



**TOWN OF ROCKY HILL
CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES/MOTIONS**

In order to comply with Connecticut General Statutes regarding minutes of meetings, the following will be used to record information during all public meetings that take place. An original must be submitted to the Town Clerk of Rocky Hill within 48 hours of the meeting being adjourned. Motions should be complete, showing the maker and second of the motion as well as how each member voted. Unanimous votes may be listed as unanimous.

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| NAME OF PUBLIC BOARD OR COMMISSION | Board of Education Curriculum Committee |
| DATE MEETING AGENDA POSTED | December 14, 2009 |
| LOCATION | Training/Conference Room |
| DATE OF MEETING | December 17, 2009 |
| TIME MEETING STARTED | 5:00 p.m. |
| PERSON PREPARING MEETING MINUTES | Jo-Anne Booth, Recording Secretary |
| VERBATIM NOTES TAKEN | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| AUDIO, VIDEO OR LIVE TRANSMISSION OF MEETING | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

MEMBERS PRESENT AT MEETING

| | |
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| 1. Edward (Alex) Silva, Chairman | 2. Frank Morse |
| 3. Rene (Skip) Rivard | 4. William MacDonald, Ex-Officio Member (Chairman of Bd. of Ed.) |
| 5. Also present: Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Villar | 6. Assistant Superintendent Marian Hourigan |
| 7. Mrs. Pentland (Resident of Rocky Hill) | 8. |

NUMBER REQUIRED FOR QUORUM 2 QUORUM PRESENT Yes No

TEXT MOTIONS AND RESULTS VOTES

1st MOTION Passed Failed Tabled

Moved by Frank Morse, seconded by Rene (Skip) Rivard, to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

LINK TO WORKING NOTES (will be attached if available)

ACTION

CORRECTION(S) (will be attached if available)

TIME MEETING ADJOURNED: 6:15 p.m. .

TIME DELIVERED TO TOWN CLERK: .

Town of Rocky Hill
Board of Education
Curriculum Committee Meeting Working Notes
December 17, 2009

A Curriculum Committee meeting of the Rocky Hill Board of Education was held on Thursday, December 17, 2009 in the training /conference room. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. Present were: Chairman Edward (Alex) Silva, Frank Morse, Rene (Skip) Rivard and William MacDonald (Ex-Officio Member) (Chairman of Bd. of Ed). Also present was Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Villar, Assistant Superintendent Marian Hourigan and Mrs. Pentland (Resident of Rocky Hill).

1. **Review of District Curriculum Model**
2. **Review/Discussion of High School Graduation Requirements and Programs of Studies**

Superintendent Dr. Villar said this would be a quick review for some of them of the curriculum philosophy that they have been implementing mixed with what he hopes is setting a direction in the analysis of the high school program of studies and course offerings. He believes this is the beginning of an important dialogue for the direction of this district and the high school in its relationship with exterior demands (i.e. graduation requirements that may be coming from the state) and the budget.

Superintendent Dr. Villar gave a PowerPoint presentation in which the framework was looked at quickly. The theory of action they are working under is that they want to establish a curriculum in which they ensure that all students have access to a very similar educational experience regardless of which school they attend or which teachers they have. Curriculum is often paid the least attention in, in public education and this is ironic because it is the core of their business.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said curriculum is a promise among teachers. There are guaranteed experiences for kindergarten, first grade, second grade and third grade because theoretically these four years culminate in a good experience on the CMT when it is first taken in third grade. This is assuming that each grade level teaches what has been written for a curriculum in a manner that is successful but often there is a break in the chain so there are inconsistencies in the instruction and the result is less guaranteed. He explained how this can be countered. Teachers are responsible for teaching, not coverage and making sure children are learning.

Superintendent Dr. Villar is trying to eliminate independent contractors in curriculum. They are trying to move to a model where teachers work collaboratively to write the curriculum and engage in an agreement so that what is written is what is going to be followed. This will be monitored as a district. Mr. Morse asked if teachers have started to be talked to about this. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this has been written already at the elementary and middle level. They have started this year at the high school level.

