

**(CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES
February 2, 2016**

Attendance: Laura Schulkind, Deirdre d’Albertis, Rick Walker, Joe Phelan, Marvin Kreps; Edwin Davenport.

Independent Study Dr. Davenport met with the committee to follow up on questions raised by some parents at the most recent “Coffee with the Board” gathering, outlining for us the district’s understanding of “independent study” options in the high school. He can count on the fingers of one hand the number of students who, after consultation with our Guidance counselors and building principal, needed to complete credits for graduation with the assistance of such a plan. Otherwise, independent study is not a regular feature of the curriculum. Rather, he and his colleagues have from time to time counseled students seeking further learning opportunities to enroll in a college class at DCC or Bard. It is important to stress that students who undertake college work do not receive high school credit for those courses. They earn college credit and the course is recorded on a college transcript (which can, of course, be submitted along with the high school record as part of the college admissions application).

What about other independent learning experiences? At RHS only a few have undertaken online high school coursework with:

The Virtual High School(<http://thevhscollaborative.org/>) or AccelerateU (<http://studentmoodle.accelerateu.org/student/portal/>)

In his experience, Dr. Davenport noted, high school students often struggle to complete online courses in a timely fashion. Perhaps someday, if budget constraints allow, it would be possible to support students enrolled in such courses with a teacher whose role it would be to oversee student progress. Clearly, in the current budget climate, that is not possible. As Joe pointed out, any supervision of student learning outside the classroom is subject to provisions in the RTA contract. There is a cost reality: with our current organizational structure, it would be very difficult for any of our teachers to add such duties.

Committee members talked about the perceived importance of students taking advantage of all or most of the class periods during the school day. We recognize that parents do not want to see their children in 2 or 3 study halls. Surely that time could be used for educational purposes. Dr. Davenport clarified that although the Library may not be accessible every period to an individual student (since classes are often using the facilities), there should always be a computer and space open to those who do wish to enroll in and take a MOOC or online course. A more wide-ranging conversation developed at this point. If the Guidance Office were to formalize such alternatives to our regular Program of Study, the school may inadvertently send a message to families and students that this is somehow a normative expectation (i.e. that students MUST take online courses or heap additional work on top of already full schedules). It

is Dr. Davenport's fervent conviction that the school should not create an "arms race" mentality around student learning.

Program of Study for 2016-17 Dr. Davenport offered the group a preview of new courses being proposed for the coming academic year, including:

--addition of a full year **Intro to Theater Design** course (to replace 1 of 3 Studio Arts sections) with no pre-requisites, a course that would satisfy the NYS required Art credit

--**Addition of AP English Lit.** This course would be available to students beginning in 11th grade who are required to take English 11R. The new AP would take the place of English Honors in 11th grade. Students would also be eligible beginning in 11th grade to enroll in AP Comp. The AP option would be added to the required English 11R. In 12th grade, students would be required to take English 12 R (a course that could be waived under certain circumstances), with the option to take whichever AP English course was not selected in 11th grade.

--a **Journalism** course (in lieu of Writer's Workshop)

--a **Drama** course (covers literature and performance, would earn an English credit)

--further Math offerings, such as "**Mathematics of Finance**," to offer our students various possibilities in fulfilling the 4 year math requirement in the high school (replacing one section of Math Applications)

--a possible **Holocaust and Human Rights** course (to satisfy 12th grade social studies requirement in place of one section of Politics, Economics, Government)

--perhaps a **Local History** course

Student interest in course offerings is assessed during the one-on-one guidance meetings scheduled in the spring. Joe acknowledged the breadth represented by these possible courses and expressed his admiration for the "budget neutral" curricular planning underway in the high school. Dr. Davenport expects to have all course requests in by early May and a clearer sense of what will run, based on student interest. At that point the board will be asked to review and approve the new courses.

Review of Health Curriculum Marvin reported on his preliminary audit of our current health program across grades K-12 with regard to prevention of childhood sexual abuse, per the committee's request. He has made a comprehensive study of state regulations/ Commissioner's regulations, to determine best practices at this time. Reviewing RCSD health curriculum in this way is in keeping with major legislation under discussion in Albany: New York State Senate Bill S6182, if passed, will "enact 'Erin Merryn's law' to require provision of instruction to prevent child sexual exploitation and abuse in grades kindergarten through eight." For more details on the bill see: <http://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2011/S6182>

As Marvin pointed out, the CDC has produced analysis and tools for health curricula, with units for prevention, and Education Law is unequivocal when it comes to training school personnel as mandated reporters. Child Protection Services and the American School Counselor Association recommend that teachers and staff receive refresher training on an annual basis.

The district is in compliance with current state regulations. The health courses in the middle schools as well as in grade 9 do cover prevention of abuse. There is room, however, to discuss

expanding the curriculum. The elementary health curriculum is in need of further development and full implementation, but this will take some time to develop as there are challenges that require our attention. At this time, the curriculum is not fully aligned with state regulations.

Marvin pointed to the Personal Safety Program for children in grades K-5 offered in Dutchess County by the Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse (CPCA) as one immediate possibility for discussion (see attached documents). The Personal Safety Program does not require much time in the schedule but some processing is needed to determine its appropriateness.

Working to build connection or “vertical integration” of curriculum across K-12 is a long term goal, one that the Health and Wellness Committee would be perfectly positioned to champion. The board too has a crucial role in articulating for our community the value of protection and empowerment of children around these issues. We ask the Board to signal the importance of making time during the academic year/instructional day for such education. The Personal Safety Program merits further interest/study in the near term as it is well-funded and could be adopted in our district at no extra cost.

Members of the committee once again wish to honor the courage and integrity of our correspondent around this serious public health concern. We are committed to following through and reporting regularly on the district’s progress.

Agenda:

--CDEP planning moving forward.

Next Meeting:

February 23rd at 9:30 AM in the District Offices.

Respectfully submitted,

Deirdre d’Albertis