

# **NHS School Council**

**October 08, 2024**

## **MEETING SUMMARY**

**Attendance:** Renee Ames, Amber Barbere, Chris Cain, Jamie Calisi, Jeane Coffey, Stacey Gijsbers, Priya Kaur, Emerson Leahy, Rourke Lee, Richard Pace, Erin Seaton, Mike Testa, Andy Wulf

### **1. Introductions: Highlight and Hope for School Year**

- a. Team members introduced themselves and shared their highlights from the start of school along with their hopes for the school year.
- b. In summary of the highlights, parents noted their students are in a good place. For those with grade 9 students, they felt they have become acclimated to the high school. Students and teachers noted a positive energy in the building. Students also noted the number of students coming to games has made the events fun. Administration also noted a highlight is that 4 students have now started the 2nd level course for Electrical at the Peterson School.
- c. In summary of the hopes, members hope the positive energy continues. The team also expressed a hope to maintain the programs that have recently been started such as the partnership with the Peterson School.
- d. Council members received the Open Meeting Law information packet and then reviewed the meeting dates for the school year.

### **2. High School Update**

- a. October 21 Budget Hearing: Andy Wulf talked about the School Committee's budget hearing that will take place on Oct. 21 from 6 - 7:00 PM. He explained this is an opportunity for the community to express their hopes around the school system's budget for next year. He invited all council members to attend.

- b. Andy Wulf highlighted a few areas the school council has played a role in to expand the high school's offerings through the budget.
  - i. Peterson School Partnership - Allows students to work toward a trade such as Electrical, HVAC, Plumbing, or Wastewater Treatment. Andy Wulf elaborated how there are currently 4 students who started the Electrical Program this past summer and are currently enrolled in the next level course this school year.
  - ii. PSATs for all sophomore and juniors. Andy Wulf summarized how the district pays for students to take the PSAT twice during high school as a sophomore and as a junior. He noted that since offering this, enrollment in AP, Dual Enrollment, and advanced technical classes has increased. He explained part of the report helps students identify their potential to succeed in these types of upper level courses.
  - iii. Andy Wulf explained how the council encouraged exploration of pathway programs. This led to the school applying for an innovation pathway grant from the state. The high school was accepted to start an Environmental Pathway program which is starting this school year. He explained the school is currently in process to apply for an Advanced Manufacturing Pathway as well as a Healthcare Pathway.

### **3. Initial Cell Phone Policy Reflection**

- a. Andy Wulf explained the local, state, and national concerns around child and teen use of cell phones and the accessibility of social media.
- b. Andy Wulf reviewed the high school's current policy in which students must place their cell phones into pouches at the start of class. They are allowed to take them from the pouches once the class is over. Students can use their cell phones during passing time and while at lunch. Ultimately, cell phones are not allowed during instructional time.
- c. Andy Wulf further explained that overall students have been very good with the policy. He mentioned there have been around a dozen students so far in which cell phones needed to be held for the day due to use in the hallways during class

time. Andy Wulf also mentioned that in general teachers have been fairly consistent in establishing the routine with their classes. He stated there have been staff who needed additional support.

- d. Students shared how overall, students follow the policy and that it is helpful to be able to access the phone during non-instructional time.
- e. Andy Wulf explained that he will most-likely facilitate a community dialogue around the use of cellphones in schools. He referenced the dialogue that was run around class rank and valedictorian and salutatorian. Though it was a contentious topic, the use of dialogue allowed the school to finalize a decision that was inclusive of all voices. He noted a quote that has stuck with him from one of the parents who participated in the process 5 years ago. Before the final decision was made around rank and val and sal, a parent commented, "Sometimes process is more important than the outcome."
- f. Andy Wulf explained how we have teachers trained in the skill of dialogue and they design lessons with this in mind so students learn how to have a productive argument and/or discussion in which all participants feel heard and valued.
- g. Andy Wulf explained the protocol the team will use to conduct its reflection on student use of cell phones. He broke the council into three groups each with a student, teacher, and parent. He explained the groups will have 5 minutes at 3 different stations to discuss and record their thoughts around the following questions:
  - i. What do you appreciate about the current school cell phone policy?
  - ii. What are the challenges of the current school cell phone policy?
  - iii. What are your hopes regarding teen use of cell phones?

h. The team started the activity and the notes for each question are below

<p>What do you appreciate about the current school cell phone policy?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ability to use phones during non academic time</li> <li>2. Learning how to monitor cell phone use</li> <li>3. Clear policy - especially during learning time</li> <li>4. Conversation with student before discipline</li> <li>5. Trusting of students /respect for others</li> <li>6. There is a stated plan</li> <li>7. Eventually the practice will become the norm (Underclassmen follow without a problem/complain)</li> <li>8. Helps minimize distractions</li> <li>9. School prioritizing in-person discussion to build strong social skills and habits</li> <li>10. School is receptive to feedback</li> </ol>
<p>What are the challenges of the current school cell phone policy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There can be power struggles at the beginning of class - more so in upperclassmen room</li> <li>● Remembering pocket number for each classroom</li> <li>● Some students feel less safe without phones</li> <li>● Other devices can be problematic - iPad</li> <li>● Policy inconsistency due to accommodations</li> <li>● Consequences should be more spelled out - especially in regards to academic integrity</li> <li>● No recourse if a student refuses</li> <li>● Inconsistent across classrooms</li> <li>● Feelings of safety in case of an emergency</li> </ul>
<p>What are your hopes regarding teen use of cell phones?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Phones are not a distraction in the classroom and at home</li> <li>● Better habits are developed             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Academic</li> <li>○ Social</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Find ways for phones to benefit learning</li> <li>● Increase own self-awareness to monitor healthy phone use</li> <li>● Continue to increase communication and improve organization/executive functioning</li> </ul>

i. The team had time to review all of the comments from each of the groups' discussions. The council then had a general conversation around what had been discussed. Below captures key summaries from the full group conversation.

- Council members believe that schools should teach students how to use cell phones responsibly, and to be able to pause and live and interact with peers without them.
- Council members believe that NHS/NPS should continue to embed learning opportunities across curriculum areas that can help students learn and understand better about the downside of social media/Phones, related to time management (getting distracted in or out of school)
  - Students spoke about the book Atomic Habits they have been discussing in class
  - Mr. Testa and Mr. Wulf spoke about the book Accountable that is currently being used in grade 11 ELA classes. He also mentioned that the school has contracted with Katie Greer who will spend the school day with the juniors to help them understand the implications that can be caused through social media.
- Council members recommended incorporating opportunities throughout the school year where students do not have their phones out during lunch to help promote the school's objective to promote self-regulation

#### **4. School Improvement Planning Activity**

- a. Andy Wulf told the team they will participate in an activity around the school improvement during the November meeting.
  - [OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING](#)
  - [ACCOUNTABILITY PERFORMANCE DATA](#)