Mr. Rivard said teachers have a syllabus. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this would be called a syllabus and historically they might have a curricular content. Mr. Rivard asked what happens when they have different levels of students and the teachers can't get through the curriculum completely or at the same speed. Superintendent Dr. Villar said what has to be identified first is what it is about a certain subject that everyone is supposed to learn about it. They need to know what the foundational, non-negotiable piece content is in a subject. This must be in the curriculum for the lowest level. This can then be expanded upon because they go up in levels. Mr. Rivard asked if there are anticipated different outcomes for the different levels. Superintendent Dr. Villar said yes. He has had experience in a previous district in analyzing courses in their relationship to students' success on CAPT tests. It is critical to have a group of quality educators who write the curriculum. Mr. Rivard asked if the outline for Grade Two would be written by one person and then distributed or if this would be team written. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this has to be team written and then peer reviewed which is a huge part.

Mr. MacDonald asked how they tie in the students who graduate from Rocky Hill High School. A vast majority of them are unprepared for math and other subjects in college. He asked where they failed them as a district in not giving them the tools to immediately jump into college math for example. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this is a statewide and maybe national question. He thinks they need to work collaboratively with the colleges to establish what the content is that the students are not getting and they need to rewrite their curriculum to ensure this is there. They need to find out how to get students to a certain level rather than drop the bar.

Chairman Silva didn't believe that he was required to take a math course in his senior year of high school and he said the last time he took a math course was probably in the second semester of his sophomore year. He explained how he would have been jumping into college not having had algebra for that amount of time.

Mrs. Pentland asked Superintendent Dr. Villar if he had any statistics yet on *Trailblazers* and if any of the students who have taken this are in high school yet. Superintendent Dr. Villar said *Trailblazers* has been very successful but there is a disconnect between that style of instruction and the instruction the students engage in, in secondary schools. The middle school is working hard in writing their curriculum so this gap can be bridged. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said this group of students hasn't hit the high school yet.

Superintendent Dr. Villar thinks this district should be ahead of the curve and not be reactionary to the state. He had a disagreement with the Commissioner at a recent meeting with regards to the "Race to the Top" funds and the lack of these for Rocky Hill. Superintendent Dr. Villar said his point to the Commissioner was that spotlight school systems have to be taken. Their work they are doing has to be promoted so that other people can work off of this and model it if they want to bridge the achievement gap to move Connecticut forward. He said Rocky Hill is trying to align its assessments with the state's.

Mr. Rivard asked who develops the CMTs. Superintendent Dr. Villar believes it is McGraw-Hill now. Mr. Rivard asked if this is straight scores or a psychometric evaluation. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this is psychometric. He said they have a lot of new elementary assessments this year and he explained more about these.

Superintendent Dr. Villar showed an example of software that is used to write the curriculum. This is an online database. Mr. MacDonald asked if the teachers use this software. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they are just beginning to. Mr. MacDonald asked Superintendent Dr. Villar how receptive his initial conversations have been with regards to this with the high school math teachers who have taught math for twenty years. Superintendent Dr. Villar explained what happened the other day at a meeting they had with the math teachers and a consultant who is working with them. He thinks this will be successful in time. Mr. Rivard asked if they use word questions to do this. Superintendent Dr. Villar said that it takes someone who really knows math to write a really good curriculum unit. Superintendent Dr. Villar referred to *Trailblazers* and he said this district's people can't tell them that this doesn't work. Mrs. Pentland said her daughter's CMT scores have gone up.

Mr. Rivard referred to where it stated that students are encouraged to use PowerPoint and excel. He said this will play off of other curriculum as well. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said they want this integration. Mrs. Pentland asked if there could be a chemistry teacher and a history teacher working on a similar concept. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this approach works well at the middle level but it is more difficult at the high school level. There have been efforts to make ninth grade teams at the high school.

Superintendent Dr. Villar spoke about STEM which stands for Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics. This is a focus at the state level as well as nationally. He passed out a copy to everyone of the Connecticut's Plan for Secondary School Reform. A couple of years ago, the State Reform Plan died in the legislature. The Commissioner is trying to tie this plan into the "Race to the Top". Superintendent Dr. Villar said this is a good plan. Chairman Silva asked if there is still legislative action that needs to occur in order for implementation to happen. Superintendent Dr. Villar said the Commissioner was very optimistic the other day and feels that some of the legislation issues are not as big of a factor. Superintendent Dr. Villar thinks there are ways in their current budget that if they were to make changes in allocations then they could start moving this way with no major cost change. He thinks their current staffing level could support this although course offerings would be changed. The big thing would be the facilities piece.

Mrs. Pentland referred to STEM which is in the high school and she asked about having this started in the elementary and middle schools. Superintendent Dr. Villar said the mathematics curriculum has been bolstered quite well at the elementary level and fixed in the middle. For this to be successful, this is a foundation requirement. Some work will have to be done in science at the elementary level and technology is another piece. They are just starting to get the infrastructure up to where it is dependable and they need to do a much better job in integrating instruction in technology.

Mr. Rivard understands about CAPT and how this does an overall assessment of the program with this district's students. He mentioned how he was doing advising the last few days and how they have had to introduce remedial courses to the remedial courses. He asked how this district can individualize this so that when a student gets into their junior and senior year, they don't end up taking one and a half years of non-credit courses before they get any credits in college. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they know that the eighth grade CMT scores have a strong correlation with tenth grade CAPT tests. They have scheduled students in the high school into courses that are focused in order to try to help them in algebra and in reading based on their eighth grade scores. There are about fourteen students in the math class. Mr. Rivard asked if something is not counted towards graduation if it is at a remedial level. Superintendent Dr. Villar explained that there is a double period math class where students are only getting credit for one period of this. He explained that a favor is being done for these students and graduating with a diploma but not having skills is not a favor. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said there is more of an inquiry base for the second course and they are trying to get to the students by using computer technology. They are trying to give these students a double dose.

Mr. Rivard asked Superintendent Dr. Villar if he has included community college professors in conversations yet. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they haven't at this point. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said they do on the Perkins Advisory. Mr. Rivard said it is so frustrating and he explained that there are students entering his class (at Middlesex Community College) who can't do arithmetic.

Superintendent Dr. Villar thinks global awareness, world language and technology are important areas for them to consider as they are looking at curriculum. He has started an analysis of the program of studies. He is suggesting they use the 21st century lens to talk about if programs are necessary in moving forward. He showed everyone what this district's current graduation requirements are. There are a lot of prerequisites for courses. This district's graduation requirements are twenty-two credits now and the state is proposing twenty-five credits. Mr. Rivard asked if there are any mandates of minimum or maximum amounts of credits from the state. Superintendent Dr. Villar thinks the minimum amount is twenty credits and he is not aware of any maximum amount. Twenty-four credits is the highest amount he has ever seen.

Superintendent Dr. Villar referred to what Chairman Silva had pointed out earlier about how a lot is meaningless to students in their senior year. Mr. MacDonald said the seniors get their first quarter grades and that is what goes to all of the colleges. Everything is irrelevant beyond this unless a student fails. Superintendent Dr. Villar said there are students who really can't be challenged in math anymore and this would be beyond the typical high school faculty. He mentioned about students hooking up with a community college during the day, going there and getting credit.

Chairman Silva referred to the four electives that are required and he asked if a student will get credit for doing community service as an elective. Mr. MacDonald said there is no credit or no requirement for community service. Chairman Silva said he received

credit for being on the Rocky Hill Fire Department. Mr. MacDonald said maybe that was labeled as an independent study. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said maybe that was an internship.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said he is looking to get the help of this Committee to start setting a direction. High schools haven't changed at all in eighty years but the world has changed and job demands, etc. have changed. Mr. MacDonald asked Superintendent Dr. Villar what he is looking for from this Committee. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they have to figure out what role electives are going to play. They have to look at things that are going to impact them right away: facilities issues and the budget. Both of these are huge issues that face the district and the high school curriculum impacts both of these. He is proposing to bring to them the schedule with an analysis of the FTEs, the best cost estimates, course offerings as well as enrollment and they can tackle each one. Mr. Rivard said they might possibly be looking at situations with the bargaining units and certifications too. Superintendent Dr. Villar said if their focus shifts and graduation requirements change where there will be fewer art classes, etc. then it could impact the FTE shift. Certification could impact this too. He said he doesn't look at the situation through the lens of personality/employment but he looks at what the FTE does for the district and for the students.

Superintendent Dr. Villar is going to bring to the full Board of Education the recommendation of eliminating the computer essentials graduation requirement immediately and replacing this with an equivalent of any course in which students use technology in a meaningful way. Mr. MacDonald asked Superintendent Dr. Villar what he needs from them. Superintendent Dr. Villar said he would need a consensus to move forward. Mr. MacDonald asked if they are going to move this forward. Mr. Morse thinks this Committee will have to discuss what classes will count towards this. Mr. MacDonald imagines there are multiple classes in the high school. Superintendent Dr. Villar suggested that a document be created with regards to eliminating this and replacing it with certain possible options. This can be brought to the Board of Education for a first reading and second reading.

Mr. Rivard asked if there was any type of curriculum share agreement. He gave an example of students going to Vinyl Tech for auto tech if this district gives this up. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said transportation costs would have to be paid for, for this. Superintendent Dr. Villar said Connecticut has a liberal school choice program now. Students can choose to apply to any of these magnet schools with no cost to their family. He said they have to consider what the district's core mission is and it can't be to offer everything to everybody.

Mr. MacDonald referred to computer essentials and he said he would be in favor of allowing a student to test out of that. He doesn't think they should get credit for this though. Mrs. Pentland asked if the students are getting tested on this in some of their core classes. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this is through the schoolwide rubrics. The skills are trying to be integrated meaningfully into instruction.

Mr. MacDonald told Assistant Superintendent Hourigan that maybe she can look at what courses would fulfill the key competencies they are trying to get out of this and he asked her if there would be an easy way of developing some testing process to let someone test out of having to take other classes. Mr. Rivard asked if they have any credit by exam. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they don't. Mr. Rivard asked if this is something that is a good concept or a bad concept with the levels they deal with. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this depends on who is talked to. A brief discussion took place about this.

Mr. MacDonald said there truly are some schools that are best practice and they are doing some really good things (i.e. Avon and Farmington, etc.). He said maybe they can get some things from them as well and they shouldn't have to reinvent anything.

Mrs. Pentland referred to the computer essentials and she told them they should take the initiative and start with the STEM elective as a requirement for graduation. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this is a great idea.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said there are scheduling problems that exist at the high school because of the number of different semester electives that exist in the school instead of year long courses. They also need to look at the eight period schedule because it is ridiculous how many students are in study hall.

Mr. MacDonald referred to the Town of Berlin and its physical education and health requirements. He asked if credit is provided to students who play varsity sports. To him, there is a lot more benefit if someone cheerleads, etc. compared to someone swimming or throwing a Frisbee around. Mrs. Pentland mentioned that her daughter gets credit for being a color guard in the band. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said this is the only course at the high school where credit is granted for dance because this is being called dance.

Mr. Rivard referred to the course descriptions in the handbook and he asked if these are listed as being social studies courses or humanities, etc. He was told they are. He said he would like to get an updated handbook and he also asked Superintendent Dr. Villar if he had a copy of the PowerPoint presentation. Superintendent Dr. Villar said he did.

Mr. MacDonald said several students have had to repeat the twelfth grade because of gym credits but he knows for a fact that some of these students were on varsity sports teams. He said they would have graduated if they had been in the color guard.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said he read the program of studies and sometimes it is compliance rather than learning that is being sought with the regulations. They need to shift their focus instead to if students know something and if they can do it.

Mrs. Pentland asked when the last time was that the Rocky Hill High School curriculum was looked at. Superintendent Dr. Villar said he was not aware of when this was last looked at in its entirety but he knew for a fact that historically there has not been a policy

of having this brought to the Board of Education. He believes that any change to the program of studies needs to be approved by the Board of Education.

