



**BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 14, 2008
(Revised April 21, 2008)**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, April 14, 2008, at 6:00 p.m. in the Superintendent's Conference Room at the Education Center. Present were Curriculum Committee Members Mary M. Katona, assistant to the superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and Richard Agretto, director of special education; and Board Members: Michele Cann, Judith Dexter, Irene Follweiler, Dr. Craig Haytmanek, Charlene Koch, Loretta Leeson, Eugene McKeon, and Benjamin Tenaglia. Also in attendance were: Dr. Joseph A. Lewis, superintendent of schools; Robert Gross, associate superintendent; Stanley J. Majewski, Jr., assistant to the superintendent for finance and administration; Thomas Washington, director of student services; Frank Arbushites, coordinator of academic computing; Kathleen Bast, coordinator of Literacy/ELA 6-12; Dr. Dean M. Donaher, director of special programs and athletics; Dr. Joanne LoFaso, coordinator of Literacy/ELA, K-8; Julie Victory, supervisor of mathematics; and representatives of the press.

Mrs. Dexter called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

INCLUSION/LITERACY ACADEMY

Mr. Agretto explained that the Second Annual Inclusion/Literacy Academy will be held on August 4, 5, and 6, 2008, at a location to be announced. He noted that it will be open to all Bethlehem Area School District teachers, counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals, parents, and school board members. It will cover differentiated instruction, motivating students, instructional strategies, and co-teaching models. Presenters will include Bethlehem Area School District teachers and administrators, as well as representatives from the state and national levels.

Mrs. Dexter noted that she heard from a teacher that last year's conference was one of the best he/she had ever attended.

ALTERNATIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION CREDIT

Mrs. Katona provided the board with copies of two documents from Shirley Black, the state's health and physical education advisor. One of the documents was a letter Ms. Black had constructed to clarify questions related to Chapter 4 regulations and physical education credit. The second document outlined the Pennsylvania health and physical education requirements and the rationale for them. Ms. Black highlighted paragraphs of particular importance regarding

credit for physical education. Mrs. Katona made note that all requirements relating to instructor certification, planned instruction components, and assessment must be met in order to assign physical education credit for participation in sports.

Mrs. Dexter stated that she read the information provided by Mrs. Katona and feels that the district should be able to set up a program. Mrs. Katona replied that it could only be set up if it falls within all the objectives set by Ms. Black.

Mrs. Cann stated that she had thought it could not be done, but upon reading the information, felt that it would be possible. Mrs. Katona replied that it can only be done if all the objectives are met.

Dr. Lewis replied that the only way it can be done is if the district meets all standards and the teachers and/or coaches are certified.

Mrs. Dexter stated that she was under the impression that it could be done, but it would take some work.

Mrs. Leeson stated that the district should look into what can and cannot be done.

Mrs. Dexter asked if requirements can be combined and still meet standards set by the state. She also asked if staff members who are certified could supervise the students' physical activities to meet the state's requirements.

Mrs. Cann noted that the whole point is not just to skip gym classes, but to be able to take more academic classes.

Dr. Lewis noted that he met with both high school principals to discuss this subject. He noted that, in order for this to work, they would have to create unique schedules.

Mr. LaPorta stated that he would be curious to know how many students would be interested in not taking a physical education class in lieu of participating in sports. Dr. Lewis stated that he would have to poll the student population to acquire this information.

Mrs. Katona noted that Kelly Pauling of the Intermediate Unit 20 informed her that other districts are not participating in this program due to the state's guidelines. Dr. Donaher had also contacted District XI schools and found that they do not subscribe to such programs.

Mrs. Dexter asked the administration to look into what it would take for our district to grant physical education credit for participation in sports. She would also like the administration to find out if any other schools within the state participate in this program. Mrs. Katona again noted that Ms. Black indicated that other districts do not allow credit for physical education based on athletics. They would only do so if all criteria are met.

ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Mrs. Katona presented an update to the Action Plan. She noted that a revised update was provided to board members and that changes were in red, and the additional changes were noted in blue.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she would like more discussion on mentoring. She asked if it will be up and running by the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.

