



Meeting Summary

Present: Andrew Wulf, Mike Testa, Jessica Buchmann, David Clay, Anya Brunnick, Stacey Gijbsbers, Laurie Kench, Riya Kaur, Tuala Sullivan, Chris Cain, Dr. Orlando, Emerson Leahy, Rourke Lee.

1. HIGH SCHOOL UPDATES

a. STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Andy Wulf shared how the extracurricular program continues to grow. He and Mike Testa provided a summary of two new groups that are currently in action.

- Mike Testa provided a summary of a recent Investment Club presentation to a board of advisors. Students part of the Investment Club manage a portfolio using allotted funds from the NEF. There are several local volunteers how provide feedback to the students on the portfolio. Before an investment is made the group comes to consensus generate from the student presentation. This has been an invaluable learning experience for students part of the group.
- The Chess Club is just over a month old. It has around 45 student members. A tournament was started before the February vacation. A championship will take place on Thursday this week. The NEF sponsored the boards for this group. An anonymous donor also has provided sweatshirts for the students.

b. BUDGET UPDATE

Andy Wulf shared how Monday, March 6, the school committee listened to a budget overview from each building's principal. Along with Andy, Anya Brunnick and Chris Cain from the Council also attended. Andy stated how the requests reviewed at the prior 2 meetings were the main part of the high school's overview. During the presentation, Andy summarized the process the School Council took on to provide feedback on the requests.

- Reviewed school performance data
- Used school performance to reflect on the school improvement plan
- Updated improvement plan based on school data reviewed.

- Used the improvement plan to think through possible requests

Here is a link to the [budget overview presentation](#) provided to the school committee.

c. SCHEDULE UPDATE

A majority of the 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students have entered their elective requests. The deadline for students to submit waivers is March 10. Under the direction of Lauren Gee, the guidance counselors are scheduling meetings with every student on their caseload in order to review the recommendations and discuss each student's request. Ms. Gee is working collaboratively with the administration at the River Valley Charter School and Immaculate Conception to support a smooth transition for students who will be registering with us. We are anticipating a grade 9 class of approximately 180 students based on the current numbers at the Nock.

d. ACCREDITATION PROCESS UPDATE

Andy shared that the Steering Committee which consists of teachers has led the faculty in collecting evidence against the standards of accreditation. The team has recently drafted a summary that includes areas of strength and improvement for the school based on the standards. The team is in the process of collecting faculty feedback so that the final report can be completed. Part of the evidence collected, included the survey results taken by parents, students, and teachers.

Andy noted that the final accreditation report will be reviewed against the school improvement plan so that any gaps in improvement areas can be added. Andy stated that he is hoping this will be done by the May school council meeting so that he can share the updates of the improvement plan with the council.

David Clay commented that he has felt the process for developing the report has been very organized and inclusive for the faculty.

2. PLANNING TO REVIEW THE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Focus Areas

Mr. Testa explained the goal for tonight's meeting is to start a discussion around areas to focus on. He explained that a Google Sheet has been shared so all members can start putting in ideas, concerns, and updates/corrections.

Discussion

- Mr. Testa shared how this school year through the student council a proposal for Senior Option with Clipper Block had been created using the language of “Student in Good Standing.” He stated, the handbook mentions “**Student in Good Standing,**” but does not define it. The team agreed that a process needs to happen to define what a “Student in Good Standing” means especially if it will be used around participating in privileges such as dances and grade level events. Chris Cain and Anya Brunnick both mentioned that GPA should not be considered for “Good Standing” due to some students who work very hard and are good students but don’t get top grades.

Mike Testa commented that we have parameters around grades as far as athletics or extra-curricular activities such as theater and band, but he agreed that it doesn’t make sense to count grades against affairs such as prom.

The Council directed Andy Wulf and Mike Testa to work with the student council and teachers to generate a definition of a “Student in Good Standing.”

- Mike Testa mentioned language under the **Academic Honors description** of the handbook that would need to be updated. He explained that this will be the first year, the school community will recognize a **Scholar Artist** alongside the Bresnahan Scholar Athlete.

Mr. Wulf commented this new award emanated from last year’s council review of the handbook when it was brought up by members for the school to consider recognizing the arts at the event to balance arts and athletics.

Mr Wulf further explained that the school currently does not have a community sponsor for the award like we do for the Scholar Athlete, but we have created the recognition and will seek a sponsorship in the coming months. Right now, the Visual Performing Arts teacher team has selected a recipient using similar criteria to the Bresnahan Scholar Athlete.

- Dave Clay asked if language around the **school dress code** could be revisited. In response, Mr. Testa explained last year through the faculty council a discussion took place around the dress code as it is vague.

Parents and students on the council cautioned that if the dress code is going to be explored that it needs to not target one gender. Anya Brunnick explained how dress codes can very easily target females recognizing how body-types vary and result in clothes fitting differently. Stacy Gijsbers agreed how body-types impact how style of clothes fit and the policy needs to not single-out students as a result of this. Students Tuala and Riya also commented similarly on this.

Mr. Wulf explained that the Policy Subcommittee of the School Committee recently reviewed and updated language to its Dress Code Policy. (See end of Meeting of Summary).

Mr. Clay mentioned that because the code is vague it is difficult to enforce and sometimes teachers are put in uncomfortable situations.

Dr. Orlando mentioned based on the discussion taking place that it's clear more conversation needs to happen around the dress code as it sounds like the current one is not enforced well or at all primarily as there can be different interpretations of what it means to distract or disrupt the education process. If a code is going to be developed it needs to be specific in regards to what is acceptable and what is not. Or decisions need to be made whether there will be a dress code or not.

Anya Brunnick commented in response, if it is going to be specific it cannot target one gender over another for the reasons stated earlier. In response to Dr. Orlando, she agreed how adults may have different interpretations of what is appropriate and what is not.

Mr. Testa pulled up dress code language that had been shared at a faculty council last spring. He said there are schools that have started to develop policies that are gender neutral and are much more explicit. Hamilton-Wenham recently updated their policy. Additionally, some schools in New Hampshire have also updated their policies based on what a teacher had shared at a faculty council meeting.

Mr. Wulf acknowledged that this was a healthy conversation around a complicated policy. He stated that he and Mr. Testa will reflect on how best to approach the ongoing conversation.

JICA - Student Dress Code

Last Updated Date: 01/03/2023

Adoption Date: 06/19/2017

Revision History: 06/05/2017, 06/19/2017, 12/19/2022, 01/03/2023

Student Dress Code

The right of students to freedom of expression in the public schools of the commonwealth shall not be abridged, provided that such right shall not cause any disruption or disorder within the school. The responsibility for appropriate dress and appearance of students will rest with individual students and parents. Students shall have a right to express themselves by the “dress” and hair style of their own choosing provided students meet their responsibility to “dress” and groom in a manner that conforms to the reasonable and acceptable standards of health, safety and cleanliness, and that does not distract or cause disruption to the educational process. Teachers and administrators also have an obligation to serve as role models for students in the manner of their dress. While it is not practical to publish a definitive list of requirements or prohibitions, the following guidelines should be followed:

- *Clothing may not bear inappropriate words or picture or, promote drugs and/or alcohol.*

Any staff member who feels that a student is inappropriately dressed may send the student to the Main Office, where the Principal or Associate Principal will make the final determination regarding the dress. Students will be given an opportunity to change into appropriate clothing. Refusal to comply with the dress code may result in disciplinary consequences.

Policy References:

Source: Newburyport School Committee