

Curriculum changes get go-ahead

School Committee OKs new programs, courses and revisions

By HANNAH CLARKIN

COVENTRY — The Coventry School Committee approved the adoption of two new programs and four new courses, and the endorsement of five new courses, as well as the revision of the kindergarten through eighth-grade science

curriculum at its meeting on last week.

As part of a routine revision, Assistant Superintendent Michael Convery collaborated with Coventry educators and School Improvement Teams to develop new courses and adjust old courses to better fit the needs of students.

The results are a new cosmetology program at the technical school and a new health program for all grades, new keyboarding and library media

skills classes at the middle school, geometry and trigonometry courses at the high school, and the endorsement of reading and writing in history, music technology, music composition, French culture, Italian culture and Spanish culture classes at the high school, as well as the revision of the pre-high school science curriculum.

The new curriculum was passed by school committee members Karlene Toppin and

Katherine Patenaude on condition of the administration addressing a few concerns raised by the school committee. Members Donna Hayden and Andrew Perra were absent from the meeting.

With the exception of a part-time cosmetology teacher, the new programs require no new staff, but will replace some existing programs. "We've gotta be careful where we go with this," cautioned Chairman Raymond Spear, "We have to

watch out what tumbles."

Kelly Erinakes, a teacher at the high school as well as a resident and mother of a middle school student, agreed during public comment, "Middle school kids are at the age where we want to engage them," she said, voicing a concern about adding keyboarding and library science to middle school classes and dropping some classes that students might find more interesting.

CURRICULUM, 4-A

Curriculum changes are afoot in Coventry

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Superintendent Kenneth DiPietro told Spear and Erinakes these were only semester classes and were part of an interest in equipping children with the tools they need in a technology-based world. "When kids don't learn keyboarding until high school, they've already developed hunt-and-peck habits," DiPietro said. "This will teach them the right way to type sooner."

While most of the classes were revised or added because of routines established in this district, some, like the cosmetology class, were special projects of administrators.

John Canole, director of the Career Center, and Susan Chandler, an assistant principal at the high school, applied for a State Adult Education Grant. All the costs for the cosmetology class will be covered for up to three years. The kits for participating in the program will be purchased by students and a practice clinic in the school will generate income to be reinvested in the program.

The school committee passed the new programs on the condition of reviewing the specifics of the health curriculum and determining the number of students allowed in the reading and writing in history class, which is designed for students who need

A change will do you good

According to a PowerPoint presentation given at last week's School Committee meeting by Assistant Superintendent Michael Convery, the following provisions for change have been made in the district:

New Programs

Cosmetology

The Career Center will adopt a nationally recognized curriculum. The nail stations and books needed for the course are covered by an Adult Education Grant. The program will be available starting in tenth grade next fall.

Health

The new health program will cover kindergarten through high school and will cover injury prevention, mental and emotional health, nutrition, personal health, sexuality and family life, substance abuse prevention, disease control and prevention. The topics will spiral through the grades being reinforced and built upon as the student gets older.

New Classes

Middle Level Keyboarding

Currently students do not take keyboarding until ninth grade. As part of the district strategic plan, keyboarding will be moved to the middle level. There are no start-up costs because the technology is already in place. No new staff will be required.

Middle Level Library Media skills

This course will be offered for seventh- and eighth-grade students. Students will learn how to utilize different media technologies as a means to communicate and demonstrate proficiency of course content and national education technology standards. Students will also begin developing electronic portfolios.

Geometry/Trigonometry

This class will be offered for students who want to reach pre-calculus level math by their senior year. This will be an accelerated but not an honors class open to sophomores who have maintained a B- or better in Algebra II as freshman.

literacy programs.

Several of the classes were designed to help groups of students who are not in special-needs programs but still need additional assistance. The introduction classes in French, Italian, and Spanish cultures stress conversational language and cultural study as opposed to grammar. Both classes are offered in parts A and B and, when combined, can replace a level one language class.

"I'm actually very excited about these classes," said Assistant Superintendent James Erinakes. "Foreign language is one of the highest areas of failure for students with an IEP. We give no support [in foreign studies]. This will give students who need additional time a chance. I think it's a good step for us.

Kelly Erinakes agreed. "We're looking at how to bring the entire school forward," she said. "[These classes] recognize that [education] is no longer one-size-fits-all. We can tell kids, 'OK, it may take you two years to learn this but by golly you're going to learn it.

"From this approach," she continued, "the angst lessens and the kids know we're setting them up for success, not failure."

The new classes will begin during the 2008-2009 school year.

In other business, the school committee also commended five teachers for achieving their National Board Certification; Deb Tyree and Lizbeth

Reading and Writing in History

This class is designed to meet the required literacy instruction for juniors through the content of American History. It will teach students how to comprehend informational text. It will be taught in a double-block of instruction and qualify for both history and literacy credits.

Newly Endorsed Classes

Music Technology

Assisted by a music notation computer program, the course will cover basic notation, music symbols and an introduction to scoring. Students will learn to write for different categories of musical instruments including piano, percussion, woodwinds, brass, strings, and voice.

Arranging and Composition

Also using the computer program, this class will teach students the basics of musical arranging and composition. Their final projects will be performed by the school band.

Introduction to French, Italian, and Spanish Culture Parts A and B (six separate classes)

These classes will be presented as first-year language classes that emphasize conversation, culture, and grammatical style, as well as an overview of history, geography, art, sports, music, school life, and holidays. They will provide a slower pace for students who have difficulty mastering languages.

Revisions

Science K-8

Two committees were established during the 2006-2007 school year to re-align and re-write the science curriculum in accordance with the State of Rhode Island's Grade Span Expectations. For grades kindergarten through four and grades five through eight, the committees are determining how to teach Life Science, Physical Science, and Earth and Space Science. All that remains in the development is filling some gaps in the curriculum and re-tooling the science kits.

Widdefield of Oak Haven Elementary School, Janet Lebranch at Blackrock Elementary School, and Ted Mitchell and Stephen Walker at the Alan Shawn Feinstein

Middle School of Coventry. The committee also commended Denise Richtarik and the Tiogue Elementary school for winning a Triple Your Heart Award on Dec. 4.

Two Coventry nurses gain new credentials

CRANSTON – The Rhode Island Department of Corrections is announcing that Marylyn Hale, R.N., C.C.H.P. and Jennifer Mageau, R.N., C.C.H.P., both of Coventry, have met eligibility requirements and passed a national exam to earn professional certification in the field of correctional health care, effective Oct. 1. Hale works at the High Security Center and has been with the RIDOC since October of 1992, and Mageau works in the women's facilities and has been with the RIDOC since April of this year.

To become a Certified Correctional Health Professional (CCHP), Hale and Mageau had to demonstrate mastery of national standards and the knowledge expected of leaders working in the field. There are nearly 2,000 certified correctional healthcare managers worldwide, 11 of whom are

now employed in the Health Care Services Unit of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections.

CCHP is regarded as a symbol of accomplishment and self improvement and provides many benefits. It promotes correctional health care professionals' knowledge, understanding, and application of standards and guidelines essential to the delivery of appropriate health care in the correctional environment; their role in delivering that care; the basic legal principles underlying their practice; and their ethical obligations.

The CCHP certification program was established in 1989 by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care and is the first program to recognize professionalism and excellence among individuals employed in correctional health care.