

**Newtown Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut
Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee**

Minutes from the Board of Education and Instruction Subcommittee held on Tuesday, October 27, 2020.

M. Ku A. Uberti K. Longobucco
J. Vouros G. Hall

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 10/13/2020 meeting.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

Public Participation: None

Presentation of Algebra I Foundations II and III – Gene Hall and Kim Longobucco

A. Uberti reminded the Committee that Algebra Foundations I was completed and approved by the Board last year.

G. Hall shared that these are the final two of three courses that are designed to support students who enter high school without the necessary prerequisite skills to complete the Algebra graduation requirement. The Foundations courses essentially cover all of Algebra over three separate courses. These courses are all co-taught by a general ed and special ed teacher. Classes are between 10-15 students, most of whom have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The courses are tailored to students' IEPs with appropriate modifications and accommodations in place.

K. Longobucco stated that the courses have been very effective in providing students with the skills they need and noted that several students have been to take more advanced math classes following just a year in the Foundations I course. Those who do stay in Foundations for all three years have significant struggles in math and the way these courses are structured enables them to earn the required Algebra credit. She noted that G. Hall and the teachers teaching these courses are doing an excellent job.

A. Uberti added some that members might notice some improvements present in the Foundations II and III curriculum as compared to the first course that had been approved last year. She attributed that to the strong group of educators who are serving on the District's Curriculum Development Council. It is a cohesive group who are passionate about curriculum. The Council is striving for consistency in the curriculum that it is moving forward for C&I review.

A. Uberti reminded committee members that there was a discussion last year when Algebra Foundations I was presented regarding some of the grade level standards included in the curriculum, some going back to the elementary grades. She wanted the committee to know that this prompted a

follow-up meeting between K. Longobucco, T. Einhorn, M. Correia and M. Hall to look at the course of study that students were exposed to between 5th and 8th grade that resulted in students entering 9th grade with significant deficits in math. It seems that many of those students were receiving pull-out math instruction as per their IEPs based on PPT decisions. She shared that those decisions are made with the best interest of the student in mind at a given point in time but she also expressed concern that some of these decisions may be contributing to the growing number of students requiring the Foundations I course. She shared that she is working with building leaders to re-examine our current practices and models for special ed instruction. Students are typically recommended for pull-out instruction when they are more than two years behind in order for them to receive individualized direct instruction by a special education teacher. However, the data suggests that this may not be the most effective way to provide the added support these students need. One possible solution is to move from a pull-out instructional model to a co-taught model such as the one being implemented at the high school which pairs a general education teacher with a special education teacher and students are included in the general education setting. A. Uberti further shared that this is being explored for implementation at Newtown Middle School next year and that members of the Board will likely see this reflected in next year's budget proposal.

Assistant Superintendent Updates

K-8 Chromebook Distribution

A. Uberti provided an update on the ongoing Chromebook distribution. Since the last C&I meeting, the District received another 625 devices. These are being distributed at NMS while the devices that were previously distributed are collected back. Those returned devices will then be redistributed to students in Kindergarten through Grade 4, making the District 1:1 K-8. The redeployment of devices is expected to be completed by the week of November 9th.

District-wide Testing

A. Uberti explained that the lack of devices in K-8 has delayed the fall administration of the NWEA which is typically done in September. She then presented an updated draft of the 20-21 district assessment calendar which lays out testing window dates for district-wide and state testing. Right now, she is hoping to administer the NWEA between November 2nd and November 20th; however, this will depend on the devices distribution being completed on time and that a viable plan for testing remote learners can be developed. Each building is working on developing their own plan for testing remote learners. Due to the late administration of the fall NWEA, the winter testing window, typically done in January, will be pushed out to March. She stressed the importance of administering this common assessment in order to gather district-wide data on student achievement so that learning gaps can be addressed. If the District is able to administer Smarter Balanced at the end of the year, it will be in lieu of a spring NWEA administration in order to reduce the impact of testing time on instruction.

State-mandated testing

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is planning to administer the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment (SBAC) in the spring. If that happens, A. Uberti plans to administer it in District between May 10th and May 28th. The CSDE is currently stating that a remote testing option for SBAC will

not be available. She will keep C&I updated as more information becomes available. Should the Smarter Balanced end up not being administered at all, she will then plan on a spring administration of the NWEA in order to get summative data on student achievement.

Public Participation: None

J. Vouros adjourned the meeting at 11:48 a.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.

