

NHS School Council

January 7, 2024

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendance Members: Renee Ames, Amber Barbere, Jamie Calisi, Jeane Coffey, Stacey Gijbsers, Priya Kaur, Emerson Leahy, Rourke Lee, Erin Seaton, Cady Seaton, Mike Testa, Andy Wulf

Attendance Guests: Assistant Superintendent Lisa Furlong, Literacy Coordinator Dr. Tom Abrams, Director of School Counseling Lauren Gee

A) High School Updates

- January Calendar Updates
End of Semester Week January 21-24. These days will be early releases to accommodate for end of semester assessments, projects, and course wrap-ups
- Athletics Director Search
Andy Wulf and Mike Testa noted the three phases of the search process, screening team, community interview team, and final decision team.

The selection process has been designed to maximize many voices. The screening team consists of students, parents, coaches, administrators, and community members including those representing youth athletic programming in Newburyport. Andy Wulf noted Amber Barbere as representing the school council on the community interview phase of the process.

B) BUDGET UPDATE

- a) The team reviewed the priority list (see below) that was developed at the December 10, 2024 meeting.
- b) Andy Wulf noted that there are no significant updates as of yet, but the priorities would be considered should he need to look at areas to conserve funding. He also noted some grant funding will support the creation of an advisory planning team and he will look at cost-neutral moves to maintain the Global Citizenship Program.

To consider	To Prioritize
- Invest time and resources into developing the fundamental aspects of learning and demonstrating through alternative assessments - Additional investment in supporting students during transition to high school - Incorporate more opportunities for the arts during the school day - Addressing media literacy more comprehensively - Intro class for parents and students for college and career center - Athletics equipment - Staff Curriculum: More Business Courses, More advanced courses in Business - New Elective Courses and Expansion of Languages - Facilities: EV Charging and maximizing parking - More alternative education paths and growing the program with different fields - More high level accessible course work such as the SNHU partnership - Expansion of the Arts program	- Staff compensation to support retention and ongoing engagement - Alternative pathway programs for varied industries - Dual enrollment programs through colleges and credit programs. - Music program - Sustain strong Student support staff (counseling, adj counseling, psychologist) - Visual and performing arts programming

C) POLICY DISCUSSION

a) Waiver Policy

Andy Wulf reviewed a summary of last year's policy review where the team gained feedback around the Waiver Policy. Feedback that had been received noted a need to put parameters on course waivers as currently there had not been any. At the end of last year, the School Council asked the administrative team to work with the ILT and Counselors to generate a proposal.

Lauren Gee summarized the proposal for [course waivers](#) (full reflection)

Current students at Newburyport High School	Permit high school students to submit up to two class waivers per academic year, accompanied by a completed electronic waiver form.
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Current students at Nock Middle School	• Permit middle school students to submit up to two class waivers for their first year at the high school, accompanied by a completed electronic waiver form.
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Discussion

Is there a way to collect data around students who waive into course and then need to drop down? This data has been collected and each year there are students who withdraw a course they have waived into. Pending on the timeframe they either receive a WD or a WF on their transcription. The spirit of this proposal is to put some parameters in place where the number of students waiving into many classes has increased. Additionally, students have discovered methods to do this without parental knowledge. This is the reason to move to an electronic waiver form.

We appreciate the limit on the number of courses a student/family can waive into. There is a pressure students feel to be in all honors or AP classes. This will help parents to have conversations with students.

There is an impact on the rigor of courses due to the increases in course waivers. This is noted by parents, students, and teachers.

Is there a pathway for a student or parent to appeal having more than 2 waivers submitted. - The team discussed and agreed there can be an avenue for an appeal. The administration did emphasize that a big part of the waiver process is that students have conversations with teachers.

D) COMPETENCY DETERMINATION (CD)

Andy Wulf, Lisa Furlong, Tom Abrams, and Mike Testa reviewed the objective of the school district given the new law for competency determination.

- The team clarified: All Newburyport sophomores will continue to take the MCAS Assessment though it is no longer a graduation requirement.
- All sophomores will be required to meet a Competency Determination by

showing “mastery of the skills, competencies, and knowledge contained in the state academic standards and curriculum frameworks in the areas measured by the MCAS high school tests described in section one I administered in 2023, and in any additional areas determined by the board.”

- “Satisfaction of the requirements of the competency determination shall be a condition for high school graduation.
- MCAS will continue to be used to determine eligibility for the John & Abigail Adams Scholarship and/or the Stanley Koplik Certificate of Mastery

SHORT TERM PLAN TO IMPLEMENT NEW LAW FOR CLASSES OF 2025 + 2026

Andy Wulf explained an academic review team will look over transcripts and course grades in the MCAS tested subjects for students in the Classes of 2025 and 2026 who have not yet met the Competency Determination. He explained this is a small number of students. If a student does not show evidence of proficiency in course standards, they will continue to be on a proficiency plan.

NEXT STEPS: DEVELOPING A PROPOSAL

Andy Wulf explained: Our charge will be to develop a proposal for what constitutes the requirements of the competency determination. Our intent is to work collaboratively with the school committee to finalize Newburyport’s definition for the competency determination.

To begin the conversation, Andy Wulf shared the questions below and the Council engaged in the conversation summarized.

Overarching question: How will competency determination be defined in Newburyport Public Schools?

Guiding Questions

1. What performance measures currently exist in the “areas measured by the MCAS high school tests?”

Team Brainstorm

- Sophomore Exposition (ELA - Social Studies: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening Standards)
- Common Assessments in ELA, Math, Biology (mid year - Final)
- MCAS
- Gr. 9 Portfolio (in ELA - Reading and Writing Standards)
- PSATs
- Course Grades
- Biology Final Project

2. How might the current performance measures be used to indicate competency determination?

Summary From Discussion

Can the CD vary by student?

Administrators present explained the competency determination would need to follow the language of the new law.

"mastery of the skills, competencies, and knowledge contained in the state academic standards and curriculum frameworks in the areas measured by the MCAS high school tests described in section one I administered in 2023, and in any additional areas determined by the board."

The way this will play out is that each District may have a different approach.

Administrators present noted that how Districts define the competency determination may vary, but all students across the state still need to meet the course standards of the areas that are assessed by the MCAS.

Does it have to be 10th grade?

The new language (copied above) indicates the CD is in areas measured by the MCAS high school test, which for NHS will be Biology, Gr. 9 + 10 Math, Gr. 9 + 10 ELA. The CD is part of the graduation requirements.

Will this be a burden for schools?

Not necessarily. Pending on how schools define competency determination

will determine if there are additional levels of work placed on the school. Prior to the new law the state provided the information on whether or not met the expectations of the MCAS. Schools will now need to come up with a system to review whether or not a student met the CD based on how their respective District defines the CD. The shift is that school's will need to report this information to the state.

Is there a way for a student to choose how they will show competency?

This will depend on the measures that are decided for the CD. Right now there are 3 levels of work to take on.

1. What do we do for the students in the classes of 2025 + 2026 who have not met the CD (See **SHORT TERM PLAN TO IMPLEMENT NEW LAW FOR CLASSES OF 2025 + 2026** above)
2. How do we define the CD? (How will students show that they have met the CD requirement?)
3. What is the longer term vision around the Portrait of a Graduate and how does that fit into the graduation requirements and the CD?

Conversation around the idea of choice continued. Several members of the team acknowledged that though it may be good to have a choice, but noted the importance of being put in a "novel" situation to demonstrate competency.

Is it possible to consider the CD to be like a triangle so that there are 3 areas that play into it?

The team acknowledged that since students are still taking the MCAS this could be one of the measures along with common assessments such as the Expo, and then course grades.

Andy Wulf acknowledged this is an interesting idea as it would give a full picture of the student.

Lisa Furlong, Tom Abrams, and Andy Wulf stated they will use tonight's conversation to generate a draft proposal that can then be used to further brainstorm with the school committee. Andy Wulf also noted he will receive feedback from the Instructional Leaders at the high school as well.