

Newtown Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut
Education and Instruction Subcommittee

Minutes from the Board of Education and Instruction Subcommittee held on Tuesday, September 21, 2021.

M. Ku A. Uberti
J. Vorous F. Purcaro

Also present Board of Education member Deborra Zukowski..

J. Vorous called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m.

J. Vorous moved to approve the minutes from the 9/2/2021 meeting.

M. Ku seconded the motion.

Public Participation: None

Newtown Middle School Updates

A. Uberti has visited both new courses at Newtown Middle School - Kitchen Science and Project Adventure and Beyond at NMS. She was able to observe students participating in a hands-on investigation related to emulsification. Students were highly engaged and enthusiastic. The teacher, Mrs. Iacofano, reported that she is using a traditional classroom as well as the kitchen space previously used for Family and Consumer Science. The curriculum for this course was developed in June and will be implemented to both 7th and 8th graders this year. The second course will be developed in June, 2022. Students typically spend the class period on an investigation, or two related investigations, and then one to two follow-up periods discussing and understanding the scientific concept behind their observations. This setup embodies best teaching practice of science.

A. Uberti also visited Project Adventure and Beyond. This class also utilizes two spaces - a traditional classroom and the gymnasium. While visiting A. Uberti observed students revisiting the Full Value Contract which is a set of values and behaviors that are the foundation for successful group interactions. The Full Value Contract was first introduced to Newtown students in grade 5 at Reed Intermediate and is now being fully implemented at Newtown Middle School through the return of a dedicated Project Adventure class. Students were also observed as they moved across to the gymnasium and engaged in a team building activity that required group problem-solving. The teacher, Mr. Chivinsky, reported that the class is off to a great start and the activity that students were engaged in expanded on what students have learned previously at Reed. He is assisted by Mr. Michaud who has supported Project Adventure for many years at Newtown Middle School.

J. Vorous inquired as to what steps will be taken to ensure buy-in to the Full Value contract. A. Uberti responded that it will happen over time with the support of R. Chivinsky.

Project Lead the Way at NHS Update

Newtown High School offers two Project Lead the Way pathways: Biomedical and Engineering. Under the Biomedical Pathway, one course is offered, Principles of Biomedical Science. Currently one combined section of CP and Honors Level is offered. Some students decide not to take this course because it has a lab

associated with it and they already have to take regular biology with its own lab. It becomes hard to fit it all into a student schedule.

The Engineering Pathway includes one section of Intro to Engineering (Honors Level), one section of Principles of Engineering (Honors) and Aerospace, which did not run this year. NHS is looking at making some of these stand alone courses as scheduling conflicts seems to be the biggest detractor from students taking the course.

Newtown Middle School offers Project Lead the Way Robotics as an elective for eighth graders who are interested in a deeper understanding of what they learn in 7th grade Tech Ed.

Reed Intermediate School introduces students to STEM through Integrated Stem 5 and Integrated Stem 6. They are not Project Lead the Way courses but were developed in-house as an introduction to the STEM pathway offered at the upper levels.

I-Ready Updates/Parent Communication & Support Plan

A. Uberti reviewed how communication regarding the shift from NWEA to iReady is being handled:

For Teachers:

- Written communication via C & I Updates newsletter sent to all staff
- A. Uberti/F. Purcaro visits to K-8 Faculty Meetings to explain the rationale and next steps in person
- Training of implementation teams at each building (took place 9.17.21)
- Follow-up training for certified teachers on how to find and interpret results scheduled for October 12-14
- Discussions with administrators regarding what types of data to be reviewed at October conferences

For Parents:

- Written communication via C & I Updates newsletter sent to all parents
- Follow up letters sent from principals prior to testing which will include a direct link to iReady's "Family Center"
- Additional communication will be provided by the classroom teachers

J. Vouros suggested involvement of the PTA. A. Uberti commented that she would like to partner with the elementary PTAs to present on assessment, in general, at the elementary level to help parents better understand what assessments are given and why, as well as how their child's performance on those assessments are communicated.

Public Participation:

Mrs. Jennifer Padilla
32 Glenn Road
Sandy Hook

Mrs. Padilla presented the following questions and concerns:

1-When piloting the new math program grades 6-8. Parents were not made aware, there was not any communications made to the parents.

2- What are you thinking about a new program, staff is learning it, students are learning it. When students are quarantined for seven to ten days how are you going to adapt quickly that there isn't any additional learning loss because there is not any live instruction. How are parents going to know enough to help students at home?

3- The assessment conversation in elementary PTA meetings is good. Have a one page document that parents can quickly consume. Parents need this clearly laid out and added to the website.

4-BioMedical program to be brought down to even grade is a good idea.

5-Cooking with Science program is this taking place of the FACS program?

J. Vouros adjourned the meeting at 12:14 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.