



Minutes
Curriculum & Professional Practices Committee
Avon Board of Education
34 Simsbury, Avon, Connecticut 06001
Via Zoom
Tuesday, February 1, 2021 - 6:00 p.m.

Attendance

Members Present: Jackie Blea, Chair; Debra Chute; Jeffrey S. Fleischman; Bogdan Oprica

Member(s) Absent: none

Administration Present: Dr. Bridget H. Carnemolla, Superintendent; Lori Arnold, Special Education Supervisor; Tiffany Fox, Director of Pupil Services; Jodi Kryzanski, Program Director; Roberto Medic, Director of Human Resources; Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent; Mike Renkawitz, Avon High School Principal; Diana DeVivo, Avon High School Assistant Principal; Eileen O’Neil, Avon High School Assistant Principal

Others Present: Shirley Moy, Board Clerk

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of December 8, 2020 Minutes

Ms. Chute noticed that the time of adjournment was wrong on the minutes and should be checked and corrected.

Debra Chute moved, Jeffrey Fleischman seconded, to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2020 Curriculum & Professional Practices meetings with the correction as stated.

The motion carried 4-0-0.

III. Communications from the Public

Carol Shubinski, Avon resident and parent of an APS graduate and AHS students, submitted a comment regarding the students who are struggling at the high school. She asked for data regarding the failing students comparing it to data of a more typical year and wondered if there was an increase of students receiving C’s and D’s. Were F’s more common in a particular grade, department (subject) or was it more widespread? Ms. Shubinski also asked if there were supports in place to help students who were struggling and commented that students seem to be struggling with a variety of issues. Ms. Shubinski asked if resources were available at the schools, how students can access them and whether teachers knew where to direct students to find help or if teachers were even reaching out to struggling students. Ms. Shubinski asked that these problems be addressed now and not think that with the disappearance of the pandemic that the students would be cured of their stresses.

Amy Branch, Avon resident and parent of an AHS student, wrote about her son's difficult full remote learning experience which caused him to fail a course last Spring and is now retaking at an online school and doing very well. Ms. Branch feels the low grades received during remote learning is a detriment for the college acceptance process but also for his self-confidence. Ms. Branch asked that the District consider ways to help with the young people who are negatively impacted during this pandemic, who are missing out on essential formative moments.

IV. Update on Student Performance

The Superintendent shared a presentation showing comparison data and conclusions from the Fall of 2019 to the Fall of 2020. Dr. Carnemolla thanked Dr. Rusack, Ms. Kryzanski and Data Specialist, Ms. Feivelson, for putting the data together in such a short period of time. Dr. Rusack gave further detail including:

- A developmental reading assessment (DRA) was administered to students in grades 1-4, but not administered to students who are fully remote as the assessment is not designed to be administered easily remotely. Kindergarten students are not administered the assessment until Winter. The data showed the students in grades 1 & 2 showed a lower level of growth and retention than in previous years but students in 3 & 4 maintained their skills and did not show regression. The District is in the midst of completing the Winter assessment and a comparison of the Fall and Winter assessment results will be reviewed to see if now that the students are back in school whether their scores are moving forward. While the assessment has not been given to remote students, if a student is noticed to be struggling, if parents agree, students have been brought into the district to take the assessment.
- The AimswebPlus was approved to be purchased with end of year funds in the 2019-2020 school year, provides national norms and replaces most of the District's universal in-house developed screenings. The first administration of the assessment will give the District base line data. When compared to the data of the national norms it mirrors the typical bell curve in grades K & 1. Avon's distribution of scores tend to trend a little higher in the upper elementary grades with students are achieving higher than the national norms in both ELA and math. A comparison will be done once the Winter administration of the assessment is completed. All students were administered the AimswebPlus including remote students.
- At the middle school the grades from Quarter One were reviewed by course and compared to the previous year. The data shows that we have higher grades this year than last though not as significant in the area of math. Semester grades were not yet available but once they are the data will be compiled and compared. The data will be reviewed with the school administrators and department coordinators as well as the teachers. This will also provide insight as to which students may need additional support and help.
- The CT School Day SAT compares the data from the Class of 2020 and the Class of 2021. For the Class of 2020 the test was administered in a normal setting with the state compiling the data and putting it out. Last year, due to going remote the assessment was suspended for the year but Districts were given the option of administering the assessment to all students in the Fall, which Avon did. The comparison of data showed that the performance of students remained fairly level.

- The PSAT was administered to the District’s 10th and 11th grade students. Grade 10 students, Class of 2023, there was an increase of students in level one for not meeting standards in both ELA and Math. This will be looked at more closely to assess whether these students need supports or perhaps additional supports. There was also a decline of students at or above level which will be watched. Data for 11th grade students showed most were in the normal range of performance for the last few years and in math there was a slight decline which is not worrisome as the skills can be built up,
- Data was also looked at how many students were enrolled in an AP, ECE, college level course for the 19-20 and 20-21 school years. This was also done for honors and college prep levels. There was an increase of students enrolled in the AP, ECE, college level courses with the increase being the 9th 10th and 12th grade students. 9th and 12th grade students also enrolled in more honors courses while we saw a drop in 10th and 11th grade students. There was an increase of college prep courses in 10th and 11th grade students.
- The core courses, ELA, math, social studies and science and looked at the grade distribution for quarter one for both school years. 80% of the students had a B- or higher in the core content areas compared to 83% in the previous year.
- AHS total grade distribution by content area was also compared in the two school years.
- Grade distribution by course was compared with remote and in-person students. Any student who is scheduled for supports received the supports since the beginning of the school year. There is also “extra help times” built into student schedules on Wednesday afternoons during remote times.
- Data was also available of the number of students who took Pass/Fail by course.

Discussion was continued with Board members including the request to see data on common assessments; supports teachers receive to be able to extend that support to students; what to do moving forward; school administrators to reach out to students who are receiving Ds and Fs and to offer additional supports; trying to bring back remote students; encouraging remote students with IEPs to come in to school more often; survey at the high school; advocating for not only the health and safety but the education of students; use of zeros in grades; student interventions in the elementary level; comparison of in person and remote school achievements; opportunities for students to bring up grades; various processes at the high school; bringing back staff and who are fully remote; pass/fail at the high school; increase of Fs; snapshots being sent to parents; homework; AHS supports that are available to all students;

V. Update on Student Supports

Committee Chair, Jackie Blea, asked for clarification as to the types of supports available to students should they need it within the District. Director of Pupil Services, Tiffany Fox, spoke about the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) document that was just finalized at the beginning of the school year. Ms. Fox also mentioned the various supports available at each of the schools. She also told of how home visits are utilized with remote students who are not engaging as well as leveraging technology to communicate with parents. Dr. Carnemolla spoke more on Securly, a platform used to monitor student safety on the computers, and how it is able to send alerts to the administrative team when key words are detected in student use.

This has proven to be very helpful as to what students are thinking and feeling and whether assistance or intervention is needed. Home visits have also significantly increased. The Superintendent also spoke on how the District has provided tangible items for students and families in need. Lori Arnold, Supervisor of Special Education, added that home visits are being documented so that it can be more easily followed up and teams are working proactively with families and incentivizing disengaged students to come to school. Dr. Rusack shared of how a teacher drove to a student's house to personally try to reengage the student and another occasion where a Hartford student missed the school parade so various staff members drove their cars to the student's house to give the student a personal parade. Dr. Rusack shared these to indicate the many things staff are doing to connect with students that generally go unnoticed. Committee members expressed their appreciation to all the staff for going above and beyond to build relationships with their students. Mr. Renkawitz also acknowledged the Avon Police Department for partnering with the District in ensuring the students are safe and never hesitating when a well check is needed. Dr. Carnemolla shared Mr. Renkawitz' appreciation of the Avon Police Dept. The Superintendent added that there were 47 risk assessments done in 6 months of the 18-19 school year; 94 were done in the 19-20 school year. A question was asked of how in tune the District is with the needs of full remote students and would like some follow-up conversation to which Ms. Fox said she would look into it and share it with the administrators. Dr. Carnemolla replied that school social workers were checking in regularly with full remote students.

Committee Chair, Jackie Blea, thanked everyone for all the information and data shared tonight and looks forward to additional information later on after its been gathered.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:57 pm.

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jackie Blea, Curriculum & Professional Practices Chair
Jackie Blea, February 21, 2021

Minutes respectfully received by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary
Jeffrey S. Fleischman, February 21, 2021

Minutes are approved at the next Curriculum & Professional Practices meeting, and any corrections to the minutes, if needed, will be made at that time.