



Curriculum & Professional Practices

Special Meeting

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.

Thursday, September 20, 2018, 7:00 pm

Avon Board of Education Offices, Meeting Rm 2

Minutes

Attendance

Members Present: Jackie Blea, Committee Chair; Debra Chute; Bogdan Oprica

Member(s) Absent: Jeffrey S. Fleischman

Others Present: Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent; Jenna Aylsworth, ELA Department Coordinator; Shirley Moy, Board Clerk

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Blea at 7:01 pm.

II. Approval of May 29, 2018 Minutes

Bogdan Oprica moved, Deb Chute seconded, to approve the May 29, 2018 Curriculum & Professional Practices minutes as presented.

The motion carried 3-0-0.

III. Communications from the Public

There was no communication from the public.

IV. Capstone Update

Dr. Nestler-Rusack explained that Elizabeth Sanborn, Social Studies Department Coordinator, who was going to join Ms. Aylsworth in the presentation was unable to attend the meeting due to a personal situation. Jenna Aylsworth, ELA Department Coordinator, gave a presentation regarding the improved Capstone program which encompasses the vision and ability level of all students and recognizes their various passions.

- All students develop expertise related to an area of interest and present their Capstone research. Students must reflect on and describe the experience of inquiry.
- Google Classroom was developed to facilitate the process and to create the experience of electronic communication.

- For the 2019 year, a Capstone website was created to establish more structure. Also, students have an advisory class with built-in curriculum and progress monitoring beginning in ninth grade to give oversight to their project.
- Capstone is presented in February and April.
- Questions/Comments
 - Mr. Oprica commented how Capstone compliments the District’s mission statement and thanked Ms. Aylsworth for the work she and Ms. Sanborn did.
 - Ms. Chute asked if students looked forward to the Capstone project after witnessing presentations from previous years to which Ms. Aylsworth replied that by the end of the sustained research project they were excited to present.
 - Ms. Chute asked if students still had a mentor. Ms. Aylsworth explained that students are encouraged to reach out to an expert related to their research topic which has included teachers in other buildings.
 - Ms. Chute also thanked Ms. Aylsworth for listening to the concerns and suggestions from students and teachers and the work done in improving the project.
 - Ms. Blea asked how students find mentors. Ms. Aylsworth explained the randomly assigned advisors are not necessarily the mentors but will travel up the research project with the students. A list of mentors and their expertise is published on Google Classroom so students can seek out their mentors. Ms. Blea asked what the commitment was of the mentors. Ms. Aylsworth said that much of it depended on how much help the student needed but it has not been an issue for teachers to spend the time with students. It is encouraged that teachers have no more than three mentees per presentation.
 - Ms. Blea asked if Capstone was a requirement of graduation which Dr. Nestler-Rusack explained that it is currently not a requirement of the state for graduation, but it is a requirement for Avon High School students. Dr. Carnemolla added that the state is contemplating making this a requirement and Avon is ahead of that requirement. Credits of .5 are also given as well as a Pass/Fail grade. Internships can be a resource for Capstone, but it is not a replacement.
 - Dr. Nestler-Rusack and Dr. Carnemolla both thanked both Ms. Aylsworth and Ms. Sanborn for shepherding the work done on the project even during the summer months.

Dr. Nestler-Rusack asked Ms. Aylsworth to help explain the course proposals at the high school for 2019-2020 which were done in CPDC in May and in place for the budget development which is starting shortly. These are college credit courses where students seem to be flourishing.

- English electives only run if there is the enrollment and may not run every semester. ECE themes were added in English Dept. based on student interest such as Writing about the Unspeakable: True Crime Then and Now; Writing Through Humor: Satire and Comedy; Writing Through Our Times: Post 9/11 American Culture and American Studies. Dr. Nestler-Rusack added that these ECE electives are in addition to AP English courses and college prep courses that can be taken on the honors level to give students more choices. Students will continue to be surveyed to find their interests in all levels to keep the courses fresh.
- ECE European History is now offered combined with AP. This is a start of offerings for ECE in History. Also offered is ECE Human Rights. Currently history is the only department that does not offer ECE courses.

- Theatre is adding a semester course called Improvisation for the Real World as well as changing Introduction to Theatre from a year to semester course.
- Questions/Comments
 - Ms. Blea asked whether the honors and CP courses were as interesting and diverse to which Dr. Nestler-Rusack replied that there were various options in those levels as well.
 - Ms. Chute likes that the offerings treat students as college students and that more options seemed logical but asked if there were too many options which thin out the classes and cause staffing issues. Dr. Nestler-Rusack replied that some courses are not run every year/semester. Usually the cutoff is a minimum of 15 students to run a course.
 - Ms. Chute shared that at CPDC it was stated that the theatre arts skills learned are for everyone and asked if it is encouraged that all classes are for everyone and if there is an attempt to encourage students to think outside their interests. Dr. Nestler-Rusack explained that English electives are requirements. Mr. Oprica asked for further explanation. Dr. Nestler-Rusack and Ms. Aylsworth further explained that students can take two half year electives but for ECE credit in English they need a full year of English electives. If they do not want the college credits students can mix the levels which would satisfy the District's requirements.
 - Ms. Blea commented that communication was vital to the understanding of this for students and parents. Dr. Carnemolla replied that Mr. Renkawitz is working with the teachers and counseling department to communicate the various course offerings so there is a better understanding of AP/ECE.
 - Dr. Carnemolla reminded that ECE courses/syllabus needed to be approved by UConn to qualify for college credit and instructors must work closely with UConn instructors.
 - Mr. Oprica asked if it was common to have combination of courses where the framework is the same while the content is different. Ms. Aylsworth explained that the choices align with student interests and hope to develop more electives for senior year to allow students even more choice.
 - Mr. Oprica also asked how does the district ensure a robust AP offering. Dr. Nestler-Rusack replied that due to lack of interest some courses or when we have "out grown" the courses, some courses have been deleted. However, AP courses are not eliminated but do an off-year cycle of AP courses to encourage larger class sizes the following year. Mr. Oprica added that the Board would not like to see the number of AP courses lessened. Ms. Aylsworth added that ECE students tend to be more honors students and students that did not tend to do as well in AP courses but does not see the number of students taking AP dwindling.
 - Dr. Carnemolla added that the concern seems to be that if more students are taking half year ECE courses there may be less students taking AP courses, however, depending on the student's college plans and where they are going they may choose AP English Lit over an ECE English elective, or they may try to do both. This emphasizes the importance of clear communication regarding AP/ECE. Mr. Oprica agreed. Ms. Aylsworth shared that she has gone into every sophomore and junior class and parent breakfasts explaining the ECE program.
 - Ms. Blea, while understanding the importance of not eliminating AP courses, ECE courses while also providing college credit seems to be more attainable

for more students. Ms. Blea hopes that the various course topics are also offered to learners in every level. Dr. Carnemolla commented that all kids are ECE kids. Ms. Aylsworth added that she has found many types of students do well in ECE courses. Ms. Blea was concerned that some have prerequisites that may prevent some students from taking ECE.

Debra Chute moved, Jackie Blea seconded, to move the recommended courses to the full Board at the September 2018 meeting.

The motion carried 3-0-0.

V. Professional Development Update

A. June 20th Professional Development Offerings

B. 2018-2019 Professional Development Dates

Dr. Nestler-Rusack gave a review of the professional development offerings that were offered on June 20 which included internal and external presenters as well as an overview of professional development events scheduled for the upcoming year.

- Questions/Comments

- Ms. Blea thanked Dr. Nestler-Rusack for the various offerings saying that the courses seemed exciting and seemed to touch every aspect of being an educator.
- Ms. Chute asked if this was the final year with Allison Zmuda to which Dr. Nestler-Rusack replied that it was hoped this was the last year to get the bulk of the work done and possibly a couple of days next year but will start weaning away.
- Ms. Blea asked if Capturing Kids Hearts being used just to train new teachers to which Dr. Nestler-Rusack confirmed it was for new teacher training and any staff that has not yet been trained. The second component is Leadership where they will come and work with the Central Office and building level leaders which will take place for three days in December.
- Ms. Blea also asked what professional development is provided to the guidance counselors regarding special education and post graduation opportunities for students with needs. Dr. Nestler-Rusack stated that Dr. Mearman would be the one to be able to provide more information which can be added to a future agenda.

VI. 2018-2019 Elementary & Secondary Assessment Calendars

Dr. Nestler-Rusack provided information on how the district monitors student growth and performance on both the local and state levels.

VII. Update from Superintendent on Resource Guide

Dr. Carnemolla shared the efforts being addressed as to how to have a comprehensive guide on the various services available for parents and children as well as to our staff. A list is currently available on the website. It is now time to revisit the list of service providers. The guide should be comprehensive to know whom to contact within the district such as social workers, and counselors; what you can expect from Avon Youth Services; what you can expect from Rec and Park; what Avon Social Services provides to the community, etc. A committee comprised of school psychologists, social workers and counselors are working to revise the resource guide. Once a draft is available it will be shared with others to get feedback prior to making a final draft. After it is finalized the resource guide will be available everywhere within the community.

- Questions/Comments
 - Ms. Chute is glad that this is being done as it is important to include what is being offered within the school buildings.
 - Ms. Blea suggested a letter be sent out informing parents of the contact information for district school counselors, school psychologists and school social workers. Ms. Blea also inquired if the websites have been corrected with accurate names and contact numbers to which Dr. Carnemolla confirmed that she had asked that this information be accurate on the new website.
 - Dr. Carnemolla acknowledged how important it is to communicate the services at each building and will consider ways on how the District can do better with public service announcements.

VIII. Future Committee Dates

Next meeting date is October 29. Dr. Carnemolla asked that future dates be held when it is efficient to meet and coincide with important district dates. Ms. Blea asked that the item be tabled for now until all committee members are present. The November meeting date is canceled and will potentially meet on December 5.

IX. Communication from Board Members

No communication from Board members.

X. Adjournment

***Debra Chute moved, Bogdan Oprica seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 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

October 1, 2018

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