

Newtown Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut
Education and Instruction Subcommittee

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

M. Ku	A. Uberti	A. Marks
J. Vouros	F. Purcaro	K. Longobucco

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 2/9/2021.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

Public Participation: None

Presentation of Humanities and Writing through Film – A. Marks, K. Longobucco

Abigail Marks – English Department Chair started the presentation with Humanities.

Both curricula were revisions of prior curriculum in the Concept-based model.

Both are senior elective courses.

Humanities is a one semester Senior English or Fine Arts elective. Co-taught by English and Fine Arts teachers.

Expanded interest has allowed us to run more sections and diversify the course to include visual and performing arts. This year 3 sections with 75 students. Curriculum was written by Ellie Hanna, Carol Skolas, Chris Lee, Brian Tenney.

Goals of the Revisions

- Create concept-based units that will allow for focus on visual art or music
- Consolidate course into two units
- Ensure skill-building aligned with CT Core Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and National Core Arts Standards.

The two units in Humanities are Identity in the Arts and The Artist in Society.

Abigail Marks went on to present Writing through Film.

This is a semester-long Senior English elective which runs 6+ sections each year with 125 students. Curriculum was written by Jacob Thomas and Rick Lye. This course consists of 3 units; however, in the fall it also includes the College Essay Unit. The units in Writing through Film are Language of Film, The Changing Face of Film and Film in Society.

M. Ku commented that she would love to see courses done in the junior year so they can use them on the college essays.

Revisiting 6-8 Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in Practice – A. Uberti, F. Purcaro

A. Uberti reviewed the overarching goals of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) which were a significant change in the practice from the old standards in which students were expected to know facts and phenomenon. Now students are expected to apply and demonstrate their learning.

The NGSS 6-8 science standards are bundled and it is up to districts how and where to implement those standards. In Newtown, these were originally divided up roughly equally across 6, 7, and 8 which is problematic since grade 6 does not have as much instructional time in science as 7 and 8.

There has been an extensive review of the Reed schedule to determine if there is a better way to schedule science. Next year, the schedule will allow for 5 weeks of consecutive science instruction offset by 5 weeks of consecutive social studies instruction for each cluster. The social studies curriculum will be revised this summer for content and will focus on inquiry as the instructional method as is expected. This will allow teachers, regardless of the content, to reinforce the same inquiry skills necessary for science. Todd Stentiford, science instructional coach at Reed, has been able to shape the development of curriculum around the Performance Expectations rather than starting with the standards. By approaching the curriculum in this way, more of the standards can be addressed. It is expected that the Grade 5 and 6 Social Studies curricula will be able to be written in June, 2021, with implementation to begin in the fall of 2021 and that the Grade 5 and 6 Science curricula will be written in June of 2022 for a fall 2022 implementation.

A review of the draft 7-8 curriculum will take place over the course of next year, in order to make it viable. Feedback from 7-8 teachers is that they cannot fit it all in. Will be looking at ways to make the curriculum more manageable with a probable rewrite in June, 2022 for implementation in fall of 2022.

DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) Update – A. Uberti, F. Purcaro

F. Purcaro shared a slide presentation of the updates which he and A. Uberti have been working on regarding DEI.

We broke it up into four priority areas:

- Professional Development for Staff
- Committee and Personnel
- Partnerships
- Curriculum and Instruction

Moving Forward

- Continue to identify and offer the full district staff opportunities to engage in workshops related to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Provide additional teacher training on strategies needed to facilitate conversations on the topics of diversity, equity, race, and inclusion
- Identify and provide administrators comprehensive training on how to best support staff and engage in conversations with parents and families on the topics of diversity, equity, race, and inclusion

The board has approved a new position for Diversity Compliance Coordinator. We are currently working on a description for the position. We are hoping to hire for the position in the spring. The superintendent has created the PEAC subcommittee which focuses specifically on diversity, equity and inclusion in the schools. It is made up of community members, administrators and staff. We are also in the process of launching a student advisory council, to give students the opportunity to share their feedback on their experience in our schools with regard to diversity, race, equity and inclusion.

Below is the link for the full DEI presentation:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Zisn4dW4wZBU6J6WqA4P6baDNekRVKFL/view?usp=sharing>

Assistant Superintendent Updates

Received correspondence regarding a parent Interested in a partial-day kindergarten option. A. Uberti has developed a list of considerations should this interest become something that the Board decides to consider. She shared that at this time she does not believe that a partial day would be practical or beneficial to our future Kindergarten students.

A. Uberti acknowledged the in-depth and very impressive analysis that was shared by board member Deb Zukowski. It was highly detailed and was very informative. She further shared that regular data review should be a part of our practice. We should know what we are collecting and how the analysis will be used. Regular data review should be part of a never ending cycle of improvement. Data should be looked at in shorter chunks so that you can measure the impact of changes. F. Purcaro will be presenting at a future meeting on our data collection review plans so that the Board better understands what we are looking at, when and why.

J. Vouros asked how we are progressing with the student survey to complete the middle school schedule?

A. Uberti stated they were sending the survey out in tandem. T. Einhorn and K. Longobucco were coordinating when the survey will be released.

J. Vouros asked to see a copy of the survey.

Public Participation: None

J. Vouros adjourned the meeting at 12:08 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

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

— District Updates —

Priority Areas

Professional Development for Staff

Committees & Personnel

Partnerships

Curriculum and Instruction

Professional Development

- Staff members, as well as the Superintendent and Director of Teaching and Learning attended the four part Anti-Racism Conference offered by the CT Center for School Change in September and October.
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- All district staff participated in PD regarding issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion in November. Approximately 400 staff members participate in the workshop, divided into two parts:
 - Part 1, Dr. Derrick Gay addressed all staff on diversity and inclusion.
 - Part 2, All staff engaged in sessions #1 & #2 of the Anti-Racism Workshop offered by the CT Center for School Change.
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- We plan on continuing to offer staff opportunities to experience professional development related to diversity and equity.
 - Currently planning our next district-wide PD Day in April.

Committees and Personnel

- The Board of Education has approved the creation of a new position in the district to focus directly on issues related to DEI - Diversity Compliance Coordinator, we are working on the job description now and are anticipating filling the position this spring.
- The Superintendent has created a PEAC subcommittee focused specifically on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion issues within the schools. PEAC is a committee made up of community members, parents, teachers and administrators.
- The Assistant Superintendent and Director of Teaching and Learning are in the process of launching a Student Advisory Council that will meet regularly to provide feedback to us directly about the student experience with diversity and race within the curriculum

Partnerships

- The district has opened up a multi-year partnership with Re-Center, Race and Equity in Education organization from Hartford.
- Two members from Re-center serve on our PEAC committee.
- Re-Center is also working directly with us on the development of the Diversity Compliance Coordinator position.
- Re-Center is providing consultation to our Central Office team around the roles and responsibilities of the DCC position as well as the creation of a previously mentioned Student Advisory Council.

Curriculum and Instruction

- As part of our curriculum revision process, we are looking for more opportunities to integrate diverse perspectives. For example, we are looking to make revisions to our social studies curriculum to include lesson activities linked to the organization known as Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance).
- Similarly, our social emotional curriculum, Second Step, has been updated to include recommendations for the integration of lessons from Learning for Justice as well. SEL planning maps are being created by each school.
- Future reviews and revisions of the curriculum will be done with an equity lens; paying particular attention to the resources being introduced to students to ensure that they are experiencing a variety of perspectives and topics as well as using works by diverse groups of authors.

Moving Forward

- Continue to identify and offer the full district staff opportunities to engage in workshops related to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Provide additional teacher training on strategies needed to facilitate conversations on the topics of diversity, equity, race, and inclusion with their students.
- Identify and provide administrators comprehensive training on how to best support staff and engage in conversations with parents and families on the topics of diversity, equity, race, and inclusion.
 - CES - Unpacking the 4C Equity Framework - Assistant Superintendent, Director of Teaching and Learning, High School Principal

Moving Forward

We are committed to incorporating the work done by the PEAC diversity subgroup into future projects.

We will support the Diversity Compliance Coordinator position and ensure their success as we work together to make improvements within the system regarding diversity and inclusion.

We will continue our partnership with Re-Center.

We will continue to revise the curriculum and we are committed to doing so with an equity lens. We expect the DCC to assist us in that process moving forward.