

Newtown Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut
Education and Instruction Subcommittee

Minutes from the Board of Education and Instruction Subcommittee held on Tuesday, February 9, 2021.

M. Ku A. Uberti G. Hall
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 the 1/12/21 meeting.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

Public Participation: None

Presentation of Pre-Calculus and College Math Topics – G. Hall and K. Longobucco

Gene Hall, Math Department, Newtown High School began the presentation with Pre-Calculus. Curriculum was written by Charlotte Cavaturo, Chris Pearson and Shawn Tierney in June 2019.

Gene presented CPA Pre-Calculus -4 sections and Honors Pre-calculus AB-3 sections:

- Trigonometric Function – Lens: Relationships
Unit Circle and Graphing
- Analytical Trigonometry – Lens: Balance
Inverse Trigonometry
Trigonometric Identities
- Sequences and Series – Lens: Patterns
Sequences
Series
- Polynomial and Rational Functions – Lens: Function
Graphing Polynomials
Graphing Rationals
- Exponential and Logarithmic Functions – Lens: Function
Graphing and Solving
Exponential
Logarithmic
- Conics – Lens: Classification
Graphing and Writing
Conic Sections
- Polar Coordinates and Graphs – Lens: Position
Polar Coordinates
Polar Curves

- Limits – Lens: Estimation
Evaluating Limits
Continuity

CPA College Math Topics-3 sections and CPB Intermediate Algebra-3sections

- Graphs and Functions – Lens: Relationships
Relations
Functions
- Solving – Lens: Balance
Simplifying Expressions
Solving Linear Equations
Inequalities
- Systems – Lens: Interaction
Graphical
Algebraic
Inequalities – Solution Region, Graph
- Quadratics – Lens: Relationships
Square Roots
Quadratic Formula
- Polynomial Equations – Lens: Interactions
Exponents
Scientific Notation
Property of Exponents
- Rational Equations – Lens: Interpretations
Simplifying Rationale Expression
Solving Rational Equations
- Radical Equations – Lens: Interpretations
Simplify Radicals
Solving Radical Equations

Questions:

M. Ku asked if interdisciplinary topics are often included in the curriculum.

G. Hall stated that it is challenging. We are trying to keep the students in the game to keep their skills sharp.

Anne Uberti added that there was a lot of the discussion regarding the degree to which the curriculum is taught and assessed in a concept-based manner. Specifically, Curriculum Council looked at the Core Learning Activities and the assessments. She believes that the K-12 math committee needs to spend some time discussing this across grades. She has not generally observed a great deal of integration or even application to real world situations in our math classes. She acknowledges that it is challenging for math teachers to think about teaching in this way and noted that the math team who wrote these curricula worked hard to incorporate significant feedback. Last year the math committee had planned to look at how math was assessed across the grades but that has not yet been able to happen. However, she believes that this is work that will need to be done at some point to ensure that students have an opportunity to not only take

traditional tests but to apply their learning through performance tasks. She thinks this would be particularly useful in helping students the value of math. At the high school, some math teachers have said that the students don't have enough of the foundation skills to apply the math but then when we about higher levels of math, we hear that they need to make sure students have the skills they will need for college. And since college remains fairly traditional, it isn't necessarily helping us shift our practice in high school. The Curriculum Council believes that this curriculum is ready to move forward as presented. We also believe that the math committee should take up this bigger discussion. Learning activities and assessments are parts of the curriculum that can change and evolve.

G. Hall added that the curriculum writing process has led to some slightly uncomfortable conversations because teachers are worried about standardized testing. He added that we need to find a balance. He believes that once the curriculum is approved our activities and assessment can evolve. He noted that the curriculum writing process has opened up a lot of good conversation, adding that math teachers can be somewhat stuck in their ways. We move ahead because we are doing what we think is right, but maybe we need to find a way to make students who are not that confident in math more confident.

J. Vouros thanked E. Hall and the committee. He was encouraged that they are proceeding with the curriculum while making sure that all students stay in the game.

SEL K-8 Update – Anne Uberti

Anne Uberti stated SEL work continues to move forward and that we are trying to clarify the specific expectations, K-8. She reminded the committee that most of this work comes out of the District Safe School Climate Committee (DSSCC) that she chairs along with Kristin Larson. The committee meets monthly and is comprised of lead teachers, assistant principals, and one counselor from each school. We address a variety of topics related to climate and culture. She shared a sample template that is being used for SEL plans at all grades Kindergarten through 8th. The plans are an "at a glance" document that lets everyone in the school know what is being taught in a grade and who is responsible for teaching it. In addition to what Second Step lessons the teacher is responsible for in a cycle or month, it also includes things such as the principal's message, counselor lessons and diversity and equity lessons that tie in with that month's theme. The DSSCC is also looking at moving from the original Second Step to a new digital version that is being released for K-5. We have already moved to a digital version in 6-8 and we have many teachers piloting their new adult SEL component.

M. Ku asked if Second Step or Responsive Classroom is doing any work with diversity inclusion?

A. Uberti replied that Responsive Classroom is not really a curriculum but a set of practices. However, Second Step is a curriculum and they have recently undergone an internal audit of their products to ensure they are inclusionary. The new digital version is the result of that audit. They have made changes to ensure the product is more inclusive and equitable. K. Larson, F. Purcaro and A. Uberti participated in a conference call last week that compared the new product to the old. After some discussion, we believe we will be going with the new digital version. Second Step has also added additional diversity, equity and inclusion resources by aligning with Teaching Tolerance and offering a crosswalk of lessons.

Michelle asked about the use of the word "tolerance" stating it did not seem like use of the word is the most updated terminology.

F. Purcaro stated that they recently changed to “Learning for Justice”.

ELL Update – Frank Purcaro

F. Purcaro provided an update on the progress of our new ELL teacher, Nomiki Theodosiou, who started on January 19th. Miki comes to us from West Haven Public Schools. Since starting, she has personally called the families of all 26 ELL students in district and also met with each building administrator. She also met with the executive secretaries in each building who are often the first line in the process of identifying students who need language support. Her office is located at the Reed School. She has started at a difficult time since this is when ELL students are required to take the LAS Links. There are four sections to the test that must be given in separate sessions. With 26 ELs, across all 7 schools and different schedules, it is a challenge. At the same time, she has started servicing students. F. Purcaro meets with her daily and believes she is a great addition to the district and will be essential in helping us improve our EL program.

J. Vouros asked what languages are students bring to the district?

F. Purcaro stated Spanish and Portuguese are prominent. There is also French, Mandarin and Albanian.

M. Ku said she appreciated this update because she does not have a lot of knowledge of our EL program. F. Purcaro stated that once M. Theodosiou has settled in, we will bring her to a C&I to present to them firsthand.

Assistant Superintendent Update – Anne Uberti

Because of the ongoing pandemic, our principals are producing a recorded presentation for incoming Kindergarten parents that will be posted on our website. In addition, each principal will host times that will be specific to the parents coming into their school. Kindergarten registration is expected to open on February 18th. It will be advertised in the Newtown Bee and promoted through our PTAs and school social media accounts. Once registration is open, we can begin tracking enrollment for next year’s Kindergarten classes.

Public Participation: None

J. Vorous adjourned the meeting at 12:04 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.

