



## **BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Tuesday, January 20, 2009, at 6:30 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: Michele Cann, Irene Follweiler, Dr. Craig Haytmanek, Charlene Koch, Loretta Leeson, 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; Dr. Dean Donaher, director of student services; Eric Smith, supervisor of science; Julie Victory, supervisor of mathematics; and representatives of the press.

Dr. Haytmanek called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m.

### **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

1. Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding five Catholic churches on the south side of Bethlehem which have been closed and are still under tax-exempt roles. He urged the district to have their solicitor check into having these properties taken off the tax-exempt roles due to the fact that they are not active churches, which would bring in more tax dollars to the district.
2. Joyce Mante, 6135 Muhlenberg Court, Bethlehem, spoke regarding Liberty High School possibly eliminating level four honors courses in languages. She noted that she is currently communicating with Mrs. Katona who is working with department chairs on this issue. Dr. Lewis replied that neither he nor Mrs. Katona oppose honors courses, and they are even looking at the possibility of taking these courses to an AP level.

### **CHARTER SCHOOL HEARING**

Dr. Lewis noted that the Charter School hearing scheduled for tonight at 6:00 p.m. had been canceled. He explained that everything had been submitted properly by the Charter School, but

the group had notified the Bethlehem Area School District that they are withdrawing their request for 2009.

Mrs. Leeson noted that Dr. Lewis had agreed to continue dialogues with the Charter School and stated that she felt that the board should have been in on any decisions. Dr. Lewis replied that he appreciated her opinion even if he did not agree with it. Mrs. Koch stated that it will happen whether or not we approve it because the Pennsylvania Department of Education will eventually approve the charter. She did not feel the superintendent talking with the Charter School would change anything.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **1. Testing Update**

#### **A. SAT/AP Update**

Mrs. Katona stated that the board had previously received information from her, as well as information directly from the College Board documents that provided SAT and AP district results.

Mrs. Katona noted that the number of BASD seniors taking the SAT in 2007-2008 decreased from 2006-2007. She noted that there was a four point increase in the overall Critical Reading mean score in comparison with 2007. This score was higher than the state mean score and lower than the national mean score. The mathematics mean scores also indicate an increase of four points when compared with last year. This mean score is one point higher than that of the state, but 13 points lower than the national mean. The writing mean score showed the most improvement of all three tests, as it was up by six points this year. She then went on to explain the groups by ethnicity and by high school rank. Mrs. Katona also noted that, as always, there are many more factors to consider when viewing the students' SAT scores from one year to the next. She stated that we continue to review all of the areas reported through the College Board's summary, and we continue to work with representatives from the College Board to identify the best ways of encouraging participation among greater numbers of students. We also continue to address ways to increase the knowledge base of those students who take the SAT's.

Mrs. Cann asked if, in comparison to the state and national levels, does it look like freshman and sophomores are taking the test. Mrs. Katona responded that the report is only based on only seniors who took the test.

Mrs. Follweiler asked if Mrs. Katona would find out the drop-off percentage rate in the different sub-groups and e-mail her the answer.

Mrs. Leeson stated that students who do not take physics do not do as well on SAT's as students who take physics. Eric Smith pointed out that the students who take physics are a much stronger academic group than the students who take the Earth and Space Science courses in our traditional sequence, so a difference in the SAT scores is expected and

unlikely to be caused by the enrollment in physics. Mrs. Leeson replied that the data did not substantiate that statement.

Mrs. Leeson stated that we need to encourage more students to take the PSAT's. She asked if we do this and how. Mrs. Katona replied that we did not do it this year, but had written it into the Project 720 Grant. Mrs. Katona explained that, since it is given on a Saturday, we cannot make students take the test. She noted that there was a slight increase in the number of students who took the PSAT's this year, but not nearly the number we would have liked. Mrs. Katona replied that the district has taken the following steps to assist students: providing SAT prep courses, continuously trying to push students up in courses, PSSA prep work crossover to SAT's, and encouraging students to take the PSAT's more than once. Mrs. Leeson noted that there are some issues with the SAT prep courses. She noted that there are a broad range of students in the class and the teacher is not able to meet the needs of all students. She stated that perhaps with the addition of the PSSA course, some of these students would no longer be in the SAT course. Mrs. Katona pointed out that while PSSA prep classes will be offered, they are for a different purpose than the SAT course, and any student who is going to take the SAT may take the SAT course.

Mrs. Leeson stated that we need better communication in our high schools. Not all students hear announced messages. She suggested posting a bulletin board in the cafeteria where messages could also be posted.

Mrs. Katona then discussed AP testing information. She noted that the numbers are not that different from last year. In comparison with 2007, district results regarding participation by ethnicity indicate little or no increase among various groups. The district as a whole had a decrease of 12.9 percent in test-takers, and a decrease of 2.5 percent in the number of exams given. Mrs. Katona stated that we anticipate that, as we continue to build additional AP courses into the curriculum, we will see increases. She noted that the curriculum and instruction department, along with school administrators and department chairs, has met with Mrs. Tatalias from the College Board and received information related to the AP tests, which can inform instruction. Mrs. Katona also mentioned that she has discussed Pre-AP with Mrs. Tatalias, as this is another way to boost the numbers of students in AP courses. At this time, however, the costs associated with this vertical articulation would be more than our budget would allow.

