



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, September 3, 2019, 6:00 pm

Avon Board of Education Offices, Meeting Rm 1

Minutes

Attendance

Members Present: Jackie Blea, Debra Chute, Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Bogdan Oprica (joined meeting telephonically at 6:03 pm and arrived at 6:50 pm)

Member(s) Absent: none

Administration Present: Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent; Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent

Others Present: Shirley Moy, Board Clerk

- I. Call to Order
Committee Chair Blea called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.
- II. Approval of June 4, 2019 Minutes
Mr. Fleischman moved, Ms. Chute seconded, to approve the June 4, 2019 Curriculum & Professional Practices minutes as presented.
The motion carried 3-0-0.
- III. Communications from the Public
Catherine Lewis, a parent, expressed her concerns regarding books being used at Avon High School, "The Hate You Give" and "Speak." Ms. Lewis said the books were provocative, used excessive profanity and centered on gang affiliation, drug use, underage drinking and rape. Ms. Lewis offered alternative books that could be used. Ms. Lewis questioned if the books followed the proper process for adopting curriculum as she very dismayed the books were approved. Ms. Lewis felt the books were unacceptable and do not support school climate.

IV. Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Supports Update

Dr. Carnemolla shared an update on the working being done in partnership with a mental health group in town founded by Avon parent, Shawn George. The group is looking for ways to provide mental health awareness information through their website but is short on manpower and looking for someone to help them with their website. They will not reference any specific providers but provide information on how to find providers, such as through the usage of 211, suicide prevention, and what is available through the school district. Similar information, with additional school information for students to get help, will be provided on the back of high school ID badges. Dr. Carnemolla also shared that the high school will be creating a counseling suite to make it easier for students to find and access service providers. Committee members suggested making the same information available on the District's website and to have support staff trained to be able to provide basic triage for students in need. The committee also asked what was being done at the other schools to which Dr. Carnemolla replied that the middle school was having posters created on how to access support. The Committee expressed their appreciation for this development and asked to be updated on the progress.

Dr. Carnemolla also updated the Committee on how the District is educating the whole student. The team of administrators came up with an Avon version of Capturing Kids Hearts' EXCEL model to incorporate social/emotional aspects in the definition. Dr. Rusack went on to explain the adapted version will become part of the District's Blueprint for Excellence and will be distributed to all staff to encourage daily implementation. The Committee asked if there was any financial obligation to Capturing Kids Hearts and both Dr. Carnemolla and Dr. Rusack replied that approval was sought but the District is no longer using their services.

Dr. Carnemolla also shared that PGS and RBS will be piloting a social/emotional learning program from PK to grade 4 with age appropriate lessons. These lessons will be embedded into the curriculum teachers already have in place.

V. Advanced Placement 3 Year Enrollment Comparison 2017-2019

As a follow-up to a previous meeting, Dr. Nestler-Rusack shared the research on the core course level changes for English Language Art, Math, Social Studies and Science for 2018-2019. The research looked at the number of students leveling down/up; if students dropped a course and registered for a different one; the number of students who leveled down was due to overriding the teacher's recommendations; and the number of students that switched during add/drop period (first two weeks of school). Dr. Rusack stated that because there is no report that pulls add/drop data cleanly it is difficult to distinguish between students that recently enrolled; students that withdrew; and students that stayed in the same class but switched periods. Dr. Rusack also explained that Algebra II Honors was an outlier due to the change of Algebra I several years ago. Work continues at the high school and middle school to monitor the algebra track and instruction to see if there are additional changes and supports that may be needed. Skills courses are available for students who need more assistance in being successful. The Committee had discussions on students' choice and making informed decisions. Dr. Carnemolla added that October 1st is now the last add/drop date which will help better track this data. The Committee also discussed uniformity across the departments as to assignments and tests as this contributes to the stress of students and possibly weighs in the decision to add/drop. Dr. Carnemolla and Dr. Rusack addressed this concern and replied the District is currently working on that issue.

Dr. Carnemolla and Dr. Rusack shared with the Committee the three-year AP enrollment comparison with 2017/18 and 2018/19 being actual enrollments and 2019/20 showing currently enrolled students. Dr. Rusack reminded the Committee that numbers for this school year will still fluctuate as students enroll, withdraw or make changes during the add/drop period. Dr. Rusack also reminded that AP/ECE numbers may differ as far as those who take the course versus those who actually take the exam. 81 additional students have enrolled for an AP course from last year. Dr. Carnemolla explained that some of the changes are due to staffing and the statistics may have been different had more courses been available. Staffing does not allow the District to offer certain courses, such as Chinese AP, but students can take them as independent studies. Students can also take AP courses through virtual high school. Students receive equal credit and have the option to take it in school or outside. An advisor is assigned to the student who chooses to do this. Additional discussion was held regarding AP and ECE courses available. Dr. Carnemolla clarified that during the 2017/18 school year, 71% took AP/ECE courses; 67% in 2018/19 and 74% this school year.

VI. Communication from Board Members

Chair Blea thanked both Dr. Carnemolla and Dr. Rusack for providing the helpful information. Dr. Carnemolla acknowledged the work of Dr. Rusack and Cynthia Feivelson, Database Coordinator, for doing the groundwork.

Chair Blea requested that all new courses and books (to open the 30 day window) be approved not be put on the Consent Calendar but listed under New Business to allow a brief overview to be given. After the 30-day window has closed books can then be listed under Consent if there has been no objection during the 30 days.

Mr. Oprica shared the concepts he had read from Todd Rose's "Myth of Average." Mr. Oprica agreed with Mr. Rose's statement that no one is average and asked the District to not educate to the average, but to support students of all ranges, not just the middle. Mr. Oprica also reminded the District to look into the Quest math program in West Hartford. The Committee had further discussion that given the caliber of the students in Avon whether the District is truly meeting the needs of all students. Dr. Carnemolla addressed the Committee's concerns, that it is on the District's radar and will give an update at the next Committee meeting.

VII. Adjournment

***Chair Blea moved, Mr. Fleischman seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 7:19 pm.
The motion carried 4-0-0.***

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

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

Jackie Blea, Sept. 12, 2019

Minutes respectfully received by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary

Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Sept. 12, 2019