The Meeting of the Curriculum Committee was held at the Blake Building, 25 Ogden Street, West Haven. Chairman Krista Pickering called the Board meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Krista Pickering, Chairman
Mark Palmieri – 6:45
Robert J. Guthrie
Howard Horvath

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: George Monahan
M. Toni Paine
Eric Murillo - 6:35

ADMINISTRATION: Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro

Also Presents:
Curriculum Writers:
Grade 6 – World History
Karen Grether
Francine Lucibello

Grade 7- Geography
Stacy Blanco
Linda Philips
Amy Webster

Grade 8- U.S. History
Valerie Bruneau
Dina Jones
James Mastriano

Mark Consorte, Social Studies Department Head (6-12)

Krista turned meeting over to Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro

Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro: First of all I want to thank the members of the Social studies department that coming, it’s a nice sign to everyone here and in support of the work you have done over the last two years. Before we actually go over the curriculum. Mark, Why don’t you briefly, you have now been in charge for a year and half of the 6-12 program. Some of the changes you have made, some of the things you have been able to see and do as a result of having both middle schools under your wing.

Mark Consorte: Well you can ask these guys; I think things have been going well. Just the need to communicate better between Carrigan and Bailey and through the High School was obvious. Just having one person to kind of know what each person is doing, just to be there, helping out with observation. Some young teachers who were struggling with different things, checking lesson plans walking through. Being there I get a sense like this is elementary school, sixth grade. That don’t have a lot of skills. I started off being
just the guy to get things. New textbooks, which we were in dire need, maps, atlas, trying to get out professional development together. We can’t always to do that, but we have a few times. The communications we are having now, everyone is going to the Connecticut Social Studies Conference. Our next big thing will be writing we have the CAPT at the high school; they have the CMT’S in the middle schools. We are obviously looking to get higher scores at the high school. But the solution is a K-12 solution. So working with the middle schools is a start. Sarah Vinci and Valerie Bruneau recently just went to CAPT workshop; I think it’s important at our next department meeting next week. That was Neil’s idea, it makes sense they will go make and try and share some of the ideas. It will help us help them, reach some of our goals. I think it’s going well.

Amy Webster: I think he said it well we communicate more with each other. We also share ideas a lot more. That’s helps us. It is helping Mark see what the reality is of the middle schools.

Mark: definitely, I think I was taking a lot for granted, come on move faster. But the kids are still developing skills.

Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro: just take a moment and explain what the writing expectations are on the CAPT.

Mark Consorte: CAPT is a tough test, and tenth grade. Social Studies is responsible for 65 minutes, they have three articles about an issue, come to a conclusion and they have to write a letter to someone. Like a congressmen or a newspaper. They must site their sources at least once. The problem is to read three articles, sort your opinions and then write the letter in 65 minutes. We need to improve on their skills.

Toni Paine: If we went to say, Florida is that the same standard.

Mark Consorte: Each state has its own standard. In my opinion a tenth grader should be able to do this we have to get the skills up.

Francine Lucibello: New teachers are being trained in how to teach CAPT.

Howard Horvath: you’re saying if they’re going to do a lesson and they are teaching those very skills. You’re accessing how well they are teaching those skills.

Francine Lucibello: right, but one of the skills is exactly what they will be doing on the CAPT.
Valerie Bruneau: The problem is middle school teachers do not administer the CAPT test. There are a number of the middle school teachers in this room that were unaware of what is on the CAPT, where our focus should be. All the teachers at the middle school should have this training.

Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro: I think Mark said it best the real approach to getting the scores up, is a K-12 continuum. I think when we first came up with that CAPT remedial. We put too much focus on the remediation after the kids failed and number two what is the high school doing to get the tenth grade ready for the CAPT. I think we need to bring it down so that we are training the kids as they come up from elementary school, middle school on to the high school, as they try to pass the exam. I think at some point, as the generations change. The CAPT test is going to jive more with the Connecticut Mastery test. In the same or similar expectations. I maybe getting ahead of myself, but Mark if you would talk about some of the assessments you will be using as part of the curriculum

Mark Consorte: There is a whole section of them

Howard Horvath: CMT and CAPT are they going to fall under the same high stake as Math.

Mark Consorte: No, I think

Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro: Math we made the grade.

Dina Jones: the thing with social studies is it will always fall into the language arts period. It’s always comprehension and planning skills. No child left behind, it not always social studies it is the content used for comprehension. Especially when they take the CMT.

Amy Webster: Linda and I are working with our reading teachers on our team this year, to kind of help with our CMT scores. It’s basically reading a passage and summarizing what it says. Not basic reading comprehension skills. We have been kind of focusing on the skills of reading non-fiction. And communicating what it actually said. That a big challenge for kids at the middle school level. Because they are not really exposed to a lot of non-fiction reading. Just to be able to distinguish between what a piece of literature is and non-fiction writing is.

Mark Consorte: Section one
We felt it needed more activities for a young teacher coming to this could use.
Page one: Middle School Mission Statement
Page two: What do we want our kids to know before they graduate
Middle school and we came up with this.

