

Minutes of the Planning Committee of the Board of Education
Regional School District 14 www.ctreg.org
August 12, 2013

A meeting of the Planning Committee of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Monday, August 12, 2013 in the NHS LMC, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present were Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler, Committee Chair Maryanne Van Aken, committee member Charles Cogriff; also, Andrew O'Brien, Susan Domanico, clerk Debra Carlton and reporter Mike Preato.

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Van Aken at 6:08 pm.

The committee discussed the following:

1. Increasing advisory at NHS to a weekly format:

Mr. O'Brien spoke to the benefits of a weekly advisory at NHS, including the link to student success plans and allowing for meaningful relationships with advisors. He feels the bi-weekly sessions do not allow for enough time with students and feels weekly sessions will result in minimal educational impact. He provided handouts on expectations for advisors and a recommended advisory schedule. He showed options for scheduled lessons such as goal setting, social progress and assessing strengths which provide structure while allowing for flexibility.

Ratio will be approximately 12-15/1. Ms. Domanico felt this would be valuable time for planning for the Capstone project. The student's advisor will likely also be his Capstone advisor. The advisory committee will monitor to ensure that this does not become a study hall. Students will meet with advisor during freshman orientation. Mr. Cosgriff saw potential value to orienting 8th graders as early as January/February; similarly, Ms. Van Aken would like to see 5th graders oriented regarding clubs/activities and middle school expectations prior to arriving in the fall.

2. Student attendance clarification to mirror BoE policy

Mr. O'Brien explained that, whereas BoE policy refers to student absences as either excused or unexcused, NHS handbooks refer to a third type of absence, called an "exempt" absence. He is looking to eliminate that confusing category. Exempt absences do not count toward loss of class credit nor toward total number of absences. Twenty absences per year are permitted for class credit and various thresholds of absences during the year trigger contact with parents to let them know where students stand.

3. Increasing student parking fees

Mr. O'Brien provided rationale for increasing student parking fees from \$5 to \$60/year. With concerns over monitoring the parking lots, as well as student activity and general campus safety, he sees this revenue as being used to fund an attendant. He provided a formula showing 184 spaces at \$60/each, a rate of \$10/hour for the attendant and showed that sufficient funds would be generated to pay for this. This would allow for the return of the senior circle and provide security campus-wide. Retired police officers were identified as good candidates for this position and it was stressed that the right person for the job would be important; if the person wasn't working out, it would be important to recognize this early on. Asked about upgrading cameras instead, Mr. O'Brien felt that cameras are more for point of entry security. It was agreed this issue would be brought to the full board for approval.

4. Leveling of classes at NHS

Mr. O'Brien spoke to research supporting reducing the leveling of classes to ensure all students have access to the same quality of teaching and curriculum. He provided handouts showing the number of L1, L2 and L3 classes at NHS. He recognizes that the discussion of leveling is sensitive due to teachers' definitions of rigor. Reducing the number of levels, he believes, will result in excellence in non-core areas and cited this as a goal. Asked how he would plan to roll this out, he said the program of studies needs to be ready by November/December for next year and so he will need to find faculty willing to do the work necessary to make it happen. The report from NEASC, too, will help to inform decisions. He has tried to maintain purposeful growth over time and this goal is in line with that. Tie ins with the SPDG grant were seen, too, and there are many assessments and much info on the subject of leveling.

Mr. O'Brien also anticipates receiving the NEASC report very soon.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maryanne Van Aken

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Chair, Planning Committee
Regional School District 14 Board of Education