



**BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2009**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, March 9, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Liberty High School. 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, Dr. Craig Haytmanek, Charlene Koch, Loretta Leeson, Eugene McKeon, and Benjamin Tenaglia. Also in attendance were: Dr. Joseph A. Lewis, superintendent of schools; Thomas Washington, assistant superintendent for human resources; Frank Arbushites, acting director of technology; Jennifer Hilton, acting coordinator of literacy/ELA K-12; Eric Smith, supervisor of science; Julie Victory, supervisor of mathematics; and representatives of the press.

Mrs. Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

1. Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding the Career Academy and read an article on Louisiana schools.
2. Gail Nolf, a teacher at the Career Academy, spoke regarding the Bethlehem Area School District dealing with its at-risk students and encouraged the continuation of its support through the Career Academy. She also invited board members to attend the Career Academy's basketball benefit on March 12, 2009, at Liberty High School, beginning at 6:00 p.m. She noted that there is a \$2 donation at the door.

**BROUGHAL MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

Mr. Smith and Mr. Arbushites presented information on the curriculum for the new Broughal Middle School. Mrs. Katona reminded the board that, while literacy and mathematics will be embedded into the curriculum, they also would still be taught as core subjects. It was noted that \$789,000 would be needed to cover the cost of the planetarium software, computer equipment, and the flat-screen televisions the curriculum would need.

Mr. Smith reviewed the new science curriculum. He noted that seeds for the project were planted prior to the 2002-2003 school year with a grant. Visitations were conducted to model programs in Maryland and Virginia. The next step was training in Project 2061 and Understanding by Design. The Signature School Proposal was presented to the board in November of 2005, with curriculum updates in February 2006, and March 2007. He explained that the curriculum objectives included:

- Reignite creativity and fascination with science and technology typically lost in middle school. Students would be doing science rather than just reading about or watching it.
- Better prepare Broughal Middle School students for the PSSA tests, high school science and technology offerings.
- Build 21st Century Skills.
- Increase collaboration and problem solving skills.
- Build habits of mind.

Mr. Arbushites then went on to explain each technology course available to students by grade and the necessary hardware and software that would be needed:

Grade 6 Technology

- TV Production I/Robotics
- Digital Imaging
- Technology Weather Unit

Grade 7 Technology

- Robotics/TV Production I
- GIS
- Graphic Design I
- Music Composition Technology I

Grade 8 Technology

- TV Production II or II/III
- Graphic Design II
- Music Composition Technology II

Mr. Smith then explained that the science curriculum was co-written by BASD middle school teachers, primarily from Broughal Middle School, in partnership with Lehigh University and NASA. He noted that the curriculum is built on the district's existing science curriculum. He then went on to explain each course available by grade level:

Grade 6 Science

- Nature of Science
- Matter
- Motion and Energy
- Weather and Climate
- Integrated Pest Management and Environmental Issues
- Integration of Building Resources

Grade 7 Science

- Nature of Science
- Cell Structure and Function
- Heredity

- Diversity of Life
- Ecosystems and Carbon Cycle
- Integration of Greenhouse

#### Grade 8 Science

- Nature of Science
- Earth's Surface and Interior
- Matter and Energy
- Climate Change
- Environmental Issues – Land Use Change
- Integration of Building Systems Monitoring, Greenhouse

In addition to these courses, students will also take Science of Food, which iterates content from Family and Consumer Science, Astronomy, and Environmental Engineering.

Mrs. Cann asked if these new programs will fit into the scheduling, or if they will replace some electives. Mr. Santoro replied that several years ago the administration was able to look at what would be needed and noted that some electives have already been replaced with these new course selections. Mrs. Dexter asked what subjects that are currently being taught would be eliminated next year. Mr. Santoro replied that nothing would be eliminated; some courses would just be redirected. He noted, for example, that every student has two periods within a grade level for related arts. The students are then cycled through depending on whether a course runs for 30 days or for 45 days. Mrs. Leeson stated that she would like to see a chart of how these courses would fit into the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade schedules.

Mrs. Leeson asked if basic technology skills would still be taught. Mr. Santoro replied that since most students in middle school already have basic technology skills, these skills will be built into the new courses.

Mrs. Leeson asked if we should be looking into revising high school level courses since middle school students already have these technology skills. Mr. Arbushites responded that the high school business departments are currently working to upgrade their business courses. He noted that eighth grade students can take a "Technology Challenge Test," and if they pass the test, their placement would go beyond the basic ninth grade technology course.

Mr. Tenaglia asked for additional information on last year's "Technology Challenge Tests". Mr. Arbushites replied that he would provide that information to the board.

Mr. McKeon asked what curriculum would be available if we cannot afford some of these programs. Dr. Lewis replied that he is waiting to hear from the state about possible funding through the federal stimulus plan, and asked that financial questions be deferred until he has a definite answer. He did note that Mr. Santoro has prepared a scaled-down version of the curriculum if funding is not available.

Mr. Amato said he was intrigued with the program and asked if the Graphic Design program would be offered at any of the other three middle schools. Mr. Arbushites replied that it would only be offered at Broughal Middle School at this time, but we could possibly offer it at other

middle schools in the future. Mr. Amato noted that our high schools already have some of these programs available to students, such as in the yearbook course. Mr. Arbushites noted that the high school courses would be more intense than the middle school courses.

Dr. Haytmanek asked whether at the end of their experience at Broughal, every student would have been taught the curriculum in both science and technology. Mr. Smith said this would be the case. Mrs. Leeson then asked how the science curriculum, as written, would advance students at the high school level. Mr. Smith referred to the earlier AP/Honors information, which showed a disproportionate representation of minority students. He is hopeful that a curriculum such as Broughal's will help the students build confidence in their ability to be successful in those higher-level courses. He also pointed out that the curriculum was written in a way that will help to build more background knowledge for students through hands-on, discovery labs, and open-ended and research-oriented work.

Mrs. Leeson and Mrs. Dexter expressed a concern over what appears to be the need for more time to work on the entire science and technology curriculum. Mr. Santoro assured the board that the approach would be no different from what is currently being done; they will simply need to shift some things around, but they will not need to get rid of anything. He also recalled the initial idea of developing the program, which had as its focus making Broughal a Signature School for science and technology.

Mrs. Leeson asked what other schools are using this type of technology? Mr. Arbushites indicated that locally, districts such as Nazareth and Parkland have a Television Production curriculum, and in some cases, such as with digital imaging, it would be uncharted territory.

Mrs. Koch noted that she hopes that, when we are teaching computer technology, we are not just teaching students word processing. She hopes we are helping students expand their world with computers that they cannot do with textbooks alone.

Mrs. Dexter asked how the board could approve these expenses for new equipment at Broughal when Liberty High School still does not have all the equipment they need in their new classrooms. Mr. Santoro responded that everything comes with time. He stated that he is only looking to do at Broughal what the other three middle schools already have. He noted that East Hills Middle School, for example, had been funded for a television studio. Mrs. Dexter stated that, basically, we are out of money.

Mrs. Leeson asked what type of televisions would be used at Broughal. Mr. Arbushites replied that they would be 46-inch flat-screen televisions, which would be used to show images and broadcasts. Mrs. Leeson suggested a less expensive and more technologically advanced way to go might be to project onto whiteboards. Mr. Santoro pointed out that the new Northeast Middle School and other schools have televisions in every classroom. At Broughal, they would be able to do just a little more with their televisions.

Mr. Amato reminded the board that Broughal Middle School has been on the drawing board for 15 plus years and is finally being built. He stated that budget problems would not be solved by

not providing Broughal with what is needed. He stated that the south side of Bethlehem needs to be treated the same as the other three middle schools.

Mrs. Dexter stated that she does not believe it is an issue of denying the students. She asked if we can still make the dream come true without money in a tough economy. She said she believes we need to consider what we can do for all our students, not just those on the south side, and noted that the board is being asked to spend \$789,000 on “bells and whistles”.

Mrs. Leeson stated that we need to finish Liberty High School, and we need to make sure the high schools are equipped to go forth with the programs that students are learning in our middle schools. Dr. Lewis replied that he would talk to Mr. Gilliland regarding the budget for furniture and equipment for the renovations at Liberty High School.

Dr. Lewis stated that there are more than two projectors in the sophisticated series of labs downstairs, with more than 40 courses being taught. He recommended deferring the financial discussion at this point until we have a clearer picture of how the stimulus money would be allocated. Mrs. Dexter asked Dr. Lewis when he would be seeking approval. He said it would be at least 30 days down the road.

Mrs. Leeson asked how Broughal, as a NASA school, is part of the curriculum. Lori Cirucci, science teacher at Broughal Middle School, explained what is happening with the school’s partnership with NASA. She noted they have received a lot of resources from NASA, and that there is a website to which Broughal will be contributing. She said that information they have learned through the partnership has assisted in developing the GIS design in the curriculum. Mrs. Dexter asked that the administration track those students involved with the NASA program when they move into high school. Ms. Cirucci also noted that two units for the eighth grade are being written with the assistance of Lehigh University and Lehigh will be tracking these units for their own use and will share the information with the district.

Mrs. Leeson remarked that she hopes more students in the science courses will now get involved with the Science Fair at Lehigh and PJAS. Mr. Smith replied that there is more scientific research involved in the program, and he hopes that, with a little encouragement from teachers and the guidance department, more students will get involved in these projects. He noted there is extended lab work in every unit, as we want to encourage the students to do more authentic research, and remove the “fear level” for these students.

Mrs. Leeson noted that middle school guidance should be partnering with high school guidance to make sure students are encouraged to take advanced courses instead of waiting until after students have chosen their courses.

Mrs. Dexter reminded the administration that she had asked to see research that supports the fact that teaching these programs will encourage students to take AP and/or honors classes in high school. Mr. Smith noted that in developing the curriculum, visits to other schools were made, and the National Science Standards were consulted. Ms. Cirucci added that Lehigh University has done extensive research on what is best in science for kids to learn today. Mrs. Dexter said she is looking for research that connects the expensive proposal with outcomes. She has seen

research that the teacher is the number one influence, and she would like to see justification that the planetarium, etc. is necessary. Mr. Smith pointed out the connection with the thematic programs, noting that they are now thriving, but when they were developed, no one knew that this would be the case. Dr. Lewis said more research would be provided.

Dr. Haytmanek remarked that this is the most exciting curriculum developed in years, and to curb this enthusiasm makes no sense. He noted that these changes are very important to the south side students and stated that the entire City of Bethlehem needs to give these students this opportunity.

Mr. Amato stated that he supports Dr. Haytmanek's opinion and he is tired of shafting the south side group. Mr. Amato remarked that it makes no sense to slash this project after we challenged this group to design this curriculum. Mrs. Leeson stated that we have learned it is absolutely necessary to be asking questions such as these, and noted that her concern for Broughal Middle School students is why she is asking the questions. Mrs. Cann agreed, adding that by asking the questions, those who have worked on the Broughal project will have a chance to "shine".

Mrs. Koch stated that she sees a group of people who are not content with the status quo, and who wish to raise the bar. She said she thinks it is a terrific idea.

Mrs. Dexter replied that this is not about the south side of Bethlehem. School should not be just fun; it needs to integrate the skills needed for a student's years in high school and their future. She stated that the board needs to make sure that they approve the best curriculum available for these students.

### ***READ 180 MID-YEAR REPORT***

Mrs. Katona informed the board that Scholastic conducted a mid-year analysis of our district's *Read 180* data. The analysis was performed based on data exported from 12 schools on February 11, 2009. The data set provided information on both student reading achievement gains and implementation metrics. The vast majority of the findings were positive. Students continue to receive the recommended amount of instruction each week and spend a commendable average of 16.7 minutes per session on their modeled reading lessons. Mrs. Katona noted that 10 out of 12 schools are showing positive gains. The two schools not showing positive gains at the mid-year point are Donegan, which began implementing *Read 180* in November of 2008, and the Career Academy. She noted that the student growth demonstrated by the majority of schools working with *Read 180* validates the continued use of *Read 180* and demonstrates the need for continued investment in the program. It is clear that, by investing in the expansion of the program's availability to the neediest students, the ongoing professional development of our teachers and administrators, and the necessary technology to keep the program running effectively, we directly improve instruction and most importantly student achievement.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she would like an end-of-the-year report on Donegan and the Career Academy. Mrs. Katona stated that she would be providing an end-of-year report on all the schools using *Read 180* and *System 44*.

Regarding *System 44*, Mrs. Katona explained that it is the newly implemented Scholastic program that is designed for our most challenged readers. It is designed to develop decoding skills in students and prepare them for the comprehensive skills acquired in *Read 180*. She noted that *System 44* data was not included in the mid-year analysis.

Mrs. Dexter asked why *System 44* was not available in the beginning of the school year. Mrs. Katona and Mr. Arbushites explained that it is a new program and the final version was not available until December. They noted that a pilot was being tested in some of our schools from September until December to try to work out some of the bugs.

## **MAD SCIENCE**

Mrs. Katona reviewed the MAD Science information that was shared with the elementary school principals. At this time, three schools in our district are hosting MAD Science programs. She noted that Hanover and Governor Wolf Elementary Schools have offered the program to their students on a pay-to-participate basis, and Freemansburg Elementary School has offered the program through fundraising. Many other schools have examined the program for ASPIRE offerings. All principals agreed to look at the information for possible future offerings at their schools.

## **HONORS AP ENROLLMENT**

As requested by the board, Mrs. Katona provided information regarding enrollment in BASD Honors and AP courses. She explained that the numbers and percentages are combined for both high schools by gender, as well as by ethnic groups. In comparison to last year's numbers, the information does indicate an overall increase in enrollment for these courses; however, we still have work to do in pushing up our numbers among certain groups. Mrs. Katona provided the board with a chart that depicted the percentage of each group represented in Honors and AP courses according to the overall percentage of each student group in our high schools. She noted that, based on comparisons between the 2008 and the 2009 school years, enrollment of students in Honors and AP courses have increased by 8.5 percent overall.

Mrs. Dexter stated that, when an A/B student does not take an AP or Honors course, she would like to see the guidance department ask these student why they are not taking advanced courses and track their reasons. Mrs. Leeson asked the administration to examine why students with A's in tenth grade might not be choosing Honors and/or AP courses.

Mrs. Leeson and Mrs. Dexter asked Mrs. Katona for the break down of student enrollment by course. Mrs. Katona explained that she based the summarized information on these charts on that detailed information. She agreed that she would e-mail the original information to the board.

Mrs. Leeson also asked for information regarding ninth grade Honors Biology classes regarding how many students dropped the course and their grades. She also asked if we know what they need to be successful. Mrs. Katona said she would present information in June as she did last year to identify the numbers of students who stayed in or left the honors courses.

Mrs. Leeson noted that it seems that students drop Honors and AP courses in 11th and 12th grades, and asked if we are offering enough Honors and AP courses. Mrs. Katona noted that this is a possibility, and added that after next year, we will be putting new AP courses in social studies and in science.

Mr. Tenaglia asked if the district had an objective for the number of students who should be enrolled in Honors or AP courses. Mrs. Katona said that the goal was established through considering a percentage of students rather than a specific number for growing the programs.

## **ANCILLARY PROGRAM REPORTS**

In response to Mrs. Dexter's suggestion that the board might want to hear from principals of our non-mandated programs, Mrs. Katona invited the principals from SPARK, Regional Academic Standards Academy, and Career Academy to provide an overview of their programs.

Ms. Ostman, principal of SPARK, provided the board with a report which included an outline of the important components of child assessment; described the assessment system used by the SPARK pre-kindergarten program; provided an outline of 2007-2008 demographic information, as well as a summary of the 2007-2008 Work Sampling Outcomes Reports.

Mrs. Leeson inquired if the SPARK program covers three and four year olds. Ms. Ostman replied that the program for three year olds is funded by a Pre-K grant.

Mrs. Dexter noted that there is subsidized daycare money available to some families, and asked if there is money out there to aid BASD. Ms. Ostman replied that, because SPARK's program and hours are different than daycare, funding is not available.

Ms. Moran, principal, presented an overview of the Regional Academic Standards Academy (RASA). She explained that RASA is an intense intervention program for students in grades four through six who are experiencing academic difficulties especially in language arts, reading, and math. With a goal of accelerating learning, students experience a variety of research-based strategies, such as an extended school day, smaller class sizes, academic teaming, rotating block schedule, and one-on-one laptop initiative. Ms. Moran provided additional information on students' PSSA scores, SRI levels, and results from interventions.

Ms. Vivian Robledo, principal, presented an overview of the Career Academy. Her report included the following:

1. The Criteria for Referrals
2. The Data Comparing the Years
3. Last Year's Successes
4. The Students This Year
5. Successes This Year
6. Additional Thoughts for Consideration

Ms. Robledo reminded the board that if the program changes in some way next year, we will need to put a transitional plan into place for the students.

## **AGENDA ITEMS FOR MARCH 16, 2009, REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

The board reviewed the following agenda items and approved placing all of them on the agenda for the March 16, 2009, Regular Board Meeting:

1. Cintas Corporation – Cintas Scholastic Grant Program
2. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts  
Dr. Lewis noted that, if this grant is approved but the district does not use the funds, they can be returned with no penalties.
3. Schedule of Board Meetings for the 2009-2010 School Year  
The board agreed that a Finance Committee Meeting and a Facilities Committee Meeting should be added to the calendar for the month of August.  
Mrs. Dexter asked when the district would be notified of the acceptance of the budget exemptions. Dr. Lewis replied that he would ask Mr. Majewski when he returns from his vacation.
4. Elementary School Open Enrollment Policy  
Dr. Lewis noted that the dates for open enrollment have been adjusted so that they coincide with the opening of school dates.  
Mrs. Dexter asked how we communicate these dates to parents. Dr. Lewis replied that the information will be on the district's Website and announcements will also be mailed.

### **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

Nothing to report.

### **OPEN FORUM**

1. Mr. Amato stated that, in a report the board received from Dr. Donaher, it was stated that students who participate in the band pay a fee to participate. He then stated that a previous board had created a board policy stating that no such assessments could be charged. He then requested information on how this money is spent, and asked Dr. Lewis to ask our solicitor if charging this fee is legal. Dr. Lewis replied that he would ask the solicitor if we can legally audit the band regarding how their money is spent.

Mr. Tenaglia noted that band students are “not required” to pay this fee. Mrs. Dexter replied that band parents are not complaining about paying this fee. She also noted that students who cannot afford to pay this fee still participate in the band.

2. Mrs. Leeson noted that the Performing Arts School is raising money for their school and asked Dr Lewis to ask the solicitor if public schools can also raise money for public education.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:41 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:

Charlotte L. Zimmerman

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