



## 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.*

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Tuesday, March 5, 2019, 6:00 pm

Avon Board of Education Offices, Meeting Rm 1

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## Minutes

### Attendance

**Members Present:** Jackie Blea, Committee Chair; Debra Chute; Bogdan Oprica

**Member(s) Absent:** Jeffrey S. Fleischman

**Administration Present:** Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent; Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Kim Mearman, Director of Pupil Services

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

- I. Call to Order  
*The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Blea at 6:02 pm.*
- II. Approval of December 4, 2018 Minutes  
*Deb Chute moved, Bogdan Oprica seconded, to approve the Dec. 4, 2018 Curriculum & Professional Practices minutes as presented.*  
*The motion carried 3-0-0.*
- III. Communications from the Public  
Shaun George, an Avon parent, spoke with the committee on partnering with the District to address the needs of mental health in Avon including 211. According to 211 counts.org, the greatest need in Avon in the past 365 days is mental health and addictions which made up to 41.2% of the calls, for a total of 189 calls. 82% of those calls were for crisis or suicide intervention with 78.1% from people age 18 or under. Ms. George and others in the community meet regularly on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Avon Public Library to help support those facing mental health issues and to address the mental health needs within the Avon community.
- IV. Avon High School Course Proposal Recommendations  
Dr. Nestler-Rusack reviewed with the community the high school courses being proposed which includes Mandarin Chinese V. The curriculum is from the Chinese Institute and is needed to advance the course for the students currently taking Mandarin Chinese. There are

also two elective, semester courses for the Social Studies Dept., Religious Studies and Classical Studies. Students can contract up to honors level in the courses and may be impacted by the enrollment of the class. Courses with the highest enrollment will take precedence and/or alternate by semester or school year. These courses will start in the 20-21 school year.

V. Primary Instructional Materials for Review

Dr. Nestler-Rusack introduced the two books that she is requesting to begin the review process for implementation into the core curriculum. The Giver, which was used in smaller groups, will be incorporated into grade 7 and Entrepreneurship to be used in a new course in its second year. Now that the course has proven to be in demand with the students, a textbook is being proposed.

***Jackie Blea moved, Deb Chute seconded, to start the 30 day review process of the Primary Instructional Material – The Giver and Entrepreneurship.***

***The motion carried 3-0-0.***

***Jackie Blea moved, Deb Chute seconded, to amend the agenda and move the Social Emotional Education and Mental Health Awareness Update up.***

***The motion carried 3-0-0.***

VI. Discussion Regarding the Committee's Roles/Responsibilities

The Superintendent reviewed the development of the Committee as well as the charge according to Bylaw 9132. A discussion was had on what the Committee should be concentrating on and how to fulfill the charge put before them (how the work gets done). The law says that a Board of Education must have a district committee for curriculum and it is important for the Board to understand the curriculum. The Board should defer to the committees to do the legwork. Conversations which gives direction of the work should be had at the committee level and other Board members can be invited to attend. It is the committee's responsibility to then inform the full Board of suggested changes without having to repeat presentations that were presented on the committee level. School climate and culture was also discussed. Dr. Carnemolla explained that culture is long and over time, whereas the climate is day to day and subtly changing. The Committee should talk about the issues together, the District implements and brings back what has been done to review with the Committee. The Superintendent will take another look at the wording of the Committee's charge and bring it back to the Committee for discussion and then brought to the Policy Committee if change is needed.

VII. Social Emotional Education and Mental Health Awareness Update

Dr. Carnemolla began the discussion with a review of the goals of the Board and the District by sharing the Blueprint for Excellence. Focus Area 1 speaks on Culture with the first goal establishing and maintain a climate, built on relational connections, that supports all students, academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. Sharing the letter with the listing of resources was an action step towards this goal. Just as with other aspects of the district, the social and emotional piece is asked "What are we doing well; what might we be able to improve and what does that look like moving forward?"

Dr. Mearman reviewed the work of the Student Assistant Team and explained the work done on a matrix that captures a lot of the work being done in the District and systemizes what is already in place. The school counseling curriculum is also in review. Functional Behavior Assessments is used for intervention plans for students who might need more intervention supports. Social emotion development is looked at as a skill development, the same as

academic development. Social thinking curriculum is being used by many of the district's social workers and school psychologists which is curriculum written specifically for development around social problem solving, example - color coded zones help students have a communication tool to address what they're feeling. Collaborative Proactive Solutions is another curriculum being used. Peer groups are also run which include Lunch Bunch; Speech and Language groups to help students develop the language tools to communicate; and Life Skills Group.

Superintendent Carnemolla explained the use of an innovative tool called Gaggle. Gaggle is an online alert system that scans the student drives (documents, emails, pictures) looking for key words that would indicate violence, self-harm, abuse, etc. An immediate notification is then sent to the principal, assistant principal and depending on the level, other district administrators. The Superintendent informed the Committee that there is a layer that separates the administrators from looking themselves at student's documents, as this is done by Gaggle. The Committee asked if students are aware of this to which the superintendent confirmed that the students in the upper grades are aware, whereas students in lower grades (beginning grade 4) may not.

Anonymous Alerts is another program the District will be utilizing according to the Superintendent. Anonymous Alerts is an online program that works similarly to Gaggle but allows students or adults to report situations of concerns and will be launched by the end of the school year. Students will be educated on how to use this program. Some alerts will go directly to the police department. Reporters can choose to remain anonymous or disclose their identity.

Dr. Mearman added that when there is a report of an issue, there is a standardized process to conduct a risk assessment through the school counselors, school psychologist and social workers. Emergency services are accessed through 211 if needed. Sometimes families find they personally get quicker help when 211 is utilized. It should be seen as a positive when 211 numbers are going up as it means people are accessing the resource to find the help they need.

The District insurance company will be offering to staff on March 15 a professional development session on Mental Health Early Warning Signs (suicide, depression and other concerns). De-escalation strategies will be offered through the district as well.

A short-term workgroup will be created to reflect on the social emotional learning framework, to look at current practices, what is the vertical alignment, what is the philosophical alignment, where are we at and where do we want to go. The framework will then be used to develop a strategic plan for APS. Meetings will be from March to June and consist of representatives from PK to high school, teachers, related services personnel, paraprofessionals, administrators, Central Office personnel and support staff.

The Committee thanked the Superintendent and administrators for hearing the Board's concerns and desires about addressing the whole child. The Committee was excited to hear about the use of the new technology that is being implemented and asked that it be shown to the entire Board at a future meeting. Committee Chair Blea did request that the District look at social media and be deliberate and intentional about the instruction around that. Dr. Nestler-Rusack replied that through the Library Media review, the issue is being addressed and they have mapped out a digital citizenship continuum, which will overlay into all the

classroom. It was also asked that additional efforts be made to communicate the resources available to students, including 211. The Committee also asked if there were other districts or references to compare what Avon is doing to which Dr. Mearman said that it is planned for the workgroup to look at these best practices.

Dr. Mearman reminded the Committee that 211 is not the same as calling 911. It is intentionally designed to be less than 911, more intermediate help. The numbers help the District acknowledge the needs of the community.

VIII. Communication from Board Members

Bogdan Oprica shared his concerns that students are given the opportunity and freedom to express their opinions and taught to be accepting of all points of view and open minded. Drs. Carnemolla and Nestler-Rusack informed the Committee that outside facilitators have already been arranged to do some professional development to address these areas with small groups of high school faculty. Culturally responsive literature and dialogue is also planned to be presented with faculty on March 15<sup>th</sup>. This topic will be a future agenda item at C&PP.

IX. Adjournment

***Debra Chute moved, Bogdan Oprica seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 pm.  
The motion carried 3-0-0.***

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jackie Blea, Curriculum & Professional Practices Chair  
*Jackie Blea, March 13, 2019*

Minutes respectfully received by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary  
*Jeffrey S. Fleischman, March 13, 2019*