



BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2009

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, February 9, 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: 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; Dr. Dean Donaher, director of student services; Frank Arbushites, acting director of technology; Eric Smith, supervisor of science; and representatives of the press.

Mrs. Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Nothing to report

CAREER PATHWAYS

Mrs. Katona provided the board with information regarding Career Pathways, which provided background on the initiative, and a summary of the aspects of the plan that the Colonial Intermediate Unit 20 has generated for implementation through a one million dollar grant that the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) has secured through Wall Street West. Along with other IUs, Colonial IU 20 has received \$65,000, which must be spent by December 31, 2009. She also noted that we do not yet have a model in place in Northampton County, and that the current grant only covers grades 9-12. Career Pathways is a comprehensive K-12 career education initiative designed to increase career awareness and preparation of students through the guidance of parents, educators, and community partners. Through this grant, participating districts have been given access to Career Cruising, a web-based career exploration and planning system that helps students plan their future. Counselors may use these tools to assist students in determining which career is best fit for them. Career Pathways model is an appropriate match to our strategic plan, since it helps students map out their future, explore careers via job shadowing, examines

comprehensive post-secondary education information, and adds rigor, high expectations, and relevance. So far this year, Mrs. Katona and Mrs. Victory have been a part of a committee that has met three times through IU 20. Most recently, committee members began to work on integrating career options into math courses in order to create a greater sense of relevance for the students.

Mrs. Leeson asked if through Career Pathways, students entering ninth grade would be making a decision regarding which direction they will be going and then select courses based on this decision. Mrs. Katona replied that, while we could choose to build our course selection around clusters, it would not mean that once a student chooses certain courses, or a cluster, he/she would not be able to make changes. Mrs. Katona also emphasized that she wanted to bring this information to the board at this time so they are aware of the grant, and its purpose. She will alert the board to developments with Career Pathways as they come about.

PAY TO PARTICIPATE IN ATHLETICS PROPOSAL

Dr. Donaher reviewed a Pay to Participate proposal for athletics and cheerleading that was drafted by the administration. It would include the following:

- Charge a fee of \$50 per sport season for all high school student athletes who participate in high school athletics or cheerleading in a given sport season.
- Charge a fee of \$25 per sport season for all middle school student athletes who participate in middle school athletics or cheerleading in a given sport season.
- Develop a process through which students may petition for a waiver or reduction of the fee, based on need. A full waiver may be granted for student athletes identified as eligible for free lunch program, and a one-half waiver may be granted to student athletes identified as eligible for the reduced lunch program.

Dr. Donaher explained that paying this fee would not guarantee playing on a team or actual play time and would only be charged when a student actually makes a team.

Mr. Amato asked why we are only earmarking sports, and why not all extracurricular activities, such as the bands. Dr. Lewis replied that bands are 85 percent self-sustaining, we only pay for uniforms and the directors' salaries. Mrs. Follweiler remarked that band members already pay a fee. Mr. Tenaglia remarked that band members who choose not to go on trips must still pay a fee if they choose not to fundraise. Mr. Amato remarked that this is not an activity fee, this fee is for fundraising to take trips around the world.

Mr. Amato also remarked that this proposal would destroy our programs. Mrs. Koch remarked that upper-income families would have no problem paying the fee, and lower-income families on free or reduced lunch could petition for a waiver or reduction of their fee, but she fears that middle-income families would be hurt the most by this proposal. Mrs. Koch and Mr. Amato agreed that making students pay to play next year would be an insult to the Liberty High School football team, who just won the state championship.

Board members asked if we have polled other similar-sized districts to see what they are doing. Dr. Donaher replied that each district with a pay to play policy handles it differently; some charge a flat fee for athletics, and some have an activity fee for all extracurricular activities.

Mrs. Dexter stated that students would not have trouble raising the money themselves by raking neighbors' leaves or shoveling snow. Dr. Lewis replied that most athletes have been paying much more money for years to participate in youth leagues.

The board agreed to pull the agenda item and asked the administration to come back with a list of fees that students pay to participate in all activities.

PSSA SCIENCE UPDATE AND SCIENCE CURRICULUM

Mr. Smith reported to the board that 78 percent of the Bethlehem Area School District's students achieved proficient or better on the science PSSA, nearly reaching the state average of 81 percent. On the elementary level, James Buchanan Elementary School had 44 out of 45 students who achieved proficient or advanced; Spring Garden Elementary School had 88 out of 90 students who achieved proficient or advanced; Asa Packer and Hanover Elementary Schools had over 94 percent of their students achieve proficient or advanced; and 13 of our 16 elementary schools had students who achieved at or above 74 percent proficient or advanced. On the middle school level, 48 percent of our students achieved proficient or better, nearly reaching the state average of 53 percent. On the high school level, 29 percent of our students achieved proficient or better, compared to the state average of 36 percent. Freedom High School essentially tied the state average at 35.4 percent, while only 24.1 percent of Liberty High School students met that benchmark.