Mrs. Leeson asked why we are not looking at sciences for AP courses. Mr. Smith replied that we will soon be adding AP courses, but teachers have not been trained yet, books have not been ordered yet, and curriculum still needs to be written.

## B. PSSA Schedule

Mrs. Katona reviewed the PSSA schedule that our high schools will follow for reading and mathematics on March 17, 18, and 19, 2009. The schedule very much mirrors last year's schedule.

2. 2009 High School Graduation Update

Mrs. Katona and Dr. Lewis discussed an updated list of reductions in graduation expenses for 2009. It was noted that, as initially planned, graduation will still be held at Stabler Arena, with Liberty High School's graduation ceremonies being held on Wednesday, June 3, 2009, and Freedom High School's graduation ceremonies being held on Thursday, June 4, 2009.

3. Agenda Items

The following agenda items, which will be placed on the January 26, 2009, Regular Board Meeting agenda, were discussed:

A. Proficiency Requirement for Graduation

Mrs. Katona and Dr. Lewis provided the board with the community input received through the district's Website regarding the Proficiency Requirements for Graduation. They also discussed the revised proposal for the Proficiency Requirements for Graduation, which would be effective with the class of 2010. Mrs. Katona noted that at the January 15, 2009, PAC meeting, she reviewed the proposal with the parents, and following much discussion, they indicated their support of it.

B. High School Summer School and Night School Program Proposal

Dr. Donaher discussed the proposed revisions to the summer school and night school programs. He noted that he and Dr. Lewis have met with Craig Zieger to review the recommendations. This design will assign rigor to each high school course taught, as the courses are now 90 hours in length. Summer school classes will meet daily for three hours from 8:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. A second course will meet from 12 noon until 3:00 p.m., giving students the opportunity to take two courses. A minimum of 18 students will be required to conduct a course, with a maximum of 25 students. Teachers may choose to teach a class with more than 25 students on an individual basis with no increase in stipend. If less than 18 students in a class, teachers will be given the option of teaching the course at a prorated reduction, or not teaching the course at all. Night school classes will meet Mondays and Wednesdays for three hours from 3:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. (or from 3:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.), with teachers' options the same as for summer school.

C. Concession Stand Report – Information item

D. Impact Aid, Section 8003

Mrs. Cintron noted that this item needed board approval because it is a grant.

D1. Federal/State Program Budgets

4. Open Forum

A. Dr. Haytmanek noted that prior to this meeting the board held an executive meeting from 6:00 – 6:40 p.m.

- B. Dr. Lewis distributed and discussed “Potential Budget Adjustments for 2009-2010”.

Mrs. Leeson suggested that budget items be discussed at the January 26, 2009, Regular Board Meeting, under Other Business.

Mrs. Koch noted that she would not be voting for “Pay to Play” until those who cannot afford to pay receive assistance.

Mrs. Koch also questioned the relocation of the Career Academy. Dr. Lewis replied that for now it is staying at its current location and they are looking at other options for next year. He also discussed the fact that the metal building in back of the Monocacy building indicated that it had a residential alarm system that was not code compliant. The system will not communicate with our fire alarm monitoring company. The district had informed the Chief Fire Inspector that the administration was recommending to the board to move the Career Academy out of the Monocacy building at the end of January. The Fire Inspector was fine with this and indicated that, if the district was going to close the building in February, then the fire system upgrade would not have to be completed. Since the board gave the administration the directive last week that the Career Academy will not move to Liberty High School as recommended for the second semester, this means that the fire system has to be upgraded and will cost the district \$3,740. The Fire Inspector has indicated that the city will defer the cost of the required permits and third party engineering drawings to save the district additional costs.

- C. Mrs. Cann asked why the administration is not considering community service as an option to budget cuts. Dr. Lewis responded that it is a quality program and important to the students. Mrs. Follweiler also noted that she would like to discuss the possibility of making cuts to the community service program.
- D. Several board members noted that they would like to commend the administration on the recommendation of employee contributions.
- E. Mrs. Leeson asked if the district has looked into tax increases it would receive from the property associated with the new casino. Mr. Majewski replied that he has and it is reflected in his revenue amounts.
- F. Mrs. Leeson noted that she would like to discuss cuts to the Welcome Classrooms. She asked if it would be possible to look into funding them through grants.
- G. The board asked Dr. Lewis to come back with two versions of the “Potential Budget Adjustments for 2009-2010”, one would show non-mandated items, and the other would show the administrations’ recommendations.
- H. Mrs. Leeson recommended that the district only fund our sports teams participating in PIAA sanctioned events. Additional events should be funded completely by the sports’ booster clubs.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:

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