

# LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

*Regional School District #18*

*A Private School Experience*



*in a Public School Setting*

## **Regular Board of Education Meeting**

March 6, 2019

*Board Present:* Michelle Roche, Chairwoman; Diane Linderman, Vice Chair; Jean Wilczynski, Treasurer; Martha Shoemaker, Secretary; Erick Cushman; Rick Goulding; Stacey Leonardo; Mary Powell St. Louis; Stacy Winchell

*Administration Present:* Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Mark Ambruso, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; James Cavalieri, Principal of Lyme Consolidated School; Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum; Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services; Patricia Downes, Principal of Mile Creek School; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School; John Rhodes, Director of Facilities & Technology; Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; James Wygonik, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School

*Others Present:* Mary Roth, RETA Co-President; Brynn McGlinchey and Emily O'Brien, High School Student Representatives; 15 Townsperson from LOL

### **I. Call to Order**

Chairwoman Roche called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **II. Approval of Minutes**

MOTION: Dr. Powell St. Louis made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Cushman, to approve the minutes of Special Meeting, Regular Meeting and Executive Session of February 6, 2019.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

### **III. Visitors**

#### **1. CABE Communication Award**

A representative from the Connecticut Association of Board of Education (CABE), Lon Seidman, presented the district with the CABE Excellence in Communications Award for the district website.

**49 Lyme Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut 06371**

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## 2. Public Comment

Mona Colwell, a resident of Old Lyme, read a letter that voiced her opposition to the Pre-K expansion that is currently included in the proposed 2019-2020 budget. A copy of this statement is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

A resident of Old Lyme requested that the 2019-2020 budget be placed on the district website for public review. She also voiced her concern over the proposed reduction in teaching time for several teachers proposed in next year's budget. She asked that the Board and administration consider using these teachers in another capacity to bring them back to full-time.

Catherine DiMella, a resident of Old Lyme, voiced her opposition to the reduction to the middle school music teacher's position from full time to .7 FTE.

Dan Stevens and Gail Stevens, owners of the Nightingale Café in Old Lyme, voiced their support for teaching the arts in the schools and their concern over cuts made at the middle school level in the area of music instruction. They spoke to the many talented students that perform at their café and how music is a great influence in these students' lives.

Tracie Ortoleva, a resident from Old Lyme, questioned the need for the expanded preschool program and asked about the curriculum and if it would include a lot of playtime as she believed this is how children learn at that age level. She also asked how this expansion would be funded. Mrs. Ortoleva also voiced her concern over the cuts made in the area of the arts.

Mr. Hunt, a resident from Lyme, voiced his support for keeping the music teacher at the middle school at full-time status.

Emerson Caldwell asked the Board to be fiscally responsible. He voiced concern over several issues, i.e., seven years of declining enrollment but increased budgets; possibility of funding for a turf field; air conditioners in windows without covers on them; and preschool expansion costs increasing every year. He also questioned why the district was not charging for preschool attendance.

Maria Marchant, a resident of Old Lyme, voiced concern over increased taxes due to the inclusion of the expanded preschool program. She inquired why this program could not be moved to Mile Creek and Lyme Consolidated School.

Due to misinformation within the community on the preschool expansion and reduction in force, Mr. Neviasser addressed the public on many of the concerns expressed during public comment:

- The reduction in music/physical education is because of a reduction in enrollment. There is NO reduction in the program or instructional time. During the past several budget seasons, cuts to staff did not occur due to attrition.
- The cuts in music and physical education have nothing to do with funding the expanded Pre-K.
- The reduction in the music teacher's position would have been more (reduction of .5 FTE vs. .3 FTE) without the inclusion of the staff member teaching at the expanded Pre-K program next year.
- Preschool curriculum is the same curriculum currently in place in the existing preschool program, which follows the Connecticut Early Learning Standards.

Mrs. Roche asked that concerned citizens contact her or Mr. Neviasser should they have additional questions they would like answered. It was noted that there is much misinformation being spread through social media. Mr. Neviasser noted that the 2019-2020 budget book would be put online in the next several weeks.

### 3. Report from Student Representatives

Brynn McGlinchey and Emily O'Brien reported on the following activities taking place at the schools:

*At LOLHS:* On March 3, the science bowl team placed 7th out of 35 schools in the Department of Energy's regional event. The varsity math team won the small division Middlesex County championship for the sixth straight year. On March 5, the third annual AP/ECE information night was held. Parents and students had an opportunity to meet the teachers of these courses and learn about the workload, rigor and pace of these courses prior to the 2019-2020 registration process. The opening of the annual Youth Art Show will take place at the Lyme Art Academy on March 14 at 4:00 p.m. On March 14-16, many juniors and seniors will descend on Washington D.C. for a whirlwind tour of our nation's capital.

*At LOLMS:* On February 11, the middle school hosted State Trooper Cummings who presented valuable information on the use and implications of social media to about 50 district parents. The 7th grade class hosted movie night showing the classic, *Back to the Future*. The 8th grade students prepared, cooked and delivered meals to the New London shelter as part of their interdisciplinary unit on homelessness and a call to action. Students were recognized for living the middle school core values at the winter grade-level recognition assemblies. This month the 8th graders met with Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of LOLHS, as they prepare for their high school transition; they also attended the 8th grade transition evening presentation at the high school.

*At Lyme Consolidated School:* Physical Education Teacher Bonnie Ambruso organized Healthy Heart Day on February 14. All of the students participated in 45 minutes of continuous exercise. Fifty students helped raise \$5,061, which will be donated to the American Heart Association. On February 27, the PTO organized a science exploration workshop with 126 out of 206 students participating. Each student attended three 20-minute workshops. A special thanks was extended to Meagan McMahon and Deb Galasso for organizing this special science event. The week of March 11 is circus week; all students will

participate in circus activities during their PE classes. The focus will be on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders who will learn a specific circus type skill. On March 15, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders will participate in two performances, one at 1:30 p.m. and one at 6:00 p.m. The District Art Show will open on March 14. Report cards will be sent home on March 22 for all students in grades K-5. On the morning of March 27, all 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders will attend the LOLMS play.

*At Mile Creek School:* ACE classes began for K, 1, 2 and will start for 3, 4, 5 on Thursday. Today the kindergarten classes enjoyed a visit from a tiny owl named Cleo. On March 8, the kindergarten will visit Bureau's Sugar House to see how their popcorn is made. Also on March 8, a musher will visit the 5<sup>th</sup> grade to kick off their interdisciplinary study of the world famous Iditarod. On March 14/15, the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will present music inspired by Peter Pan. On March 22, report cards for all grades will go home. On March 27, the 5<sup>th</sup> grade will present their annual musical entitled *Juke Box Time Machine*. On March 29, the kindergarten and 5<sup>th</sup> grade buddies will take part in another Fun Friday activity in celebration of their cross-grade partnership.

*In the Preschool Program:* Happy St. Patrick's Day from the Pre-K. This month the students in Pre-K will be studying the color white and the shape of a diamond. Students will be learning about Dr. Seuss and reading a variety of his books. They will focus on robots in math and space in science. They will practice writing the letters P, Q, R and S. This month the artist of interest is Jackson Pollack. The preschool and kindergarten teachers and Lymes' Youth Service Bureau teaching team hosted a "Kindergarten Readiness" information discussion on March 5 at 6:30 p.m. at Center School. The presentation was well attended and designed to provide information for parents regarding expectations for school readiness. The high school students involved in the life skills class provided homemade cookies and various healthy snacks. The preschool students were excited to partner with students at the high school.

#### **IV. Administrative Reports**

##### **1. Superintendent's Report**

Mr. Neviasher reviewed the March personnel report. Of note: the retirement of Glenn Elliott, Science Teacher at LOLHS for the past 20 years, effective June 30, 2019, and the hiring of Deborah Spera, School Psychologist at Lyme Consolidated School effective March 25, 2019. Mr. Neviasher reported that the Mile Creek principalship vacancy (for 2019-2020) has still not been filled. Mr. Neviasher also listed some of the other vacancies to be filled for next school year.

Mr. Neviasher reviewed the March enrollment report, which reflected a student enrollment of 1,281 students (three more students than last month this time).

Mr. Neviasher reported that the budget edition of the *Focus on Education* newsletter is being prepared for distribution in the next several weeks. He also reported that they are in the process of presenting the district's budget to the Boards of Finance in both towns.



