They put this out on the table with Math coordinators from Newtown MS and asked, “Can we do something on our end?” The Reed Math Team is doing “out of the box” thinking but remembering that their teachers are only certified through 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and they have to be careful who is teaching the advanced curricula. Evelyn Nash has Math certification at the middle school grades level, and there are some students coming into Reed who will need acceleration. Therefore, they probably will have a program with E. Nash.

- J. Vouros commended A. Uberti and D. Hall and stated that this was “excellent news”! A. Uberti stated that it would be good to meet with the MS Math Team every year. She said it was great to actually look at their students (now in Middle School) and see how they were doing. J. Vouros stated that this is very good because it’s all about “What’s best for kids”.
- J. Vouros asked who is in Math at the MS now that J. Cavallero is gone. D. Hall answered that her position has been split between B. Hart and M. Hallak, and they are also meeting with the HS Math group.
- J. Vouros asked if D. Hall and A. Uberti were finding that parents’ level of concern about the Math program has lessened at all? D. Hall answered that there are always going to be outliers, but the volume definitely has diminished with only a few having needed to meet with Principal A. Uberti.
- A. Uberti said that a Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee recommendation that has worked extremely well is that they notified every parent by the end of the school year whether their child would be in Standard Math 5 or Math 5 Plus.
- M. Ku asked if it raised concern more?
- A. Uberti answered that it did not – and those who did have concerns were referred to D. Hall for a more detailed explanation. A. Uberti said that she is looking to create an appeals process for next year where the parent could appeal the placement in June. This idea was commended by J. Vouros as a proactive measure. A. Uberti said that parents received a letter from her and D. Hall, and they hosted an information night, where they “put it all out there.” A. Uberti stated that this has definitely helped a great deal to lower parental anxiety/concern about the Math program at Reed.
- J. Evans Davila set the following dates for the Reed Math Curriculum program approval process: 1) April 19, 2016 – Curriculum Council – 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm. J. Evans Davila advised A. Uberti to explain the difference between the standard Math 5 and Math 6 curricula and the advanced Math 5 Plus and Math 6 Plus curricula at that meeting, 2) April 26 – C & I Subcommittee – 10:15 am, 3) May 3 – BOE 1<sup>st</sup> read of curricula, but A. Uberti and D. Hall’s presence will not be required, and 4) May 17 – BOE 2<sup>nd</sup> read of curricula– 7:30 pm.—A. Uberti and D. Hall are asked to hold the May 17 date on their calendars, as their presence could be requested by the BOE.
- D. Hall asked if the Curriculum Council has a set of guiding questions, and J. Evans Davila answered that they follow the Concept-based curriculum model and the template from Rubicon as partial criteria in curriculum approval. There are other criteria, such as rigor and vertical articulation.
- J. Vouros told A. Uberti and D. Hall that it is so encouraging to hear all about the transition planning with the Middle School and High School.

Item #5 Pilot Course Proposal – “AP Computer Science Principles” (L. Rodrigue, K. Violette, E. Holst-Grubbe)

- E. Holst-Grubbe complimented K. Violette on her work on the proposal and commented that it has vision and will work hand-in-hand with other courses at the High School.
- K. Violette told the Committee that this is a new course designed by College Board. It has been piloted by College Board elsewhere, but this is the first time the opportunity to offer this course has been available to all high schools. For NHS, it will be available to sophomores, juniors and seniors. J. Vouros asked, “Why not Freshmen?” K. Violette answered that she is not certain of the curriculum maturity level for this course. J. Evans Davila questioned whether she was thinking in terms of content or maturity level in general. K. Violette explained that she felt the transition from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade was challenging enough, and L. Rodrigue agreed. K. Violette said that she would certainly be willing to consider Freshman taking the course on an individual basis in the future.
- K. Violette explained that currently the computer courses are about programming. This AP Computer Science Principles course talks about the foundations of Computer Science and teaches key concepts our students aren’t getting in other course curricula.
- J. Vouros asked if students were signing up for next Fall. E. Holst-Grubbe answered that guidance counselors are telling students about it, but they are waiting for Board approval. K. Violette said that she has 3 females who are waiting to sign up. L. Rodrigue stated that once the course is approved, it will be marketed heavily. J. Evans Davila said that it can’t be called official until the outcome of the April 5<sup>th</sup> BOE vote.
- J. Vouros asked how many classes of this can be offered. K. Violette said that, as a department, they will react accordingly. She will be teaching the course.
- M. Ku said that she felt the BOE would ask the question, “If we’re adding, what are we taking away (due to declining enrollment)?” L. Rodrigue and K. Violette stressed that the Business and Tech Teachers have taught a variety of courses and can overlap. They are very flexible and can adapt to the changes. Not as hard as if it were, for example, a Science or World Language course.
- M. Ku asked if she felt prerequisites would be needed? K. Violette answered no, and said that the big piece that is needed is for students to understand what they’re getting into. They will not just be computer clicking but that there will be writing, problem-solving etc. This is where maturity plays into the selection of an AP course.
- J. Evans Davila said that it needs to be stressed to the BOE that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for K. Violette to get free training by the College Board to teach this course. Training will only be free if this course is offered by NHS in the Fall of 2016.
- K. Violette told the Committee that she is awaiting acceptance into the training and the deadline to hear is March 15<sup>th</sup>. She said that this started as a National Science Foundation grant 3 years ago and she has been a part of it, as she works part-time for MIT. J. Evans Davila commended K. Violette for her achievements and stressed that it is important for the BOE to hear all about her professional expertise and background.
- J. Evans Davila asked E. Holst-Grubbe and L. Rodrigue, “What is happening with BEAT?” E. Holst-Grubbe said that the classes are all elevating and becoming so professional. L. Rodrigue stated that she looked at K. Violette’s proposal for this AP Computer Science Principles Course and said, “Phenomenal!” J. Vouros added that it brings another level of

professional sophistication for those students, and that's wonderful. J. Evans Davila stated that the last two proposals certainly speak to that, as they are exemplary.

- J. Evans Davila then asked L. Rodrigue if she sees this course as one for the Freshman Academy? L. Rodrigue said that they haven't really talked about this as an elective, but it could be an excellent fit. The Freshmen have to write a mini-essay to get in to the Academy. J. Vouros said that students interested in the Freshmen Academy should be taken to K. Violette's room when she is teaching this course, as one never knows what could motivate their interest and excitement. L. Rodrigue said that it is too late this year to think about this course as a possible elective for Freshman Academy, but it could be a good fit as an elective for the next year.
- J. Evans Davila asked L. Rodrigue if the Committee could get an update on the Freshman Academy at some point soon. L. Rodrigue said that it is an ongoing process and that she could give an update in May 2016. J. Evans Davila will set this up with her. The Freshman Academy is called STEM. The STEM logo was designed by Dave DeFeo and it stands for Advanced Partnerships with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. J. Evans Davila asked if there will be an Arts and Humanities strand. L. Rodrigue said "No, there would not at this time." J. Evans Davila stated that she is interested in continuing looking to expand advanced opportunities in the arts and humanities domain.
- M. Ku asked if the proposed AP Computer Science Principles course would appeal to students who are motivated in computer programming. K. Violette answered that the material is appealing to everyone. It broadens the appeal because it includes writing and projects, as well as hands on computer use. She also stressed how good the course is for the students' future as there are so many computer jobs available. J. Vouros stated that this should be emphasized to the BOE as well.
- K. Violette asked the Committee for their recommendation on how to present to the BOE. J. Vouros told her to market herself as well as she has to the Committee. J. Evans Davila agreed and said that a lack of knowledge can lead to misperceptions. E. Holst-Grubbe stated that he would be there as well and would speak to her accomplishments. L. Rodrigue told the Committee that K. Violette has been a standout at NHS for a long time and back in 2000 when the Blue Ribbon Committee was reviewing NHS they said, "Do not lose that girl!" She feels K. Violette is continually growing and elevating her status at NHS and that the AP Computer Principles Course would be a wonderful addition to the High School curriculum.