Dr. Lewis replied that the administration has met with the student advisory group. He noted that there was a comfort level this year because students could choose their proctors for the PSSA tests. Mrs. Katona also noted that teachers at both high schools are working on the mentoring program with input from the student advisory group. She stated that it should be up and running for the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.

Mr. LaPorta added that a homeroom block has been added this year, which is the equivalent of the old version of homeroom, and allows teachers time to discuss information, surveys, problems, solutions, etc., with students. He noted that a student's homeroom teacher is his/her mentor for the four years that a student is in high school. He noted that he has also met with the Bethlehem Rotary Club regarding possibly bringing representatives from outside organizations into the mentor program.

Mrs. Durante noted that the mentoring program at Liberty High School was piloted at the freshman campus. She stated that the administration is reviewing what worked and what did not work this past year. She stated that they are looking into cross grouping students in homerooms next year.

Mrs. Katona offered to provide an update on mentoring at the May Board Curriculum Committee Meeting.

Mrs. Dexter noted that she did not see Project 720 on the Liberty High School website. Mrs. Durante explained that they are currently working on it and it should be on the website shortly.

Mrs. Leeson asked why the Gifted and Talented Subcommittee has only had one meeting so far. Mr. Agretto replied that they have had actually had two so far, and their third meeting is scheduled for this week.

Mrs. Leeson also noted that there has been a lot of discussion regarding the Reading Recovery Program and the board needs to know what direction this program is going so they can make financial decisions regarding the upcoming budget. Mrs. Katona replied that the district is not getting rid of the Reading Recovery Program; they are looking at reducing the number of Reading Recovery teachers. She stated that she and Dr. LoFaso are meeting with Mr. Gross on Tuesday to discuss this subject.

Mrs. Leeson asked if the district can make reductions and still have a quality program. Mrs. Katona replied that the district can still have a quality program if it goes to small groups as opposed to a one-on-one program. Mrs. Katona noted that dealing with small groups will enable the program to reach more students.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she feels the program works better on a one-on-one basis rather than going to into small groups as students progress. She would like the administration to provide her with information on how many students we will reach with the proposed cuts. She would like this information before the April 23, 2008, Budget Hearing.

Mrs. Katona stated that she also likes the idea of one-on-one because it would be a benefit to many students; but, the district also needs to have something in place to reach students for whom the Reading Recover Program does not work. She also stated that there have been cases where, because of the one-on-one guidelines for Reading Recovery, students who might have benefited have not received services.

Mrs. Dexter asked for the administration's guidance in figuring out what and how much is needed to service our students.

Mrs. Katona reminded the board that the district has some regular classroom teachers who have had previous experience teaching Reading Recovery.

Mrs. Leeson noted that Mr. Washington has been meeting and working with the guidance counselors to ensure that their roles are aligned with the most pressing needs of the students. The plan of the committee is to develop a community committee by April 2008. A community meeting has been scheduled for April 25, 2008, which will include community, board members, guidance counselors, principals, and other administrations. Students are also being invited to this meeting.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PLAN – CAREER ACADEMY PROGRAM

Mr. Washington informed the board that the administration and the principal of the Career Academy had been meeting with the administration of the Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical School concerning the possible relocation of the Career Academy to the Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical building. Mr. Washington then informed the board that this plan has changed, and the administration is now looking at relocating the Career Academy to the Monocacy Building. Dr. Lewis stated that the administration is preparing schematics, which will be available shortly for the board to review.

Mrs. Leeson asked if personnel will change at the new location, and she asked what impact this move would have on the budget. Mr. Washington replied that the administration will be discussing both of these items in cabinet on Tuesday. Dr. Lewis replied that it will probably be a neutral change to the budget.

Mrs. Dexter inquired if the Monocacy Building will have sufficient room for the Career Academy. Dr. Lewis replied that the Monocacy Building is actually larger than the portion of the Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical building that was proposed, and will offer better technical opportunities because of the larger size of the building.

Mrs. Robledo-Shorey noted that she met with her staff on Friday afternoon to discuss the change and how they can make it work. She feels that this change will actually be a good opportunity for the students. She reminded the board that these are students who did not do well in a regular

classroom setting. She also informed the board that her staff does an Individual Career Plan (ICP) on each of her students.

Ms. Citak, a teacher at the Career Academy, noted that not all teaching is done during the regular school day. She noted that some of their classes/trips are during evening hours or on Saturdays, and the students enjoy learning this way.

Mrs. Follweiler noted that the board had some concerns with moving the Career Academy to the Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical building and this may be a change for the best.

ENGLISH PILOT FOR GRADES 11 AND 12 – AGENDA ITEM

Mrs. Katona informed the board that this agenda item is for the authorization to conduct a pilot for English at grades 11 and 12 using the Pennsylvania editions of Pearson's Literature book, and Holt's Elements of Literature book during the 2008-2009 school year. She noted that each teacher will receive one of the two textbooks to use in class. At the end of the first semester, teachers will switch with colleagues so that they may use the other book in their class. Teachers will conduct a review, complete a textbook evaluation form, and a recommendation will be made to the board at the May, 2009, Regular School Board Meeting, in anticipation of purchasing the selected series for the 2009-2010 school year. Mrs. Katona noted that samples of all books are available for board members to review.

Mrs. Leeson asked why the district is changing the system and going back to textbooks. She noted that, especially at Liberty High School, a large number of the staff are new teachers. She also stated that the Bethlehem Area School District has always been known for being outstanding in teaching English and writing. Mrs. Katona responded that it is being done at the request of the teachers. She also noted that books do not replace the curriculum, they are a resource for teaching. Additionally, she noted that textbooks are a welcome resource for new teachers.

Mrs. Koch noted that when the computer program was initiated, it was stated that the district would be using less textbooks. She asked if the computers are being used mostly for writing. Mrs. Katona replied that the computers are not replacing textbooks, they are among a variety of resources for teaching to encourage differentiation. Dr. Lewis added that it is the policy of book companies that you must purchase the regular textbooks before you can have access to their on-line textbooks.

Mrs. Leeson requested the following information:

- A list of other school districts in the area that are using this series of books.
- Have their PSSA scores increased?
- The costs of each series.

Mrs. Leeson also noted that she is not sure if she would be able to vote on this agenda item after only having one week to review the books. Mrs. Dexter stated that the board was not aware of a pilot and reminded the administration that it is the responsibility of the board to pick curriculum. She asked why the administration waited this long to bring this item before the board. Mrs. Bast explained that there was a timeline for investigating which books to present to the board, that includes involving teachers.

Dr. Haytmanek responded that he felt the staff was qualified to do the research and bring a recommendation to the board. He did not have a problem with voting for the pilot.

Mrs. Dexter asked what would happen if the board tabled the agenda item for one month. Mrs. Bast replied that it would delay getting the pilot books into the hands of the teachers who wish to have them prior to the end of the school year so they can review the books over the summer. She will find out from the representatives how long it takes for the books to arrive once the order is placed.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she would like more time to review the information.

Mrs. Dexter replied that she would also like more time to look at the information in detail and discuss her findings. She would also like some time to discuss with other districts who use these books, and ask for their opinions. She also asked if these books meet standards. Mrs. Bast replied that they do meet Pennsylvania standards.

Mr. Tenaglia asked if the books for the board's review are teacher editions or student editions. Mrs. Bast replied that the Holt books are teacher editions and the Prentice books are student editions, but during the pilot, students will be using student editions.

Mrs. Koch noted that she has no problem with the agenda item for the pilot because the administration must present its final choice to the board for their approval before books are ordered.

Mrs. Follweiler suggested that, if the board looks at the books for one week and is not ready to vote, they can table the item at the April 21, 2008, Regular Board Meeting.

The board members present agreed to place this agenda item on the agenda for the April 21, 2008, Regular Board Meeting.

Mrs. Katona stated that if any board members had any further questions, they should call her or Mrs. Bast at their convenience.

