

NHS School Council

March 12, 2024

Attendance: Renee Ames, Jim Antonelli, Chris Cain, Stacy Gijsbers, Priya Kaur, Laurie Kench, Rourke Lee, Mike Testa, Andy Wulf

1) High School Updates

- **Activities + Events**

- Andy Wulf provided updates around the following activities:
 - Legally Blonde - Opening Night, Friday March 15.
 - Spirit Week - This week is Spirit Week with different themes each day and wrapping up with a school rally on Friday. The week has been run by the Student Council.

- **MCAS Schedule**

- March 26 + 27 is the MCAS for grade 10.
- Grade 9 and 10 will come to school at the regular time and grades 11 and 12 will have a 3-hour delay. Classes begin at 11:15.
- Juniors can use the time to visit a college as long as parents have completed the form that had been sent home a few weeks ago.

- **Budget Update**

- Principals presented their aspirational budgets to the school committee on March 4th.
- Andy Wulf mentioned the Pathways Coordinator and Humanities Teacher positions will continue to be priorities throughout the process. Both of these can be added at cost-neutral. The Peterson Program will be an additional cost to the budget and is also a priority based on students expressing an interest in the opportunity to work towards a trade.

- **Scheduling for 2024-25 School Year**

- Andy Wulf shared how course sectioning has begun.
- The administrative team is currently using course requests to decide on the

number of course sections that will be offered next year.

- The objective this year is the same as last year: Have the schedule completed early enough so that students leave for the summer knowing the classes they are in.

2) Handbook Policy Review

- Andy Wulf reviewed the spreadsheet that contains all of the policies that are being discussed or have proposed changes

Policies For Review

- Andy Wulf brought up two additional policies for discussion that have come from the faculty council and/or the student council. Course Waiver Policy and Dual Enrollment Course Weight.

➤ **Dual Enrollment Discussion**

- i) Andy Wulf shared the question that has been asked around dual enrollment: Should Dual Enrollment have the same weight as an AP course.
- ii) Question: What is the concern around the current weighting?

Andy Wulf shared how there is a concern that dual enrollment courses may or may not have the same level of rigor as a College Board AP course and that there is a perceived trend of students taking these classes to increase their GPAs. A recommendation had been made to vary the weight of dual enrollment based on the course level number (For example, lower 100s Honors Credit, upper 100s and above AP Credit)

- iii) Summary of Discussion:

Some students present have taken dual enrollment classes and have felt the rigor has been comparable if not more than some AP classes they have taken.

Students noted that not all of the AP classes at NHS have the same rigor. There are some that are significantly challenging and others that do not require as much work. For example, Declan noted that he has had friends who have taken dual enrollment classes that are extremely hard and others that were easier, and

alongside that students have taken some AP classes here that have been hard and others that are easy to them.

Students also noted how the college courses are self-driven which can make them challenging. There is very little support as you would typically get from a high school teacher.

Students noted there are some students who may take dual enrollment for the purpose of the GPA but a majority of their peers see it as an opportunity to gain college credit and the weight provides a good incentive for this.

It was recommended by the students that maybe when students are opting for a dual enrollment course that counselors ensure the course aligns with the students path versus a student taking random classes throughout high school. Students also noted that they understood how college admissions uses each applicant's School Profile to more accurately assess the rigor of a student's transcript. It was also mentioned how college admissions is most-likely aware of the various levels of rigor amongst AP curricula and college dual enrollment courses

Parents present did note that part of the incentive is the college credit, but also understanding the AP weight may make sense as a college class is a college class. It was also noted that part of the goal of the high school's budget proposal was to increase more accessible AP classes at the high school by the addition of a humanities teacher. Andy Wulf acknowledged this by stating that schools with higher advanced coursework measures have multiple sections of courses such as AP Psychology. Over the past few years, the high school has only been able to offer 1. He also noted how these schools offer other accessible AP classes such as AP Geography.

