

CENTRAL BUCKS SCHOOL DISTRICT
Curriculum Committee Minutes
January 11, 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Collopy, Chair
Karen Smith

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS AND ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT

Beth Darcy	Mr. John Kopicki	Dr. Alyssa Walloff
Glen Schloeffel	Dr. David Bolton	Ms. Laura E'Nama
	Dr. Scott Davidheiser	Ms. Corinne Sikora

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dennis Weldon
Jerel Wohl

The meeting was called to order by Sharon Collopy.

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

The meeting minutes from the November 9, 2016 meeting were reviewed and approved without changes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nancy Santacecilia distributed information to the committee members to support her concerns about course weighting and how courses are being offered in the District. She indicated her belief that additional weighting in the ninth grade CB courses in particular would be to the CB students' advantage when it comes to college applications, enhancing the student academic record submitted for college consideration. One particular concern was with the ninth grade math program currently beginning with Algebra II and Precalculus. Ms. Collopy noted that the plan is to weight the ninth grade Algebra II course, and it will be discussed in a future meeting, when Richard Kratz, K-12 Math Curriculum Supervisor, makes the presentation to the committee. Ms. Santacecilia went on to express concern that the District is doing a disservice to our arts program students in not offering more rigorous courses (such as AP Art Theory) that are being offered in other schools in our area. Our arts and music students need to be better prepared to compete and excel in college level programs, of which there are at least six in our region that present great opportunities. Mr. Kopicki replied that he and Dr. Davidheiser have been having conversations regarding weighted programs. Mr. Kopicki stated he is looking forward to course changes and additions in the future in the arts. He assured Ms. Santacecilia that though the changes may not come in time for Fall 2017, the benchmark goals are being established and the District will be moving forward.

Mr. Kopicki went on in response to her comment regarding the Middle School schedule to report that we are in the third quarter of a four quarter game in recommending changes to the schedule. A Middle School Schedule Committee is being formed and information that has been gleaned from the focus groups that will be concluding with the last two meetings on January 18 (at Unami Middle School) and January 23 (at Tamanend Middle School) will provide invaluable information into the Middle School Schedule Committee discussions. Ms. Collopy suggested that Ms. Santacecilia should be sure to attend one of the remaining public information sessions. Ms. Darcy concurred, stating that the focus groups were great. The presentations start with a comparison of old middle school schedule parameters and the current schedules to clearly illustrate the differences for parents who have had no experience with the old schedule format. Ms. Darcy encouraged Ms. Santacecilia to attend one of the remaining two focus presentations.

INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

9th Grade English (Honors) Course of Study

Dr. Alyssa Walloff, Supervisor of K-12 English Language Arts, presented the 9th Grade English (Honors) course of study. Her review of the course description highlighted the differences between the 9th grade honors course and the regular 9th grade academic course as being the accelerated pace, more complex texts to be used, and focus on working closely with development of the writer's craft which will be supported with a grammar textbook (*Image Grammar*) that focuses on the style/beauty of language and the language choices made by the author in developing the author's purpose. The *Illustrated Man* is a new fiction text which is a collection of short stories to be used in this curriculum along with previously approved texts of *Lord of the Flies*, and *A Separate Peace*. Copies of both new texts, *Illustrated Man*, and *Image Grammar* were distributed to the committee members for their in depth review prior to consideration of these two texts for their approval at the next School Board Curriculum Committee Meeting. When questioned why *Illustrated Man* was chosen as a more complex text by Glenn Schloeffel, Dr. Walloff stated the committee of teachers developing the course curriculum felt it was challenging in its philosophy, would engage the students, and provided an excellent example of the beauty of language in its expression.

The course Core Assessments are the same as those for academic students, however the Honors English course expectations are much higher than the academic course level as reflected in the honors rubric. More is expected of the students in achieving "proficient" in the course. There will be a minimum of six required writing pieces, including two required on-demand argument writing pieces, additional research to support the writing, and additional application of the grammar insights that will enhance style. The reading protocol is based on a new "whole novel" approach (*Whole Novel* by Ariel Sacks)—students read the whole book first then dive into analysis after completion. Ms. Darcy asked how the "whole novel" process is different. Dr. Walloff indicated it is a newer idea that came to light a couple years ago—however the novel to be used must be chosen carefully to fit the technique. The "whole novel" process facilitates student engagement with the text, and gives the students freedom to draw their own conclusions prior to closer analysis of the author's purpose and process in the classroom.

Dr. Walloff is requesting approval of this course so they may move forward developing resources, lesson outlines, designating activities, and training the teachers. This will be a weighted honors course. Teachers are supportive of student abilities to take on this work. Karen Smith asked if there were any plays studied in 9th grade. Dr. Walloff indicated all 9th graders read *Romeo and Juliet*.

The 9th Grade English (Honors) will have no prerequisite--guidance counselors will be informed of the increased rigor to the course and will be sure to inform student selection. Ms. Collopy questioned the additional grammar text, which on first glance appeared unconventional. Dr. Walloff noted that the focus of the text is explained in the introduction—that the approach is that writing is like creating a painting. Karen Smith indicated she liked the approach. Ms. Collopy asked if there is a grammar text in the regular academic English course? Dr. Walloff noted that research does not support the instruction of grammar alone at the secondary level. Grammar instruction focus is in the elementary level. Mr. Kopicki acknowledged that this (grammar) is being used as a supplement to the course in teaching the craft of writing. He recommended putting the course approval on the agenda for the full Board for adoption (curriculum only—texts will wait until February Committee review). Ms. Collopy stated Dr. Walloff should go ahead with development of the course. It can go to the Board for adoption.

Dr. Davidheiser will have the 9th Grade English (Honors) course information regarding availability of the course conveyed to 9th grade parents for the Fall 2017 semester, providing description and nature of course.

9th Grade Science (Academic and Honors) Courses of Study

Ms. Laura E'Nama, Supervisor of K-12 Science, is proposing changes to the current academic 9th grade science course and adoption of a new 9th Grade science honors course. Two years ago they initiated a new 7th grade science course, this year a new 8th grade science course was rolled out, and next year the plan is to roll out the new 9th grade science courses. Course content and rigor have been added to the courses. Ninth grade science is integrated with emphasis on earth science with additions of focus on atmosphere and light. An approach to systems thinking is also being added to course—looking at changes over time in the four earth spheres: geosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, and biosphere, with deeper discussion on evolution and "mini" unit sustaining earth's systems. Environmental considerations have been spread throughout the four spheres. Human population growth and sustainable living are the topics in the smaller unit study of sustaining earth's systems (approximately two-week study).

Ms. E'Nama is proposing a 9th grade science honors course version that is more discovery based, more of an open inquiry approach guided through scaffolding in content, and includes greater depth, different learning, different approach to laboratory studies, challenging reading from scientific journals, and will have unit assessments (instead of a final exam) and core assessments. Reading materials will be nonfiction with student choices to be made from a recommended reading list. The question was raised whether the order of units would be mandated? At this point order of units is not mandated, except sustaining earth's systems at the end of the course. If all instructors in a building are not teaching the same spheres unit at same time it would make equipment and resources more available. Some schools do units simultaneously so instructors can do one setup and share resources. The flexibility in unit study provides autonomy for the instructors. Ms. E'Nama indicated some instructors bring in the parallel focus of sustaining earth's systems at beginning of year, discussing implications throughout the spheres instruction and concluding with a final sustainability project at the end of the year. Ms. Darcy asked if this was developed with current 9th grade science teachers? And do they feel the students will be able to accomplish the work? Ms. E'Nama confirmed this and stated that the developed course was also reviewed with the high school teachers and their additional input was added to refine the curriculum in light of upper level coursework to come. Changes made at the upper levels include more frequent incorporation of iPad use, and there is ongoing thought being given to introduction of new resources and equipment at the 9th grade level for more complex exploration (e.g., microscopes). Ms. Darcy asked Ms. E'Nama about including a Biology course in 9th grade. Discussion ensued regarding providing sciences in specific order (bio/chem/phys) and that there was no necessity for order in introduction. If Biology is moved to 9th grade, some of the content would have to be totally rewritten to take into consideration topics that will now be included in the regular/honors 9th grade science. The Biology assessment (Keystone Exam) is very difficult—the District philosophy is that teaching content well first time will eliminate need for remedial course offerings. Ms. Darcy commented on the logistics of course scheduling in the high schools when doubling up on science courses becomes necessary.

QUEST for Grades 1-6

QUEST is a completely new course piloted last year for grades 1-6. The format for the six years has three units in each and is modeled off all other specials formats in CB. Ms. E'Nama presented the lesson on *Measuring the Wind Design Project* (first unit in second grade) as an illustration. Students are guided to apply skills being learned in every class to solve problems, and reinforces collaboration, creativity and communication with focus on engineering, technology, math, and science. Ms. E'Nama reviewed the QUEST curriculum map, illustrating how each unit ties to the previous year's studies. Computer units in particular will continue to evolve as earlier grades are introduced to new skills and come to later grades with higher level skill sets. Ms. Darcy questioned the logistics of QUEST. Each teacher has their own

classroom, branded across the district with similar posters, equipment, etc. It was asked whether each classroom has a laptop cart? Ms. E’Nama indicated yes—they have 15 laptops in the laptop cart. Each teacher has an iPad, and students can bring their iPads from their classrooms if they are needed. Mr. Kopicki noted that the Board needs to know if teachers need additional equipment. Ms. E’Nama indicated that the QUEST classrooms are well equipped. Mr. Kopicki commented that with the development of QUEST, the District would need to take into consideration the larger vision (K-12)--where do we go in the middle school...high school....are we looking to provide more opportunities through curricular sequence? Should the District be looking for additional curriculum products? This is a custom designed curriculum and the team developed it with cross-curricular connections in all areas. Ms. E’Nama noted that the District has a great resource in the skills and dedication of its teachers. Ms. Darcy asked whether the units are flexible for deeper instruction in some areas? Ms. E’Nama indicated each unit is designed for approximately 10 weeks, but the teachers do have flexibility to do mini-units or extend units.

Dr. Davidheiser noted that they had done purposeful scheduling of high school and middle school administrators for observation of the QUEST classrooms in anticipation of modifying the secondary level coursework to take advantage of the knowledge and skillsets developed through the elementary QUEST program.

Update on PAYS: PA Youth Survey

Corinne Sikora presented an overview of the PAYS report, a state-funded (PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency), self-reporting anonymous survey of students to determine prevalence and frequency of 'at risk' behavior. The survey has been in existence since 1989, and this year was the first year that all 13 school districts in Bucks County participated. CB chose to survey eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders. The data is reportable by district-wide grade, not with school specificity. The survey was administered in 2015--results came in late summer 2016. CB is neither immune nor unique in concerns and challenges being faced. Research is reported for the full district only, with comparison of our district to county and state results.

Ms. Sikora began her summary review of the data with the reported *Past 30 Day Use of ATODs: Gateway Drugs* graph, noting a trend towards increased reporting of use in the upper grades. Vaping is a subject that was originally addressed in the Board policies on tobacco use, but now should also be considered for inclusion in the drug use policies, as there is reported use of marijuana and hash oil in vaping among the students. Longitudinal comparison (2009-2015) of use by each grade level shows downward trends in usage of alcohol, marijuana, and inhalants, cigarette usage is beginning to swing upwards. The good news is that the reported 8th grade levels are all lower than 2015 state and national reported usage. Longitudinal comparison (2009-2015) of use at the 10th grade level shows declining use in alcohol, cigarettes, and inhalants, but an increase in marijuana use. The caveat at the 10th grade level is that reported usage of alcohol, while declining in this population over time, is higher than 2015 state and national levels. The reported use of marijuana at the 10th grade level is higher than the 2015 reported state level. The longitudinal comparison (2009-2015) at the 12th grade level is concerning where reported use of alcohol and marijuana are higher than the 2015 state and national reported usage. Reported 12th grade use of cigarettes is even with the 2015 national reported usage.

Ms. Sikora continued reviewing results of the survey for *Risky Substance Abuse Behaviors, 30 Day Use of Prescription Drugs, 30 Day Use of Other Drugs*. Possible causative factors underlying the risky behaviors reported were reflected in two questions asked: (1) Are you inclined to think of yourself as a failure? and (2) have you felt depressed or sad most days? The graphed results show that eighth and twelfth graders have increasingly reported feeling as if they are failures over the reporting years (2009, 2013, 2015).

All three grades are reporting this feeling less than the state reporting average (2015). All three grades report feeling depressed or sad MOST days in increasing numbers over each reporting year 2009, 2013, 2015—still less than the state reporting average (2015), but steadily increasing, nonetheless.

Ms. Sikora reviewed a paragraph from a lengthy article in the November 7, 2016 *Time* magazine, titled “Teen Depression and Anxiety: Why the Kids are Not Alright” (<http://time.com/magazine/us/4547305/november-7th-2016-vol-188-no-19-u-s/>, Susanna Schrobsdorff, author). The article reports that the number of anxious young people is increasing, and attributes this to a combination of the more intense and urgent emotional state of teen minds and the cultural influences around them including living in post-9/11, national and economic insecurity, terrorism, school shootings, parents working through the effects of a severe recession, and the accelerated changes to society wrought by technology and social media.

Ms. Sikora reviewed the risk factors and protective factors in the CB population, and summarized the survey conclusions that 37% of CB students would be considered at-risk based on the survey results; 68% of CB students have “assets” in their lives that suggest they are less likely to engage in at-risk behavior. Review of CB District supports either in place, or in process include:

- Awareness of National Mental Health Concerns as 21st Century Issues
- Mental Wellness Committee (Karen Smith volunteered to be on this committee)
- Working with our School Mental Health Professionals
- Parent Positive (in place)
- Educating our Educators (continuous—example: is staff development planned for February 16 with the return of Dr. Dahlsgaard)

Ms. Sikora suggested two possible additional considerations for the future action as (1) instituting Integrated Mental Health Curriculum and (2) addition of Social Workers to the staff to help bridge the gap between home and school.

Ms. Darcy noted that the statistics are disturbing, even though some are trending in a better direction. We have to approach these issues as parents and community and determine whether we are contributing to the rise in those statistic and what can we do to support our children more.

Update on Middle School Scheduling

Dr. Davidheiser reviewed the status of the Middle School Scheduling review. Since the October survey the data has been disaggregated and distributed to the public. We have met with 13 focus groups so far, with two more focus group sessions to come (1/18, 1/23). A wealth of knowledge has come from those meetings. Relevant/current data has been very specific across all groups. We are creating a Middle School Schedule Committee comprised of 40 individuals (2 representatives from every stakeholder group from the five buildings), with the schedule of committee meetings to be established shortly. First order of committee business will be to establish the philosophy of what middle school will be moving forward. We will work through information about teaching/learning at middle school level and review of survey data as well as best practices data, followed by looking at schedule variations that mesh with the committee philosophy. The expectation is to then make recommendations to the Curriculum Committee--whether they will be ready for 2017-2018 is yet to be determined. There may be changes recommended that need to be instituted over more than one year.

School Calendar 2017-2018

Mr. Kopicki presented a draft version of the CB 2017-2018 school calendar that includes a later start, trimester schedule for elementary students, and a longer February break following Presidents' Day. First school day for students would be September 5 (start date is established by Board Policy #803); with August 29-31 as professional development days for teachers. Graduation would be June 15. A February mixed spring break is included for students (President's Day followed with February 20-23) which would be professional development time for teachers. Middle and high schools will follow traditional four quarter marking periods. This is a 184-day student calendar with no built in snow days (182 days for elementary with two parent conference days, 184 days for middle and high schools). Ms. Collopy expressed concern about making up snow days if three or more snow days were called. There was an expressed desire not to go beyond June 15 graduation to make up snow days. Possible solutions might be taking away some days in the February 20-23 week, or altering the March 16 day off. Theoretically there are four to six days built into the calendar we could pull back on. If we have a snow day, it will be made up by everyone. Ms. Collopy asked if the March 16 day off could be a student day? Could it be a half day? Mr. Kopicki stated that creativity can be applied. Karen Smith asked why the extra break was placed in February instead of at Easter? Mr. Kopicki noted that Easter falls on different dates every year. Mr. Schloeffel asked whether the April-May timeframe was not a long time without a break? It was noted that April is filled with state-scheduled PSSA exams, and May has Keystone exams and AP exams ongoing at the secondary level. Mr. Kopicki recommended approval of this calendar as it is presented for this year, noting that there is not a great deal of flexibility with the academic requirements, and it will be a strong instructional calendar for the students.

Ms. Darcy suggested that the draft calendar not be put on the Board Agenda for approval until the rest of the Board members had a chance to review and make suggestions, and the staff and parents have a chance to give input. The calendar approval will be rescheduled to the first February Board meeting for approval.

9:24 p.m. meeting adjourned.