

Newtown Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut
Education and Instruction Subcommittee

Minutes from the Board of Education Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee held on Tuesday, June 8, 2021.

M. Ku A. Uberti R. Eberts K. Longobucco
J. Vouros A. Deeb D. Foss

Also present Board of Education member Deborra Zukowski.

J. Vouros called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

J. Vouros moved to approve the minutes from the 5/11/2021 meeting.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

Public Participation: None

Presentation: Modern U.S. History – D. Foss, A. Deeb, K. Longobucco

Social Studies Department Chair, Amy Deeb, stated that the curriculum was last updated in 2015 and this is a revision of that version. Dave Foss, who has taught the course for many years, presented. The curriculum consists of ten different units taught through a variety of key concepts: American History through Industrialization, US Emerging as a World Power, The U.S. in World War I, Progressive Era and Immigration, Prosperity and Depression, World War II Era, The Cold War, The Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam and Modern Wars, and The Political Divide.

M. Ku inquired as to how current topics, that may not have been previously taught are included in the formal curriculum, are addressed. She shared the example of the Tulsa Massacre. D. Foss answered that a benefit of teaching through a conceptual lens, is the flexibility to incorporate other topics as appropriate into the curriculum. For example, when in the Civil Rights Movement unit, in light of current events, there has been a focus on what has been accomplished but also how far we need to go. The Political Divide is another unit that lends itself to current events discussion.

A. Uberti added that when this curriculum was reviewed by the district Curriculum Development Council, some recommendations were made for modifications to ensure the curriculum was more inclusive. She shared that the Curriculum Development Council members also serve as coaches to curriculum developers at the start of the curriculum writing process. Much focus will be on Social Studies and ELA courses, although not exclusively, due to the nature of the content. She will be working with the principals, department chairs and curriculum coordinators next year to look specifically at areas to improve and increase representation in our existing curriculum.

Presentation: World Religions – R. Eberts, A. Deeb, K. Longobucco

Teacher R. Eberts began the presentation of the World Religions course by sharing that the first thing addressed with students in the course is the legality of studying religion in a public school and how the

content must be taught using the 3-part test: impersonal academic study, goal is always education and never indoctrination. In this course, every unit is taught through the same lens, identity. There is a beginning unit, What is Religion?, followed by units of study of the following religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, followed by a culminating activity to reformulate the answer to the first unit to answer the question, What is Religion?

M. Ku asked about the composition of the students who take the course. R. Eberts responded that World Religion is an elective course offered at the honors, CP and co-taught levels. There is no AP level.

Summary of Upcoming Curriculum Writing – A. Uberti

There are over 20 curriculum projects set to launch on June 16th. Kindergarten Reading and Writing will get underway and once completed, the full K-4 Reading and Writing curricula will be complete. Other projects underway June 16th through June 25th are as follows: Grade 5, 6, 7 and 8 Social Studies, Grade 6 Spanish, Grade 5, 6, 7 and 8 ELA, as well as Library Media, Tech Ed and Computer Integration for grades 7 and 8. Curriculum work will also begin on the two new middle school courses of Kitchen Science and Project Adventure and Beyond. At the high school work will continue on both Medical and Business Spanish, Latin I and II, the sophomore courses English courses Composition and English II, and Health I and II. Work will also begin on developing a pilot Executive Functioning course and the high school. There will likely be a decrease in the overall number of curricula moving forward to the board as not all of these courses are expected to be completed this summer.

Assistant Superintendent Updates – A. Uberti

A. Uberti provided an update on EduClimber, a new student data warehouse. Training has begun for teams from each of the seven schools. The teams include principals, the assistant principals and/or lead teachers, math specialists, language arts consultants. At the high school, in lieu of math and language arts specialists, there will be two assistant principals and the director of counseling. These core teams will be the point persons for training that will ultimately occur at the building level. There are 4 3-hour training sessions that will conclude on June 17th, allowing the summer to work with the principals on data protocols and expectations for next year. A. Uberti expects to present EduClimber to C & I next year.

Teachers for the new courses at the middle school have been named: Ron Chivinsky, current 8th grade social studies teacher will teach Project Adventure and Beth Iacifano, current 8th grade science teacher will teach Kitchen Science. A. Uberti is collaborating with T. Einhorn and J. Ross to support them as they develop these new courses.

There has been considerable interest in our summer school program offerings. There was a question from a Board member regarding if we offered programs both in person and virtually. Initially both options were offered. However, most virtual options were eliminated due to lack of interest. Foundations' Ready to Rise program is being offered through our summer school programming for our rising first and second graders. The response for this has been tremendous.

Looking ahead, A. Uberti shared that she would like to resume in-person C & I meetings, if health conditions permit, but that she is also considering a hybrid approach to allow teachers, who may be presenting, the option to join remotely to limit time away from the classroom.

A. Uberti mentioned that there had been a request from a Board member in hearing an update on Project Lead the Way. She has added this to her list for the fall and requested more detail on what specific information the Board member was seeking so she could provide it.

Public Participation: None

J. Vouros adjourned the meeting at 12:02 p.m.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Norling

THESE ARE DRAFT MINUTES AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE.