

Middletown Public Schools

Middletown, Rhode Island

February 7, 2008

6:30 p.m. – Regular Meeting

MICHAEL S. PINTO CONFERENCE ROOM

PROGRAM OF STUDIES WORKSHOP

Members Present: Michael F. Crowley, Jr., Chairman

Liana F. Fenton, Vice-Chair

William Coogan

Edward K. Draper

Theresa M. Spengler

Also Present: Rosemarie K. Kraeger, Superintendent of Schools

Catherine McLeish, Business Manager

Edward Collins, Director of Facilities

The regular meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chairman Michael Crowley. Administrative staff members present were Timothy Ryan, Steven Ruscito, Janet Sheehan, Roxie DeBlois,

Colleen Larson, John McDevitt, Christopher Savastano, Laura Yentsch, and Linda Savastano. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Ruscito and the MHS Directors reported on the program of studies. Mr. Ryan visited Middletown High School approximately 15 times to survey the staff for their input on courses. He submitted a report to the Middletown High School professional learning community. Meetings were conducted by the directors and Ms. Sheehan, the leadership team reviewed feedback from different departments, which led to informal conversations that added to the report. Opportunities for staff input included:

- a. Open Doors – conversation**
- b. Mr. Ruscito visits**
- c. Director level conversations**
- d. PLC conversation**
- e. Leadership/director meetings**
- f. Informal conversation**
- g. Leadership team review**
- h. Proposal share - internal**
- i. Proposal share - public**
- j. Program anticipation**

Mr. Ryan's view was that these steps pushed thinking around

program design and course selection.

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Mr. McDevitt, Director of Science and Math, reviewed his department's courses.

- **Earth Sciences – A shrinking student population will change what is offered under this area. Courses cover everything we have on Aquidneck Island, but there is a need to streamline into one course. This change is very much supported by the teachers.**

Other suggestions included:

- **Environmental Science – Horticulture and agriculture should continue utilizing the greenhouse.**
- **AP Physics – leave as an option, maybe as VHS course**

Mr. McDevitt said that since the Physics First program was implemented, we have raised the level of Science expectations.

Ms. Janet Sheehan held many AP meetings. Results show that even students who get 2's on their exams do better in college than students who haven't taken courses at all.

Mr. McDevitt identified an area of concern in the Math Department.

Many students are lacking skills to be successful with Algebra I. There was some discussion on a pre-algebra course. However, it was decided that a summer ramp-up program would be offered.

Mr. Crowley suggested we look at the middle school math program. Mr. Ryan mentioned that was currently being done. Since we administer the NECAP test at the beginning of 8th grade, what happens in grade 8 to lead into grade 9. Mrs. Kraeger said the district will administer a new test for grades 7-9 (NWEA) that can be used to determine where students are deficient.

The math labs will give students the opportunity to test out mid-year and move on. Mrs. Fenton asked what is being done at the middle school level to identify the problems/gaps. Mrs. Spengler suggested a mandatory assignment of students, those who don't do well on NECAP would be required, and recommend they take summer math camp either in the daytime or evenings.

Mr. McDevitt suggested the possibility of combining Statistics with the Applied Math program. Four years of math is required for graduation. Regular calculus would serve more students. The Math Department would implement Calculus at this time, not AP Calculus.

Mr. Savastano presented the Physical Education/Health program.

The Health 9 course would no longer stand alone. We currently

exceed the number of minutes for Phys Ed at the high school. From a resource point of view, a recommendation for a comprehensive health package of Phys Ed/Health for one semester per year meets the state requirement.

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In Computer Science, the Visual Basic course is being changed to Java. We could offer an AP Java for the Java League, possibly as a VHS Java class taught by Mr. Savastano.

The photography curriculum needs to eventually change to a digital format. Converting the course to digital may cost more initially and we will gather information and report back for the 2009-2010 Program of Studies. Ideally, we could have an introduction course to include the darkroom, and then an advanced course allowing students to branch into digital photography.

Mr. Ryan expressed some concerns with the Music Program. He felt the band and chorus classes were undersubscribed. Discussions on these observations were to possibly offer a second chorus or band class to attract more students. We should consider this after course selections were completed this year. Mrs. Spengler asked if we could take a survey of 8th graders to see what their interests were. We could possibly add a second piano class to follow, maybe in next

year's program of studies.

Entrepreneurship, a one semester course, will introduce the stock market. Mr. Savastano would also like to introduce a Personal Finance course.

Mrs. Laura Yentsch discussed the Humanities department.

- **Goal 1 is to have a schematic connection between Social Studies and English.**
- **Goal 2 is to fill in the gap between Literature and History**

Mrs. Yentsch said the implications of these changes have a textbook cost of approximately 35-40 thousand dollars.

Mr. Crowley felt we were heading in the right direction with more rigor with the Program of Studies.

The directors are working towards embedding the Capstone into the classes. They will give an update, in written format, with the number of students who completed the capstone after March program.

Mrs. Kraeger expressed appreciation for all the hard work done to date. It has been a great job done by all.

ADJOURN FROM MEETING

MOTION: 1) Theresa Spengler, 2) Edward Draper. To adjourn from School Committee Meeting at 8:53 p.m. Unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rosemarie K. Kraeger, Clerk