

NHS School Council

February 4, 2025

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendance Members: Renee Ames, Amber Barbere, Jeane Coffey, Stacey Gijbsbers, Declan Hocheiser, Priya Kaur, Rourke Lee, Richie Pace, Erin Seaton, Cady Seaton, Mike Testa, Andy Wulf

A) High School Updates

a) Activities and Athletics

- Sports teams heading to playoffs.
- Mock Trial team advances to regional competition at Clark University.
- Drama Fest preparing for March competition.
- Model UN Club with Tim Mahan will compete in April.

b) Pathways Program

Andy Wulf shared how the high school's program has increased pathways for students to support options for students as they develop their interests.

- [Environmental](#) (Partnership with Waste Water Treatment, ACES, GOMI)
- [Health Care/Social Assistance](#) (Partnership with Atria Assisted Living)
- [Adv Manufacturing](#) (Partnership with Munters)
- [Peterson Vocational Dual Enrollment Pathway](#)

c) School Committee - Cell Phone Policy Presentation

Andy Wulf and Mike Testa shared a summary of curricular and programmatic work that has taken place at the high school to help students regulate habits associated with cell phones and social media.

Emerson Leahy, Tyler Chorebanian, and Andy Wulf presented a similar overview to the school committee the night before.

Overview of Work Done Around Cell Phones + Conversation

- High School continues its ban on cell phone use during instructional time
- Juniors and seniors engaged in book studies in the fall in which they reflected on their own behaviors as it relates to using cell phones and accessing social media.
- Many students developed their own strategies to limit their use of cell phones and social media. Andy Wulf reiterated Emerson's story of journaling before bed instead of scrolling on her cell phone.
- Katie Greer (attorney with extensive work on social media legal issues) spent a full day at NHS and worked with juniors in small groups.
- January 28 assemblies, upperclassmen shared their stories with underclassmen around limiting their use of cell phones and social media.
- Spring 2025: Dialogue Coaches: Lynne Cote & Chris Shulga from the Nock will work with the high school and District administration to run an intergenerational dialogue around youth use of smartphones. Andy Wulf explained how the high school used an international dialogue in 2019 to help move forward with its decision on class rank and the impact of valedictorian and salutatorian.
- Andy Wulf and Mike Testa shared outside of the cell phones, the school's IT team has been working to determine restrictions to the wifi and methods to limit disruptive (gaming) apps that students have access to on their iPads. To accomplish this there will be a specified network that students will use so that teachers can still make use of apps they use for instructional purposes. This will be in place after the February vacation.
- Students noted that as the school explores restrictions, it should consider that upperclassmen are technically adults. They stated that after high school, restrictions will not exist so there should be some flexibility that is afforded to upperclassmen as they need to be in a position to manage their cell phone behaviors. Additionally, the students spoke that they do comply with the current expectations of placing phones in the holders despite it seeming juvenile. They stated that some teachers recognize this and just note to the upperclassmen to keep their phones away. The students further expressed that the phones from what they see have not been a problem in the classroom whether in holders or not.
- Mr. Wulf mentioned that for right now the schools cell phone ban will continue to be during instructional time. He stated, the intergenerational dialogue will be important for us to engage the community around an issue that goes beyond the walls of Newburyport High School.

B) Policy Discussion

a) Competency Determination ([Draft Policy](#))

- Andy Wulf explained the School Committee's Curriculum Subcommittee met and reviewed the feedback on the language for Newburyport's Competency Determination. Subcommittee members noted the importance of having the policy focus on the courses in the MCAS tested subjects as noted in the new law.
- The council read through the draft policy and discussed language in the draft and recommended clarification on the statement, "must successfully complete coursework . . ." The councils asked for this to be more explicit about passing the course with a minimal passing grade (65%) as outlined in the student handbook.

b) [Attendance Policy - Changes to Consider](#)

- Andy Wulf and Mike Testa shared administration's recommendation on changes to the attendance policy. The objective is to streamline the policy for all stakeholders; parents, students, and teachers.
- Andy Wulf noted the time and asked the council members to review the policy for a discussion at the March meeting.