



**BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2008**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, October 27, 2008, at 6:00 p.m. in the Education Center's Dining Room. Present were Curriculum Committee Member Mary M. Katona, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction; and Board Members: Rosario Amato, 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; Stanley J. Majewski, Jr., assistant to the superintendent for finance and administration; Thomas Washington, assistant superintendent for human resources; Kathy Bast, coordinator of literacy/ELA K-12; Doris Correll, coordinator of English acquisition; Eric Smith, supervisor of science; and representatives of the press.

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

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Nothing to report.

INFORMATION ITEMS –

ACTION PLAN REVIEWS

Dr. Lewis noted that action plans for Fountain Hill Elementary School, East Hills Middle School, and Freedom High School were sent to the board for their review and opened them up for discussion.

Mrs. Follweiler thanked the administration for the summary sheets with highlights of each action plan.

1. Fountain Hill Elementary School's Action Plan

Mrs. Dexter noted that Fountain Hill Elementary School has a Welcome Classroom and inquired as to why there was nothing in the summary regarding how it is associated with the improvement plan.

Dr. Lewis replied that it has been a successful intervention.

Mr. Stannard noted that last year Fountain Hill Elementary School had approximately 220 students in and out of his Welcome Classroom, many from homeless and/or unstable housing conditions.

Mrs. Dexter asked if we could measure the outcome of the Welcome Classroom. Mr. Stannard replied that no hard data is available, only observational data.

Mrs. Koch stated that her concern is with the constant interruptions in a classroom without a Welcome Classroom. Students enter and leave classes on a daily basis. She stated that this was the reason Welcome Classrooms were originally started.

Mrs. Dexter invited all principals to attend the upcoming budget hearings where the future of Welcome Classrooms will be discussed.

Mr. Amato asked if the administration could check records of which students keep moving out of a school and eventually returning back to the same school. He asked if something could be done to keep them at the same school to establish some sort of stability.

2. East Hills Middle School's Action Plan

No questions or comments.

3. Freedom High School's Action Plan

Dr. Lewis and Mrs. Katona noted that the administration has held many meetings with Freedom High School's staff and they have identified all students by name for tracking purposes.

Dr. Lewis announced that he has been able to obtain a Distinguished School Leader (DSL) to be assigned to Freedom High School and a Distinguished Educator (DE) to be assigned to Liberty High School for the 2008-2009 school year.

Mr. LaPorta stated that Freedom High School has two extended homerooms per month to give teachers additional time with students. He also discussed the various tutoring options available to students and noted that tutoring is not only held at Freedom High School, but is also located at the Fowler Center on the south side of Bethlehem. Mr. LaPorta noted that the tutoring initiative revolves around "Study Island," a Web-based program that can be accessed by students in their classrooms and also at home.

Mrs. Koch asked if the Fowler Center attendance is good. Mr. LaPorta replied that it is starting out slow, but building.

When asked about schools at different levels talking with each other, Mrs. Katona responded that, at the January in-service, grade five and six teachers will meet to begin vertical articulation

discussions. Grades eight and nine ELA teachers have already met, and grades nine, ten, and eleven ELA teachers meet with Mrs. Bast monthly to discuss literacy across the classrooms. Mr. Stannard stated that at the end of fifth grade, elementary and middle school staffs have meetings to discuss students to enable an easier transition. He noted that middle schools and high schools have similar meetings.

Mrs. Dexter asked how receptive teachers have been to going online to put in grades, etc. Mr. LaPorta indicated there have been no complaints. Mrs. Dexter asked if it is time to make it mandatory for all teachers to use Parent Portal for more than just posting final grades. She also asked how many parents have access, and if they all are aware of the Parent Portal. Dr. Lewis replied that he is working with Mr. Zieger on this matter.

Mr. Tenaglia asked if once students attain proficiency do they stop trying? Mr. LaPorta replied that some do; thus, there is a need to increase the level of rigor for eleventh and twelfth grade students. Mr. LaPorta also stated that there is a need to make a strong push for dual enrollment. Mrs. Koch questioned the funding that is available for the dual enrollment program.

LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE FUNDRAISER “SPONSOR A CHAIR”

Dr. Lewis explained that The Friends of Liberty Theatre is a non-profit education foundation that hopes to raise \$100,000 by the year 2018. Their aim is to give support for a strong theatre program in the school, fund artists in residency, offer scholarships for underclass students who want to take summer theatre classes, and to be able to help offset the ever rising costs of mounting live theatre productions. The recommendation included that the proceeds from “Buy a Chair” campaign be handled as follows:

1. That the amount of each sponsorship of a chair be split in thirds as follows: one-third to the Liberty High School Theatre; one-third to the Liberty High School music departments; and one-third to the district, which will be restricted for general purposes.
2. That the board shall approve all sponsor names prior to any nameplates being installed.
3. That the district shall not be responsible for the maintenance of any nameplates, loss of nameplates, or damage of nameplates.

The board suggested the foundation look at a three-year sponsorship cost and a lifetime sponsorship cost instead of all sponsorships being lifetime. It was also suggested that the wording be changed on the section where the BASD portion is restricted for general purposes. It was suggested that the BASD portion be spent on expenses related to the arts so the money is not just merged into the general fund.

Mrs. Koch stated that she is in favor of this fundraiser, but asked what is the chance of other groups selling off or renting other seating areas or rooms without prior board approval. Dr. Lewis agreed that general rules with criteria are needed.

Mrs. Cann stated that she would like to see the BASD portion cut back with more money being divided between the other two groups.

Mrs. Follweiler stated that we must look at the larger picture. She asked that we make sure the district's solicitor review the wording and also suggested a board policy be added.

Mrs. Dexter reminded everyone that a nameplate on a seat does not mean that person is guaranteed that seat for any performance.

The board agreed that the group should bring an updated presentation to the next Board Curriculum Committee Meeting on November 3, 2008, with plans for a three-year and a lifetime nameplate.

PSSA REQUIREMENT FOR GRADUATION

Mrs. Katona stated that there has been an on-going discussion between principals, assistant principals, department chairpersons, and the administration to make passing the PSSA a requirement for graduation. The administration is recommending that, beginning with the Class of 2010, our current juniors, students will be required to pass the PSSA at proficient or above, or follow an alternate route, in order to be eligible for graduation. Special Education students, with prior individual determination, and Level I and II ELL students would be exempt from this requirement.

It would include the fact that students who exit grade ten with basic or below basic scores on their 4Sight tests would be required to participate in 45 hours of tutoring in preparation for the PSSA during their junior year. Students who demonstrate proficiency on the PSSA in their junior year will be eligible for graduation, provided they successfully complete other district requirements. Students who do not show proficiency on their PSSA reading and mathematic assessments in their junior year must retake the failed portion of the PSSA in the fall of their senior year and show proficiency on the assessment(s) at that time.

Students who do not show proficiency upon taking the test a second time will have the opportunity to show proficiency through one of the following measures:

1. An alternative assessment, such as a portfolio.
2. A Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA) in the given subject area.
3. Showing marked growth while enrolled in a PSSA remediation course in the student's senior year as determined by assessments geared toward the four levels of performance, below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced.

Dr. Lewis noted that Liberty High School's action plan is in concert with these recommendations, and Freedom High School's action plan has specifically addressed the tutoring requirement.

Mr. Tenaglia asked if students who had met the proficiency requirement would still have the opportunity for tutoring. Dr. Lewis said they would.

Mrs. Dexter noted that she had members of the community ask her the following questions:

1. What impact will this have on our dropout rate?
2. What will happen to students who freeze up when taking tests, will there be alternate options for these students?
3. Is part of the reason for some students not passing mathematics due to years of recovering from the old mathematic system?
4. Block scheduling for mathematics, does it need to be restructured, possibly making it a year-round course?
5. Alternative assessments.

Mrs. Katona addressed Mrs. Dexter's questions, specifically as they related to students dropping out or freezing when taking standardized tests by reiterating that there is a built-in "alternative measure" that would allow students to demonstrate proficiency in ways beyond the PSSA itself. Dr. Lewis noted that the administration is looking into the option of being allowed to give a third test in the senior year for proficiency.

Dr. Haytmanek asked if the administration was aware of other districts with similar policies. He asked why we would give diplomas to students if they cannot pass the test.

Mrs. Dexter asked if the teacher's union has taken a position on this proposal. Mr. Zieger noted that the union has currently not taken a stand on this subject. He stated that they need to look at all aspects and options before making their decision. Dr. Lewis said that if we keep it simple we could implement it this year.

Mr. Zieger remarked that if we cut a lot of mandated programs early on, we are taking away opportunities for success at the high school level. Mr. Amato said we need to take away the frills; it is a very serious situation that we have in looking at a test on which our district is being judged.

Mrs. Dexter stated that she does not feel this policy is ready for implementation this year; we need to do a careful and rational examination of all aspects. She also indicated that the administration needs to get this information out to parents and the community as to how it will impact the students. She suggested that the information be posted on the district Website, and Dr. Lewis asked the media to publish the information so that parents can come to the next Board Curriculum Committee Meeting on Monday, November 3, 2008, beginning at 7:00 p.m., to make their opinions know.

Dr. Lewis asked the high school principals their opinions. Both principals agreed that everything is in place to make this happen, and noted that time is of the essence.

Mrs. Leeson asked what the timeline would be. Mrs. Katona responded that the administration is looking to have a policy in place for this year's junior class, who will take the PSSA in March. She noted that the alternative measures would not need to be in place until next fall, when these students are seniors.

The board agreed that a message should be sent out to all students and parents that the BASD is looking at: "Beginning with the Class of 2010, our current juniors, students will be required to

pass the PSSA at proficient or above or follow an alternate route in order to be eligible for graduation.” They asked that this message be put on the BASD Web-site tomorrow and asked principals to also announce this to their students.

The board agreed to place this item on the agenda for the Board Curriculum Committee Meeting on Monday, November 3, 2008.

OPEN FORUM

Mrs. Koch stated that she agreed with Mr. Zieger regarding not closing Welcome Classrooms. She stated that we need to notify all stakeholders and have them speak to the board regarding the benefits of these Welcome Classrooms.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:

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