

# BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ellington, Connecticut

December 11, 2019

## **Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes**

The Curriculum Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met on Wednesday, December 11, 2019 in the School Administration Building.

### **Attendees:**

*Administrative & Faculty Team Members:* Mr. John Collins, Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Mr. John Guidry, Ms. Liz Cole, Mr. Ed Depeau, and 8 high school teachers.

*Board of Education Committee Members:* Mr. Gary Blanchette, Ms. Miriam Underwood, Mr. Michael Young (Chair), Ms. Marcia Kupfershmid, Ms. Jen Dzen, Ms. Liz Nord, & Ms. Kristen Picard-Wambolt (telepresent).

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 1:03 PM by Mr. Young (Chair).

### **AGENDA**

- 1. Review and discuss the following Ellington High School course proposals for inclusion in the 2020-2021 Program of Studies (with brief review of process leading up to course proposals):**

Mr. Hendrickson presented a brief slidedeck of background information for the review of course proposals that highlighted national and local goals of expanding career pathways. He also directed our attention to an EdWeek article on the value of the high school diploma, that addressed the need for including on-the-job experiences and 21<sup>st</sup> century soft skills. Some of the course proposals presented would touch on this theme. Mr. Justin Waine (teacher) spoke about the cardboard boat program at UConn, and how soft skills were a critical learning outcome from that.

Mr. Guidry & Ms. Cole presented a summary of the 12 new proposed classes. He reported the student-involved rating process that culled these 12 proposals from a wider array of proposed courses in which students were encouraged to vote for their top five choices.

- a. Science in the Media – related to physics in the movies targeted at non-STEM major
- b. Greco-Roman Mythology – relating to Avengers and graphic novels and tied to Latin

- c. The Refugee and Immigrant Experience – possible English & Social Studies, also interrogating fake news and personal stories
- d. Women's Literature – ECE in literature, photography, TV (potential controversial aspects of the course were discussed as well as the need to have deliberately planned teaching strategies and classroom norms in order to navigate the topics in this course)
- e. Arabic 1 - Modern Standard – related to military pathway
- f. Science, Technology, and the Law – Science elective (seminar type approach to the course was discussed with references to intellectual property, criminal forensics, as well as inviting graduates of Ellington High school into the course to discuss current careers or current college experience in aspects of the course)
- g. Agribusiness for the Entrepreneur – connections to local businesses
- h. Drop the Bass – afterschool course, performance ensemble model
- i. Geometry in Construction – going beyond a single story problem, application to engineering, partnering Tech Ed and Math
- j. Trigonometry - returning as a semester course (encouraging taking Math beyond Algebra II)
- k. Digital Photography II (growing beyond Photoshop, bringing in Ads and Logo designs, building in experience for real world feedback)
- l. Self Defense – adding to PE (discussed connections to current events as well as the district's Run Hide Fight safety and security mindset training)

Discussion ensued, including:

Course (a) – Ms. Picard-Wambolt asked if the course would have a Myth buster style component? Justin DeCormier (teacher) described how it might as the course details were developed.

Course (d) – Mr. Young and Ms. Picard-Wambolt inquired about how civil discourse about potentially controversial topics will be handled. Mr. Scavotto (teacher) described how the focus will use a lens of theory about femininity and sexuality to ensure scholarly discourse. This course will also feature writing assignments, with attention to writing, revising and editing.

Course (i) – Ms. Dzen and Mr. Young inquired about what theory or school of defense might be the basis of the course, and if course content had a touchpoint with Run Hide Fight policies. These questions were taken under advisement.

Ms. Underwood inquired if the courses would draw on new resources. Mr. Guidry reported that it was unlikely all new courses would be offered initially, and that the total number of students to be served remains the same. This suggests that while some teachers may teach different courses, reduction in load in existing courses would compensate for offering new courses. Current budgets allow for 6 such courses.

## **2. Infinite Campus Update (connections to report cards, assessment calendar, intervention programming, and college and career pathways)**

Mr. Hendrickson presented a brief video background on the marketing point for Infinite Campus. He and Mr. Collins emphasized how this project touches nearly every process in the district and they continue their efforts to listen to the wide array of stakeholders and needs. They also reiterated how the process to upgrade to Infinite Campus will identify redundancies and choke points in existing operations.

Mr. Young asked if this positive process of identifying pinch points and redundancies and associated re-engineering of processes could be more built-in, and not be a one-time “fix”. The committee was assured that that was the plan.

Mr. Collins reported that data migration and teacher learning about the system are on track, as Phase 1 transitions into Phase 2 of the project. In the pending Phase 2, the data will “go live”, as well as a sandbox of sample data will be available for training.

Ms. Underwood inquired about plans to ensure a smooth onboarding process for pending new hires on an ongoing basis. Mr. Collins reported that his team was aware of issues in the past and that the new system should, by reducing the number of systems in use, simplify and reduce training to some extent.

Discussion ensued regarding the multiple problems of practice that have emerged for the adoption process of Infinite Campus, and how that has enabled re-engineering of the school system to be more responsive to its core business and mission.

### **3. Windermere Building Project Educational Specification (Ed Specs) Update**

Mr. Greenleaf and Tecton representatives presented the status of thinking about the Windermere educational specifications. The three options of ‘new’ and ‘renovate as new’ were reviewed, and updates were given as the process moves toward referendum. Comparison of the options showing, for example, that circulation corridors would be reduced if the fully new option was taken were presented in a matrix. Developing the final educational specs has moved forward to outline the process. Eventually educational specs will need to be approved by the full Board. Images of various configurations of spaces designed to encourage several (approximately seven) aspects of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, (including collaboration, project-based workspaces, and small group breakout spaces) were provided. Principal Hill reported on informal input from Windermere teachers that they would like more daylight, more student and teacher storage, and attention to tech access and support, such as power at the desktop.

### **4. Discuss agenda items for the next Curriculum Committee meeting and confirm date/time of next meeting**

The committee heard from members concerning future agenda items. Items discussed included: more paras, smaller class size, Gifted/Talented Enrichment (accelerated) opportunities in elementary and personalized learning pathways throughout the schools, adding Spanish and other world languages to the elementary programs, incorporating STEM and robotics in school day classes, a need to address vaping at elementary (health & STEM implications), and possibilities for an ROTC program.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

1st. G. Blanchette                      2nd. M. Kupferschmid    Vote: Unanimously approved.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

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Michael Young, Curriculum Committee Chairperson