

## MINUTES

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Julie Altman, Christopher Browe, Diane Crocco, Rita Gedansky, James Horwitz

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:** Thomas Hurley

**Also Present:** Angelo Amato, John J. Brady, Charles Britton, Kathleen Fuller-Cutler, Richard Dellinger, Thayer Doyle, Estelle Fanucci, Jonathan Furst, Warren Gohsler, Heather Goldstein, Marianne Lippard, Grace Lomen, Marie McPadden, Marissa Marnelli Nall, Robert Schumann

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A meeting of the Curriculum Committee of the Amity Regional Board of Education was held on Thursday, October 4 2012, at 5:30 p.m. in the Presentation Room at the District Offices.

- 1. Call to Order:** Julie Altman called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

The approval of minutes from the April 23, 2012 meeting was moved to Item 10 on the agenda.

- 2. Summer Curriculum Work Update**

Ms. McPadden noted that ACES offered training for implementing the Common Core. Amity joined the consortium. Training will continue throughout the year and the staff is excited to take part in the training.

- 3. Demonstration of Rubicon/Atlas**

Mr. Gohsler provided a demonstration of Rubicon/Atlas. He noted that every course was set up the same in Atlas. A course description is always provided. The template is the same for all classes. He pointed out the title line. Each year is archived, providing the ability to go back and look at previous years. He noted that there are always backups. He has been pleased with the company's responsiveness.

Ms. McPadden pointed out the curriculum mapping guide feature. Mr. Gohsler displayed where teachers are doing their work. Unit focused questions are there. There are links to websites, documents and assessments. These are particularly useful for teachers who are teaching a course for the first time.

Dr. Brady questioned if substitutes have this.

Mr. Gohsler said that substitutes do not. Ms. McPadden said that it might make sense to consider having this for substitutes, since it would help them.

Mr. Gohsler pointed out where to find assessments. He noted that the program is fairly easy to use.

Ms. McPadden said that when looking at the unit template, it begins with the standards. Amity has spent a significant amount of time with literacy strategies. Teachers can use multimedia features in Atlas. Teachers can use this with the class on SMART Boards. Each class will have a complete template filled out.

Mr. Gohsler noted that teachers can go into other communities to see what other schools are doing. A dialog can be established on what works and what doesn't work.

Mr. Britton noted that teachers are pretty comfortable on Atlas. The program is used to review and regularly update what is going on in the classroom.

Ms. McPadden noted that the program has many useful features and is easy to navigate.

#### **4. Public Comment**

Ms. Altman noted that a parent sent a letter. All members of the Committee should have seen the letter. Dr. Brady said that the letter addressed concerns about Bring Your Own Device. The letter raises concern about students using special apps on electronic devices when they should be doing their homework. Dr. Brady noted that the concerns have more to do with parental supervision. Devices can be personalized.

Dr. Britton said that he read the letter and two teachers were referenced. The teachers reassured the parent.

Dr. Dellinger said that it would be helpful to provide parents with more guidelines.

#### **5. New Course Proposals and Program Changes**

Two course proposals for ceramics and pottery were contained in the packet distributed to the Curriculum Committee. The proposed courses are Honors Ceramics and Pottery, and Advanced Ceramics and Pottery.

The criteria for acceptance into Honors Ceramics and Pottery include a portfolio review and Fine Art teacher approval. The course is designed for the ceramic student with proven superior ability and possible interest in continuing the study of art beyond high school. It is a yearlong course offered as an elective to juniors and seniors.

According to the course proposal, a full year of ceramics promotes a deeper understanding of individual artistic expression and technique. The course will develop the student's skills in order to make them career or college ready for a field in the arts. It would also prepare students who are eligible to take the Advanced Placement 3D Design course, which has not been able to run due to students not being able to get to the course level required. The course replaces Ceramics III, IV and Potter's Wheel.

The honors course would be something to build up to with only two courses as a prerequisite, instead of four. More students would end up in this advanced course as it would be a designated pathway for them to follow. This course would give students the

ability to work collaboratively to solve complex problems related to their individual interests.

The Advanced Ceramics and Pottery course would expand upon previous hand building potter's wheel knowledge. Students will advance their skills through the creation of personalized functional and sculptural forms. Traditional and non-traditional forms using both the potter's wheel and hand building methods will be explored and researched in order to enhance the student's experience. Independent problem solving and emphasis on form, balance and finish work are the focus of the course. The course replaces Ceramics II.

Amity needs this change of course to show the delineation and rigor in the ceramics course selection. More students are interested in continuing their studies of ceramics as an art form and need the time and space to work on advanced concepts. Advanced students will be given the dedicated time with other advanced students and be able to focus on developing their individual artistic expression.

*Motion to approve the proposals for Honors Ceramics and Pottery, and Advanced Ceramics and Pottery (Ms. Crocco, 2d Mr. Browe).*

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

Dr. Britton noted that the next course proposal is being developed for students who are having difficulty. It is called Reading – Self and Society and would be offered to sophomores.

Based on the Common Core State Standards for literature and informational texts, and using the theme of "Self and Society," this one semester course will accelerate the reading progress of participants. Students will be placed in this course in either the fall or spring semester based on the results of multiple reading assessments and/or teacher recommendation. With the focus on reading and writing in response to texts, this course will prepare students for the Common Core assessments in reading. An interdisciplinary focus is used to study local, regional, national and global topics and issues.

The objective is to accelerate reading progress to get at or above grade level, prepare for Common Core in reading with overlap in writing and research, and read, analyze and interpret complex text using textual evidence to support claims.

The course is needed because some students, even with high quality teaching and course work, have not yet been able to make grade level standards. With the advent of the Common Core, students are going to be expected to read even more complex and rigorous text. Some students who have been at grade level in the past will find themselves in need of support as reading, and all aspects of literacy, become more difficult. The course replaces CAPT Reading, since CAPT will no longer be the testing instrument. There is a need for a sophomore course for students struggling in reading and not up to grade and/or skill level.

The Committee also considered a proposal for Marine Biology and Oceanography. The full-year course investigates the human fascination with the ocean. The main goal of the course is to increase science literacy for Amity students, combining aspects of biology, earth science, history, engineering, math, physics and chemistry. Students will complete their own STEM project which may include building an autonomous underwater vehicle, building and deploying a monitoring buoy for data collection or designing equipment for maintaining scallops or salmon eggs in culture. The elective course will be offered to juniors and seniors. Prerequisites for the course include successful completion of Biology I and Chemistry I.

This course will help to satisfy the three years of science requirement that is needed for all students from 2012 and on. Students can contract to take this course for level one or level two credit, offering flexibility in scheduling. The course will increase science literacy and add to the STEM offerings in the science department.

*Motion to approve the proposals for Reading – Self and Society and Marine Biology and Oceanography (Ms. Gedansky, 2d Mr. Browe).*

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

The Committee considered a proposal for Physics for Engineering. Mr. Amato said that this course is being proposed for the engineering student. The full-year course will be a merger of Physics I and Engineering Design. The course will cover the topics studied in a traditional Physics I course. These topics include mechanics, electricity and magnetism, thermodynamics and waves. The difference from the traditional Physics course is the lab activities. This course will replace traditional physics labs with engineering design project-based labs. The course represents an attempt to prepare students for a college engineering program by studying the science and design application to 21<sup>st</sup> century problems. It will be offered to juniors and seniors. The prerequisites are Algebra II and Chemistry. This offering will replace one section of Physics Honors and one section of engineering design.

Dr. Britton said that the course offers a new approach to the material.

*Motion to approve the proposal for Physics and Engineering (Ms. Crocco, 2d Mr. Browe).*

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

The Committee reviewed a proposal for Advanced Woodworking. The course is designed for students who have completed Construction 1 and 2 and are interested in building the skills and learning the techniques needed for fine and advanced woodworking. The course will introduce topics such as furniture design and construction, cabinet making, and advanced joinery and finishing. Emphasis will be placed on elements of design, creating pieces with high aesthetic value as well as structural integrity. Students will also be engaged in the design and construction of the sets for the theater productions, calling upon their knowledge and skills to translate the ideas and concepts into functional and efficient theater elements. The course would

replace Set Design/Construction and a landscaping course also will be replaced with Advanced Woodworking.

Ms. Altman said that she would like to ensure that this course represents what the students want. She said that the Committee would like to look at all of the electives.

Dr. Britton said that about 25 students are needed for a course to run.

**6. Information on Digital Photography**

Mr. Furst said that the chemical dark room could be changed to benefit more students at the High School. Use of the dark room is limited. The space can be transformed to incorporate room for a radio station.

