

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

Minutes of the Board of Education Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Meeting held on October 14, 2014, at 10:00 a.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room, 3 Primrose Street.

J. Vouros

L. Gejda

M. Ku

L. Rodrigue

K. Sherman

The Board of Education Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m.

MOTION: Mr. John Vouros moved to accept the minutes of September 23, 2014. Ms. Michelle Ku seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Dr. Linda Gejda introduced Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Principal of the High School and Karin Sherman, Department Chair of High School Math Department.

Dr. Rodrigue thanked the subcommittee for giving her the opportunity to discuss class size at the high school.

Mr. Vouros discussed the importance of being educated in class size and thanked Dr. Rodrigue for putting this presentation together. He said it was especially important to understand class size at the high school and to track the use of the classrooms at the high school.

Dr. Rodrigue said class size is looked at two different ways at the high school: current classes and future classes. The high school has to monitor class size during the year which is not the same at all school levels. Current classes reflect credit requirements, current enrollment, drop/adds during the year, and sometimes it is necessary to amend number of sections due to lack of enrollment. Future classes may change due to credit requirements, staffing and certification issues and enrollment trends. Sometimes students fail courses, students change their mind when they see workloads, and enrollment just goes up over the summer getting as much as 50 new students which all affect class size.

Mr. Vouros said he hears from a lot of different people that there are too many choices for the students. Dr. Rodrigue said it is necessary to have different choices because credit requirements are changing. The Class of 2018 is required to have 22 credits, the Class of 2019

is required to have 23 credits, and the Class of 2020 is required to have 25 credits to graduate. Dr. Rodrigue also said children are choosing many different career paths with some continuing on to college, others going to technical schools and some just entering the workforce.

Dr. Rodrigue said the new credit requirements are an exciting opportunity to create something good at the high school. The Class of 2020 will need one more credit in math, one more elective in the math/science area, two more credits in world language, and one more credit in career and life skills. Dr. Rodrigue also said the business/technology classes will be included as an elective. Mr. Vouros talked about how important the career and life skills electives are for children not going on to college. A discussion followed on the importance of educating all of our students.

Dr. Gejda spoke about making decisions about new credit requirements in world languages. Mr. Vouros talked about how not all children take a world language in the middle school and we may need to look at conversational classes in the high school.

Dr. Rodrigue spoke about the complexity of class size. There are many different variables: current enrollment; enrollment by department, level, and course; number of required credits students need to graduate; courses needed in content areas to satisfy graduation requirements; indicators that cause deviation or fluctuation in the number of students enrolled at a given time; courses that meet the needs of diverse niche of students (AP/SPED); future credit and course requirements for all students.

A discussion followed about being competitive and special education classes. Dr. Rodrigue said that sometime classes need to be small. AP classes are specialized and we need to offer these courses in order to be competitive. Our students need these classes in order to get into certain colleges. Dr. Rodrigue also said that special education classes need specialized instruction and those classes need to be small.

Dr. Rodrigue discussed the yearbook class. She said sometimes kids need to make difficult decisions in their schedule. They might do a yearbook club after school instead of taking the class because the class just does not fit into their schedule. Ms. Ku asked if it was cost effective to have yearbook as a club. Dr. Rodrigue said she does not see this class turning into a club as a huge savings.

Dr. Rodrigue said the AP Music Theory Class is important for children to be competitive for college who will be continuing on that pathway. Mr. Vouros said he understands we cannot pull the rug out from children who have started on a program path as freshman. We need to plan for the future and be sure the supports are there for the children.

Ms. Sherman discussed how summer school can change class sizes. She said some students choose not to take summer school. This impacts class size for the following school year because those students did not plan on repeating classes and fall behind.

Dr. Gejda asked if we can offer some courses online. Dr. Rodrigue said virtual classes will hit one niche of children. Many children do not have that kind of persistence and stamina these classes require. Sometime AP students may want to take an online course because they do not have the time in their schedule. Dr. Gejda said we would definitely need staff to coordinate the program and make sure the students are keeping up with the work. She said in the past a small stipend was given to the teacher. Dr. Rodrigue said we should consider this program or we would be behind the times.

Dr. Rodrigue discussed how the high school has multi-level classes where there are college prep students and regular students in one class.

Ms. Ku discussed her research on class size with the group. She said she has found Newtown to be consistent with the other schools in the area.

Ms. Sherman discussed the high school Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry curriculum. She said the Math Department started to put assessments on a Google document two years ago. Putting the assessments on a Google document is very beneficial because teachers can note what is working and different strategies to use. Ms. Sherman said some activities from the State are appropriate and some are not and need to be more rigorous.

Ms. Sherman stated that Algebra 1 at the high school is the same for eighth graders at the middle school. The eighth graders will have to “test in” to take Algebra 1 at the middle school.

Mr. Vouros asked about the Math Department’s staffing. Ms. Sherman said the Math Department has had a lot of turnover. She said she has worked hard placing veteran teachers as mentors with new staff. Ms. Sherman said she stops by all the new teacher’s classrooms weekly to check-in and offer advice on how to teach the class.

Ms. Sherman discussed the math courses that are available at the high school. She said Intermediate Algebra will get credit at Naugatuck Valley Community College. She also said she is thinking of adding more half-year courses to help students get more involved in mathematics. Ms. Sherman said she wants students to be good problem solvers and give students confidence and problem solving skills. With these skills, students will be more career and life ready.

Ms. Sherman said the Math Department piloted a new NWEA program. She said she has received positive feedback from the teachers. The Algebra 1 class used the reports as baseline data to move students forward. Students are familiar with the tests because they were used the previous year. Ms. Sherman said the test is adaptive and shows the student's ability.

Dr. Gejda gave an update on the Gifted Program. She said the program has been well received and is running smoothly. Dr. Gejda said the identified students are meeting with the three new gifted teachers on a weekly basis for direct instruction. Dr. Gejda said two of the gifted teachers will be going to convention. She also said Dr. Erardi arranged for a consultant to meet with the three gifted teachers. They met for a half-day on Thursday, they will meet for one full day on November 4<sup>th</sup>, and a half-day to be determined.

Jeanne Cavallaro and Drew Hall will give a presentation at the next subcommittee meeting

A discussion took place about testing into the gifted program. The process is taking too long because there is not enough Central Office Staff. Dr. Gejda thinks the process will improve next year since this year is just a pilot program.

Dr. Gejda said Peggy Kennedy will give an update on full-day kindergarten at the next subcommittee meeting.

A discussion took place on when the next subcommittee meetings will be held. The group agreed upon the following dates:

November 3, 2014 – 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (new date for the October 28<sup>th</sup> meeting)

November 12, 2014 – 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

November 25, 2014 – 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

December 9, 2014 – 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

December 23, 2014 – 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

January 13, 2015 – 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

January 27, 2015 – 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

February 10, 2015 – 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Ms. Ku moved to adjourn, Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.