#### Item #6 Sleep Study and School Start Times

- Thoughts from last C & I Meeting: If we split to 4 tiers with NHS, NMS, RIS and elementary schools on each tier, what would be the cost? Could NMS and RIS be combined? All Star could propose times for all other routes if we were to start NHS 30-45 minutes later.
- M. Ku asked that we also add "What would be the cost if we went to 2 tiers?"
- L. Rodrigue stated that she feels 8:00 am – 2:30 pm time is best for NHS. She also mentioned a survey that was done and NHS students were asked, "If you could rearrange your school for the future, what would you do?" Starting school later was the biggest response! M. Ku stated that she posted something on her own BOE Facebook page about sleep, and it got more responses than any other topic has ever gotten. J. Vouros asked if all this has been relayed to Dr. Erardi? L. Rodrigue said, "Yes", and added, "You'd be surprised what 45 minutes later can do for kids." She asked where we were time-wise in

possibly implementing this? M. Ku stated that there isn't a time frame but that next year is not the year to do it with the new Sandy Hook School opening in 2016-2017, but perhaps 2017-2018.

- J. Vouros asked L. Rodrigue if she would call the Wilton principal (as they instituted this later time change back in 2003) and talk "principal to principal"? L. Rodrigue said that she would.
- The Committee then asked D. Abbey, Interim HR Director for NPS, to speak to them about his experiences with later start times proposed for the High School as Superintendent of New Canaan.
- D. Abbey said that the League of Women Voters were the catalyst for interest in changing to later start times for the High School when he was Superintendent of New Canaan. He did a year-long study with them and there was research to back that, in terms of adolescent sleep times and development, a later start for High School students was beneficial. They surveyed students and parents, and there was a great deal of time and effort put into this.
- He stated that they ended up not doing it because, in the end, it was 1) too expensive because of busses, 2) There were concerns about athletes having to leave school early and therefore miss classes, and 3) Students in work study or vocational programs had to leave early and would miss school. Perhaps the most detrimental barrier to garnering widespread support was that adding another tier of busses was too expensive. When the BOE did vote against it, it was D. Abbey's recollection that there was no negative reaction to the decision. Westport also went through the same process and decided against it, as well.
- D. Abbey suggested that the BOE consider looking at two things at the same time: 1) Look at facilities, reorganization and declining enrollment...PLUS COST, and 2) What do teachers think about it? He stated that it is doable but there are issues and, in the end, he and New Canaan had expended a great deal of time and effort. Feels they should have looked at the cost first.
- D. Abbey had two suggestions of people to call to discuss. Can use his name with both contacts:
  - 1) Roy Walder – Research Scientist who works in New Canaan. Extremely bright and solved complex problem for D. Abbey while Superintendent in New Canaan.
  - 2) Wilton Transportation Coordinator.

Item #7 Public Participation – None.

Item #8 Agenda recommendations for the **next meeting: Tuesday, March 22, 2016**

- Science Self-Study Committee (SSSC) with C. Canfield
- Invite L. Rodrigue back to talk about Wilton
- M. Ku would like to go through the highlights of the research she has on sleep
- M. Ku asked, "If we're doing Spanish in 1<sup>st</sup> grade next year, do we need to look at curriculum? M. Kugligowski, a kindergarten teacher with dual language experience and certification at HOM is working on developing it.

- J. Evans Davila let the Committee know that Elissa Gellis has taken her suggestion to extend Spanish Language Instruction into SMART Camp offering. This summer offering will be taught by M. Kugligowski, kindergarten teacher from HOM.

Item #9

J. Vouros motioned to adjourn the C & I Subcommittee Meeting at 12:05 pm., and M. Ku seconded.