

SYOSSET COUNCIL OF PTAS
Communications Conference Committee
Spring 2019

CURRICULUM TOPICS:

- In middle school, students choose French, Italian or Spanish. Because there is no “level one” course offered in the high school for French, Italian or Spanish, these cannot be selected as a second language. Would the district consider offering this level in the high school?

District Response:

Students elect to learn French, Italian, or Spanish starting in 6th grade, and most continue studying the same language through 12th grade. This long sequence of study is needed for students to build proficiency. At the high school we offer a robust selection of additional languages: American Sign Language, Japanese, Korean, Latin and Russian. Level 1 courses in these languages are offered based on enrollment. Students who would like to begin French, Italian or Spanish at the high school may be able to enroll in a Level 2 course, since the three languages have much in common. Students interested in this option should speak with the World Language Coordinator.

- Would the district consider participating in foreign exchange programs to provide an additional way to learn about a culture and language?

District Response:

The Syosset Board of Education supports foreign exchanges programs as outlined in Policy No. 5153, Admission of Foreign Exchange Students Policy. The Policy states: “The Board of Education recognizes the importance of providing the opportunity for students of the District to participate in educational and cultural exchanges with non-immigrant foreign students. Thus, the Board encourages the attendance of non-immigrant foreign students in the District’s High School.” This policy provides provisions and restrictions for foreign students with J-1 Visas to be admitted to Syosset High School for a one-year academic program.

- For a large group of students, the honors courses are too challenging, but the regular courses are not challenging enough. Parents are paying for tutors to manage the honors classes, but the children aren’t challenged in the regular class.
 - How has the supplementary tutoring impacted the classroom? Has it become more imbalanced as some families supplement where others don’t?

District Response:

The Syosset School District does not gather any data concerning the use of private tutors. The decision to pursue additional tutoring beyond the support offered by the school is a choice of each individual family. For those who perceive a need for extra support, the High School offers extra help from every teacher, content and skill-based workshops, math support during every lunch period, and peer tutoring through the National Honor Society.

- Would the district consider a level of course work that is between the current honors and regular programs?

District Response:

The school district prides itself on its ability to meet the needs of every student. The parents and students are empowered to make appropriate course selections based on the information provided by classroom teachers, our curriculum manual, guidance meetings and our incoming student transition programs. Our current program strives to meet the needs of all students through classroom instruction that is diverse and challenging. Differentiation within all of our classrooms ensures that the instruction provides for individualized attention to every student.

- Would the district consider an honors science class without the additional research component?

District Response:

All of our evidence, anecdotal and empirical, indicates that our research program is highly effective. The program is in place for every student who takes Living Environment Honors. The reason for this is to provide a research opportunity to all students as early in their high school career as possible. Many students have found that their passion lies within one of the research areas that we offer: Science, Social Science, Math or Technology. This allows students to decide which pathway they would like to follow and be prepared for the next steps. It also allows students to have an early exposure so that there is an opportunity to pursue other paths, if they desire. They cannot make that decision in an informed manner if they are never exposed to the research in the first place.

Click here to view our online curriculum manual:

https://www.syossetschools.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=474&dtaid=514&FileName=2019_20%20CURRICULUM%20MANUAL%2004.24.19.pdf

The District reviews the research component attached to honors science courses on a regular basis. Any changes to coursework will be reflected in the curriculum manual.

- Why has the district chosen not to participate in IB programs?

District Response:

The District makes a robust range of college-level coursework available. 29 Advanced Placement (AP) classes are offered as well as 8 SUPA (Syracuse University) classes.

- Why was the decision made to make physical education classes coed?

District Response:

The decision to schedule co-ed groupings in PE has been consistent in Syosset for many years and was originally based on the Title IX legislation.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/t9-guidelines-ss.html>

In Syosset, grades 9-10 are co-ed and students are exposed to a variety of activities both involving individual and team sports. Grades 11-12 are elective-based so the roster will reflect whoever signs up for each individual course.

- Would the district consider removing the swim component from general physical education classes? So many of the students are unable to participate for various reasons, it seems the time might be better used on another activity.

District Response:

We need to include swimming in the 9/10 curriculum for a number of reasons, as noted below:

1. The pool is a needed teaching station
2. Many students use the opportunity to work toward becoming certified as a lifeguard
3. Many schools do not have a pool and we have been successful in taking the fear of swimming away from many students over the years
4. Many students actually enjoy swimming
5. We believe it is an important part of the curriculum and important life skill.

ADMINISTRATIVE TOPICS:

- Teachers appear to be posting assignments in the evening after school and in the morning before school. This does not seem related to Google Classroom's technology. Can the district set parameters for the timing of posting assignments?

District Response:

Teachers are sensitive to providing students with adequate time to complete assignments. As many students use their cellphone to receive "push alerts," these alerts may be delayed for a variety of reasons due to their cellular service provider or individual device settings (i.e., battery saver or data saver modes). Notifications can also be muted in the device settings including "do not disturb". Please contact your service provider for more information on configuring your device. In addition, students should check their Google Classroom Account directly to verify assignments due.

- Can the parent portal be set up with separate logins for parents and students? This way a parent can access the portal for all their children, but a student can access only their portal and not their siblings' information.

District Response:

Our Infinite Campus Parent Portal requires a student to have an email address in order to establish an account. The District is in the process of establishing protocol for high school students to utilize Gmail through their existing Google G-Suite for Education Accounts. We anticipate that Gmail accounts will be available for high school students by the Fall of 2019, after which students will be able to set up their own account for the portal.

- Has the formula for the parent teacher conference schedule been revisited to reflect the growing number of elementary enrollments?

District Response:

Yes. We continually evaluate enrollments and parent conference opportunities. The District ensures there is ample time for conferences in all classes and if a parent has a concern, they can always call the building principal to discuss further.

- Would the district consider ending all district sports by 4:30pm on the day of spring parent teacher conferences so that parents have time to pick up their kids and get to the high school when conferences begin.

District Response:

We recognize that parents will have a number of conflicts with tight family schedules. Whether on conference days or with other conflicts, parents can discuss individual concerns with the Athletic Director or their child’s coach.

The District has taken measures to improve parking and traffic flow on parent teacher conference nights.

- Question added: Are the class sizes consistent among elementary-level buildings?

District Response:

The average class size ranges from 20-23 students consistently among elementary-level buildings. There will always be outliers, but the data shows consistency among buildings.

Average Class Size – 3 Year Average:



ELEMENTARY LUNCH

- Please provide an update on food services for elementary schools.

District Response:

The District works with its consultants and attorneys to secure a Food Service Management company and procure the necessary equipment for the cafeterias. The District's bid specifications were reviewed and approved by NYSED Child Nutrition, and we are in the competitive bidding phase of the process. Our bid opens on May 6 and we anticipate awarding to a vendor at the May 13 BOE meeting.

We had originally planned for outreach between the food services management company and parents in the spring; however, we have been advised to wait until the new contract term commences.

The District awarded a competitive bid for new equipment at the elementary schools to accommodate the lunch program at the April BOE meeting.

The District has been coordinating with the PTA and building principals on developing a process for the implementation of new BOCES curriculum enrichment programs funded by the District. These additional funds will offset some of the revenue loss for the PTAs.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TOPICS

- Now that the 9th grade orientation has been revised, would the district consider scheduling the guidance meeting for students with IEP's in the spring, so that the student doesn't risk options changing from the point of the student/guidance meeting to the IEP mtg.

District Response:

Counselors meet individually with students in February to plan their programs. The annual review meetings are then conducted in Feb/March and guidance counselors are in attendance at that meeting. If any changes need to take place, they can be adjusted after the annual review. This is to ensure that all students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in classes when the master schedule for the building is constructed.

- The consultant-teacher model works well and is a proven teaching strategy in the Middle Schools. Would the district consider utilizing this model in the high school to provide more of a least restrictive environment? Kids successful in MS cannot keep up in regular classes and feel failure of going back to "self-contained" classes. However, if there was a special ed teacher in classrooms, they would learn with typical peers and have "typical" students as positive role models.

District Response:

The consultant-teacher model has always been among the continuum of services available at the high school. Recommendations for students are made via the CSE during the annual meeting. Sections will be designated next year for ELA & Math at the high school. However, because of the singleton nature of these classes, they may conflict with some electives.

The model will also be enhanced at the elementary-level. There will be at least one co-teaching section per grade at the elementary-level.

FACILITIES TOPICS

- Is there a central place to collect future capital improvement project ideas?
 - Track at HBT
 - Radio station equipment
 - Audio systems in most buildings

District Response:

Parents are always invited to share their ideas with Administration, and we will prioritize them for inclusion in the District's capital plan. Parents are encouraged to share ideas with building principals, who will share the ideas with Administration.

DISTRICT CULTURE/ENVIRONMENT

- Would the district consider including a section on the new website that would include athletic schedules so that elementary families can attend high school events?

District Response:

The schedules are available through a link on the District website:

<https://www.syossetschools.org/Page/258>. Enter "Syosset" as the District name.

In addition, the District will investigate options to better promote athletic events to the community to raise awareness and attendance.

- Is there an opportunity for high school students to "mentor" younger students in athletic activities to foster some community interest in events?

District Response:

Our coaches currently bring high school athletes to the middle schools and occasionally to the elementary schools to promote our athletic programs. The Syosset youth leagues are gaining traction once again with the help of some very dedicated community members who work in conjunction with our athletic department and varsity coaches. We are looking to rebuild many of our programs which have been losing numbers over the past year or so and the coordination with the youth groups helps accomplish this. Our cheerleaders have brought up the youth group in the past for our football games and have assigned a cheerleader to each youth cheerleader. Wrestling holds evening clinics for the middle school students along with elementary kids who want to attend. We are not permitted to have students actively coaching other students when the event is under the Syosset School District, so we have to make sure that the adults instruct while the HS students observe.

SPORTS TOPICS

- What methodology is used to distribute funds to the sports teams? Some teams require additional parent financial contribution for training, clothing and other activities. Students are told without these mandatory funds they cannot participate. Preliminary research suggests that parents cannot be forced to pay for participation.

District Response:

The District assumes responsibility for providing uniforms for all sports. Booster Clubs will sometimes set up “stores” where students can purchase items for themselves reflecting their sport, position, number, etc. There have been some costs incurred by cheerleading parents in the past for optional additional training during the cheerleading season. Going forward these costs will be covered.

Baseball, softball, lacrosse, basketball, track/cross country all have off season training and camps that are optional for students and funded by the parents. Students can fund raise to cover these costs.

In summary, no student is obligated to pay in order to participate on a District team. The District will continue to work with Mr. Cronin, Director of Athletics, PE and Recreation, to make sure no students feel pressured to purchase items.

TECHNOLOGY TOPICS

- Would the district consider formally introducing the Google Suite available via chrome? As the children transition from elementary school into middle school, a “study skills” class is offered which would be an excellent opportunity to teach this suite of tools. In addition, part of the skills class could emphasize organizational techniques including long term and short-term planning using the Google calendar and Google keep.

District Response:

Our 1:1 technology platform leverages Google G-Suite for Education Platform from the elementary Library-Media classes through the Middle School and high school, where students are provided with a 1:1 Chromebook device (which uses the G-Suite). Additionally, students at all levels receive instruction on the Google G-Suite for Education Platform during their content classes.

The District is also making assistive technology available to all students on a broader basis as opposed to limiting it to students with special needs.

PROJECT BEYOND

- What is the selection criteria for Project Beyond? Can you elaborate on the goals of this program and other enrichment activities?

District Response:

The District currently takes the top 10% of the class based on the local norms of two sub-tests of the CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test). The District is in the process of evaluating the selection criteria for Project Beyond to incorporate multiple measures of achievement.

Enrichment activities at elementary and middle school include:

- Meetings with grade level teachers with consultation on strategies for gifted and talented students.
- Schoolwide challenges
- Curriculum differentiation
- Enrichment teacher support for Kidoyo in classrooms
- Enrichment teacher support for Next Generation Science Standards in classrooms
- Small group research projects for select students
- Book Clubs
- Number Talks (K-5)
- Math enrichment for select students in grades 3-5
- Math Olympiads Grades 4-5
- Math extensions for higher level
- STEM Units (K-5)
- STEAM - Build and design examples of extreme weather
- STEAM - Build Bridges to support Robotic cars
- STEM - Build a Rube Goldberg project (simple machines)
- STEM - Build a house to protect 3 little pigs against weather
- STEM- Mayflower, Clothesline, Monument
- STEM- Light/Sound Communicator, Model to show sun, moon, and earth's revolution/rotation
- STEM- Build an anemometer/ Wind vane
- STEM - wind turbines, Native American Shelter Challenge
- STEM – Hydroponics
- Social Studies cross cutting centers/stations