

**MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Julie Altman, Christopher Browe (5:25p.m.), Diane Crocco, James Horwitz, Thomas Hurley

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:** Rita Gedansky

**Also Present:** Charles Britton, Julie Chevan, Ken Clark, Marianne Lippard, Marie McPadden, Michael Nast, Chris Pittenger, Helen Pushkarskaya, Mary Raiola, Jill Polisson, Elena Serapiglia, James Stirling, Jennifer Wentworth

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A meeting of the Curriculum Committee of the Amity Regional Board of Education was held on Thursday November 7, 2013 at 5:15 p.m. in the Superintendent's Conference Room.

- 1. Call to Order:** Julie Altman called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m.
- 2. Approval of Minutes – July 7, 2013**  
*Motion to approve the minutes as presented* (Ms. Crocco, 2d Mr. Horwitz).  
*Vote in favor:* Julie Altman, Diane Crocco  
*Vote opposed:* none  
*Abstain:* James Horwitz, Thomas Hurley **Motion passed.**

**3. New Course Proposals and/or Revisions**

Elena Serapiglia, Department Chair of World Languages addressed the Committee with the following proposed changes:

Chinese

The rationale behind taking the number out of the name of Chinese V is so that there are no issues with a small group of Chinese III students who do outside work (and are recommended by their teachers) to be able to take the AP course, bypassing Chinese IV while completing the coursework independently. In addition, this has been a contracted course (LE and LH) but there have not been students taking this course at a contracted LE. The new name would be AP Chinese Language and Literature.

Spanish

The rationale behind taking the number out of Spanish IV LH (AP Spanish Language and Culture) and Spanish V LH (AP Spanish Literature) would be so that, based on the recommendation of their teacher, more students might be able to take the AP Spanish Language and Culture class. They are not currently able to do so because Spanish IV L1 and Spanish IV LH are both Spanish IV classes, and students are unable to repeat a numbered course, like Spanish IV, for credit. Additionally, some heritage speakers of Spanish may find it more useful to bypass the AP Spanish Language and Culture class and move directly to the AP Spanish

Literature course. Removing the number (Spanish IV or Spanish V) from their names could also potentially allow more flexibility in scheduling for the counseling department. The proposed new course names are AP Spanish Language and Culture and AP Spanish Literature.

Ms. Serapiglia noted that there are no budgetary implications to the proposed changes. Changing the course names would allow a handful of students to have the chance to take additional AP classes that would not otherwise be available to them. There would be no change to the courses themselves.

Mr. Hurley noted that the disadvantage with how the courses are numbered currently limits students, because they can't take two of the same numbered courses at the same time and receive credit.

*Motion to approve the name changes for three World Language AP courses (Mr. Hurley, 2d Mr. Horwitz).*

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

#### Strings II and Strings Ensemble

Two courses requiring modification are Strings II and Strings Ensemble. These courses are offered as electives without honors credit. They need to be listed in the 2014-2015 Program of Studies as courses with the option for students to contract for honors credit.

Ms. Polisson noted that Amity needs this course modification because the High School has reduced its strings classes by one this school year. This has created the need for combined Strings classes, such as Strings I and Strings II and a combined Strings Ensemble Level Elective and String Ensemble Level Honors. The honors level strings students who cannot schedule Symphony Orchestra Level Honors are now in Strings II and Strings Ensemble Level Elective classes. Many of the students have been members of the CT All State Festival Orchestra, Southern Regional Festival Orchestra and competition winners. These students are not presently receiving honors credit; however, they are learning music that is professional level music, and unabridged original classical pieces. These students are rehearsing and performing these difficult pieces in small ensembles, trios and string quartets. They are putting in more hours of practice at home than the other Level Elective students in this strings class. These Honors Level students are in blended classes with beginner, intermediate, and honors students in one class due to scheduling. The Strings program teachers don't want to lose these advanced players who have received Honors credit in previous years.

Mr. Hurley questioned what other high schools are doing.

Ms. Polisson said that Farmington and Glastonbury have honors level symphony orchestras.

*Motion to approve listing Strings II and Strings Ensemble in the 2014-2015 Program of Studies as a course with the option for students to contract for honors credit (Mr. Horwitz, 2d Ms. Altman).*

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

Writer's Workshop: Writing Center Peer Tutor Training

Julie Chevan, chair of the English Department, described the course, which is a half-year English elective that would be open to sophomores and juniors in the fall semester. The course would prepare students to participate effectively in the editing/revising process, familiarizing them with basic writing techniques in a wide range of genres and with techniques for giving feedback to peer writers across content areas. Students must achieve a B+ minimum in this course and regular English course to qualify as a peer tutor/writing center assistant. Students will receive community service hours as peer tutor/writing center assistant.

Ms. Chevan noted that the focus of the course is to refine writing skills and refine skills for students serving as peer tutors. It is believed that the writing center will be a huge asset to Amity. This would offer a community opportunity much like Link Crew. We are seeking elective credit. It is hoped that this elective will draw not just honors level students. The students serving in the writing center should have good interpersonal skills. There may not be a need to add a section in order to offer this course. It might replace a section or at most it would be a .1 position.

Dr. McPadden said that she supports adding this class. The idea of using peer tutors is exceptional.

Mr. Hurley questioned the GPA requirement of a B+ and not an A. He is concerned about having someone serve as a tutor who could pass on a weakness to another student.

Teacher Jennifer Wentworth said that this would allow teachers to take very qualified students who are good communicators to serve as tutors. Ms. Chevan said that Amity allows students with a B to exempt an exam.

*Motion to approve Writer's Workshop: Writing Center Peer Tutor Training (Mr. Horwitz, Ms. Crocco)*

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

**4. Yale Research Project Proposal: Dr. Christopher Pittenger and Dr. Helen Pushkarskaya**

Dr. Pittenger of Yale described his interest in performing a survey at the High School. The survey would be examining risk and ambiguity and cognitive flexibility. The survey is part of a study that focuses attention on adolescents to see how these traits correlate with personalities. This research would look at obsessive compulsive traits. Personality traits, such as the tendency to believe in things in the absence of evidence, would be examined. The online survey was

developed by Dr. Pushkarskaya and her colleagues would take about an hour to complete. The questions aren't made up; instead, they are used in psychology literature. Survey participants receive a \$2 iTunes gift card.

Mr. Hurley questioned what Amity students would get out of their participation in the study.

Dr. Pittenger said that he and his colleagues would be able to talk to students about this topic. The school would be provided with a summary of the results. He noted that this is not a diagnostic study of students.

Ms. Altman questioned whether parental consent would be needed.

Dr. Pettinger said that parents would receive information and could opt out. It is an anonymous survey, not a confidential survey.

Concerns were raised about the software used and the promise of confidentiality. Ms. Altman questioned whether IP addresses are captured.

Dr. Pushkarskaya said that the addresses wouldn't be saved. Dr. Pittenger said that the issue raised by Ms. Altman could be addressed. Questions have been raised about two survey questions concerning belief in God. Those could be removed from the survey.

Mr. Stirling questioned whether other schools have been approached.

Dr. Pettinger said that Amity is the second school that they have talked to and other schools have been contacted.

Dr. Pushkarskaya stressed that the survey is anonymous.

Mr. Hurley questioned whether the policy manual had been reviewed regarding this request. He noted that if it hasn't already been checked, it should be.

Mr. Nast said that he had not reviewed the manual with respect to this request.

Dr. Pushkarskaya said that the students could benefit by developing an appreciation for how different people are, as well as how different people think about the same things.

Dr. Britton said that there isn't anything in the study to help Amity develop a better curriculum.

Dr. Pettinger said that it was not the intent of the study to help the administration develop a better curriculum.

Mr. Hurley said that if we could find a way that the study could benefit students, it would make more sense to go forward with the survey. It might be possible to use this as a learning opportunity for students, perhaps by showing them how to perform scientific studies of this kind.

It was noted that Amity does have students with diagnoses such as ADHD and OCD.

Dr. Pettinger said that the researchers did not intend to exclude any diagnostic category.

Dr. Pushkarskaya said that a form could be created to allow the administration to exclude certain students from participating, if necessary. Ideally, the researchers would like to offer the survey during school hours.

Dr. Britton said that he spoke with the school psychologist about the survey and some questions were raised. One concern was that this survey could be used as a way to diagnose a problem. If the administration is aware of a problem, there is a responsibility to seek out the individual that completed an anonymous survey. Students with problems need to be identified and accommodated. Once we are aware of a problem, we need to be able to act.

Dr. Pettinger said that either the data could be mined out of the database or we could accept that we can't trace back to the student. If the survey was restructured so that it isn't anonymous, there would be additional issues.

Ms. Raiola said that the District would have an obligation to try to find a student exhibiting signs of a problem.

Mr. Horwitz questioned what Amity would get out of this survey. He is very uncomfortable with this idea. If the psychology students at Amity requested this, he would have a different reaction. He is not comfortable with this request coming from the researchers. He understands this from a scientific point of view, but not for Amity.

Dr. Pettinger said that he has four children in the District and would love to work with the students enrolled in psychology at the High School. He did approach the psychology teacher with the idea first. She referred him to the principal and then the superintendent.

The researchers would like to survey one thousand students for the study.

Mr. Browe questioned whether this would be published later and would Amity be included in the study or would the school remain anonymous.

Dr. Pettinger said that the school would remain anonymous. He sees no risk to students in exposing them to the survey. It appears that further information is needed before a decision can be made. The survey questions are available for the Committee to review.

Mr. Browe said that this research model would be great to share with the psychology students.

Mr. Hurley questioned whether there is a CABE policy on IRB.

Mr. Nast said that he would check.

Ms. Altman said that the Committee needs more information and more time to make a decision. Mr. Nast will invite the researchers back if necessary. The item was tabled.

**5. Update: Teacher/Administrator Evaluation Plan and SBAC Test**

Dr. McPadden said that the teacher evaluation plan was sent to the State. There would be no SPI. She has three more applications from teachers interested in being complementary evaluators. She will attend a workshop at ACES that will update her on the test.

Mr. Nast said that though teachers have experienced anxiety related to the changes, great conversations have taken place regarding class planning. This will be very worthwhile.

Dr. Britton said that the anxiety is going away about the new process. Success revolves around the relationship between teachers and administrators. We are setting measurable goals for student progress. Never before have we had such rich and detail-oriented discussions about teaching and learning.

Dr. McPadden said that she recently visited a co-taught math class where there was total student engagement. She was extremely impressed with what she saw.

**6. Other**

Mr. Nast said that students are now using the Black Box Theater.

**7. Adjourn**

*Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 p.m. (Mr. Hurley, 2d Mr. Horwitz).*

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

*Motion passed; meeting adjourned.*

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Lippard, recording clerk