

CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Office of the Superintendent of Schools  
106 Hancock Road, Peterborough, NH 03458-1197

## EQUITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

5:30 PM

### Virtual Location:

Topic: Equity Committee Meeting  
Time: Feb 23, 2021 05:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

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## Minutes

**Equity Committee Members:** Rich Cahoon, Richard Dunning, Janine Lesser, Linda Quintanilha (Chair), and Tim Theberge

**Present:** Linda Quintanilha, Dick Dunning, Janine Lesser, Rich Cahoon, Dr. Ann Forrest, Tim Cotreau, Kevin Pobst

Linda Quintanilha called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

### 5:30 Approval of December 21, 2020 Minutes

Dick Dunning moved to approve the minutes of December 21, 2020. Janine Lesser second. Unanimous.

### 5:35 Scheduling at ConVal High School

Linda Quintanilha urged that Advanced Placement Scheduling be added to the next Equity Agenda.

Dr. Ann Forrest said that the two rounds of looking at equity at the high school with social studies resulted in themes coming out around scheduling. A clear understanding of how scheduling is done at the high school does not exist.

Tim Cotreau, Director of School Counseling, was present to share how he sees scheduling happening at the high school.

Tim Cotreau said that he is doing a lot of listening to take all of the thoughts that he hears into consideration.

Tim shared a timeline of how scheduling unfolds. The process begins in the fall. Departments propose new courses; it is department driven. The courses are shepherded to the Education Committee. There was not an internal process this past fall prior to going to Ed Committee. There may be interim steps that he is unaware of.

The Program of Studies would be revised between October and December. From December to January, the Program of Studies would be reviewed and finalized by the Administrative Team.

In February, course selection presentations, followed by course requests by students through PowerSchool. This alerts administration to the level of interest in courses and how many sections might be required.

Students are met with by counselors to confirm the graduation pathway is being met. Adjustments and revisions are made as needed.

March/April - Requests are on an equal playing field and not first come first serve. If requests are absent from students it is difficult to build a schedule. Requests are reviewed.

This year, students will be asked to make their best estimate of courses for the fall. Departments will be asked to review student requests. If there are reservations with requests, teachers will reach out to students and families. Administration has been clear that the recommendation process is to provide guidance and not a barrier. If a student wants to take an academic risk, that is up to the student and family. There is a pathway to take risks.

Linda Quintanilha shared a personal experience when she was at ConVal. There are conversations that happen with families and individuals that do not reflect equity and policy.

Janine Lesser asked what Tim's experience was prior to ConVal. Tim Cotreau said that prior to ConVal, it was the opposite how ConVal schedules. If a student wanted to take an AP course, they could. They were family decisions and students would consult with the teachers to get input. There were prerequisites for certain courses, like world language courses, or if there was a companion course for another course. Creating opportunities and not barriers was the focus.

Tim Cotreau said that when the course of studies requires a teacher recommendation, some students will reach out while others will be discouraged from taking the risk.

Dick Dunning said that if there is not buy-in from staff, and students think they can be successful, and some see it as a detriment to the course. Heading in the direction of helping all students to be successful is the aim.

Rich Cahoon asked to what extent a particular class drives future level classes is a concern. If a student comes in at the foundational level, what are the odds they achieve other higher levels?

Tim Cotreau said that the master schedule has been built by hand in the past. A schedule can be input and load students. Or, parameters can be put into the system and the schedule can be built. When a Master Schedule works well, it is not uncommon to keep the manual schedule from the previous year. But, often, several years out, it no longer meets the needs of student requests.

Rich Cahoon shared his concern with students following each other through courses as a result of the trajectory of where they begin in course selections.

Tim Cotreau said that as students' progress past freshmen and sophomore year, schedules are less in lock step. It could be a symptom of block scheduling. In addition, advance courses spanning a year does a lot to block student schedules. Tim said that his concern is that we have extended courses to full year as a work around to a schedule that is problematic. Teachers feel the crunch to achieve mastery. Is block scheduling the most optimal for learning?

Discussion took place about what happens if a student withdraws from a course at certain intervals in the course. After the "add/drop" period, a "W" for withdrawal would appear on the transcript. Further discussion took place about not having a penalty should that occur.

Kevin Pobst applauded Tim Cotreau's view from the student perspective. There are staff that will insist and serve as a block from gatekeeping to an open system. Looking at the best interest of students is the way to go. Kevin added that block scheduling is not the friend of equity. It is difficult to schedule.

Rich Cahoon said that it is an equity issue to allow a student to take a risk and then drag the student through the semester. It is not fair to the teacher or other students in the class. It is okay if it does not work out and a student lands in a study hall. Rich added that the dignity of risk is the possibility of failure and dropping a course rather than dragging through.

Discussion took place about keeping accurate records that reflect what actually took place i.e. a withdrawal. If there are issues with teachers, those have to be dealt with.

Linda Quintanilha said that the accountability at ConVal tends to fall on the student and not the teacher. She said that hearing Tim Cotreau speak makes her feel as though we are moving in the right direction.

Rich Cahoon said that there is evidence to support that we do not do well with socio-economic disadvantaged students. We do well with special education students. As an example, there is no Honors Algebra I course. If you want to get on an honors track, you have to have it together by the end of seventh grade. Students who have parents that can help them navigate the system are more successful.

Janine Lesser said that we expect school districts to correct problems of socio-economic issues i.e. low income. This is why preschool is so important.

Janine Lesser exited the meeting at 6:28 p.m.

Dick Dunning said that one of the equity issues is having a block schedule with the population that we have. Meeting the needs of students is difficult.

Dr. Forrest said that there isn't a perfect schedule. You have to pick the one that works best for what you are trying to achieve. She said that we are starting to hold up the mirror. We have to identify things before they can be addressed. We are uncovering things. Reframing how people see and approach things and making sure people aren't coming in with a deficit view. Policies and structures that we have in place are important. Things move slowly but we are doing important work.

## **6:20      Next Meeting**

The next Equity Committee Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 23, 2021 which falls during the March vacation. Keep this meeting as scheduled? Reschedule the meeting? Cancel the meeting and meet on Tuesday, April 27, 2021?

Scheduling of next Equity Committee Meeting – Linda suggested meeting in March on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Linda Quintanilha spoke about the gender inequity in teaching staff between 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 9<sup>th</sup> grade. An 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher might not recommend a certain teacher for a student in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade transition is the most critical.

Kevin Pobst said that it is tough to sort out when a student or a parent chooses a certain risk; who gets penalized?

Tim Cotreau said that there is a process that exists if a student wants to take an academic risk. Parents can acknowledge the teacher reservation and take the course anyway.

Ann Forrest said that we do not have a policy that speaks about equity directly. There are sample policies out there. We are looking for a broad policy that would frame these conversations and provide a lens for those working in the system to review structure and practices.

The Program of Studies can be reviewed. It has only had slight updating. Should it come to the board for approval?

Kevin Pobst said that counselors can make a big difference when spotting when they have to be the aggressive parent to advocate for a student.

Dick Dunning said that a teacher recommendation should not be a road block to success but, it should be a consideration in course selections.

Rich Cahoon said that one of the areas is where parents make sure that their kid takes geometry before they take the SAT. We have the Algebra requirement that is new. The schedule focus on the first year is to take health and it doesn't have follow on courses. Taking geometry before walking into a high-stakes test would be valuable.

Tim Cotreau said that there are five opportunities to take math courses before taking the SAT. He said that he would be curious to look at the data to learn if it is by choice or advice in math selection. Tim said that there are units in the health and wellness required course for ninth grade students that are extremely valuable.

Tim Cotreau said that success is not about access to a course it is about mastery. The goal is not just access but mastery of geometry concepts. We have to look at how the math sequence evolved.

Did doubling the time to allow a course to run full year improve the outcomes?

### **6:30 Other**

Advanced Placement for the next Equity agenda. Teacher recommendations as well; gate keeping. Keeping Running Start opportunities for students to earn an Associate's Degree should be kept in the focus.

**Dick Dunning motioned to adjourn at 7:16 p.m. Second. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok