



BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MONDAY, AUGUST 11, 2008

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, August 11, 2008, at 7:00 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, Michele Cann, Judith Dexter, Irene Follweiler, 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; Frank Arbushites, coordinator of academic computing; Eric Smith, supervisor of science; Julie Victory, supervisor of mathematics; and representatives of the press.

Mrs. Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mrs. Dexter asked if the board would mind if she moved some of the topics around because of the amount of speakers in the audience, and noted that she would be adjourning the curriculum meeting after the first item in order to move to the Special Board Meeting. The curriculum meeting would reconvene afterward. She then asked Mrs. Katona which item on the agenda she would like to start with. Mrs. Katona responded that she would like to start with discussion item #1.3 – Summer Conferences Report, as several teachers had come to the meeting to share their experiences from the conferences.

1.3 - SUMMER CONFERENCES REPORT

Mrs. Katona provided a summary to the board of the four secondary conferences, supported through Project 720, which were attended by 36 different representatives, consisting of teachers, as well as building and central office administrators, in order to be able to support and enhance the work being done to redesign our high schools to meet student needs. Mrs. Katona asked the following personnel, one from each conference, to provide an overview of the conference he/she attended:

George Zeigler, an English teacher at Freedom High School, presented a review of the Hope Conference he attended in Costa Mesa, California, titled, "*Failure Is Not An Option: Courageous Leadership for School Success.*"

Kim Harper, chairperson for the English department at Freedom High School, presented a review of the conference she attended at Harvard University, titled, "*Redesigning High Schools Institute.*"

Natalie Chickey, chairperson for the English department at Liberty High School, presented a review of the conference she attended in Orlando, Florida, titled, "*Model Schools Conference: Great Challenges, Real Solutions, Right Now.*"

Samuella Donnelly, department chairperson for high school ESOL, presented a review of the conference she attended in Hershey, Pennsylvania, titled, "*2008 Governor's Institute for Data Driven Instructional Practices for Reading and Mathematics.*"

Each presenter personally thanked the board for the opportunity to attend these very informative and worthwhile conferences, and stated that all attendees are very anxious to implement what they learned into their schools. Each presenter also agreed that Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) will be the foundation of education in each school, and that supporting each other will make this program work. They also noted that "rigor for all students" would be essential to improving their schools.

Mrs. Katona reported that she and Dr. Barilla held a post-conference meeting with attendees from all the conferences to plan a specific course of action for sharing the information with other staff members and how to use the ideas to advance their goals. Mrs. Katona then asked the building principals to identify the actions they have already taken towards meeting the Project 720 and district goals, as well as areas to which they still need to attend.

Mr. LaPorta reported that he has attended some professional development experiences during this summer. He reiterated that the Harvard conference provided excellent instructional strategies, which included the theory that operating within a school is a 24/7 way of thinking. Mr. LaPorta remarked that his seven goals are:

1. Mentoring for all basic/below basic students.
2. Improving student achievement through "*Getting Results*"
3. Data analysis that leads to task analysis.
4. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
5. Literacy/numeracy, inclusion and co-teaching
6. Successful transition of the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) program
7. Safe and orderly school

Mr. LaPorta stated that the main focus must be what we do with our students. When you focus on instruction, the data will improve. We cannot teach students on a sub-standard level and expect them to make standards. We also need a successful transition of ESOL students.

Mrs. Durante replied that she echoes many of Mr. LaPorta's comments. She was skeptical of sending personnel to these conferences, but was extremely pleased with what everyone got out of attending. She stated that when she attended the conference at Harvard, they taught them the way our teachers should be teaching our students, rigorously for the entire class time. They taught them to focus on the child, and to make sure every child is engaged in the class. Our teachers need to be there for all the students, all the time. She also stated that she had the opportunity to meet with administrators and staff members from across the United States, who are facing similar situations. Everyone at the conference agreed that we need to break down large schools into smaller teaching groups. Mrs. Durante stated that our district needs to send more teachers to these types of conferences.

Mr. Amato stated that both principals mentioned breaking down high schools into Smaller Learning Communities. He noted that this has been introduced in our district before, but we called them "Houses". He remarked that he had suggested a similar idea twelve years ago about breaking our schools down into "Magnet" schools and was glad to see that this idea is again being considered.

The meeting was suspended at 8:05 p.m., at which time a Special Board Meeting and a Remarketing Agent Discussion took place.

The meeting was reconvened at 10:10 p.m.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding his nature, and told a story about a scorpion and a frog.

Sandy and Richard Cabrera, 2106 Aster Road, spoke regarding the Liberty High School wrestling team's trip to the Virginia Duals. They wanted the board to be aware that the only expenses approved for the trip were the costs for the substitutes, and not for the cost of the registration fee, which they reported has always been paid by the district. Mrs. Cabrerra asked the board for suggestions on how to handle students who do not fund raise the amount required per student for such trips.

Mrs. Dexter replied that the board is currently reviewing the policy of paying for registration fees for all trips and may be coming back with changes, but that will be in the future. Right now no funding is available for registration fees.

REMAINING DISCUSSION ITEMS

Because of the lateness of the meeting the following was decided regarding the remaining agenda items:

- 1.1 Field Trip Overview – tabled until next Board Curriculum Committee Meeting
- 1.2 READ 180 - tabled until next Board Curriculum Committee Meeting

- 1.4 Relationship Disclosure Form (Human Resources Item) – the board recommended the use of this form for new hires, but agreed to table the discussion regarding its usage for current employees, until the next Board Human Resource Committee Meeting
- 1.5 Electronic Devices - tabled until next Board Curriculum Committee Meeting

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE AUGUST 18, 2008, REGULAR BOARD MEETING

The board discussed the following items and recommended they be placed on the agenda for the August 18, 2008, Regular Board Meeting:

- 2.1 No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Title I
- 2.2 No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Title II, Part A
- 2.3 Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities, Title IV, Part A of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
- 2.4 Keystone Nazareth Charitable Foundation Grant

OPEN FORUM

Mrs. Leeson questioned class size guidelines for elementary schools. She asked if some of our classes have 28 or 29 students in them.

Mrs. Dexter stated that she would like to know the projected class sizes for each elementary building.

Dr. Lewis responded that we cannot hire additional teachers on projected amounts. He stated that we have to look at the actual totals on the first and third day reports. He explained that not all students projected to be in our schools on the first day of school actually show up. He also noted that he and Mr. Washington are checking the class size numbers daily.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she would like to go back to the practice of sending the board a “red flag” warning when any classes are reaching maximum size.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she still does not see a Reading Recovery program in place or specific changes to the program. She is concerned that we will not meet the needs of all our students.

Dr. Lewis replied that he believes the district’s program will no longer only service first graders, but will service students in grades one, two, and three. He also stated that he will find out next week if additional funding will be available from the state. If additional money is available, the program will be adjusted accordingly.

Mrs. Dexter stated that she is concerned about cutting staff in buildings that did not make AYP. Dr. Lewis replied that the district will now have a stronger program, and also stated that first graders are not part of the AYP testing.

Mr. Tenaglia inquired about unused tutoring funds.

Mr. Smith explained the NCLB funding. He explained that these tutoring funds can only be used for external tutoring and that experience has shown that district parents strongly prefer using district teachers to tutor their children.

Mrs. Follweiler recommended that the board develop time management practices. She stated that tonight's meeting was a good example, and suggested realistic time frames be developed for future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:

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