

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2024**

Present Members: Vice Chair Laura Gallagher Byrne, Timothy Lepore, and Esmeralda Martinez. Also present from the Studio, an NCTV Representative. This meeting is an in-person participation meeting in compliance with Governor Charlie Baker's statement allowing public bodies the ability to hold a meeting at a physical location that is open to the public, without requiring to provide alternative means of remote access.

Before officially commencing the meeting, Vice Chair Laura Gallagher Byrne took a moment to acknowledge the passing of Christopher Lemus. She requested that everyone pause for a moment of silence before proceeding.

The March 19, 2024, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM in the Nantucket High School LGI by Vice Chair Laura Gallagher Byrne with a motion made to approve the agenda by Timothy Lepore, seconded by Esmeralda Martinez and approved unanimously.

There was no public comment.

Superintendent's Report

In Dr. Hallett's absence, Mrs. Gallagher Byrne read her statement addressing the tragic passing of Christopher Lemus, a senior at Nantucket High School. The statement, sent to staff and families on Sunday, March 17th, outlined the crisis management plan for Monday, March 18th, the first day of school following Chris's death. Superintendent Hallett expressed the community's shock and sorrow over the news and acknowledged the pain and difficulty ahead in processing yet another loss for the school community. Despite the short timeframe since the tragedy and the loss of others from the school community in the past, it was decided to keep the school open, drawing from lessons learned in previous incidents. The decision aimed to provide students and staff with familiar routines and access to support from counselors, staff, and peers. The statement also emphasized respecting the family's privacy and grief by withholding the name of the deceased student. Superintendent Hallett expressed gratitude for the community's understanding and support of the decision, despite some students disagreeing with it. The district provided spaces for grieving, including gatherings on the baseball field and access to counselors and clinicians from Fair Winds. Support would continue throughout the week as the high school community worked through the healing process.

After several months of review and revision, the 2023-2024 Nantucket Public Schools employee handbook is prepared for review and approval. Before this year, there had been no handbook in place for nearly a decade, putting the district out of compliance with federal civil rights obligations. Dr. Deb Gatley and a team comprising teachers, administrative representatives, and our HR specialist collaborated to create the new handbook, incorporating essential district rules, procedures, and specific Nantucket Public Schools policies for employees. Once approved, the handbook will undergo annual reviews, with any necessary adjustments or revisions included for voting alongside school handbooks. Questions were invited for Dr. Gatley.

High School Program of Study - Mandy Vasil, NHS Principal

Ms. Vasil began by expressing gratitude for the community's support and assistance to the family of Christopher Lemus. She acknowledged the significant fundraising efforts and the establishment of a meal train for the family. Transitioning to the program of studies, she discussed the collaborative process involved in making changes and provided insights into the process of updating the program of studies, beginning with sharing the current program with all stakeholders, including departments, teachers, and directors. Input from everyone involved informs decisions on necessary changes or adjustments for the upcoming school year, such as adding or removing courses. She then outlined changes by department, starting with the English Department, which is offering two electives: journalism and creative writing,

alongside two AP classes: AP Literature and AP Language. In the math department, a new advanced algebra course combining honors Algebra 2 and pre-calculus is introduced, along with the revival of computer science through the Project Lead the Way program. The science department adds a third section to the Project Lead the Way pathway, focusing on honors medical interventions, and rebrands the science foundations class to conceptual physics in collaboration with the ESL Department. The department continues to offer marine science and various AP courses. Social studies maintains its offerings, while there are no significant changes, there's an important adjustment regarding the teaching of personal finance. It will now be integrated into the curriculum and taught by social studies teachers. Despite this shift, personal finance will not count as a social studies credit. Instead, it will be a general requirement for graduation, with all students mandated to earn a 0.5 credit in personal finance to graduate. This initiative places the NHS ahead of state requirements, as it is anticipated to become a statewide graduation credit for all high school students in the future. This move underscores the school's proactive approach to providing essential life skills education to its students, aligning with broader educational initiatives aimed at fostering financial literacy among young adults.

Dr. Lepore asked about the medical terminology and coding as it can lead to a high-priority job.

Ms. Vasil confirmed that Jess Douglas, the nursing teacher, is offering that course for that reason.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne asked if the elective offerings were replacing anything else.

Ms. Vasil explained no elective offerings are being replaced and that she wanted to ensure that committee members were aware of the elective options offered across the departments. Mrs. Gallagher Byrne was also delighted about personal finance being a requirement.

Student Support Services & Special Education Update - Sherri Lewis, Coordinator of Student Support/SEL Michelle Cadavid, Coordinator of Special Education and Dr. Debra Gately, Director of Special Services

Dr. Deb Gately, the Director of Special Services, began her presentation by reflecting on her journey over the past four years in her role. She acknowledged that when she first started, she was responsible for managing all aspects of special services on her own. However, with the support of the school committee, Dr. Hallett, and the leadership team, she recognized the need to expand the department to better serve the needs of students. Dr. Gately expressed gratitude for her colleagues, Michelle and Sherri, who have helped to share the workload and enhance the department's capabilities.

Within the department, there are 30 special education liaisons, eight related services providers, a transition specialist, 1.8 school psychologists, 11 school counselors, four social workers, 55 teaching assistants, four school nurses, a nurse teaching assistant, and 5 educational support personnel (ESP). Gately highlighted that the department's ESPs are bilingual, with some being trilingual, significantly improving communication with families. Dr. Gately outlined there were initially 335 students eligible for individualized education plans (IEPs), with eight students in out-of-district residential placements and eight in private schools receiving services. This number increased by six, maintaining around the state average of 17.9%. However, there was a notable change this year as students in the transition program reached the age of 18, resulting in a decrease in program enrollment. By the end of February, all but one student had aged out, with one attending Cape Cod Community College through the Macy program. Regarding out-of-district placements, there are currently nine students in residential schools in Massachusetts and Connecticut, with an increase in families permanently relocating to Nantucket, making the district responsible for their education. Additionally, 15 private school students qualify for special education, but only five receive services at the public school, as parents elected not to utilize district services. Despite challenges, collaboration with school heads aims to ensure students receive necessary services.

Ms. Sherri Lewis noted that this year, there are approximately 106 students districtwide on 504 plans. A new approach implemented is the incorporation of a District Accommodation Plan (Decap). When a student is identified with a disability that interferes with their curriculum access, they start with a Decap as a trial period to adjust accommodations. This approach allows for tweaking accommodations before transitioning to a 504 plan, resulting in more accurate 504 plans and a decrease in the number of students on them. The success of students on Decaps indicates positive outcomes for their educational needs.

Ms. Lewis provided an overview of the SEL program and initiatives implemented across all schools in the district. Notable programs include Second Step, Responsive Classroom, and Teen Truth at CPS and NHS,

along with the use of Zones of Regulation and Social Thinking curriculum district-wide. She mentioned the departure of a tier 3 counselor at the high school, which is being supplemented by an external local provider alongside in-house support services. The utilization of DESE data helps inform the provision of services to students. Ms. Lewis highlighted the importance of staff training, with several members certified in CPR AED training, ensuring readiness to respond to medical emergencies. Tiered interventions and a referral system are in place, complemented by tier one counseling services available to all students through their school counselors. Additionally, small group counseling and collaboration with the Family Resource Center have been ongoing across all four schools, with a focus on supporting students' social-emotional well-being. The Bridge Program, aimed at facilitating student transitions, continues to operate successfully. She then provided updates on several programs and initiatives, including the Substance Alcohol Vaping Education (SAVE) program in coordination with ASAP, focusing on substance abuse prevention. Additionally, a K9 therapy program has been reinforced at the middle and high schools, with plans to extend services to staff. Grant funds totaling \$89,000 were received and allocated to various programs, such as the Bridge Program, Teen Truth, and safety training initiatives. Ms. Lewis discussed the introduction of the PASS program, providing alternatives for high school students facing suspension or therapeutic needs, albeit with logistical challenges due to its off-Island location. Professional development efforts have focused on the implementation of a new Physical Education (PE) and wellness program, with collaboration among PE teachers, nurses, social workers, and counselors to enhance curriculum delivery. Lastly, trauma-attuned counseling practices have been emphasized through ongoing professional development workshops for counselors and social workers, ensuring a supportive environment for students facing trauma-related issues. Ms. Lewis then went through the professional development offerings.

Dr. Gately announced the new IEP management system, Ed Plan which will allow for translations and offer online access to families for IEP documents and the ability to sign documents electronically. This system will also facilitate real-time translation of IEP documents into target languages, enhancing accessibility for families. Additionally, the department aims to continue its commitment to the Orton Gillingham Academy, with nine teachers entering their second year of certification. Dr. Gately emphasized the importance of having certified educators to meet the needs of language-based learners, including students with dyslexia. To address staffing changes and ensure students receive services within their schools, they plan to introduce summer professional development for elementary teachers in Orton Gillingham education. This initiative aims to keep students in their schools and provide appropriate instruction tailored to their needs.

Ms. Cadavid shared updates on the district's plans for the 2024-2025 academic year, highlighting their participation in the Desi Dyslexia Institute. This initiative aims to provide professional development for districts to develop dyslexia action plans, focusing on early identification and intervention for students at risk of reading challenges. The district cohort includes Barbara Cohen, the ELL director, Kim Albertson, NES assistant principal, Ms. Cadavid herself, and two special education teachers, Elizabeth Weber and Nicolette Benson. The Institute, which concludes at the end of May, will help devise an action plan for implementation in the coming year. Additionally, the district has begun its next cycle of tiered focus monitoring, focusing on student identification, IEP development, program and support services, and equal opportunity. The self-assessment is underway this school year, with a Department of Ed site visit scheduled for the following year. Ms. Cadavid expressed enthusiasm for the progress made and the collaboration with experts in dyslexia education.

Dr. Lepore thought more staff members were CPR/AED certified.

Dr. Gately explained some of the certifications may have lapsed and the employee may not have chosen to re-up it. Certifications right now are on the weekends or after school which is tough. So they are working with the Community School and the leadership team to allow time during professional development.

Dr. Lepore also asked what happened to 4 students that aged out.

Dr. Gately was proud to update on students who have transitioned from the district's program. One of them is now employed at the elementary school, assisting in the pre-K program, after previously participating in the School to Career program. Another student is employed at a local hotel and has been gainfully employed since the age of 19. The third student is receiving direct support from the state and services through job training, while the fourth student's family is in the process of transitioning, and their

future plans are uncertain. Dr. Gately explained that students at this age level typically receive certificates of completion rather than diplomas, which still endorse their employment opportunities through state agencies.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne asked if once a teacher is certified in Orton Gillingham are they able train other staff members.

Dr. Gately replied no, but funds have been allocated to support staff.

School Committee Self-Evaluation Results - Hold for next meeting, April 2, 2024

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to approve the March 5, 2024 School Committee Minutes, *Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, Esmeralda Martinez, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved*

Vote to approve changes to Policy BEDH, Public Comment at School Meetings, per MASC recommendation, *Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, Esmeralda Martinez, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved*

Vote to approve changes to Policy JLCB, Immunization of Students, per MASC recommendation, *Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved*

Vote to approve Policy CHA/CHC, Development and Dissemination of Procedures, per MASC recommendation, *Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved*

Transfers and Invoices, *Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved*

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne reported she attended the Cape Cod Collaborative meeting last Wednesday which was interesting in terms of movement happening inside their organization, but nothing major to report.

Student Council Representative - Bruna Jenzura was not present

Agenda for the next meeting, April 2, 2024 - Student Enrollment, 24 Surfside Property Update, Campus Wide Master Plan Update

Motion to adjourn at 6:48 PM by Timothy Lepore, seconded by Esmeralda Martinez, with none opposed, the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk