

# Seymour Board of Education



## CURRICULUM and TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 13, 2016  
Seymour Middle School  
Library Media Room  
7:00 p.m.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Jim Garofolo  
Kristen Harmeling  
Yashu Putorti  
Ed Strumello

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Christine Syriac, Superintendent  
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent  
Ernie DiStasi, SMS Assistant Principal  
Bernadette Hamad, SMS Principal  
Paul Lucke, SHS Assistant Principal  
Pat Boyle, Board Clerk

### I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Christine Syriac called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance

### II. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

Mrs. Harmeling nominated Mr. Strumello to Chair this committee. There were no other nominations. Mr. Strumello is the Chairman of the Curriculum and Technology Committee.

### III. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

### IV. RECOMMENDED ACTION

A. Seymour High School

#### 1. Discussion on adopting state math curriculum for Algebra II and Geometry

Mr. Lucke stated that the Grade 8 Algebra I students as well as the high school Algebra students have been using the state curriculum. It was designed by state math teachers to align with the Common Core. It is also relevant to current events in the state. Currently the Algebra II and Geometry state curriculum is 2/3 done. The teachers at the high school have piloted some of the curriculum and like the format. Mr. Lucke would like board approval to move forward with this so the teachers have as much time as possible to prepare. Mrs. Syriac pointed out that the students will eventually have to take a state assessment and it would be helpful to use their curriculum so that our students would be better prepared. Mr. Strumello wanted to know what other towns were using the state curriculum. Mr. Lucke agreed to do a survey of surrounding towns as well as towns in our DERG to see if they are going to implement the state curriculum. There was discussion on what would happen if the rest of the curriculum was not ready for next year. Mr. Lucke felt that there was enough already completed to do at least the first semester of the state curriculum and then they would default to the current curriculum. Mr. Strumello was worried there wasn't a textbook. Mr. Lucke and Mrs. Syriac both stated that the current Algebra I curriculum does not include a textbook and it has been working. Mr. Lucke also noted that none of the Social Studies electives have textbooks. Mr. Strumello asked that the use of textbooks be included in the survey Mr. Lucke is doing. Mr. Garofolo wanted to know if they could adopt this curriculum pending state completion. Mr. Putorti stated the full board would need to approve this.

**MOTION:** (Mr. Putorti /sec., Ms. Harmeling) to recommend to the full Board the approval for Seymour High School to use the state curriculum for Algebra II and Geometry.

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Putorti

2. Health Curriculum Information

Mrs. Syriac wanted this committee to be aware that for the last few years the high school has combined the P.E. and Health curriculum. At this time they are going to be separating it back into two classes. All of our physical education/Health teachers have both certifications. The incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders will now take a .5 Health class in 10<sup>th</sup> grade as well as 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

B. Seymour Middle School

1. Discussion on World Languages

Mrs. Hamad wants to offer an Exploratory Language class to 6<sup>th</sup> graders to bring an interest in another language to both the middle school and high school. A survey was conducted and French was the most requested language other than Spanish which is already offered. The exploratory class would offer a .25 class in French and a .25 class in Spanish. Textbooks may need to be purchased for this class. The students would then be able to decide whether to continue to take French I as a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grader or to take Spanish I. Ms. Roche has both certifications and we could offer French I next year without an increase in staff using the same textbooks as the high school. A .5 teacher would need to be added for the exploratory class. There is currently a part time high school staff member that has both certifications. Mrs. Syriac says if this takes hold we may need additional staff in the future but it would be a wonderful problem to have in hopes of rejuvenating the high school French program. Mrs. Syriac asked for guidance from the committee on how many students they felt should be in a class to allow us to hold a class. Mrs. Harmeling said the AP classes typically have small numbers and we staff them. Mr. Putorti felt that some of the specialty classes should be run with smaller class sizes. Mr. Strumello felt you should have at least 10 students. Mr. Garofalo felt that as long as you had staff to run the class without skewing staffing needs, you should run the class. Mr. Strumello then wanted to know the criteria for students taking French if we should have a lot of students wanting to take it. There was a discussion on the criteria for selection. Mr. Garofolo gave a brief demonstration on the differences of translating English to French or Spanish and how difficult it was for some English speaking students. He felt that the only criteria should be the students' willingness to immerse themselves in a different language and to express themselves in a different language. Mr. Garofolo also wanted the parents and students to be aware that both programs are rigorous and one is not easier than the other. It was decided that if this becomes an issue Mrs. Syriac and Mrs. Hamad will meet to decide a fair selection process.

**MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Garofolo) to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Seymour Middle School class French 1A.

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Putorti

2. Social Studies Curriculum update

Mr. DiStasi said that after meeting with Mrs. Hamad and Mrs. Syriac the social studies department went to a Model District Workshop with the Connecticut Council for Social Studies. They have had one of the council's consultants, Steve Armstrong, come to the school to talk about the new frameworks and meet with the staff. The council then paid for all 6 of our Social Studies teachers to come in over the summer and work on aligning and revising our curriculum to meet the new frameworks. While the teachers got paid it was voluntary for them to come in over the summer and they all participated. The council is also paying for substitute teachers when our teachers are working on this curriculum as well as providing professional development. We have been picked to be a model district and our curriculum when finished will be featured on the state website for other districts to either adopt or use as a model.

Mr. Strumello stated that the middle school needs to get the word out about the success of this group of dedicated teachers. Mrs. Harmeling felt we should write a press release and put videos of the students on line with the new program. Mr. DiStasi said they would get the word out this spring when they are ready to launch. Mr. Garofolo thought we should put it on the website as a great and exciting project.

C. Elementary Schools

1. ELA writing curriculum update

Mrs. Tencza wanted the committee to be aware that we have 15 teachers, K-5, who have volunteered to develop and integrate a writing curriculum into the ELA curriculum. They have been working afterschool and doing workshops during the day. They are integrating writing in all ELA Units for Narrative, Information and Opinion writing. They have been aligning benchmarks and using rubrics to determine how and what to teach next as far as progression to make our students independent learners. They are very excited about the new curriculum.

V. **REPORTS**

A. Chairman's Report

Mr. Strumello asked about the schedule for the remainder of the year. Mrs. Syriac said typically there are two meetings a year but if the committee would like another one we can schedule it.

B. Superintendent's Report

Mrs. Syriac just wanted the committee to be aware that Mrs. Tencza would be facilitating this committee in the future.

VI. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

VII. **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Garofolo) to adjourn the meeting

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Mr. Garofolo, Mrs. Harmeling, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Putorti

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Submitted by:  
Pat Boyle