



## Curriculum & Professional Practices

Avon Board of Education  
34 Simsbury Road  
Avon, Connecticut

### Mission Statement

*Our mission is to inspire in each student a joy and passion for learning and a commitment to excellence, personal integrity, and social responsibility.*

---

---

Tuesday, December 4, 2018, 6:00 pm

Avon Board of Education Offices, Meeting Rm 1

---

---

## Minutes

### Attendance

**Members Present:** Jackie Blea, Committee Chair; Debra Chute; Jeffrey S. Fleischman; Bogdan Oprica

**Member(s) Absent:**

**Administration Present:** Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent; Tiffany Fox, Pupil Services Supervisor; Noam Sturm, Roaring Brook School Principal; Dr. Kim Mearman, Director of Pupil Services

**Others Present:** Shirley Moy, Board Clerk

I. Call to Order

*The meeting was called to order by Chair Blea at 6:01 pm.*

II. Approval of September 20, 2018 Minutes

*Jeffrey S. Fleischman moved, Deb Chute seconded, to approve the Sept. 20, 2018 Curriculum & Professional Practices minutes as presented.  
The motion carried 4-0-0.*

III. Communications from the Public

There was no communication from the public.

IV. PreK Program Changes

Dr. Rusack, Assistant Superintendent explained the history of the PreK program and the possible re-envisioning of the full day 4 year old and half day 3 year old program. Being that the PreK program is held at Roaring Brook School, Mr. Sturm, the principal of the school and the Supervisor of Pupil Services, who oversees the program, Tiffany Fox, gave a short overview of the status of the program. Mr. Sturm shared this mutual commitment that Avon has to early childhood education. Research shows investments in early childhood education reap long term benefits; \$1 invested in strong early childhood programs returns \$7 in future revenue and public savings. With high quality education, at-risk children are less likely to

drop out of school, less likely to become a teen parent, more likely to attend college and less likely to be placed in special education. At the early years the brain's ability to change in response to experiences is the highest with peaks at higher cognitive function, language development and sensory pathways.

Ms. Fox explained the PreK program currently breaks the students down by age; whereas the planned multi-age classroom allows for the many benefits of peer modeling between the ages, allowing young children to engage in more interactive and complex types of play with older children. In addition to enhancing the school day for children it will also expand the learning opportunities by providing a full day program for all the children in preschool. Currently the program consists of 2 half days for 3 yr olds and 3 full days for 4 yr olds with roughly 60 students. Mr. Sturm and Ms. Fox feel a full day program for both 3 and 4 year olds, with multi-age classrooms, is the next step of the program.

The committee asked if there would be an impact to staff, to which Mr. Sturm stated that there would only be a slight increase in class size and no increase to the budget and he did not see the need for additional staff. Mr. Sturm shared that one of the many benefits is the opportunity to provide approximately a dozen young Open Choice students with an early education program. Dr. Mearman included that the District is obligated to provide early intervention for students needing special service beginning at 3 years old.

A discussion was held regarding the half day vs. the full day implications for parents and children. Ms. Fox explained that parents seem very interested in the PreK program which has a lengthy waitlist; parents seem to appreciate the full day program. Mr. Sturm explained that having a full day program does not mean more curriculum in the day but elongating the day to allow extra hours to teach the current curriculum. Mr. Sturm also explained the benefits of having teachers loop with the students. Multi- age classrooms provide opportunities for students to “lead” and “model.”

The Committee asked for details regarding the curriculum with a merged class room setting and how to ensure the skill set is reached with different development levels, to which Ms. Fox and Mr. Sturm stated that the curriculum was created with levels of development and give the opportunity to tailor the curriculum to student interests and looks at the continuum of growth. Kindergarten teachers sat on the committee when the curriculum for Prk3-and 4 was being developed.

Dr. Rusack explained that the new model for the program will be implemented in the Fall 2019. The program will accommodate approximately 60 students with roughly forty 4 year olds and twenty 3 year olds. It was also explained that there is no fee charged for students with special needs or Open Choice students; peers pay tuition with a projected increased tuition for the Fall to compensate for the full day program. The full day program will be increased to \$5,566 for the full year, compared to this year's tuition of \$2,700 for a half day program. Dr. Rusack explained the Board will not need to vote on the new program model but the presentation may be brought to the Board for their information.

#### V. Update on Student Services

##### Update on Reference Page

Dr. Mearman shared the letter which will be sent to families and the community. The Frequently Asked Questions was comprised of questions Dr. Mearman had received in the past. The Committee was appreciative of the information but asked that phone

numbers be included. Dr. Mearman explained the FAQ and resource pages will help provide parents with the various supports the school and community provides.

The Committee questioned if it would be helpful to have one point of reference at each school to which Dr. Mearman replied that the point of references of whom to contact depended on the matter of concern and rather than having one point of reference to triage issues it was felt more effective to equip all staff members with the knowledge of how to direct student to the right connections.

Dr. Mearman also provided a list differentiating the roles and responsibilities of the school counselor, school psychologist, and social worker. The Committee asked how these staff members are introduced to the students with an issue of students not knowing who the staff members are and perhaps weave them into the curriculum to which Dr. Rusack explained it is incorporated in the wellness curriculum. School counselors all introduce the students to the various staff members and their roles. Dr. Rusack added that this issue is being revisited at CPDC.

Dr. Mearman reminded the Committee that the School Psychologist and Social Worker are shared between the two elementary schools which create some limitations. The approx. case load of each counselor in the upper grades is approximately 225-250 which is in the profession norm.

It was stressed by the Committee the importance of getting this information out to parents and swiftly communicate to the students as to whom they can go to with any issues. It is extremely important that each student has an adult connection in the schools. Dr. Mearman responded that the letter and corresponding information would be sent out by the end of the week. The Committee would also like the information on the website.

A discussion was held in regards to equipping staff on understanding early warning signs of students in crisis. Students at AHS have also expressed to the high school principal an interest in spearheading a suicide intervention program.

The Committee expressed their appreciation for the work done to help communicate to parents and students the resources available within the District

VI. Communication from Board Members

There was no additional communication from Board members.

VII. Adjournment

***Debra Chute moved, Bogdan Oprica seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 pm.  
The motion carried 4-0-0.***

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jackie Blea, Curriculum & Professional Practices Chair

*Jackie Blea*

December 10, 2018

*Minutes are approved at the next Curriculum & Professional Practices meeting, and any corrections to the minutes, if needed, will be made at that time.*