Mr. Neviaser reminded the Board that there will be an official vote to set a date for graduation at the April Board meeting as prescribed in statute. Assuming no more closures beyond the two snow days that have occurred, the last day of school will be June 17, 2019.

Mr. Neviaser updated the Board on the Next Generation Accountability Report, which came out on February 22, 2019. Mile Creek and Lyme Consolidated Schools were named “Schools of Distinction” based on high levels of student growth on SBAC testing. While LOLHS has the highest index rating of all schools, they only had 94.7% of their students participate in the CT SAT Day, which automatically pushed them from a level 1 school ranking to a level 2 school ranking and did not allow them to qualify as a School of Distinction. All schools in a district must have a minimum of 95% participation on state assessments or they are automatically bumped down a ranking level. The middle school’s level 2 classification is based on their performance index rating falling in the state’s level 2 range.

Mr. Neviaser updated the Board on a number of legislative items that could impact the district in the future. Specifically, setting a firm graduation date (which would include starting school after Labor Day); the various regionalization proposals; and shifting a portion of teacher retirement payments to town budgets, which would result in the following costs for the towns going forward.

Old Lyme

(1<sup>st</sup> year) 74,966

(2<sup>nd</sup> year) 154,812

(3<sup>rd</sup> year) 224,898

Lyme

(1<sup>st</sup> year) 19,260

(2<sup>nd</sup> year) 39,774

(3<sup>rd</sup> year) 57,780

Mr. Neviaser updated the Board on the status of the annual district goals as follows:

*Curriculum*

Infuse differentiated practices into daily instruction based on an analysis and identification of areas of need using multiple performance indicators including, but not limited to, SAT and SBAC results.

- Differentiated SAT Prep classes started for all grade 11 students (using PSAT results).
- Analysis of common K-5 assessments (Math)/ K-3 Foundations Screeners (ELA) compared to AIMSweb and student longitudinal data to inform teachers of student growth over time.
- SBAC/NGSS Interim Assessment Blocks started with item analysis used/available 3-8, 11.
- State Accountability Report assessing 12 components related to student success used for strategic planning at the building level.

### *Human Resources*

Analyze and communicate processes by which we formally monitor and maintain positive communication and relationships.

- School climate surveys distribution begins today to all students, staff, and parents.

### *Community*

Continue to access and expand upon community resources that support academic, social, and emotional learning for all students.

- Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School, and Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School, will report on this during their presentation tonight on Advisory programs.

### *Facilities*

Monitor and evaluate five-year facility and technology plans to ensure appropriate improvements and maintenance of buildings, grounds and infrastructure.

- Phase one of the solar panel project is complete.

Mr. Neviasser reported that the Lyme-Old Lyme Schools and Scholar Search Associates are presenting an Educational Forum for families on Sunday, March 24, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. This is a free event open to the public and includes presentations for parents from experts and interactive workshops for students on various topics.

Mr. Neviasser reported that phase one of the solar panel project is complete. Mr. Rhodes is working with Greenskies on phase two of this project.

Mr. Neviasser noted that the month of March is Connecticut Board of Education Member Appreciation Month. He recognized all Board members for their dedicated service to the communities.

## **2. Business Manager's Report**

Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Executive Budget Summary as of February 28, 2019. Fluctuations of note:

*Employee Benefits:* timing of invoices.

*Special Education:* tuition actuals are exceeding budget expectations due to increase of population.

*Support Services:* increased spending year to date on library books at Lyme School, LOLMS and Mile Creek purchased services.

*Administrative Services:* administrative technology purchases. Equipment purchased services.

Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Contingency Maintenance Report. There was \$15,075 in new spending in January. Expenditures were for work on the Lyme School boiler, the sewer at the Middle School and HVAC work at the High School. Remaining contingency balance: \$85,712.

**V. Educational Presentation**

Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School, and Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School, gave a presentation on the advisory programs at both schools. A copy of their presentation is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

Comments and questions followed the presentation and included the following topics: length of the Pursuits Program during a school year (two semesters); connection of homeroom to the advisory program at the high school level; and inputs that were used to develop these programs.

