

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

EQUITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, September 28, 2021

5:30 PM

Location: SAU Finch Room

Minutes

Equity Committee Members: Rich Cahoon (Chair), Richard Dunning, Janine Lesser, Liz Swan, and Kevin Pobst

Rich called the meeting to order 5:32 p.m.

5:30 Approval of [June 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes](#)

Dick Dunning moved to approve the minutes of June 17, 2021. Liz Swan second. Unanimous.

5:35 Review the Equity Committee's goal related to School Counseling, as well as District's [Policy JLD - School Guidance Programs](#)

- Equity Committee Goal: District guidance/counseling program and how it functions to inform and widen opportunities not limit: How are we introducing the program of studies and selecting courses? What is the role of teacher recommendations? How are we supporting the transition from 8th to 9th grade?

Policy JLD was recently reviewed. School Counseling came in and presented two meetings ago about the recertification process they are going through.

The goal of the School Counseling Department is broader. It is about things that are taking place in counseling that have an impact. The schedule has an impact and is under review by the principal and administration.

The gatekeeping role that counselors play in determining access to courses needs to be understood.

Of concern is whether or not we have lost track of the college and career readiness and are placing more of a focus toward counseling than guidance.

It was said that Kevin Pobst's concern is that the way that the department has been organized is not optimizing post-secondary opportunities which impacts those that are more in need of this guidance.

Rather than assigning kids to counselors by last name as done at ConVal, students might be given access to counseling by area of expertise of the counselor.

Rich Cahoon said that highly selective universities would rather deal with the same person each year at a high school rather than a different one each year.

It is thought that post-secondary guidance is by student last name rather than by the development of counselors.

Ann Forrest shared concern that it would almost be like tracking students and could be seen as an equity issue. She said that she struggles with what the school counseling goal is and how much of it is based on perception or wondering. Do our perceptions match reality?

Dick Dunning said that it is important for the new staff in the counseling department understand the perception. He shared his history with transitioning middle school students to high school.

Dick further said that there is a perception that guidance is not doing all that they could for students. He added that having someone with a specific interest to help guide students in that area is valuable.

Rich Cahoon noted that in the policy, it states that “a summary report of student performance in achievement, attendance, and behavior shall be provided to the board at least once a year...” That has not been happening. The board regularly receives performance data but not attendance and behavior.

Ann Forrest said that the first step is digging into how much of a perception is reality. Determining if the perception matches practice is important.

Having a completely new staff in the department is also an opportunity.

Counselors often talk to the board about the work that they are doing, and are going to do, in the areas of social emotional learning.

Teresa Drogue spoke about how social emotional learning is intertwined in everyday learning. She said that she does hear from elementary counselors that students have an extra need for social emotional learning. They are coming back with learning delays. How does the counselor and whole school response fit in? When students have the soft skills, it is helpful for college success.

Rich Cahoon said that he has no doubt that students need more SEL coming out of remote learning but they also need the academics too. Confirmed.

Teresa spoke about *Drive to 65*, legislation enacted in 2020 that requires a number of things that are enveloped in it. Counselors can login interactions that they have with students in our student data system. Administrators have access to information but not teachers. This information can be helpful when trying to diffuse a situation. ASCA is clear that school counselors are not therapists. Services can be brought in.

The goal might be more about gathering information to see if perception matches reality. Another perception is that this district has cared a lot about the top of its class and also our special education students. If you are in the middle, you can pass through the schools unnoticed. We care that everyone is getting counseling services.

Teresa Drogue said that the perceptions being shared are inequities. If we change some of what we do, there will be some that are unhappy.

Rich Cahoon noted a decision matrix that was decided that resulted in beginning with non-controversial topics as the preference. When we talk about students having access to advance programming, we want to make sure that we are not gatekeeping. Heterogeneous grouping is not always good. Students should be narrowed on their abilities and interests.

Teressa Drogue spoke about the master scheduling process. Building a new schedule maximizes equity.

Rich Cahoon asked if meeting student interests translates into equity. If we have parents who don't care about their students schedule there is an inequity with those students whose parents that do. Students need to know when some of the offerings are for planning purposes e.g. AP classes.

Teressa said that it is important not to simply recycle a schedule but to look at student interests.

The achievement gap between socially disadvantaged students is larger than that of the State as a whole.

Dick Dunning said that CTE courses should have equal value to those going on to college. It is not a lower level course. Getting information out to parents about the potential for students to earn college credit while at ConVal through Running Start is important. Seventh and eighth grade students should have this information.

Rich Cahoon spoke about requesting that completing a form not to receive college credit through running start courses might be asked rather than completing it to earn the credit since ConVal is paying for it. Is it an opt in or opt out? Right now, it is an opt in. It is the kids who don't have the parental support that might not fill out the form.

Liz Swan asked what the advocacy level is for a student to advocate for themselves with course selection.

Teressa said that she is taking a look at how students get into the counseling office and see a counselor. She is interested in the opportunities for students to advocate for themselves. Teaching children to advocate for themselves is a focus for her. Building an atmosphere where students feel comfortable is important. Examples of change were shared.

On the perception goal is the requirement to report out. Having data to line up with the goals might include a half year check in. Counseling needs to translate the rules for attending school to students.

Rich said that the schedule and the gatekeeping is the next piece and how it factors in. In order for kids to have equitable opportunities for the same outcomes requires them to have equitable access to classes without a penalty for academic risk. It is a balancing act and the schedule is an issue. If kids are allowed to take academic risk, it requires enough time to determine if a course is a good fit. Students have up to five weeks to withdraw from a course without a "W" showing up on their transcript. Moving up or down a level would not result in a "W".

A student who has not mastered the material should fail the course.

Dick Dunning asked where the high school was with looking at block scheduling and traditional scheduling. Teressa confirmed that conversations are happening.

The history of grading and resetting a student who is failing to a grade of 50 to allow them the opportunity to succeed for the remainder of the semester was discussed. Conversations need focus on the priority standards so that kids master the course so that they can go onto the next level. It should be a reflection on how students are doing against the standards.

Making sure that the grade reflects what a student knows and is able to do is important. We are not talking about changing the grading system.

Gathering actual information to determine if perception matches reality is an action item.

Ann Forrest said that when she brought up perception, she was not thinking that a separate goal on perceptions would follow.

Rich Cahoon said that the perception to move in a social emotional direction rather than academic needs to be determined if it is real or not. If it is not, then we are done.

Gathering post ConVal education data was discussed.

Gathering data that student opportunities are declining might be valuable.

Ann Forrest said that she has heard the perception that the counseling department is more heavily focused on SEL rather than career and college ready should be investigated.

Looking at data to measure the reasons students are met with could be pulled.

The Equity Committee Goal needs to be clearly stated. The current version has questions in it.

The new goal is likely to require a greater focus on college and career ready.

Teressa spoke about "Time on Task" to track where a counselor's time is being used.

Liz Swan exited the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

The next step might be for the district to pose what the next steps might be and the report required.

Does policy JLD capture the focus of the guidance department for our community? The policy should be looked at again. What should it look like?

Teressa said that the ED300's drive her work.

Teressa Drogue exited the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

6:15 Other

None.

Meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok