



## **BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MONDAY, JULY 14, 2008**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, July 14, 2008, at 6:00 p.m. in the Education Center's Dining Room. Present were Curriculum Committee Members Mary M. Katona, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and Richard Agretto, director of special education; and Board Members: Rosario Amato, 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; Stanley J. Majewski, Jr., assistant to the superintendent for finance and administration; Thomas Washington, assistant superintendent for human resources; Dean Donaher, director of student services; Kathleen Bast, coordinator of Literacy/ELA K-12; Eric Smith, supervisor of science; Julie Victory, supervisor of mathematics; and representatives of the press.

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

### **GOALS 2008-2010**

Dr. Lewis reviewed the District Goal Scorecard for 2008-2010, which consisted of the following goals, which were broken down by objectives, targets/activities, administrator, status, timeline, and measurement:

Goal 1: Curriculum and Instruction – Improve student achievement through high school restructuring and strengthening middle school level and elementary programs.

1. To meet Project 720 goals.
2. To reduce the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and high achieving students.
3. To focus on diversity and understanding differences among races, classes, ethnicities, and social choices.
4. To explore International Baccalaureate.
5. To incorporate rigor, relevance, and relationships across all content areas.
6. To improve student achievement at all levels.
7. To use multiple data sources.
8. To ensure alignment of all core curriculum, K-12, to the state standards, and as appropriate, anchors and eligible content.

9. To develop Small Learning Communities and Signature Schools at the middle school level.
10. To evaluate the Classrooms for the Future initiative using the online tools from Metiri and the University of Virginia.
11. To move schools and subsequently the district off the state warning list and corrective action status list.

Goal 2: Teaching and Learning – Raise the level of effective teaching through a professional development plan that focuses on identifying and using best practices.

1. To provide appropriate professional development for teachers and administrators.
2. To enhance advance placement and develop pre-advance placement offerings.
3. To develop professional learning communities.
4. To develop teacher leaders.
5. To teach and exhibit tolerance and understanding of diversity.

Goal 3: Building Capable Leaders – Create a cohort of instructional leaders, not just managers at the building level, where the principal and assistant principal are regarded as the academic leaders within their building.

1. To develop leadership for inclusion.
2. To support leadership for differentiated instruction.
3. To use data driven decision-making.
4. To create professional learning communities.
5. To create a culture of learning.

Goal 4: Artful Use of Infrastructure – Improve the district’s financial situation while implementing a complete and comprehensive Strategic Plan.

1. To monitor the district budget.
2. To build the district’s Strategic Plan.
3. To evaluate the Capital Improvement Plan.

Goal 5: School Safety – Create a safe environment in all schools to address not only facility security and student decorum, but also an environment of tolerance and understanding amongst all stakeholders.

1. To hold an annual review of facility security.
2. To improve consistency of the Student Code of Conduct.
3. To provide diversity training in “No Place for Hate.”
4. To create a safe school culture.

Dr. Lewis remarked that there is still a lot of work to be done under each goal.

Mrs. Follweiler asked if each objective could be prioritized. Dr. Lewis replied that he also felt it would be a good idea to put a priority number next to each objective. Dr. Lewis and the board discussed various objectives and their estimated priority. Dr. Lewis said that cabinet would review the objectives and prioritize them. The goals will then be returned to the board for review of the priorities.

Mr. Tenaglia noted that in goal 1, it is stated, “Place all students into Algebra 1 in their freshman year, distinguishing courses by the amount of scaffolding, rather than by the curricular content,” and he asked what “scaffolding” meant. Dr. Lewis replied that it is a strategy by which you build off of prior constructs and supports. Mrs. Victory replied that the ultimate goal is that students are able to function on their own without supports. In response to Mr. Tenaglia’s question, Mrs. Victory reiterated that the content would not be changed.

Mr. Tenaglia asked what the target “Encourage greater participation among tenth and eleventh grade students in PSAT testing” meant. Dr. Lewis replied that there is much research showing that students who take the PSAT test in tenth or eleventh grade score higher scores on the SAT test. He also noted that many scholarships are tied into SAT scores and the data from the PSAT is very useful. Mrs. Katona also replied that we can obtain important information from a student’s PSAT data, such as whether a student has the potential to be placed in advanced placement classes, etc.

Mr. McKeon noted that years ago all students took the PSAT test. He asked what the percentage is now of students who take the test. Mrs. Katona replied that she would obtain this information for him.

Mr. Tenaglia asked what NISL stood for. Mrs. Katona and Dr. Lewis replied that it stood for National Institute for School Leadership.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she felt the goals seem to be too general, and she would like to see them narrowed down further.

Mr. Amato suggested that Mrs. Leeson rewrite them the way she would like to see them written.

Dr. Lewis noted that goals one through four are from the state’s Action Plan Template.

Mrs. Leeson replied that she understood this information is from the district’s goals that were given to the state, but she felt that it does not communicate as well as a list of four or five goals would. She suggested an additional sheet be completed that would identify four to six goals that the district could accomplish this year.

Dr. Lewis replied that we could accomplish the same thing by prioritizing objectives.

Mrs. Leeson and Dr. Lewis agreed that the prioritized list of goals be placed on next week’s agenda. Mr. Majewski commented that while it would be possible to put priority numbers on the goals by next week, but he would need more time to place dollar amounts on each item.

## **STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT UPDATE**

Mr. Washington and Dr. Donaher presented an annual overview of the Student Code of Conduct. Mr. Washington noted that the Student Code of Conduct has three main objectives: to ensure a safe, secure, and orderly environment; to provide a standard of behavior; and to offer

interventions and progressive consequences. His report include the following changes from the 2006-2007 school year to the 2007-2008 school year in Level III Infractions:

- High school levels dropped from 2,983 to 2,753, for a 7 percent decline
- Middle school levels dropped from 1,357 to 906, for a 33 percent decline
- Elementary school levels dropped from 691 to 607, for a 12 percent decline

Mr. Washington also stated that district-wide, the total number of students suspended declined 11 percent.

Mr. Washington noted the following recommendations:

1. Provide an update to all hall monitors in nonviolent crisis intervention.
2. Implement Policy #218.3 on gangs and gang activity in January of 2008.
3. Continue staff development on gang awareness.
4. Provide staff development on bullying to administration, teachers, staff, students, and parents.
5. Investigate using “Right Reason” bullying software in academic integration classes to provide training and awareness to students.
6. Hold town hall workshops to educate parents on the topic of bullying.
7. Review, implement, and enforce Policy #237 on electronic devices.
8. Continue to provide staff development in differentiated instruction and inclusionary practices.
9. Support and promote the second annual Inclusionary Academy.
10. Enforcement of wearing school ID.

Mrs. Koch asked if board members could be included in some of the meetings noted in the recommendations.

Mr. Amato commented that, regarding the Student Code of Conduct for the high schools, there is a decline in the percentage, but when we examine the data we do not come close to having students conduct themselves conducive to a safe, secure, and orderly environment. He noted that he has sat in on several executive sessions where students have been allowed to return to school, and feels that the board has become weak in enforcing the Student Code of Conduct.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she is more concerned with the number of elementary referrals being dropped, and questions if the board is not taking referrals seriously.

Mr. Washington stated that, when the Student Code of Conduct takes effect and the numbers go down, we are accused of not taking it seriously, but if the numbers go up, we are accused of being out of control.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she would like to recommend that a survey go out to all staff members to ask their opinion of the Student Code of Conduct and the current system.

Mrs. Koch recommended that there be a meeting with the board and the administration to discuss problems with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Mr. Washington explained changes to Policy #237 – Electronic Devices. The changes included: that students may possess cellular telephones while on school property and during school-sponsored activities. However, all cellular telephone functions must be deactivated and cellular telephones must be placed in a secure area. No voice and/or text messages may be received during the school day or during a school-sponsored activity unless authorized by a district employee. Students in violation of this policy will have their electronic device confiscated. These devices will be returned to the student at the end of the school day. A second violation will result in the device being confiscated and returned only to the parent/guardian. Upon the third violation, the device will be confiscated and returned at the end of the school year upon furnishing proper identification. All electronic devices must remain off during a school evacuation or drill. The district is not responsible for any lost or stolen electronic devices.

The board agreed that the policy should read, “No voice conversation and/or text messages may be **sent or** received,” adding the words “**sent or**”.

Mrs. Leeson asked if it would be possible to set up a “Cell Phone Authorized Area” to be used during free time.

Mr. Amato replied that we are just looking for trouble if we set up such an area; he feels there is no need for such an area during the school day.

Mrs. Leeson stated that the hardest part is enforcing the policy of no cell phones during class time. She would like staff input to see the feasibility of enforcement.

## **LEVEL IV INFRACTIONS – BOARD REGULATIONS CONSEQUENCES**

Mr. Washington reviewed the Level IV infraction language and added replica of a weapon and/or look-a-like objects to the language.

Mrs. Leeson stated that we need to work harder on the issue of bullying; we need to teach students the seriousness of their actions.

Mrs. Koch stated that we also need to include teachers and parents, because they also need to be reminded that students often copy the actions of adults.

## **GANG ACTIVITY**

Mr. Washington reviewed the policy that states that students should associate with peers who engage in safe, respectful, and responsible behaviors. Students must not participate in gang activities. Gang activity consequences shall be assigned by the administrator after assessing whether any acts or behavior is gang related. Consequences may range from Level II to Level IV infractions.

Mr. Washington noted that the following guidelines are deemed closely related to gang activity and are prohibited:

1. Wearing, possessing, using, distribution, displaying, or selling of any clothing, jewelry, emblem, badge, symbol, sign tattoos, or manner of grooming, or other item which indicates or implies membership in, or affiliation with, any gang and/or representative of any gang.
2. Commission of any act or omission, or the use of any speech, either verbal or nonverbal (gestures, handshakes, etc.), which indicates or implies membership in or affiliation with any gang, and/or is representative of any gang.
3. Use of any speech, or committing any act or omission in furtherance of the interests of any gang or gang activity including, but not limited to:
  - a. Soliciting others for membership in any gangs.
  - b. Requesting any person to pay for protection or otherwise intimidating or threatening, hazing, or harassing any person.
  - c. Committing any illegal act or violation of school district policies.
  - d. Inciting another person to act with physical violence upon any other person or to cause damage to property.
  - e. Painting, writing, or otherwise inscribing gang-related graffiti, messages, insignias, or signs on school property.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she does not like the idea that consequences could range from Level II to Level IV; she felt that the district needs to write individual level descriptions within each category.

Mr. Washington replied that we have a draft of guidelines and will send a copy of them to the board.

### **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding the fact that enforcing usage of electronic devices is a “Catch 22” situation. He also suggested that Mr. Washington contact Mr. Jim Tice from the South Side Gang Task Force Committee.

Mrs. Esther Lee, 627 Cherokee Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding the district’s goals. She stated that they are so general that sometimes they miss the point. She felt they needed to be more specific. She also spoke regarding diversity within the curriculum; and also the fact that, as far as she was concerned, cell phones are not needed in schools during class time.

### **OPEN FORUM**

Mrs. Koch requested that the new social studies books be brought to the next diversity meeting to review how the texts approach diversity.

Mrs. Koch noted that she had just returned from the PSBA meeting in Gettysburg and stated that a wonderful presentation had been provided with emphasis on teaching reading and Reading

Recovery®. She stated that when they compared Reading Recovery on a 1:1 and 1:3 basis, they believed the same job could be accomplished on a 1:3 ratio. She also noted that the next PSBA meeting is scheduled for October.

Mrs. Follweiler asked if the contractor at the Nitschmann worksite would be responsible for the water leak damages. Dr. Lewis replied that the contractor would be responsible for the expenses, since it was a contractor error.

Mr. McKeon requested an update on the Nitschmann and East Hills roof leaks, and also on the Liberty floor construction problem.

Mr. Tenaglia requested litigation updates, a report on the administrative/supervisory workshops, and also an update on the handwriting program.

Dr. Lewis and the board discussed possible dates for employee hearings.

Mrs. Leeson asked for an update on Reading Recovery. Dr. Lewis replied that the administration has been working on the update, but due to resignations received as late as today, they are not prepared to make a final report at this time. He stated that they will have a final report next week. He also noted that there is no extra money available in the state's budget to reinstate Reading Recovery teachers that have been reassigned.

Mrs. Leeson asked the board and Dr. Lewis to suggest dates for the superintendent's annual evaluation. It was suggested the superintendent's presentation be held on August 18, 2008, and the board's evaluation on August 25, 2008. These dates will be finalized after all board members are notified.

Mrs. Leeson asked why the seating was cut back from the original planned seating at the new pool at Liberty High School. She stated that with the present seating, there would not be enough seats to accommodate a large swim meet, such as for the Liberty vs. Freedom swim meet.

Mrs. Follweiler agreed that, as a former swimming coach, the amount of seats is inadequate and noted that it is now too late to add additional seats. She also noted that the visibility from the new seating location is poor.

Mrs. Esther Lee asked if the Broughal Middle School project is on schedule. Dr. Lewis replied that the project is on schedule and noted that there have been no change orders to date. But he did note that the district will have to borrow additional money to complete the project.

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

Minutes Prepared By:

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