TUITION RATES FOR CHILDCARE PROGRAMS – AGENDA ITEM

Mr. Washington explained that the Bethlehem Area School District's Childcare Program is a self-sustaining program with centers housed in each of the district's sixteen elementary schools and in the SPARK Early Childhood Center. The proposed 4.5 percent average rate increase allows the district to remain competitive with other childcare providers in the Lehigh Valley.

Mrs. Dexter asked if the childcare program is making money. Mr. Majewski replied that it is at least breaking even.

Mrs. Dexter asked if the childcare program at Fountain Hill Elementary School is being moved out of that facility. Mr. Washington replied that the administration is looking at shared space at that facility to continue to provide the program.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCY – AGENDA ITEM

Dr. Donaher presented an agenda item to be placed on the April 21, 2008, Regular Board Meeting, for Musikfest to be added to the agencies included on the Community Service approved list.

Mrs. Follweiler asked if Musikfest followed the new rubric established for community service agencies. Dr. Donaher replied that the organization did.

Mrs. Koch stated that she was happy to see that the procedure, indicating the recommendation that parents must sign a waiver if their children choose to volunteer at Musikfest, was followed.

TICKET PRICES AND STUDENT/FAMILY TICKET PROGRAMS 2008-2009 – ATHLETICS – AGENDA ITEM

Dr. Donaher presented an agenda item to be placed on the April 21, 2008, Regular Board Meeting, for the approval of admittance fees for athletic events for the 2008-2009 school year. He noted that the ticket prices are remaining the same as the 2007-2008 school year.

Mrs. Dexter asked if the increase in admittance fees last year covered the increases in the budget. Dr. Donaher replied that the increase in admittance fees last year did result in an increase in income from gate receipts last year.

Mrs. Dexter then asked for a breakdown of the number of student and family sports passes sold last year. Dr. Donaher replied that he would get that information to her.

Mrs. Dexter asked if a family cannot afford to purchase tickets to an athletic event is there an assistance program available. Dr. Donaher replied that there is not.

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAMS – 2008 – AGENDA ITEMS

Dr. Donaher explained that the middle school summer program is prepared to offer courses in reading/English and mathematics, with the emphasis placed on remediation and development of basic skills. He explained that middle school students in grades six, seven, and eight who fail two core academic subjects will be required to participate in a summer school remediation program. A twenty-day program will focus on reading and mathematics with the emphasis in reading on reading in the content area.

Regarding the high school summer school program, Dr. Donaher explained that the district is prepared to offer required courses in English, mathematics, science, social studies, computer literacy, and health and physical education that are scheduled during the regular school year, with emphasis being placed on remediation and development of basic skills. The high school program will be held only if enrollment is sufficient to cover all costs associated with this program. Students who enroll in the twenty-day program will be charged registration fees. In addition, a ten-day, half-credit driver education theory course will be offered to students. Students failing regular academic courses due to attendance problems and students withdrawn

from courses as a result of academic review board hearings may not be admitted into the high school summer school program.

Mrs. Koch asked if the standards will be the same as during the regular school year. Mrs. Katona replied that Dr. Donaher has been working with the high school principals to assure that they are.

Mrs. Leeson noted that there is \$50,000 allotted in next year's budget for summer school. Dr. Donaher explained that \$25,000 is allotted for the middle school summer school program, and the administration is looking at the possibility of using part of the remaining \$25,000 for an elementary summer school program, possibly to be held at combined elementary school locations.

PENNSYLVANIA PRE-K COUNTS – EXPANSION GRANT – AGENDA ITEM

Dr. Lewis explained that the office of child development and early learning (OCDEL) at the Pennsylvania Department of Education has made available new and expansion grant opportunities. The purpose of the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is to expand the number of children who have the opportunity to experience a Pre-K program of high quality. The high standards for the program will ensure a high return on the investment made in preparing young children for school and will help close the achievement gap between groups of students in the K-12 educational system. He explained that funds will be available for both half-day and full-day programs. Half-day programs must provide a minimum of 2.5 hours per day for at least 180 days per year of instructional activities or services. Full-day programs must provide a minimum of five hours per day for at least 180 days per year of instructional activities or services. Under this expansion opportunity, the Bethlehem Area School District is proposing a program for sixty (60) three-year old children and an additional forty (40) four-year old children.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Vivian Robledo-Shorey, principal of Career Academy, extended an invitation to all board members to attend the first graduation ceremony for the Career Academy, to be held on May 30, 2008, 6:00 p.m., at City Hall. She stated that invitations will be sent shortly.

Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding courses not being offered in our schools which would teach students how to become good citizens.

OPEN FORUM

Mrs. Leeson commented that the district used to have a program a few years ago titled "Character Counts". Mrs. Koch replied that the state and federal governments put so many requirements on this program that it had to be merged into other classes.

Mrs. Leeson asked if the district is looking into a handwriting program. Mrs. Katona replied that she and Dr. LoFaso met with Claire Hogan who will be collecting information to begin a writing program. Mrs. Katona stated that she will bring a progress report to next month's Board Curriculum Committee Meeting. Mrs. Katona also noted that Ellen Bucks from the Intermediate Unit presented sessions for teachers at the January inservice. Mrs. Dexter asked if the district will be developing a program and a budget to make this happen. Mr. Agretto responded that it

will take time to look at all students and investigate a program with staff development. Mrs. Dexter then asked what is planned for the budget regarding this program. Mr. Majewski replied that money was put back into the budget for this program. Mrs. Leeson then asked if the district currently has a writing program in place. Mrs. Katona and Dr. Lewis responded that it is currently embedded in the reading series.

Mrs. Dexter asked for an explanation of ranging and grouping for achievement. Mrs. Katona explained that she will be meeting with principals to discuss parameters associated with developing the ranges. In general, the highest and lowest students would not be mixed with other levels. Other groups would be mixed according to criteria identified at each level. At this time, it is difficult to estimate a number of sections, as student data must be considered in scheduling.

Mrs. Durante explained that current teachers meet to discuss each student before they are placed in the next grade level. Ninth grade teachers decide where students will be placed in the tenth grade through the following process: current teacher makes a recommendation to the counselor; the counselor then make changes which will be placed on a student's course request, which will then be sent to the parents in the form of a course request letter.

Mrs. Leeson requested a report regarding the results of how students did academically when bumped up to higher level classes.

Mrs. Leeson noted that students who take drivers education classes get 4-1/2 weeks of classes and 4-1/2 weeks of study hall. She asked if the administration can look into finding something else to replace the study hall portion.

Mrs. Leeson stated that many of the ninth graders have out grown the ninth grade computer class. She asked if there is something else more challenging for them. Mr. Arbushites responded that an eighth grade computer challenge test will be administered to see if students can be bumped up to a more challenging class.

Mrs. Dexter requested a copy of the Tutoring Money Report. Dr. Lewis replied that he will have Mrs. Katona send this information out to all board members.

Mrs. Leeson asked what the impact would be of moving the English as a Second Language (ESOL) program from Liberty High School to Freedom High School. Mr. LaPorta replied that they are currently looking at the courses and electives that will be available to students. Mrs. Correll stated that the number of students who come out for electives is minimal. She also noted that all core courses will be with ESOL teachers.

Mrs. Dexter stated that she has heard from high school parents that a letter was sent out to parents requesting them not to approach guidance unless it is absolutely necessary to do so. She stated that parents do not understand the full meaning and impact of the letter. Parents and students need to know that they can contact guidance regarding class changes. Mr. LaPorta replied that if anyone is not comfortable with meeting with guidance or any other staff member, they should contact him. He also noted that sometimes changes are not available after the start of a marking period because certain classes are already full. Mrs. Dexter replied that the administration should check the wording of the letter that was sent from Liberty High School regarding this matter.

Mr. Tenaglia reminded the other board members that when they are requesting information to be sent to them, all information should go through the superintendent, and then sent out to all board members, not just the person making the request.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:

Charlotte L. Zimmerman

Administrative Assistant to the Assistant to the Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction