



Curriculum & Professional Practices

Avon Board of Education
34 Simsbury Road
Avon, Connecticut

Mission Statement

Our mission is to inspire in each student a joy and passion for learning and a commitment to excellence, personal integrity, and social responsibility.

Tuesday, June 4, 2019, 5:30 pm

Avon Board of Education Offices, Meeting Rm 1

Minutes

Attendance

Members Present: Jackie Blea, Debra Chute, Jeffrey S. Fleischman

Member(s) Absent: Bogdan Oprica

Administration Present: Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent; Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Kim Mearman, Director of Pupil Services

Others Present: Shirley Moy, Board Clerk

- I. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Blea at 5:35 pm.
- II. Approval of March 5, 2019 Minutes
*Deb Chute moved, Jeff Fleischman seconded, to approve the March 5, 2019 Curriculum & Professional Practices minutes as presented.
The motion carried 3-0-0.*
- III. Communications from the Public
Carol Shubinski, Avon resident, spoke of her concerns regarding the culture and courses at Avon High School and the need for more consistency with curriculum. Ms. Shubinski requested a CP level 6 in French and Spanish to give students an option besides AP and to also add more instruction in computer science engineering and bio medical sciences. Ms. Shubinski suggested the District look into Project Lead the Way, which provides curriculum in the areas of engineering and bio medical science and is used in districts similar to Avon across the country. Additional courses were requested in computer coding and theatre. Ms. Shubinski also mentioned the need for consistency and difficulty for some students with the levels of courses offered when students have to opt for CP classes instead of AP because there are no other alternatives.

IV. Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Supports Update

Dr. Mearman described the work of the SEL (Social Emotional Learning) Committee, which consists of about 40 people and comprises all levels of staff including administrators. The SEL Committee reviewed what had been done in the District in terms of Social Emotional Learning and is working on providing a cohesive approach for the District - defining common experiences; standards; instructions; school wide and district wide practices for PK-12. The C&PP Committee engaged discussion on the definition and specifics of SEL. It comes down to centering on the whole child, how we benefit the whole child, and how we help students develop a healthy life balance integrating that with the real world. The SEL Committee will provide a working definition of social emotional learning, which will apply to every child, even extending to the child's family. Social emotional learning is married with the SRBI (Scientifically Researched Based Interventions) process, which was just revised at the last Curriculum Professional Development Council meeting explained Dr. Rusack. With SRBI, when a concern is seen, it is documented; interventions are put in place and later assessed. The SEL Committee has determined the SRBI has the interventions in place, the academics is very strong but the behavior side needs work. Dr. Carnemolla added that there is a continuum with SEL. The SRBI is the reactive piece when there is an issue. The creation of the SEL Committee is to examine how to weave in learning opportunities from grades K-12 around social skills, managing emotions and being able to communicate with people, advocating for yourself, knowing where and when to seek help, etc. The SEL Committee was created to address how we work with a developmental and appropriate level with students and the direct instruction that should model our behavior, how we interact with people, which addresses our school climate and culture; it is holistic. Dr. Mearman agreed that holistic is the key word that will drive the work. The purpose of the SEL Committee is to define the framework and definition of social emotional learning and what the major principles will be to drive the work. The natural outcome of the SEL Committee work will feed into SRBI conversations and will most likely be a multi-year plan with even more conversation in regards to curriculum and what needs to be done (training/professional development, programs to purchase, curriculum to put in place, etc.). The C&PP Committee asked what tangible action is currently happening and if there is communication that is being had with students on how to get help. Committee members expressed their concern that this seems to be a long process that restricts the opportunity to currently take action and students are not having access to an adult in the district. The Committee fears there is a lack of awareness of the services and staff available to them to which Dr. Mearman explained the various pathways students can take – talk to their teachers, social workers or counselors; SAT process; 504 and IP processes; Child Find; parents can make referrals, even students can come forward themselves. The implementation of Gaggie has shown it being used by students to indicate concern about friends. Dr. Carnemolla shared staff went through a training with CIGNA teaching how to recognize signs. The committee expressed their concern of not providing students with more tangible information in a more expedient time frame and making certain students know adults in the District are accessible. The committee suggested to reacquaint the students at the beginning of the school year with information of how to navigate in the district should they need social emotional help and to think about providing opportunities for students to have at least one connection in whom they can confide. Dr. Carnemolla suggested advisory be implemented more widely to offer that opportunity for students to connect with staff. It is a program done that has been offered in the upper grades utilizing a guidance curriculum though it has not been a widespread program or done with fidelity. CAPSTONE also provides high school students the opportunity to connect one on one with a staff person. The goal of the schools is that every student has that one caring adult to go to talk to, which may not necessarily be the social worker or school

psychologist. The C&PP Committee asked to set a district goal that by the beginning of the new school year every student is made aware of who to contact, that we value relationships and to inform students on how to find the support staff available to them. The Committee also stressed the importance that every staff person, not just teachers, be accessible and knows who they can refer students to should they need help. The Committee asked Dr. Mearman for her timeline to which she replied that the last SEL is on Thursday, June 6th. The information given from the committee will be debriefed and shared at a future time.

V. Advanced Placement 3 Year Enrollment Comparison 2017-2019

Dr. Nestler-Rusack shared the 3 year enrollment comparison of AP students, which provide actual counts of students who completed AP courses in SY 2017-2018 and SY 2018-2019. SY 2019-2020 are just projections of those enrolled. The process of recommendations of AP courses was changed which now allows students to make well informed choices after having conversations with their teachers. Data is being compiled comparing AP courses data, the teachers recommendations, and the AP Potential report. Mr. Renkawitz, AHS Principal, and Mr. Dyer, AHS Guidance Director, will continue the work of compiling the data through the summer as well as look at how to retain the students in the courses. The Committee asked for clarity as to the numbers and requested a more extended report of at least five years. Dr. Rusack stated that AP enrollment has steadily increased and a five-year lookback was provided to the Board a few months earlier. Dr. Rusack also explained that the dip in AP enrollment coincided with the dip in enrollment districtwide but the trends show AP enrollment hovering around 700 students. Dr. Carnemolla added that being 4th in highest SAT scores in the state does not necessarily mean having the 4th highest enrollment in AP courses. The lower enrollment that was mentioned in a previous meeting was in comparison to districts that achieve similarly or more aligned to Avon but may have a larger population. Changing the procedure of students choosing AP classes may be one of the reasons of the increase. The Committee expressed concern of honors classes being phased out and not being able to retain students, whether it was a curriculum issue or instructional issue. It was also asked if data on honors classes could be produced to help assess the issue. The Committee suggested to run numbers of first day of school and last day of school to see where it started and how it ended to get basic numbers to help understand the situation and get an accurate look at the full year. Course sequencing is also being looked at to get a more accurate look at the progression of why students taking certain courses or levels over another. The Committee added that lack of common grading methods and consistency among the sections was also a concern. The Committee shared that the Board is concerned when levels (CP, AP, honors) are eliminated in various subjects and do not offer the same opportunities for all students. Discussion was also had on grading policies, fairness in grading methods and the discretion of teachers vs common summative assessments. The C&PP Committee asked that honors retention number be presented at the next meeting. Dr. Carnemolla suggested not just looking at honors courses but at the entirety of all the course levels, the movement from CP through AP. Mr. Renkawitz and Mr. Dyer have begun the comparison of the AP Potential and the actual number of students being successful in AP courses, as well as enrollment numbers in CP & honors, which will be completed by the beginning of the next school year and shared with the Board. The Committee asked for data to be presented in percentages rather than just giving numbers.

VI. Avon High School Course Proposal Recommendation

CPDC recommends several courses including Introduction to Business which is under the math department but will not count as a math credit and four special education courses with

two just being a name change; Pre-Vocational now named Career Exploration and Life Skills now called Social Development. The last two special education courses, Workplace Experience and Community Living are part of the transition program and a legal requirement to provide for students with IEPs. Dr. Carnemolla asked Dr. Mearman to explain to the Committee how courses would look on the transcripts to which Dr. Mearman replied the course titles would be listed exactly as shown on the transcripts which are the nationally endorsed titles from the national registry. All courses that go on a transcript must be in the course of studies with a description, which these course are. Information on leveling must also be explicit in the description so it is understood who may take the courses. Generally, special education courses open only to special education students are non-leveled. To ensure students do not register for courses not geared for them the counseling office oversees the registration process. Support courses are Pass/Fail and it is disclosed to parents this would show on transcripts. The Committee expressed support of the courses but also expressed concern of revealing courses as Special Education courses and labeling the students who take them or disclosing their disability.

Jeff Fleischman moved, DC seconded, to move all five course proposal recommendations: Introduction to Business; Workplace Experience; Career Exploration; Community Living and Social Development to the full Board for adoption.

The motion carried 3-0-0.

VII. Primary Instructional Materials for Review

Dr. Rusack introduced two books to move forward for the 30 day review, *Revenge of the Whale* for use in two different units, ELA and Social Studies in sixth grade, the book was previously approved but a different edition that is currently being used in the high school and World History and Geography textbook for ninth grade.

Debra Chute moved, JF seconded, to start the 30 day review process of Revenge of the Whale for 6th grade and World History and Geography textbook for 9th grade.

The motion carried 3-0-0.

VIII. Communication from Board Members

Jeff Fleischman mentioned the new social studies requirement to add African American or Latino studies and that state standards still needed to be created. Dr. Carnemolla replied that she is aware of the new requirement and it is on the District's radar.

Chair Blea, speaking on behalf of committee member, Bogdan Oprica, introduced a math curriculum for gifted and talented students called Math Quest to which Dr. Carnemolla stated that she was aware and will follow up with Mr. Oprica later.

IX. Adjournment

Debra Chute moved, Jeff Fleischman seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 pm.

The motion carried 3-0-0.

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

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

Jackie Blea, June 11, 2019

Minutes respectfully received by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary

Jeffrey S. Fleischman, June 11, 2019