Chairman Silva confirmed that eight classes of electives could be taken in order to acquire four credits because the electives are half credit classes. Superintendent Dr. Villar said students also have to take English and science, except for maybe their senior year. If the science requirement is to be expanded then one of the issues will be space because lab space has to be looked at.

Chairman Silva asked Superintendent Dr. Villar if he is targeting a credit increase with regards to going from twenty-two credits to twenty-four or twenty-five credits. Superintendent Dr. Villar thinks it would be in their best interest to look at getting to this by looking at math and science. He and Assistant Superintendent Hourigan will have to work with the high school principal on this. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said Simsbury has a three year plan with regards to getting up to twenty-five credits. Superintendent Dr. Villar said higher graduation requirements would be initiated for the incoming freshmen who are coming in.

Mr. Rivard asked what subject business education would come under. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this is a part of career and technical education. Mr. Rivard asked if this would be an elective and Superintendent Dr. Villar said yes. Mr. Rivard said family and consumer science would be an elective as well. Superintendent Dr. Villar said business and some other courses fall into a lot of different areas. Mr. Rivard asked if they can get a breakdown of this as they begin to analyze this. Superintendent Dr. Villar said the current policy sets this to the high school principal but as they do the policy revision, the Board of Education will have the policy on high school graduation requirements. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said the state has distinguished what it thinks are career and life skills. Mr. Morse said it seems like there are some overlaps.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said in working with Chairman Silva and Mr. MacDonald that they are going to have to meet frequently in the next few months to get this rolling. Chairman Silva asked Superintendent Dr. Villar if he thinks they can implement a career pathway to follow on with the curriculum changes. Superintendent Dr. Villar said absolutely. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said this is a big part of this 21st century. She referred to the student success plan that starts in the sixth grade.

Mr. Rivard thinks this would be a good time to consider graduate surveys to see how they have prepared students a year or two out. Superintendent Dr. Villar thinks this is a practice they can put in place. Mrs. Pentland said she has heard from students who are juniors and who are looking for colleges that they had wished they had known where they should have headed when they had started their high school classes. Superintendent Dr. Villar said the focus isn't so tight with regards to the career planning. They need to have a lot of courses that give a good foundational skill set and that give options. Mr. Rivard referred to an assessment that a lot of the incoming freshmen take that gives them an idea where they might be directed based on their answers. Mrs. Pentland said the Guidance

Department does this. Superintendent Dr. Villar said there are assessments at the high school level. Mr. Rivard said this is more psychometrically developed.

Mr. MacDonald asked Superintendent Dr. Villar what the next step is. Superintendent Dr. Villar mentioned again how recommendations will be prepared for the full Board of Education with regards to immediately changing the computer essentials. Mr. MacDonald asked if this would include testing out and/or checking what courses this fits into. Superintendent Dr. Villar said exactly. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they will have to schedule another meeting so that they can start to review the departments.

Mr. MacDonald asked Superintendent Dr. Villar if his overall goal is to have this done and approved by the Board of Education for the class for next year's curriculum. Superintendent Dr. Villar said that would be ambitious. Mr. MacDonald asked Superintendent Dr. Villar if his plan is to say what the "low hanging fruit" is that they can get rid of. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they are trying to get some major change initiatives off of the ground. He said if they can come up with a timeline in the next two meetings that they think is doable and they think they can have this for September then that would be great but he is worried because there is so much change. Mrs. Pentland said she would be afraid to put too much change in the high school with the NEASC visit pending. Mr. MacDonald thinks this is a positive thing. Superintendent Dr. Villar said any major change can only impact the incoming freshmen class so they have a window of time. That class would have to be notified though before they start school. It is a longer range plan for the rewriting of all of the curriculum and stages can be set up.

Mr. Rivard mentioned what had been brought up with regards to the curriculum changes having an effect on the facilities. Superintendent Dr. Villar said the areas of technology, science, music and art have to be addressed quickly.

Mr. MacDonald thought this meeting was very helpful.

Moved by Frank Morse, seconded by Rene (Skip) Rivard, to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

Respectfully submitted,

Jo-Anne Booth

Accepted by: _____ Date: _____