

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION  
CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 5, 2024

**Board Members In Attendance:** Janice Corrado, Robin McKeon, Keith Molinari, Jennifer White

**Administrators in Attendance:** Michael Fackelman, Kristin Fox, Dave Hunscher, Grant Kolmer, Nick Markarian, Tom Misiak, Jean O'Connell, Allyson Read, Kathy Stotler, John Terry, Lisa Vitale

**1. Board Agenda Items:**

- a. **Heritage Speaker Spanish:** The goal of this course is to provide a world language course for students who already have knowledge of how to communicate orally but little exposure to written instruction. The Freshman/Sophomore experience would be replaced with Heritage Spanish and then students would be able to place into upper level classes. This course would serve as the 2 year requirement for students as they enter Ridge. Upon completion, they could continue with our usual courses offered to juniors and seniors: Hispanic Culture and Society, Spanish 4 honors and AP Spanish. Approximately 3.4% of Bernards Township Students indicate Spanish as their home language in Genesis. This number does not include students who indicate a home language of English but also speak Spanish at home. The need to provide this course has grown as an increasing number of 8th grade students report speaking Spanish at home and do not want to take an intro course upon entry to Ridge. Students are given an assessment to determine abilities and it has been found that while the students can speak the language, they do not demonstrate strong written language skills. This course would address this issue. Ms. Stotler will be surveying students enrolled in World Language Classes in grades 6-12 to determine interest. The timetable for the development and implementation of this course is as follows:

Level 1 Phase 1 curriculum writing summer 2024

Place in Program of Studies in December 2024

Level 1 Phase 2 curriculum writing summer of 2025

Level 2 Phase 1 curriculum writing summer 2025

Run Level 1 course Fall of 2025.

Level 2 Phase 2 curriculum writing summer 2026

Run Level 2 course Fall of 2026

Two questions Ms. Stotler is researching are 1) will colleges accept this course as a foreign language and 2) Will the course be NCAA approved and we will not

know this until the course is submitted. A number of schools currently are running such a course.

The committee unanimously recommends approval of the course.

## **2. Discussion Items:**

- a. **Agricultural Awareness:** Friday, March 22 was Agricultural Awareness Day and the 5th grade students at Oak Street and Liberty Corner enjoyed a special visit from some of our local farmers. The visits were coordinated by Katelyn A. Katzer of the Somerset County Department of Engineering and Planning and Ana Duarte McCarthy from the Bernards Township Committee. The children heard directly from some farmers at English Farm in Basking Ridge, Middlebush Dairy Farm in Somerset and Abma's Farm in Hillsborough. They learned about where food comes from as well as the importance of supporting local farms. The objective of the program is to provide an introduction to the science of farming, along with providing the nutritional component. As a part of this program, 5th grade students received six plants to start a vegetable garden and a goody bag of resources. They all met the "dairy" cow and learned how the animal recycles food. We are hoping going forward all 4 elementary schools may be able to take part in this event if it is spread over 2 days.
- b. **Professional Development Plans for WAMS, Spring 2024:** Short term plans are to utilize instructional coaches to run the staff college, Creating a Safe and Supporting environment which will be offered over 6 meetings. Some staff have already taken this staff college course and the hope is that they will opt to take part in helping run future sessions or will help vet professional development for the coming school year which is part of the longer term plan. Mr. Markarian and his cabinet will be vetting a variety of possible partnerships that would be good fits for our students and staff. Topics to be explored are culture, climate and race. Specifically, vendors will be asked what they offer looking through the lens of what would be appropriate for WAMS students. The hope is to start in the fall but this is dependent on cost, scheduling, staff college and inservice days.
- c. **Summer Curriculum Projects :** A brief discussion about summer curriculum projects took place. All projects planned for this summer have been outlined by content area and all departments are represented. Ms Fox has asked that all board members review the attached document and send any questions before the next curriculum meeting on May 3rd so that she can provide any answers when we revisit this topic at our next curriculum meeting.
- d. **Dual enrollment Update:** We would like to be able to offer more dual enrollment courses at Ridge than we currently run but it is difficult as each college/university has their own regulations and often these rules differ by subject area. Dual courses are desirable because state schools must accept dual

enrollment credit whereas AP scores may not be accepted. Mr. Kolmer has been in contact with RVCC and is exploring what we would need to do to have a partnership for the Fall of 2025 established. We are currently preparing documentation of our staff's qualifications for RVCC's review. Once RVCC identifies qualified staff, we can then have our curriculum reviewed. Typically they expect a school to use their textbook. This summer, Mr. Misiak will explore AP Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science and Anatomy as possible Dual enrollment options. Conversations will continue with RVCC, Seton Hall, and William Paterson in the hopes of establishing these partnerships.

- e. **Youth Summit 2024:** This day has been a part of the 8th grade experience almost every year since 1997 and has been called Youth Summit Day and Empowerment Day over the years. It has always been well received by students and staff. Staff originally brought this program to WAMS after seeing it in other districts. The program was renamed after Covid and the day entailed 3 parts for 8th graders. Staff members were in every room in which sessions took place throughout the day. One session was a presentation with REACH (Ridge Education Action & Community Health). The mission of REACH is to promote healthy lifestyle choices through mental health awareness and alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention amongst Bernards Township youth. Ridge students who are members of REACH spent a great deal of time planning for this event and then ran this session which focused on the transition to high school and how to be less stressed. Participating in this program is tremendously important for and to the members of this club. It was extremely well received as hearing from peers is very impactful.

Another session was hearing from Kevin Wanzer who has been a presenter in our district since at least 2003. He is a motivational speaker and comedian who delivered an engaging program encouraging responsible decision making, connecting with others, and bullying prevention. He emphasizes that you can achieve success, social acceptance, and happiness while staying true to yourself, being drug-free, resilient and kind to others. Every year, students report finding Mr. Wanzer to be extremely engaging.

Lastly there were sessions offered through the Lindsey Meyer Teen Institute. The first workshop Positive-ly Me seeks to help young people identify strong guiding values, having high standards for personal character and believing in protecting and honoring their own well being. The second workshop R-E-S-P-E-C-T engaged students in the process of not only understanding diversity, but of appreciating and embracing it. Students learned to connect with each other because of the things that they share in common and to respect each other for the things that are different. Ms Fox shared that a few parents reached out with questions about the day which led to a brief discussion about how the day's programming of activities was designed and student participation. She shared that during each hands-on session, participation in group activities was voluntary so as to ensure the comfort level of students. Prior to the day, conversations were

held with the participating groups to make this clear.

Many WAMS 8th grade students and Ridge students attend LMTI each summer for a week in August and participate in similar activities and sessions and is an impetus to join REACH upon becoming a student at Ridge. Students were surveyed following Youth Summit Day during morning meetings to gain feedback about what they liked, didn't like etc. There was a very positive response to the day and specifically hearing from the REACH students. They also asked to have additional hands-on activities. Feedback will be used for planning purposes for next year's Youth Summit Day and continued conversation will take place to include parental input as well.

- f. **Panorama Permission Slip update:** Ms Fox gave an update to the response rate for granting student permission to participate in the surveys through Panorama. 53% (2029 responses) of parents have completed the permission slip to date. There are 1816 yes responses and 216 no responses. The breakdown is as follows

K-5: 664 Yes, 64 No

6-12: 1152 Yes 152 No

The surveys will be administered in May.

Our next Curriculum meeting will be on May 3rd.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer White