

**New Milford Board of Education
Committee on Learning Minutes
December 5, 2017
Lillis Administration Building, Room 2**

Present: Mrs. Tammy McInerney, Chairperson
Mr. Bill Dahl
Mr. J.T. Schemm
Mrs. Angela C. Chastain, Alternate

Also Present: Mr. Joshua Smith, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Alisha DiCorpo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Len Tomasello, consultant
Ms. Mariann Schirizzo, Health teacher
Mr. Scott Hoffman, Health teacher
Mr. Eric Williams, Assistant Principal, New Milford High School

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NEW MILFORD, CT

1.	Call to Order The meeting of the New Milford Board of Education Committee on Learning was called to order at 7:34 p.m. by Mrs. McInerney. Mrs. Chastain was seated as an alternate.	Call to Order
2.	Public Comment • There was none.	Public Comment
3.	Presentation A. Social Emotional Learning • Dr. Len Tomasello said he has four target audiences for his work in social emotional learning: students, teachers, administrators and parents. He sees about 450 students per week for classroom lessons at HPS and NES currently. • He supports teachers in this area with professional development, including book study groups at HPS and NES, and at formal sessions in October and November. He has created a database of resources for follow-up. Parents receive letters about the program and take home resources following lessons. • Themes for his work revolve around a growth	Presentation A. Social Emotional Learning

	mindset for students, and the constellation of stances for learning: optimism, persistence, flexibility, resilience and empathy. He talks to students about making good choices, and how their behavior impacts their class. Other lessons focus on coping skills, kindness and gratitude. He talks with teachers about the importance of getting to know their students and building relationships throughout the year. • Ms. DiCorpo said Dr. Tomasello's work ties in to the district's health curriculum and to the three lenses of how the district knows and responds to students: academics, aspiration and sense of belonging. It is also helping to build a common language on these topics throughout our schools. • Dr. Tomasello said the other part of his consulting will focus on the transitions from PreK to K, and grades 2 to 3, 5 to 6, and 8 to 9. He has begun talk with administrators about the current processes and what could be done better. • Ms. DiCorpo said that discussion includes possibly moving kindergarten registration to earlier in the year to assist with that transition. • Mrs. Chastain asked how often Dr. Tomasello visits each classroom and if he also works with Head Start. Dr. Tomasello said he is in each classroom once every other week and he has visited Head Start. • Mrs. Chastain asked if teachers are making more referrals for student needs as they are building relationships. Dr. Tomasello said he did not know. • Ms. DiCorpo said teachers say general Tier 1 support has improved as their bag of tools has expanded. They find the common language very helpful as well. • Mrs. Chastain said she was asking specifically about more awareness for needs such as free and reduced lunch and winter clothing, since these social emotional needs must be addressed before academic growth can happen. • Mr. Smith said they have been discussing possible indicators of growth and progress and have been focused on climate drivers of discipline and	
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	guidance referrals. • Mr. Dahl said the real evidence of growth will probably not show until years down the road once this foundation has been successfully set. • Mrs. Chastain asked Dr. Tomasello if he sees more needs at either of the PreK-2 schools. Dr. Tomasello said no, that if you mixed the students from the schools into groups, you wouldn't see a difference. All have different needs. • Mrs. Chastain asked if Dr. Tomasello did any work directly with parents and he said no, just through take home materials. He would be speaking to PTO starting next month. • Ms. DiCorpo said teachers are very positive about the program and feels it is addressing needs. • Mr. Schemm asked how Dr. Tomasello is building capacity. Dr. Tomasello said the teacher stays in the room for his lessons with students and participates in the building of skills and common language. • Ms. DiCorpo said this is one area of social emotional work; Guidance and Health staff complement it with other angles. • Mrs. McInerney said she could imagine students reaching out to Dr. Tomasello with needs as a person they trust. What happens in a case like that? Dr. Tomasello said he would go to the teacher and the teacher would work with support staff as needed. • Ms. DiCorpo shared a summary of the social emotional work done within the district from Pre-K through grade 12. Highlights included Dr. Tomasello's work at the elementary level. Mindset work has been a topic of focus at SNIS for the last two years, with work done with staff during after school meetings. Other approaches used are the Nurtured Heart and Jesse Lewis' "Choose Love". PBIS continues to build capacity for implementing a multi-tiered approach. Health and PE classes teach a variety of grade level wellness topics such as self-care, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and	
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	responsible decision making. • A certified behavior analyst was hired full time in 2017. An inclusion specialist helps to support children struggling with behavior. Social workers and guidance staff support families and collaborate with outside agencies. • In addition to these resources, the middle school uses field trips for team building. A presentation was held this year on bullying and suicide prevention. The high school holds an all-day anti-bullying event, Names Can Really Hurt Us, for grade 10 students and The Truth About Hate assembly for grade 11 students and the I Am Dirt assembly is offered to all. Students and staff participate on a Climate and Culture Committee. There is a full time student assistance counselor. • District social workers, psychologists, and guidance staff attend monthly mental health forums. This year's topics include school anxiety, depression, trends in drug use, social media, gender issues and grief counseling support. Social workers belong to a regional crisis team designed to build collaboration and resources with other school districts in our region. All administrators take part in monthly meetings where topics on responding to hate and bias are discussed and brought back to their schools for further discussion. • Mrs. Chastain asked how all these initiatives fit into the school day. Ms. DiCorpo said some involve a staff member dedicated to the task, e.g. the behavior analyst. Mr. Smith said the schedule has been adjusted over the last few years too so that guidance and health classes are built into the schedule, not carved out as in the past. • Mrs. McInerney asked if there was any thought to involving parents more, possibly through workshops. Ms. DiCorpo said workshops had been offered in the past, with limited turnout. She said there has been beginning talk about a "Parent University" night where several resources would be brought together but we are not there yet. • Mr. Smith said that this is all part of a broader conversation taking place about how best to	
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	structure finite resources to maximize output so that all the pieces feed together towards the end result.	
4.	Discussion and Possible Action	Discussion and Possible Action
A.	Review and Approval of Curriculum	A. Review and Approval of Curriculum
	1. Health K-2 - Ms. Mariann Schirizzo said Health for grades 3-6 was rewritten last year, these two curriculum now connect the dots beginning to high school. Health K-2 meets every twelve days with each class receiving about 15 lessons total, which is a big improvement from just a few years ago. The curriculum is laying the foundation for future grades, teaching self-advocacy skills and teaching students that they have a right to be happy, respected and safe. They talk to students about making safe, smart choices and helping others to do the same. Supplemental materials are very interactive and hands on. The curriculum also included mandatory teaching regarding sexual abuse and assault, in an age appropriate manner. It also incorporates the common language used by Dr. Tomasello in his lessons. Teachers are required to be in the room for lessons and Ms. Schirizzo said they are very supportive. - Mr. Schemm asked if an opt-out is offered regarding the sexual abuse unit. Ms. Schirizzo said there is and she has had some conversations with parents regarding the lesson. No one has opted out so far. 2. Health 7 & 8 - Mr. Scott Hoffman said this curriculum continues work from previous grades and prepares students for the high school health classes. It supports social emotional learning in every unit. Units include drug prevention, nutrition, and healthy relationships. - Mr. Schemm asked if "affirmative consent" was	1. Health K-2 2. Health 7 & 8

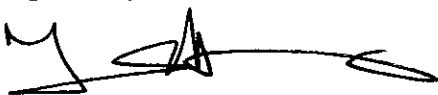
	taught as part of the healthy relationships unit and Mr. Hoffman said it is. Mr. Dahl moved to bring the following curricula: 1. Health K-2 2. Health 7 & 8 to the full Board for approval, seconded by Mrs. Chastain and passed unanimously. B. Request for New Program or Course 1. Digital Photography 2. AP Computer Science Principles 3. Word Processing and Google Apps • Ms. DiCorpo said requests for new courses are not brought lightly and as such she had prepared flow charts to show the different pathways and manner in which students can move into courses in the subject areas under consideration. • Mr. Williams said in the case of AP Computer Science Principles it opens up a pathway for grade 10 students who would not have taken the advanced math currently required for AP Computer Science. The Principles course focuses more on the creativity aspect of applications in computer science. • Ms. DiCorpo said other courses might be adjusted based on enrollment. Web Design II, for example, could be offered on a rotating basis if enrollment drops as a result of the restructuring. • Mrs. Chastain asked if students were surveyed for interest. She said she did not support the addition of another AP class. She said she thought some students were turned off by the AP title and she would prefer to see other courses offered that were not as college oriented. In her opinion, the district has been too focused on AP additions over the last few years. • Mr. Smith said there had been more non-AP classes requested than not over the last few years and he would provide a listing to illustrate. He said that student interest has driven most of the new courses.	Motion made and passed unanimously to bring the following curriculum to the full Board for approval: 1. Health K-2 2. Health 7 & 8 B. Request for New Program or Course 1. Digital Photography 2. AP Computer Science Principles 3. Word Processing and Google Apps
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- Ms. DiCorpo said the other two courses requested are not AP and this particular course has a very hands-on design.
- Mr. Schemm said the AP Principles course is in its second year where he teaches and it is his experience that it is attracting a varied cohort of students. For many, this is the only AP course they take. He said the College Board is trying to be more inclusive in the courses they offer and this is a good example. It is a way to get more students involved in computer programming, similar to how PLTW works for engineering.
- Mrs. Chastain reiterated that she would prefer to see new classes focused on career readiness versus college.
- Mr. Schemm said he would like to see the flow chart changed to remove the Introduction to Programming requirement as he did not think it was necessary.
- Ms. DiCorpo said they would prefer to leave it in as they are trying to build a pathway of interest. They are continuing work with the middle school to survey students regarding course interest.
- Mr. Dahl said he appreciated all the work presented this evening and the enthusiasm for all the programs. He said so much is presented all at once that he sometimes finds it overwhelming and would prefer a slower pace. He finds it confusing in that the district is talking about adding courses when the town and state are talking about a budget crisis. He asked if these needed to be addressed now.
- Ms. DiCorpo said they are presented tonight because they need to plan for budget impact.
- Mr. Smith said that the budget impact will be in allocation, not funds, as the courses will be built in to the high school budget presented, not as additional funding requests. He said they do need to plan for whether or not these courses will be offered to students for course selection.
- Mrs. McInerney questioned the request for the Word Processing and Google Apps course as she said students are already becoming fluent in this area in the lower grades. Mr. Williams said

	teaching keyboarding is basically obsolete. Regarding google apps, the high school teachers have not seen that proficiency and would like to increase the focus on google applications. The other course currently offered, Business Computer Applications, focuses on the Microsoft suite. • Mr. Smith said the Keyboarding course is outdated and they are adapting to current technology use. • Mr. Schemm said he views it more as teaching the students digital fluency. He said he would like to see Microsoft and Google applications combined into one course. • Mrs. Chastain agreed and said she could not support the course as presented. She suggested all three courses: Keyboarding, Business Computer Applications and Word Processing and Google Apps be combined into one, perhaps year-long, course of study. • Mr. Smith said certification and credit could come into play but they would look at a revision of the request prior to the Board meeting. • Mrs. Chastain said she does appreciate the thought that went into the requests. In light of budget constraints, she is just trying to look at the best use of staff to provide the most offerings to students. Mrs. Chastain moved to bring the request for new program or course: Digital Photography; AP Computer Science Principles; and Word Processing and Google Apps, with discussed modifications, to the full Board for approval, seconded by Mr. Dahl and passed unanimously.	Motion made and passed unanimously to bring the request for new program or course: Digital Photography; AP Computer Science Principles; and Word Processing and Google Apps, with discussed modifications, to the full Board for approval.
5. A. NMHS Proposed Art Department Course Changes • Ms. DiCorpo said the changes are designed to open opportunities for students. The Cut, Paste and Copy (CPC) class will become a one credit graphic design course, making it easier for students to fit in	Items of Information A. NMHS Proposed Art Department Course Changes	Items of Information A. NMHS Proposed Art Department Course Changes

	their schedule. Advertising Art will be rewritten to incorporate some of the material from the redesign of Cut, Paste and Copy and will include more digital/online references. Digital Photography will be added. This proposed course already has high student interest with students even petitioning for it to be added. It will be taught by the CPC teacher, so it is cost effective. B. Possible Budget Drivers Ms. DiCorpo said they continue to examine opportunities to best utilize resources to support student interest and aspirations. She said there is an alumni survey coming in January to further add to this conversation.	B. Possible Budget Drivers
6.	Public Comment There was none.	Public Comment
7.	Adjourn Mr. Dahl moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:41 p.m., seconded by Mrs. Chastain and passed unanimously.	Adjourn Motion made and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Tammy McInerney, Chairperson
 Committee on Learning