



**BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2008**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, September 15, 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, Michele Cann, Judith Dexter, Irene Follweiler, Dr. Craig Haytmanek, 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; Robin Lutcher, director of information technologies; Frank Arbushites, coordinator of academic computing; Kathy Bast, coordinator of literacy/ELA K-12; Eric Smith, supervisor of science; Julie Victory, supervisor of mathematics; and representatives of the press.

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

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Mr. Thomas Nolan, 3910 Kipton Court, Bethlehem, president of the Freedom High School Choir Association, spoke regarding the upcoming choir trip to Mexico. He requested that the board consider approving the trip regardless of the fact that the cost of sending an administrator and substitute costs were up for discussion on tonight's agenda. He felt it was not fair to have students miss out on this great opportunity due to budget cuts.

Ms. Tanya Thear, 1202 West Union Boulevard, Bethlehem, a teacher in the Sequoia program at Nitschmann Middle School, spoke regarding concerns about budget cuts and how reductions in the program's field trips could possibly hurt the quality of the program.

Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding Courtesy of the Floor and asked why it was moved to the beginning of the meeting. Mrs. Dexter responded that they have experimented with placing Courtesy of the Floor at various times during meetings and it was decided to place it in the beginning of the meeting with the option of having a second Courtesy of the Floor at the end of the meeting if there are people still present who still wish to speak.

DISCUSSION ITEMS –

FIELD TRIPS

Mrs. Katona noted that she has met with the Sequoia team and the principal at Nitschmann Middle School to discuss future field trips and the need to support their program.

Mrs. Katona then discussed three different items, which were related to field trips or student trips that are typically supported through the general operating budget.

The first item outlined the specific trips that have historically been covered through the general operating budget, and which the administration plans to support once again this year. She noted that the costs associated with these trips are mainly related to transportation.

Mr. Majewski noted that the field trip budget for 2008-2009 is \$130,000.

Mrs. Katona and Dr. Lewis then asked the board for direction regarding funding field trips. Mrs. Leeson replied that she felt the administration should be coming to the board with their recommendations on which trips to cut, so as not to affect the quality of the programs.

Mrs. Cann stated that she thought that trips were part of the Sequoia and Monagacci programs. Dr. Lewis replied that they are part of the programs, but trips are funded through the field trip budget.

Mrs. Follweiler stated that she thought the reason for the review of this program was to make sure one group did not fundraise their entire trip, while another group had all their expenses paid. She stated that she trusted the administration's judgment to divide the \$130,000 evenly amongst all schools.

Mr. Amato asked why the board needed to review field trips line-by-line.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she thought the board had originally requested to review the Student Trip Policy, not field trips. Mrs. Katona responded that when field trips originally appeared on the agenda of the August Curriculum and Instruction Committee Meeting, she gave the board an outline of discussion points and recommendations that grew out of meetings with principals and teachers in the summer. When the field trip topic was tabled until September's Curriculum and Instruction Committee Meeting, her understanding was that the board was not looking for that information, but rather for information regarding specific trips, and the funding associated with them. This is what she had compiled for the board for this meeting. She also indicated that she had mentioned previously that this process would take a full year to go through, as she has been meeting with principals about their field trips, and would be continuing the dialogues throughout the year. She would then be in a better position to return to the board with specific recommendations.

The board agreed that they need to support curriculum related field trips and asked that principals try to find other funding for non-curriculum related trips. They also asked to see a

breakdown of the \$130,000 allocated for field trips. The board recommended that the administration make a list of all field trips and their estimated costs to see if the costs fit within the \$130,000, and if not, how much additional funding would be needed and what account(s) the additional money could be transferred from. Mr. Majewski informed the board that transportation is working on this, but that given the enormity of the task, it will not be completed until later in the week.

The second item was a summary of costs associated with the FBLA and DECA trips during the last three years. Mrs. Katona noted that, along with this item, is a recommendation for how the district might continue to support these trips. The administration recommended an amount not to exceed \$150 be provided in support of each student per event, as determined by the merit of the event. It was noted that there are some trips for which only a \$50 cost per student would be applied, and others for which the total amount would be fundraised. Any amount from the district would be applied to all associated costs, including transportation and adults' costs, with the difference being made up by the organization. The board would also like to see what else is covered by the \$48,000 that goes toward funding these trips.

Mrs. Leeson asked if this much was allowed in the business area, how would the district cover expenses for other competitive areas? Mrs. Katona pointed out that the administration is providing an interim solution at this time, as everyone needs time to work through this year to get a better understanding of what the particular clubs will and will not be able to support. There was also a discussion on how much less the \$150 would mean overall in comparison with the money the district gave to the clubs in the past.

The third item was in response to a board member's request for a history of international field trips and extended destinations, and the costs associated with those trips. The board asked that additional information be included in this report concerning the Liberty High School band trip to Orlando, Florida.

FREEDOM HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL TRIP

The board reviewed an agenda item for the Regular Board Meeting on September 22, 2008, regarding a proposed Freedom High School choral trip to Mexico on February 21-28, 2009.

Mrs. Follweiler asked if it is in our board policy that an administrator must accompany groups on these types of trips? Dr. Lewis replied that it is only a guideline, but noted that it is not fair to put a teacher/chaperone in the position of an administrator where students are involved. He also stated that right now there are enough funds budgeted for high school administrators to accompany groups on such trips. The board requested information on how expenses for middle school administrators who accompany their groups on trips are covered.

PSSA UPDATE

Mr. Smith presented an update to the board on PSSA results. He explained that the targets for 2008-2010 included:

- At least 63 percent of tested students must be proficient in reading, an increase of nine percentage points from last year.
- At least 56 percent of tested students must be proficient in mathematics, an increase of eleven percentage points from last year.

Mr. Smith noted that the Bethlehem Area School District is “Making Progress” in Corrective Action II. He explained that Donegan Elementary School is “Making Progress” in School Improvement II; Lincoln Elementary School is out of “warning” status, having made Annual Yearly Progress (AYP); and Northeast Middle School has successfully moved into AYP status from “Making Progress” in 2006-2007.

In the areas for improvement, five elementary school are now in “warning” status; Fountain Hill Elementary School has moved into “School Improvement I” status; Broughal Middle School remains in “warning” status; East Hills Middle School is in “School Improvement II” status; and Liberty and Freedom High Schools are in “Corrective Action, II, Year Two” status.

Regarding 4Sight and PSSA, Mr. Smith reported that all grade levels and schools show marked improvement from September through May. He explained that 4Sight, at many grade levels, is not a good predictor of advanced performance, due to a lack of discrimination of higher-level performance. He also explained that 4Sight has not been a good predictor of PSSA performance at the high school level, overestimating our basic and proficient numbers and underestimating our below basic and advanced performance.

Regarding a comparison to similar districts, Mr. Smith explained that the Bethlehem Area School District compares favorably when compared to similar districts, based on size, socio-economic status, IEP, ELL, and Hispanic populations. Nearly every grade level has shown year over year growth in PSSA scores. Our Hispanic and IEP sub-groups, while still requiring growth, generally outpace those populations in other similar districts.

Mrs. Leeson asked if the board will be receiving a copy of the PSSA report they usually receive. Dr. Lewis replied that he has just received his copy and will be sending copies out to the board.

Regarding the PVAAS Report, Mr. Smith explained that, as a district, every grade level in our elementary and middle schools achieved “Value-Added” growth at or above the state growth standard for 2007-2008, in both reading and mathematics. As individual schools, 89 percent of all identifies quintiles are within one standard error of the state target or better, and 47 percent of elementary targets and 68 percent of middle school targets are above the state target. He also noted that our high school growth continues to be a struggle for all targets.

Regarding writing results, Mr. Smith explained that writing continues to be a strength for the district, with more than 78 percent of eleventh graders, 75 percent of eight graders, and 57 percent of fifth graders either proficient or advanced on the PSSA writing test. He also noted that writing is still not used to measure AYP.

Mr. Smith explained that the focal points for 2008-2009 include:

- Improve all student performance, but especially focus on identified subgroups.

- Look to other districts and programs that are more successful at reaching these subgroups, utilizing the Distinguished Educator program and making contacts with other resources.
- Focus attention on student performance at the high school level through challenging curriculum for all students.

Dr. Lewis informed the board that he had requested additional personnel from the Distinguished Educator program and will have four Distinguished Educators and two Distinguished School Leaders on site for the 2008-2009 school year.

MENTORING PRESENTATION BY HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Mrs. Durante and Mr. LaPorta explained plans for student mentoring, as developed by teachers and administrators, at Liberty and Freedom High Schools.

Mrs. Durante explained that last year Liberty High School teachers implemented some concepts of mentoring. After attending conferences this past summer, the Liberty School Improvement Team announced that their mission is “Success For All Students!” They recognized that embracing their students to achieve their highest success requires the establishment of relationships between their students and the staff. In an effort to work toward their mission, students in grades ten, eleven, and twelve were surveyed last spring to determine which teacher they would like to have as their homeroom teacher. As school began, students were placed in homerooms with the teacher, coach, or advisor of his/her choice. Thus, homerooms at Liberty High School had a better transition this year. Mrs. Durante then went on to explain that homeroom teachers will focus on the ninth grade “Kick-Off” plan and the ninth grade mentoring plan. She stated that their main goal is to establish a sense of trust.

At Freedom High School, Mr. LaPorta explained that mentoring will formally begin during the week of September 15th. Assigned staff members will provide mentoring to all eligible 9th-12th grade students that are identified as at risk for not graduating or being college or career ready. He explained that Freedom High School will be using the three R’s program – Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships.

Mrs. Follweiler stated that she would like to have high school administrators check on students who are doing well with their grades, but are not involved in extra-curricular activities. She would like someone to try to get these students involved in extra-curricular school activities.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Dr. Donaher presented updated guidelines and an agenda item to be presented at the Regular Board Meeting on September 22, 2008, regarding the use of electronic devices on school property. After much discussion on the wording, it was decided that Dr. Donaher make changes to the guidelines and agenda item before bring it to the board meeting for final approval.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE SEPTEMBER 22, 2008, REGULAR BOARD MEETING

The board reviewed and approved bringing the following agenda items to the September 22, 2008, Regular Board Meeting:

1. School-Based Behavioral Health Grant – PBIS
2. Title III – Part A of No Child Left Behind

OPEN FORUM

Mr. Tenaglia asked if the administration received any recommendations for format changes at the conclusion of the recent Inclusion/Literacy Academy? Mr. Agretto replied that all recommendations will be reviewed by the committee, who will then incorporate requested changes into next year's academy.

Dr. Lewis noted that the items regarding the Liberty High School athletic trips to the Virginia Duals and the Cross Country trip will again be placed on the September agenda with requests to cover their registration fees, since they were budgeted for in this year's athletic budget. He also noted that the Sunguard conference will also be included with reduced rates.

Mr. Tenaglia mentioned that the Nitschmann Middle School parent group will be hosting author John Grogan at their school on Wednesday, October 1, 2008. He noted that the parent group will be sending invitations to the board for their attendance. He also noted that Mr. Grogan will be waiving his fee and will be providing copies of his book to students who cannot afford them.

Mr. McKeon asked the status of the staff/student/parent survey. Mrs. Lutchter replied that it is complete, and Mr. Zieger and Mr. Washington have reviewed it, but it has not yet been put on the Web site. Mrs. Dexter asked that the board be allowed to review it before it is posted.

Mrs. Leeson asked if elementary schools are cutting back on allotted times for recess. Dr. Lewis replied that Mr. Washington contacted all elementary principals and reported that all elementary schools still take a twenty-minute recess with a teacher. He did note that, regarding the thirty minute lunch period, some schools were allowing their students to go outside after they finish eating, and others found out that students were hurrying to finish their food so they could go outside, and have changed their procedures to allow quiet activities for the remaining lunch period.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:

Charlotte L. Zimmerman

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