**VI. Chairman & Board Report**

Mrs. Roche thanked the Board members for their efforts on the Board. Mrs. Roche noted that there would be discussion under the “correspondence” section of the agenda on best practices for Board members when dealing with controversial district matters.

**VII. New Business**

The Superintendent asked that the Board approve an additional New Business Item as a tuition student request was just recently received the previous day; he would like action on the request so that the student could begin attendance at LOLHS on or about April 1.

MOTION: Mrs. Linderman made a motion, which was seconded by Dr. Goulding, to approve the addition of an agenda item, *Tuition Student Request*, under New Business.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

**1. Tuition Student Request**

Mr. Neviasser reported on a recent request for a tuition student (9<sup>th</sup> grader) to attend Lyme-Old Lyme High School.

MOTION: Mrs. Winchell made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Shoemaker, to approve the tuition student request as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Dr. Goulding asked Mr. Neviasser about his knowledge of other school districts in the area who had tuition students attending their public schools. Mr. Neviasser reported that he believed Lyme-Old Lyme Schools were unique with currently eight students attending on a tuition basis.

**2. Closure of LOLMS Roof Project**

John Rhodes, Director of Facilities and Technology, reported that the Middle School roof replacement was successfully completed during the summer and fall of 2018. The completed project cost is \$399,316.05 excluding reimbursement.

MOTION: Mrs. Linderman made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Wilczynski, that the Board of Education approve the Middle School roof replacement project as complete and accepts the school building project herein identified for public school purposes and certifies that:

- a. The project has been accepted by the architect and contractor as completed.
- b. All change orders for this project have been approved by the State Department of Education.
- c. The grant received for this project does not represent a duplication of funding and that funds received do not exceed 100%.
- d. All bills for the project have been paid or funds to pay such bills are deposited in a separate escrow account.
- e. The total sum noted in this application was expended for the school building project herein described.
- f. Application is hereby made under provision of Chapter 173 of the Connecticut General Statutes as amended for payment of the school building project grant due based on the completion of the project described herein.
- g. All the statements contained in the application are true and correct to the best of our knowledge.
- h. Certification by our attorney has been obtained that all legislative and regulatory requirements, including C.G.S. Sections 10-287(b) and 49-41, have been met in awarding of contracts for this building project.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

### 3. Closure of Mile Creek Fuel Oil Tank Replacement Project

Mr. Rhodes reported that the Mile Creek fuel oil tank replacement was successfully completed during the summer and fall of 2018. The completed project cost is \$193,431 excluding reimbursement.

MOTION: Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Winchell, that the Board of Education approves the Mile Creek fuel oil tank replacement project as complete and accepts the school building project herein identified for public school purposes and certifies that:

- a. The project has been accepted by the architect and construction manager as completed.
- b. All change orders for this project have been approved by the State Department of Education.
- c. The grant received for this project does not represent a duplication of funding and that funds received do not exceed 100%.
- d. All bills for the project have been paid or funds to pay such bills are deposited in a separate escrow account.
- e. The total sum noted in this application was expended for the school building project herein described.
- f. Application is hereby made under provision of Chapter 173 of the Connecticut General Statutes as amended for payment of the school building project grant due based on the completion of the project described herein.
- g. All the statements contained in the application are true and correct to the best of our knowledge.
- h. Certification by our attorney has been obtained that all legislative and regulatory requirements, including C.G.S. Sections 10-287(b) and 49-41, have been met in awarding of contracts for this project.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

4. Computer Network Infrastructure Upgrade

John Rhodes provided the following background information on this agenda item: the High School switches were installed in 2011 and are ready for replacement. These replacements are part of the network infrastructure maintenance plan. All the equipment was bid through the Federal E-Rate bidding system. This equipment is eligible for E-Rate grant discount of 50%. Only one quote was received which met the bid specifications. All of this equipment will be supplied and installed by Connecticut Computer Services, the district's network services contractor. Total cost is with the 2019-2020 school district budget.

MOTION: Mrs. Linderman made a motion, which was seconded by Dr. Powell St. Louis, to award Connecticut Computer Services the supply and installation of new High School network switches for \$100,620.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

5. Irrigation System Water Supply

John Rhodes provided the following background information on this agenda item: the Facilities Committee, along with an Ad Hoc committee, had previously advised the Board of Education to install a supplementary irrigation water system on the Lyme Street campus to reduce the strain on the potable water supply. This project was publicly bid with results listed below.

| COMPANY NAME            | PRICE        |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Machnik Brothers        | \$118,000.00 |
| National Lawn Sprinkler | \$128,200.00 |
| Winterberry Group       | \$116,045.00 |

References and qualifications of the Winterberry Group have been verified. This project is within the estimated value and will be funded from remaining 2018-2019 funds.

MOTION: Dr. Powell St. Louis made a motion, which was seconded by Dr. Goulding, to award Winterberry Group the contract to install an irrigation system water supply on the Lyme Street campus for \$116,045.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

On another matter, Dr. Goulding reported that ad hoc committee that is studying field usage never considered crumb rubber usage (possible safety issues) for turf fields during their recent discussions. Mrs. Wilczynski addressed the concern that the public isn't aware of the efforts that go into the decision-making of committees.

#### 6. Student Chromebook Lease

John Rhodes provided the following background information on this agenda item: this purchase is part of the annual computer replacement program. These new Chromebooks will replace the existing six-year-old student laptops in grades K-8. In addition, this purchase will establish a grades 4-8 1:1 student computer program.

The proposed action is based on a four year computer lease. Lease pricing is based on the State of Connecticut Dell pre-bid contract pricing. The base equipment cost is \$171,304.00. The total expenditure following four annual lease payments is \$184,199.76.

MOTION: Mrs. Linderman made a motion, which was seconded by Dr. Goulding, to award Dell Financial Services, using Connecticut Computer Services as our agent, a four-year lease for 532 student laptops for \$46,049.94 annually.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

### VIII. Old Business

#### 1. Closing of LOLHS Project

The district is still waiting for the final change order from the State so there is no action required on this agenda item.

#### 2. Report of Committees:

- a. *Facilities*. A meeting of this committee (along with Finance Committee) was scheduled for March 20 at 5:30 p.m.
- b. *Finance*. No report.
- c. *Communications*. No report.
- d. *Policy*. Mrs. Linderman reported that this committee is working on policies that were cited by the CABA Policy Audit for inclusion as district policy.
- e. *LEARN*. Mrs. Leonardo reported that Michael Siebert, a representative on the LEARN Board of Directors and a Salem Board of Education member, passed away recently. She also reported that Eileen Howley, Executive Director of LEARN, is retiring effective July 1, 2019. Other topics covered: special ed costs, classroom safety, regionalization, kindergarten entry age, and regional transportation study.

- f. *LOL Prevention Coalition*. Mrs. Shoemaker reported that Cristal DePietro has resigned as Prevention Coordinator.

**IX. Correspondence**

The Board reviewed a document entitled “Pre-K Expansion – Know the Facts” which was prepared by Superintendent Neviaser to help clarify many of the misconceptions that are being discussed in the community and on social media. The Board wordsmithed the document and gave suggestions for improvement to Mr. Neviaser. He will revise and post the document on the district website. The Board also suggested that the Superintendent hold a public forum so that the questions and concerns can be answered and addressed.

Mrs. Roche discussed the importance of Board members supporting a vote that has been approved by a majority of the Board. She noted that she will email all Board members a copy of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education’s *Code of Ethics for Boards of Education* and *What Does a School Board Do*. There was follow-up discussion on separation of roles and Board members expressing their own personal opinion as taxpayers on issues relevant to the community.

**X. Executive Session**

There was no need for an executive session.

**XI. Adjournment**

The regular meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m. upon a motion by Mrs. Winchell and a second by Mrs. Shoemaker.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Shoemaker, Secretary



Dear Board of Education,

On Wednesday, February 6<sup>th</sup> at the 7:00 PM Board of Education meeting, you chose to adopt a fiscally irresponsible budget for the 2019/2020 school year that jeopardizes funding for our current faculty and facilities and instead funds a \$380,000 pre-k expansion.

The budget included the proposals to extend the pre-k program in our school district which will have a significant negative impact on the Lyme-Old Lyme Schools. Besides the fact that the proposals suggest taking funding from our existing staff and facilities, the idea that it will somehow grow our town has no merit. Other towns that function with free preschool, such as is proposed, end up with enormous program and facility costs that actually cost the taxpayer more money due to the sheer size of the program and the numerous layers of bureaucracy that are required to run them. Of greatest concern is the idea that we will lose our educational staff in K-12 in our small local schools which are vitally important to the success of our students. Students in our town have already been forced to endure lengthy bus rides as the Administration constantly change the school borders, attend massive class sizes greater than the Region 18 guidelines where they lose personal connection with their teachers, and our communities will no longer have the ability to manage the preschool education of our children. Districts across the state, ours included, are already mismanaging the resources in our regional services designed to save money. To force this upon our schools based on arbitrary enrollment and population numbers is foolish and short-sighted. We are not opposed to the idea of pre-k expansion, but are opposed to the idea of the Administration mandating this with no data to support their actions. Many of our residents have chosen to move to our towns because of the highly achieving schools and relatively low taxes. The proposed budget stands in contrast to the desire of those residents to live in a community that has that "small-town America" feel. The idea of local control is a concept that is rooted in our Lyme & Old Lyme heritage. We, the taxpayers of Lyme and Old Lyme, are trying to make sure our voice is heard to ensure that decisions involving education services like the pre-k expansion are made at the local level with community involvement and fiscal responsibility, particularly NOT taking away funds from our existing programs and facilities.

We have submitted written testimony to the Administration and BOE, we have provided testimony in person at BOE meetings, we have created petitions and our towns are resoundingly speaking in favor of NOT including the \$380,000 proposed pre-k in the 2019/2020 Region 18 Budget.

Sincerely,

Mona Colwell

On behalf of a group of taxpayers in Lyme and Old Lyme who are opposed to the \$380,000 proposed pre-k expansion

\* All highlight sections are direct quotes adapted from Ian Neviasser's Regionalization email.



# Advisory: How we build community in our schools

Board of Education  
March 6, 2019

## Purpose of Advisory Programs



Advisory programs are intended to create and foster a school climate in which students and teachers can:

- Work collaboratively to discuss, share, and encourage positive and expected behaviors.
- Develop, nurture, and maintain caring and meaningful relationships.
- Discuss freely various topics dealing with real life situations.





## District Goals

The advisory programs at the Middle and High School help us meet our District Goal for Community. Specifically, our advisory programs:

- Continue to access and expand upon community resources that support academic, social, and emotional learning for all students.



## Pursuits

The Advisory Committee at the Middle School created an interest-based advisory program. In Pursuits:

- Kids and adults are grouped around a common interest; groups are multi-aged.
- Adults are facilitators but, in time, kids become the leaders.
- All the participants are expected to work as a team to accomplish a goal or complete a project that the Pursuit group defines.

To promote community building, each Pursuit meeting opens and closes with a brief circle-based discussion.





## A note about Circles

Circle-based discussions are an important component of Restorative Practices, which is used at both the Middle and High School.

- Circles help to build community through meaningful communication. [Circles 101](#)
- Middle and high school teachers were trained in leading circle-based discussions during our August PD. [Circle Discussion Prompts](#)

Both the Middle and High School use Circles to make sure that advisory programs address climate, build community, and facilitate communication.



## How Pursuits works

Groups meet once every nine school days for 45 minutes.

- Pursuit groups were developed by teachers based on their personal skill set and reflected student suggestions. [Fall 2018 Pursuit offerings](#)
- Students identified four Pursuits they were interested in and were scheduled accordingly.
- Pursuits has a [transfer process](#) if a switch is necessary.

Pursuits is intended to be student-led so the group, with some teacher direction, is responsible for planning and organizing their time. The planning is part of the learning.





## An example of a Pursuit

"The Pay It Forward Pursuit believes that through acts of kindness towards people, animals, and the environment, we can foster a more caring society. Members are challenged to 'change the world' - even in a small way"

- 8 students; two boys and 6 girls
- Team collected old sweatshirts and stuffing and made dog beds, which were donated to a local animal shelter
- Mrs. Staranchak and Mrs. Molnar were the team leaders

Pursuit groups are many and varied. [Click for a complete list of Spring 2019 Pursuit options.](#)



The Pay It Forward Pursuit







## What Pursuits strives to accomplish

As an advisory program, we hope that Pursuits helps us to:

- Build community through shared experiences and teamwork.
- Develop a school community in which students and adults:
  - Feel connected and are kind to one another.
  - Demonstrate respect, tolerance, and perseverance.
  - Learn goal setting, collaboration, and communication.

To determine if these goals are being met, we developed a school climate assessment that is reflective of these targets.



## How we are assessing Pursuits

To assist in determining the efficacy of Pursuits, the Advisory Committee:

- Committed to a two-year pilot.
- Developed a [middle school climate assessment](#) that is administered three times per year in September, December, and May.
- Incorporated the [climate assessment results](#) into our teacher evaluation process as our peer goal.



## LOLHS Advisory / Homeroom:



The mission of the High School Advisory Program supports our Core Values and Beliefs. Specifically, our Advisory Program:

- Assists students in their journey through high school.
- Builds relationships between students and teachers.
- Develops the social and emotional needs that arise on a daily basis.
- Addresses topics and themes that are important to and for students.

## Nuts and Bolts of the High School's Advisory Program



The High School's Advisory Program is committed to long-term community building. To do this, advisory groups:

- Are created through collaboration with the Middle School ensuring that students will be compatible.
- Remain together for all four years.
- Meet everyday for 5 minutes after 2nd block.
- Participate in 20 minute bi-monthly lessons.





## Advisory Expectations

The expectation for students in Advisory is to **STEP UP:**

- Skills:** Reinforce life skills
- Team:** Be a part of something bigger than yourself and build relationships
- Engage:** Have a conversation face to face with teachers and students
- Positivity:** Engage in a positive way during advisory
- Unplug:** Put personal devices / phones aside
- Progress:** Make strides to improve yourself as well as assist others in your group



## How Advisory is implemented

All advisory lessons are provided to teachers. To ensure consistency:

- Every Advisor receives a binder with hard copy of lessons and resources.
- All materials are organized in an **Advisory Canvas Course** by grade .

In addition to materials provided at monthly faculty meetings committee teams:

- Review two monthly lessons with grade level advisory groups.
- Solicit feedback from previous lessons.
- Share various ways to differentiate advisory lessons.





## The Advisory Plan

|                 | Theme          | Essential Question  |
|-----------------|----------------|---|
| <u>Grade 9</u>  | Stepping Up!   | What does it mean to be part of the HS community?   |
| <u>Grade 10</u> | Check Yourself | How do you utilize your resources to become your best self?                               |
| <u>Grade 11</u> | Take Charge!   | What are the various pieces you need to consider as you begin to plan for the next steps? |
| <u>Grade 12</u> | Stepping Out!  | What does it mean to be a contributing member of society?                                 |



## Sample Advisory Lesson

### Advice from a Senior:

Panels of Seniors share their experiences to small groups based on class theme

- **Freshman:** Making the most of their time at LOLHS.
- **Sophomores:** Taking advantage of opportunities /extra-curricular activities
- **Juniors:** Preparing and surviving the post-secondary (college/career/military) process





## Sample Advisory Lesson

Clean up your social media (Grade 12 - October 3)

*Objective: Students will be able to review and discuss the need to clean up social media accounts.*

Activities:

- Circle: As you think of next steps and prepare to “step out” of HS, how do you think your prospective employers or admissions counselor would view your social media persona?
- View Ted Talk link: [Juan Enriquez how to think about digital tattoos](#)
- Identify 3 things that you need to change on your social media.



## Advisory Committee & Next Steps

To help the evaluate the effectiveness of the Advisory Program, the following steps are being taken:

- The Advisory Committee meets weekly to plan, review, and revise lessons.
- Quarterly Faculty Feedback forms are collected and reviewed.
- Teacher Feedback forms are utilized to support the Peer Goal portion of the teacher evaluation.
- The Committee elicits student feedback from students which will be shared.
- Professional Development is planned for this summer to review feedback and further align and revise lessons.





## Conclusions



Both Pursuits and Advisory seek to build community in our schools. Specifically, these programs have been:

- Thoughtfully and deliberately designed to meet the needs Lyme-Old Lyme students.
- Developed in collaboration with a devoted group of faculty members.
- Embraced and accepted by faculty.

Whether it is building empathy or teaching real-life skills, both programs are critical to the social and emotional learning needed for students to succeed.