West Haven Middle School Social Studies Department Philosophy

Adhering to the Middle School concept, the Social Studies Department aims to develop the whole child. Teachers provide accurate and interesting student-centered instruction aimed at developing academic, civic, and social skills. Academically, emphasis is placed upon reading, writing, researching, speaking, and critical thinking. Civically, emphasis placed upon problem solving, community and citizenship. Socially, emphasis is placed upon cooperation, collaboration, and responsibility.

More specifically, all Social Studies teachers are committed to developing for students the following skills:

- reading for comprehension, reading non-fiction such as text and primary documents, and building vocabulary.

- writing persuasive essays, developing expository writing skills, writing creatively using writing prompts, and writing the 5-paragraph essay. (this provides the structure for the CAPT test in High School)

Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro: Can I just ask, are there enough non-fiction books to choose from at this point. Because I know one of things we are doing for science right now is having the science department work with the reading department. To pick out some selections so they are available.

Amy Webster: When I first started Linda got junior scholar on regular bases, but because of funding. We don’t get it anymore. Social Studies is a current event subject, it is constantly, countries are changes, and government is changing. When you can give them a daily newspaper like junior scholastic, it keeps them reading and interested. They actually find it more interesting. Because the text can be dry. We choose our text because of the limited amount of words in it. We knew we could supplement for Honor students, but we knew we could raise skill levels.

- researching information, properly citing sources, using the MLA format, using technology such as the Internet, and discerning valid websites.

Mark Consorte: usually the skills the student need reading, writing, researching, working together. These are the skills they need to compete.

- developing map skills (geographical and thematic), and reading pie charts/graphs
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- giving oral presentations.
- working cooperatively.

Mark Consorte: When they get to the high school their skills will be sharpened.

Page 3 is course descriptions 6th grade is World History. This survey course makes a chronological examination of important contributions by various peoples, cultures, and societies throughout history. Reading comprehension, writing and study skills are emphasized. As a survey course, teachers will choose among the listed objectives.

7th Grade students will study Geography. This survey course examines the 5 themes of geography while studying all seven continents. Map skills and culture are emphasized. As a survey course, teachers will choose among the listed objectives.

8th Grade students will study U.S. History. This survey course makes a chronological examination of important events, people, and policies that have shaped this nation. Emphasis is placed upon reading primary documents, using technology to develop research skills, and writing persuasive essays. As a survey course, teachers will choose among the listed objectives.

It’s difficult to cover everything and do anything justice. But if you look at the big picture, not knowing what the elementary school, social studies sometime gets lost. Same thing with science. That’s changing but we can’t wait for that. Students coming in from other districts, we don’t know what they did in elementary school. So we decided to stay with 6th World History, 7th Geography and 8th U.S History. We did look at other schools around the state, but this is pretty standard. We think this fits are needs best.

Page 4- Assessments
Evaluation of student progress and achievement may consist of the following traditional assessments:
- Daily reading and writing homework assignments
- Weekly quizzes
- Chapter and unit tests
- Quarterly research papers/projects
- Midterm and final exam
- Debates & mock trials
- Daily participation in classroom discussions

Evaluations of students may also include the following alternative assessments:
- Creating an authentic newspaper featuring the issues of the day
- Analyzing and constructing political cartoons
- Maintaining a journal of a person in the news.
- Composing a mock interview with a historical or contemporary social issue.
- Participating in a scored debate, mock trial, or model United Nations session.
- Preparing a mock dialogue between two (or more) people from history or today.
- Drawing and presenting campaign posters illustrating a current candidate, political party, and party platform.

We have started a mock trial at the middle schools; we would like to get together in the spring. Ron Conlan from the high school has come over to the schools. Any new teacher coming can follow this. We will have constant assessments. So we think this curriculum is comprehensive enough and covers ideas for activities, and hopefully it will help develop the skills.

Technology

Students have complete access to the library Media Center at Bailey and Carrigan. This is especially useful when working on research papers/projects. The media center has on-line research capabilities and access to several periodicals. Most Social Studies classrooms have a computer with Internet access. Both schools have computer graphic presentations. Also, teachers use videotapes and audiotapes to supplement the curriculum.

There is never enough technology

Amy Webster: the lab tops are great when they are working

Patty Fusco: When we put wireless router in the buildings, some how it is interfering with the wireless signal from the cart. Charlie, John and Fran have to figure out how to fix this. They are right one cart for a school with 1000 kids is not enough. We need a lab.

Mark Consorte:
Next section is State of Connecticut Goals & Standards
Pages 5 through 13
There are 15 standards that the state has, 6th meets most of them, but not all of them, it’s pretty close, 7th meets all of them, 8th meets most of them. We are in line with the state standards. Now I want to bring up the 7th grade teachers first.

Grade 7- Geography

Amy Webster – I am a teacher at Bailey, this is Linda Philips from Bailey and Stacy Blanco from Carrigan, and we all worked together and were on the same page. The goal of 7th social studies is to look at 6 different units that we came up with the cover six
different regions of the world. Using geography and focusing on culture. We discuss different factors and situations that effect people lives. That’s it.

Mark Consorte: for each continent on the planet it is time, especially if you are going to skill develop as well.

Amy Webster: It does take a lot of time; with each unit we focus on a different aspect of the country. For instance with the U.S we looked mostly at the physical features. Latin American, we kind of focus on natural resources and population. Europe we did government structure, Africa the geography, Asia was culture, food, and standard of living culture.

Mark Consorte: correct me if I wrong but there is more emphasis on the history in 7th grade because they had it in the 6th more current culture.

Amy Webster: Asia, Latin America, show the kids how movement affected the language. They have great resources. Letters plays, organizing information. Incorporating the skills into the lessons.

Grade 6 – World History
Karen Grether
Francine Lucibello

My name is Karen Grether and this is Francine Lucibello we did 6th grade curriculum, basically we are covering from, we start with map skills that the in coming 6th graders need. Then we move on to the beginning of human society to the renaissance. Ancient Egypt and Ancient Nubia, India, China, Greece, Rome and Byzantine Empire, Ancient Middle East, African Civilization, Early Civilization of the Americas, The Incas and The Mayans, Medieval Europe, Renaissance Europe. Working on their critical thinking skills. Forms of government, also religion. We try to show the interaction of the people and the cultures. Area of where they are located. We are showing the area where things are going on today. They get to see what is going on, what’s important to them and their contributions. Where they started and where they are now. We don’t do every single activity but we give an assortment. A new teacher can come in and just pick up and move along.

Mark Consorte: It can be very challenging with ESL classes. Objectives are listed and the activities. To do this well you use many skills, drawing a map, graphs and time line. This takes a lot of time
Chairman Krista Pickering: How long do you take with one unit?

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Francine Lucibello: It varies on the chapter; some units take three weeks some take four to five. Sixth grade they are just beginning to learn the critical thinking skills. They need sometimes just how to learn to take notes. So, they can analyze what they read.

Chairman Krista Pickering: Do you think this will trickle down to elementary school?

Karen Grether: It's hard now, because as Mark said they don't really get social studies in elementary schools.

Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro: My goal has always been as the person in charge for the district to sit around with full time curriculum coordinators in each of the major subjects and kind of argue about what a day in the elementary school would look like from kindergarten on, unfortunately bring down to the middle school right now, we are starting to get the science into the elementary schools. The biggest challenge there is working it in. In my experience it's hit or miss, if you like teaching science you spend more time on it, if you like social studies you spend more time on social studies. It's what you have time for; you spend most of your day on language, arts, and Math. You're squeezing in what's left.

Patty Fusco: you don't have a whole lot of extra time. The only way I could teach science or social studies was I use to do themes. My reading would be science or my reading would be and spelling, writing. You have to teach them to read and write.

Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro: it's only the second year and they are already having more department meetings and trying to work more in. Shorter days build into our schedule would go along way.

Mark Consorte: I would like to see the elementary teachers teach more social studies, and they say give us some ideas.

Karen Grether: you never know where a child is coming from school to school, teacher to teacher; the kids don't always know the same things.

Howard Horvath: that's funny, but it is scary.

Karen Grether: the way would be to try and work social studies into the reading.

Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro: we would need some collaboration with Ann Valanzuolo.
Valerie Bruneau: First we had to collaborate to see what skills were necessary with the curriculum at the high school. Because 10th grade they do U.S History, we want to make sure we don’t have a whole lot of repetition, but we are filling in the blanks until they get to the high school level. That’s what we really tried to look at. To see what the curriculum at the high school emphasized on where they thought the gaps were. Then we looked at the resources available and that they were being utilized. For example the textbook on line. If you look at the objectives for the 7, most of the objective whether it’s Explorers, Revolution, Expansion to present. We try to emphasize map skills as in 7th grade. Make sure they are reinforced, essay skills. We also wanted to make sure that important events were not missed. At the High School they can opt to take some of the history half-year courses. We made sure we were aligned with the state standards. We would love to have a two year course, but we do have to fit it into one, and we have to remember that we have students coming from other districts. We also included primary documents.

Mark Consorte; any questions?

Chairman Krista Pickering: Thanked everyone for coming tonight and the hard work

Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro: Thanked everyone and congratulated everyone on a great job.

Mark Consorte: Thanked Alana Gooley for getting them all organized, also Steve Lopes when he was at Carrigan, Patty Libero, and Dr. Anthony Cordone who gave us release time without a problem.

Robert Guthrie: Mark do you plan on putting this on a cycle with the High School?

Mark Consorte: That’s sounds about right.

Assistant Superintendent Neil Cavallaro; we need a recommendation to add to the agenda, if it is past here.

Chairman Krista Pickering asked for a MOTION to add approve and add to the Social Studies Curriculum to the next Agenda. MOTION made by Robert Guthrie and SECONDED by Howard Horvath, Discussion: No Discussion, Vote passed unanimously
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Chairman Krista Pickering asked for Motion to adjourn
MOTION made Robert Guthrie and SECONDED by Howard Horvath

Meeting adjourned at 7:25 PM
Minutes subject to board approval

Respectfully submitted,
Rose McDonnell
Board Clerk