Dr. Brady noted that a new use for the space would seem to make sense.

Mr. Furst said that the space can be more flexible. The dark room is only used for four sessions a day.

Mr. Horwitz questioned whether the District can move into the digital world without giving up the dark room. The space offers hands-on experience in showing students what chemicals can do. He doesn't want to sacrifice one form of education for another.

Dr. Britton said that digital photography has replaced film. Photographers are freezing film out of concern.

**7. Information on Creativity Research**

Dr. Brady discussed the connection between creativity and adolescent development. A creativity assessment has been proposed comparing students in the United States and France. He noted that there are valid and reliable measures of creativity.

**8. BMS Pilot Blue Team Reorganization: Information and Discussion**

Information regarding Blue Team Reorganization in Bethany was contained within the information packet distributed to the Committee. Since 2010-2011, there has been District-wide concern with the percent of special education students in core level classes. In 2011-2012, all teachers were required to create one professional goal involving differentiated instruction. A District-wide initiative was designed to provide professional development in differentiated instruction. A chart shows the lowest percentage of special education students in Team Blue. Dr. Brady noted that the differences shown on the chart do not represent best practices.

In early September, members of the Blue Team approached administration with concerns that the levels of some students could not be revised because of current scheduling restrictions. Blue Team teachers and the administration created a re-sorted grouping of 56 students in comprehensive or core level classes. A new schedule was created, ensuring that a resorting was possible. A letter was sent to parents and guardians of all

students involved and an informational meeting was held. Ten parents came to the meeting. Some parents were in favor of the restructuring; some were against.

Ms. Nall and Ms. Goldstein, teachers from Bethany, said that teachers want to regroup the students. Dr. Brady noted that 25 special education students are coming to Amity Middle School in Bethany next year.

The restructuring would bring all students up to the same level, benefiting both groups. Dr. Dellinger noted that the change would be helpful. The same curriculum is covered in all classes. The teachers noted that in order to teach to students of different abilities, different teaching strategies are put to use at times.

Ms. Cutler noted that it is difficult to see core classes with such large percentages of special education students. Dr. Brady said that he isn't aware of another middle school in the state that is leveled. This setup came from when the District had junior high schools.

Ms. Altman said that providing information to parents helps to establish a better understanding of what changes will mean. Restructuring can provide social benefits for advanced students as well.

*Motion to accept the reorganization proposal (Ms. Crocco, 2d Mr. Browe).  
Vote in favor unanimous.*

*Motion passed.*

#### **9. PLAN Test Administration to Sophomores: Information and Discussion**

Mr. Schumann noted that there are a number of students participating in the ACT test. The SAT is a test of verbal and quantitative reasoning. The PLAN Test is a curriculum-based assessment and also has a career and occupational portion. College readiness can be determined. Feedback is provided in different content areas. Mr. Shuman said that students are currently taking the ACT without appropriate preparation. Taking PLAN can prepare students for the ACT test. It covers the same subjects and provides an estimated ACT score. PLAN testing can be done on October 17<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Schumann said that 122 parents were surveyed and the majority favors using this test for sophomores.

Mr. Horwitz asked if sophomores would still be able to take the PSAT.

Mr. Schumann said that they would. There was overwhelming support from parents who responded to the survey. Of the 122 responses, 115 favored administering this test. A few parents expressing opposing views cited concerns about too much testing.

Ms. Crocco said that offering the test seems like a good idea.

Dr. Britton said that he is sympathetic to concerns about testing, but the students need to be well prepared if they are going to consider taking the ACT. Ninety-eight percent of the students will take the PSAT.

Ms. Altman questioned whether the students are aware that the test is coming up in two weeks.

Mr. Schumann stressed that this is a practice opportunity. If a parent is opposed to their child being tested, then a student can opt out.

Dr. Brady said that standardized tests and high school transcripts are the measures used to determine college acceptances. Valuable data will be collected by administering this assessment.

**10. Approval of Minutes – April 23, 2012**

*Motion to approve the minutes from the Curriculum Committee meeting on April 23, 2012 (Mr. Browe, 2d Ms. Crocco).*

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

**11. Adjourn**

*Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 p.m. (Mr. Horwitz, 2d Mr. Browe).*

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed; meeting adjourned.***

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Lippard, recording clerk