Concord School District
Instructional Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: November 23, 2015

Committee members present: Barbara Higgins, Chair; Jennifer Patterson, Alana Kimball, Tom Croteau

Other Board members present: Clint Cogswell

Administration: Terri Forsten, Superintendent; Donna Palley, Assistant Superintendent; Leslie Barry, Hamilton Munnell, Kelly Noel, Eric Brown; Concord High Teachers; Gene Connolly, Principal; Steve Mello, Director of Physical Education and Health; Jeff Fullam, Facilitator for the PE and Health Department

Barbara Higgins opened the meeting at 5:34 p.m. and welcomed our teachers and administrators from the high school representing our physical education and health programs.

Steve Mello opened the presentation about the high school Physical Education and Health department. Our high school offers over 13 choices for our high school students to consider.

Leslie Barry highlighted some of the new course options for our students – for example, self-defense for women. A short video was shared; this has been used to engage students in signing up for physical education classes. The video highlighted several classes including yoga, orienteering, fitness training, world games, CPR and First Aid, and self-defense.

Eric Brown highlighted a model that is shared with students; it’s a plan for lifelong fitness for our students as they learn the physics of training. Health includes two classes over the life of a high school student. Students may sign up to be a PE leader for a class that they have already taken and work as an assistant to the teacher.

Board members were impressed by the breadth of programs being offered and commented how these programs support student learning and engagement in physical education.

Kelly Noel outlined the celebrations from these student-driven courses. The health curriculum aligns with the state guidelines to support our student learning. Our staff are all trained in the self-defense program, which is very popular among students. Plymouth State University sends their undergraduate students who are studying physical education to our high school because of the breadth of programs we are offering.
There were a few questions from the Board about the physical education and health programs at the high school. Would a student have had to take a course at CHS to be part of the PE Leader program? Yes, that is the standard for the program at this time. They would be open to reviewing an application from someone who had done their studies somewhere else. What does this curriculum look like across our district, kindergarten through eighth grades? There have been some collaborative meetings across the district. There are challenges in supporting learning given some time constraints within our courses.

Tom Croteau offered his appreciation to the team who came this evening for their work to engage and support each and every student.

Superintendent Terri Forsten presented information about school district enrollments this year. She focused on overall enrollment numbers for our schools. At a future meeting she plans to present information about staff and course enrollments to the committee.

Superintendent Forsten presented a look at enrollment over the last five years. She notes a 4% decrease in enrollment between 2011 and 2015, with a 1% decrease this year from last year. Grade level sizes vary across the grades, from a low of 263 students in kindergarten to 483 in grade 9 this year.

Over the last five years, enrollment has declined 4% at the high school, 5% at the middle school, and 3% at the elementary level. Our elementary numbers have decreased from 1975 in 2011 to 1922 this fall. Our elementary school enrollment currently ranges from 335 students at Beaver Meadow to 432 at Abbot-Downing. We currently have a total of 2013 students in our elementary schools, including preschoolers.

Rundlett enrollment has decreased from 1013 students in 2011 to 960 this year. Our current 8th grade class is a bit smaller than other classes and may result in a need for fewer 9th grade teams next year. With a larger fifth grade class entering Rundlett next year, the school population is projected to again be over 1,000, close to their enrollment five years ago.

Concord High School’s enrollment this year has increased by 3% over last year. Class sizes range from 382 to 483.

Superintendent Forsten asked committee members about other enrollment information they would be interested in receiving. Members requested a report on individual class sizes at the schools, noting that this information helps them as they plan the budget, as well as to answer questions or concerns from parents or teachers.

Clint Cogswell noted that he often is asked why taxes increase when there is declining enrollment. He indicated that as student numbers have declined, there has been a corresponding reduction in staff numbers. This is because the Board’s class size guidelines have remained the same over this period of time.
Jennifer Patterson pointed out that the number of courses we offer remains aligned with the number of students and our class size guidelines, but that the work of the PE Department and others allows our students all kinds of choices in the classes they take.

Committee members praised the efforts of high school teachers who work hard to meet the needs and interests of all of our students. They note that the PE Department, like other departments at the high school, provides Concord students with exciting and varied choices in courses.

Mr. Croteau suggested that the committee consider meeting in the spring with the elementary and middle school PE staff. Ms. Patterson noted that, given the recent discussion of a new wellness policy, she’d like to hear more about health and physical education at the elementary level. Ms. Higgins would be interested in further information about how nutrition is taught.

The committee voted 4-0 to adjourn at 6:21 p.m. (moved by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Ms. Patterson).

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Higgins, Chair

Donna Palley, Recorder