Mr. Cain questioned whether the discussion around dual enrollment weight is worth having. "Reflecting on my own college experience, there were many classes that I felt were easier than my high school classes. A big difference for college classes is that a lot of the management of work is on the student whereas at the high school level, there is more scaffolding across the school year. A college class is a college class, AP or Dual Enrollment. If AP was created to give students access to college credit, but then we are saying a college course does not count as AP, I'm not sure that makes sense."

Andy Wulf closed the discussion to move onto the other topics. He mentioned the team would revisit the conversation at the April Council meeting.

- **Course Waiver:** Andy Wulf mentioned a faculty subgroup will convene in the late spring to review the current waiver policy. Over the past few years, there has been a significant increase in students waiving into classes during course registration. This has resulted in large numbers of students sometimes needing to then change courses in the mid fall as a result of not being able to meet the learning expectations of the course waived into. Andy Wulf mentioned, he still wants students to take risks to challenge themselves, but as a school we need to make sure the waiver policy has the right safeguards and steps a students needs to take to support their decision to waive into a class for the proper reasons.
- **Breathalyzers:** The team reviewed the draft [Breathalyzer Policy Proposal](#).

Questions asked during discussion:

If a student's guest has a positive test, does this implicate the student who brought the guest? *The student who brought the guest would not be implicated.*

If a student refuses, are they off the hook? *The admn mentioned they would not be allowed into the venue and parents would be notified. With reasonable suspicion a school search can take place.*

What about for substances that a breathalyzer would not screen for? *Admn mentioned that if there is reasonable suspicion that a student is under the influence, this can lead to a search and nurse evaluation. This is also addressed in another section of the handbook.*

- [MIAA Chemical Health Policy](#): Mike Testa reviewed the update and then clarified that this will go in both the Clipper Compass and the Athletic Handbook. No additional questions from the Council.
- [10.9 Spectators/Fans](#): The team reviewed the updated policy proposal. The Council offered the following recommendations:
 - It will be good to send this out to all parents at the start of the school year to review with their student.

- It will be a good idea to have signage at sporting events.

➤ **Attendance:** The team reviewed the following updates and recommendations around the school attendance policy.

- [4.4 Attendance for Extracurriculars](#) : Below are questions asked around the proposed policy.

What would it take for admn. approval? *Admn noted there may be unique situations brought to their attention from a parent or counselor that would allow for participation in the after school program on the day of an absence.*

If a student has a medical condition and every so often needs to go to a medical appointment, how will this be handled? *Admn noted this would fall under a unique situation and with the admn or counselor team being aware accommodations can be made.*

Recommendation made by the Council: Add more language to make the administrative support more clear for students who may be in a unique situation.

- [Nurse Dismissals](#) : The team reviewed updates to School Nurse Dismissals.

Is there a way for students to have latitude who are not frequently coming to the nurses office and seeking dismissal? Admn. explained the intent of the policy is to give nurses better ability to relay to parents that a student's symptoms may not be something a student should be dismissed for. Parents can still override the recommendation. Admn further elaborated how the update of the policy is to help minimize the frequency of students seeking dismissal from the nurse but are not necessarily sick.

- **Loss of Class of Credit:** Admn made the recommendation to reduce the number of UNEXCUSED ABSENCES from 9 to 7 before credit is lost from a class. Below is a summary of the discussion.

Mr. Testa explained the rationale for reducing the number of unexcused absences. With the high school's schedule, a class meets approximately 60 times in a semester. Currently our policy allows for a student to be out of a class much more than the 10% measure set by the state. By dropping this to 7, it makes the policy more in line with the school's effort to reduce chronic absenteeism.

The Council felt the proposal seemed reasonable to have the number of unexcused absences drop to 7 recognizing that this comes to approximately 10% of the class meetings.

Rourke mentioned how it would be interesting to see if there are certain blocks in which more students lose credit due to attendance. Admn mentioned first period classes tend to have the greatest impact.