Mr. Smith then went on to explain that it is of critical importance that the district adopt a new high school science curriculum that increases hands-on and inquiry experiences and includes instruction in all three content areas. He reminded the board of the February 9, 2009, Board Curriculum Committee Meeting, at which he, along with the combined science departments of both high schools, presented their draft for the new science sequence for high school students. The committee's recommendation is to mandate a fourth credit of science for all students in the Bethlehem Area School District, and to modify the science sequence for all students.

Mrs. Leeson noted that we should be preparing students for their future, not just for the PSSA tests. Mr. Smith replied that this proposal is not only to meet the needs of PSSA, but would have been proposed even if PSSA did not exist; it is for the benefit of all our students.

Mrs. Dexter noted that when we implemented FOSS, it was agreed that it would be evaluated to know the value of the program. She asked when and how we would be evaluating this program. Mr. Smith replied that we are currently looking at standardized test scores and at the results of other schools that have implemented FOSS. He noted that our current sixth graders are the first class to have had FOSS, and PSSA's are not taken until eighth grade. Mr. Smith will work on an evaluation of the FOSS program to bring to the board.

CHARTER SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Dr. Lewis explained that, in light of the voluntary delay on the part of the Lehigh Valley Dual Language Charter School (LVDL), he wanted to apprise the board on what discussions might focus on between the LVDL and the BASD. He presented thirty-two possible points of collaboration. He also noted that the board should keep in mind that the administration's thinking is every service would have a chargeback to the LVDL, thereby reducing our costs proportionate to the instructional costs expended. Also, the board would ultimately decide on whether any collaborative service, specifically or in whole, would be approved. The board then discussed this idea and asked if this is the birth of an idea to assist all charter schools or just this one in particular. Dr. Lewis replied that it is hopefully the birth of an idea to assist all charter schools. Mrs. Dexter raised a concern over the amount of time that would be taken away from district business if Dr. Lewis and his administrators were involved in assisting the charter school. She polled the board and they agreed to allow Dr. Lewis ten hours to discuss these items with LVDL. It was agreed that, if he needed to go over the ten hours or use BASD staff, he would have to go back to the board for further approval.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE FEBRUARY 23, 2009, REGULAR BOARD MEETING

1. Pay to Participate – this item was pulled.
2. Science Curriculum – the board agreed to place this item on the agenda for the February 23, 2009, Regular Board Meeting.

OPEN FORUM

1. Mrs. Follweiler requested a tour of the new Broughal Middle School. Dr. Lewis replied that he would try to set one up for some time in May. He stated that he would also like to schedule a tour of Liberty High School for March or April.
2. Mr. McKeon spoke regarding the government's proposal to close the Scranton State School for the Deaf, which currently costs the district \$70,000 in busing. Mr. Majewski replied that this is not accurate, the program is Monday through Friday, and districts share the busing costs. Mr. Agretto added that students are bused to the school on Monday and reside there until Friday, at which time they are bused home.
3. Mr. McKeon asked if we have looked into Odyssey, the customized academic program currently being used at Parkland High School. Mrs. Katona replied that we currently have a similar program being used at the Career Academy.
4. Mrs. Leeson noted that she has seen signage at Broughal Middle School and asked where the directional signs are at Liberty High School.
5. Mr. Tenaglia noted that the board had received a memo on February 6, 2009, regarding the analysis of Academic Interventions. He inquired why only one-half of the allocation has been spent so far. Dr. Lewis replied that a memo will be going out requesting information on

allocations for the remainder of the year. He stated that we do not want to wait until the last minute to find out schools have not spent all their allotted allocations.

6. Mrs. Follweiler inquired about the All City Concert for this year. Mrs. Katona replied that the funding has been cut from this year's budget, but principals have found an alternative way of funding this event, so it will be held this year.
7. Mrs. Dexter reminded the administration that she had asked for information regarding AP and honors enrollment by gender and race. Mrs. Katona replied that she has the information and is in the process of putting it together.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

1. Mr. John Del Vecchio, 2061 Tenth Street, Bethlehem Township, spoke regarding putting funding of computers and charter school collaboration on a back burner until the board has balanced the budget.
2. Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding PSSA scores and comparisons between similar demographic schools. He inquired if PSSA results for Easton and Allentown are available. The board replied that they are available on the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Web site.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:

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