

## Region 9 Curriculum Committee

Special Meeting

March 28, 2011

Minutes:

Attendees:

Region 9: Thomas Logie, Mark Lewis, Chris Hocker, Margot Abrams

Central Office: Michael Cicchetti, ER9 Superintendent, Marie McPadden, Assistant

Superintendent of , Curriculum & Instruction

JBHS Admin: Thomas McMorran, Head of School, Anne Kipp, Gina Pin, Maureen Kilbourn,  
Julie McTague, Sandra VanAusdal

Public: Dr. Saul Cornell, Redding parent of JBHS junior, a second (unnamed) Redding parent

1) Call to order: 6:08pm

2) Approval of November 9, 2010 minutes: Motion made by Mark Lewis, seconded by Chris Hocker

**Motion:** Move to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2010 meeting of the Region 9 Curriculum Committee. Vote: unanimous (Logie, Lewis, Hocker)

3) Public comment: none at this time (chair suggested that Dr. Cornell might wish to hold his comments until after the administration review)

4) Administration mid-year review of the AP program at JBHS:

Head of School, Tom McMorran distributed a data sheet detailing AP test scores by subject over the past six years (2005-2010), first semester 2010/11 grades by AP subject, and projected enrollment for the 2011/12 school year.

Mr. Logie joined other board members in congratulating the JBHS team for the strong first semester grades in AP Biology and the sharp increase in enrollment for next year in AP Calculus, AP Language, and AP Literature.

Mr. McMorran pointed out that the anticipated decline in enrollment for AP Statistics (from 35 to 23) was partly due to higher enrollment in AP Calculus. Meanwhile, the drop in AP Comparative Government was due to senior schedule conflicts (and might be avoided in the future if this course is opened to juniors and seniors)

With respect to teacher training, Mr. McMorran noted that during the summer of 2011 a 2D AP art teacher will be trained so that 3D AP Studio Art can be offered in the fall.

Other staff members will be trained this summer to become certified to teach sections of AP Calculus, AP Biology, and AP U.S. History.

With respect to the teacher transition (now in the third year) for AP U.S. History at JBHS, the first semester grade data provided by Mr. McMorran supports the administration's position that the students will be well prepared for the May 2011 AP test.

In summary, the committee thanked the administration for the mid-year review (delayed due to weather issues from February to late March) and wished the staff and students well as they prepared in April to take this year's AP tests in early May.

It was noted that the committee would likely meet again in late summer or September to review 2011 test results and might then suggest that the Communications Committee determine the best method to post future AP results by subject on the Region 9 web site.

#### 5) AP curriculum review:

Mr. McMorran noted that the JBHS team was working with the central office and ER9 K-8 schools to improve sequencing of curriculum so that students were prepared to perform to their potential and the rigorous expectations of grades 9-12 at JBHS. This on-going work in vertical alignment and sequencing included attention to Capstone projects (which are optional at JBHS but mandated under Connecticut's new secondary school reform requirements passed into law in 2010, to be implemented in 2014), and updating of AP courses offered at JBHS.

Mr. Logie noted, for the record and members of the public in attendance, that many AP courses offered at JBHS go far beyond the curriculum required by the College Board for its AP course label. Primary examples include AP Language and AP Literature (which require student work far beyond what is required in other high school AP courses), and AP Comparative Government (which is an in-depth full-year course at JBHS but only a one-semester test prep course at most high schools).

Mr. McMorran noted that the College Board was updating the curriculum (and related tests) for many of its courses to include AP Biology (for 2012/13) and AP U.S. History (delayed by the College Board, but to be ready for 2013/14).

#### 6) Public comment:

At this point, the chair recognized Dr. Saul Cornell, a noted specialist in the study of American history, currently teaching at Fordham University in New York City. Since Dr. Cornell had expressed interest in meeting with the Region 9 Curriculum Committee to discuss the AP U.S. History curriculum and test, he was invited to attend and his views were welcomed by the administration and the committee.

Dr. Cornell distributed to members of the administration and committee a summary of academic articles studying the link between participation and success in high school AP courses and student success in college level course work. Dr. Cornell praised the Barlow humanities department and the AP U.S. teacher, yet expressed his opinion that the AP US

History curriculum and test were flawed, overly focused on memorizing names and dates, and failed to teach students the importance of seeking out original source material and considering events in the broader context of historic eras, catalysts, and transitions.

Region 9 board members noted their awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of detailed oriented “survey” courses, but supported retaining AP courses at JBHS, to include AP USH, since it had become a standard (along with IB programs) of academic rigor for students applying to America’s most selective colleges and universities.

Dr. Cornell pointed out (as he noted in his handout) to feedback he had received from admissions officers at Lafayette College, Goucher College, and Bard College regarding how their schools perceive AP courses listed by students applying for admission.

Region 9 board members noted that the most often mentioned public high school that has dropped AP courses (Scarsdale H.S) still noted in its on-line course descriptions that its most rigorous U.S. History course prepares students to take the AP U.S. History test.

Since all DRG A high schools offer their students AP U.S. History (most during junior year) the committee feels it would disadvantage JBHS students if they were not offered this choice in our program of studies.

Mr. McMorran noted that work continued with his staff to offer recommendations to the committee that would “re-envision” the junior and senior years at JBHS and offer more diverse opportunities that could better fit the unique needs and interests of our students in years to come.

Mr. Hocker noted that he appreciated the discussion and hoped that in the future the committee would be open to consideration of administration curriculum change and sequencing proposals.

Dr. Cicchetti recommended that, as part of the high school administration’s follow-up work, conversations should be held with students to determine (1) if they feel truly engaged in their coursework and (2) if they feel challenged.

Supporting all efforts to strive for continuous improvement, the chair thanked the administration for its excellent work, and thanks Dr. Cornell for taking the time to offer his opinions and recommendations to the committee. His perspective will be shared with all members of the Region 9 board of education.

7) Adjournment: Mr. Lewis moved, Mr. Hocker seconded

**Motion** to adjourn. Approved: unanimous @ 7:35 pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by:  
Thomas Logie  
Secretary, Region 9