



**BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2009**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, May 11, 2009, 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, 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; 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 6:00 p.m.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

1. Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding Broughal Middle School being an historic site.

SENIOR LUNCH PRIVILEGE

Dr. Donaher gave an update on the Senior Lunch Program at both high schools. He noted that he and the administration met today with the high school student advisory committee, at which time they discussed this topic to try to find alternative solutions to the problems. Dr. Donaher explained that another meeting with the committee is scheduled for Wednesday, May 13, 2009. Dr. Lewis explained that the administration is recommending major changes, if not the elimination of the program.

Mrs. Leeson said that we had promised the neighbors of Liberty High School that we would have a recommendation on the May 18, 2009, Regular Board Meeting. Dr. Lewis replied that we could possibly have a recommendation but was not sure one would be ready by then. He noted that, since a change would not take effect until the fall, the recommendation could be on either the May or June agenda.

Mrs. Leeson asked if anyone from the community had been invited to the May 13, 2009, meeting. Dr. Donaher replied that no one from the community had been invited. Mrs. Leeson replied that they should have been invited. He noted that the plan was to have a minimum of three meetings, one with students from both high schools, one with parents and members of the community, and a final one with review by the board. Mr. McKeon stated that he agreed with Dr. Donaher's format. It should start out as an internal issue, then go to the public, and finally back to the board. Mrs. Follweiler agreed with Mr. McKeon. She stated that senior lunch privilege is a privilege, and if what is being reported is actually happening, the program should be eliminated.

Dr. Lewis remarked that he and other administrators have driven through alleys and have seen not only students from Liberty High School, but have also seen students who do not even attend our high schools. He noted that he had seen a student from another school hanging around Liberty High School who claimed he had missed his bus.

Dr. Donaher stated that eliminating senior lunch privilege will not completely stop the neighborhood problems, since what seems to be happening is not entirely seniors. Underclassmen seem to be more of a problem.

Mr. Amato stated, "Shame on us," noting senior lunch privilege has been abused for many years, and we don't need students to tell us how to correct this situation. He suggested doing away with the program for one year, and see what happens. He said we need to get our students off the streets and back in our buildings, and that it is going to take one of our students getting killed before we realize that once a student comes into our building, they are our responsibility till they leave at the end of the day.

Mrs. Dexter asked what the punishment is for a student who leaves the building without permission. Mr. Wagner, dean of students at Liberty High School, replied that the first offense is a Saturday three-hour detention, and the second offense is a three-day out-of-school suspension for unauthorized area.

Mrs. Dexter asked if students need to show their identification badges to get in and out of our buildings. Dr. Donaher replied that at Liberty High School when students are changing classes, there are so many students entering and exiting all doors that it is almost impossible to know who is entering or leaving the building. Mr. Amato stated that it sounds like we are out of control with students; we need to control all doors.

Mrs. Leeson noted that the area around Liberty High School is being checked, and asked if anyone is cruising around Freedom High School to check on those students. Dr. Lewis replied that there are people patrolling around Freedom High School as well. He also noted that he has discussed with Mr. LaPorta the fact that students are speeding on Chester Avenue during the day and at the end of the day.

Mrs. Dexter and Mrs. Leeson stated that they would like an update on the senior lunch privilege at next week's board committee meeting.

RIGOR FOR ALL

Mrs. Katona presented a report to the board on Questions on Rigor. The information she presented was based on a paper from the National High School Alliance (NHSA) which points to a “growing recognition that the *purpose* of efforts to increase rigor in high school is to ensure that all students are well prepared for postsecondary education, career, and civic life” (p.6). Additionally, based on input from the organizations noted, the NHSA has identified the following as “four major themes that emerge with regard to strategies for increasing academic rigor:

1. Raising graduation requirements;
2. Ensuring access to quality course content and instruction;
3. Aligning course content and assessments with the skills necessary for higher education and employment; and
4. Institutionalizing additional support for students at risk. (p. 2)

Given these themes, the following points outline ways in which we have been working toward increasing rigor in the Bethlehem Area School District:

1. Raising graduation requirements
 - A. Proficiency requirements for graduation
 - B. Essential courses and credit requirements
2. Ensuring access to quality course content and instruction
 - A. Course offerings and curriculum
 - B. Working toward equity
 - C. Access to honors and AP courses
 - D. Reversing the trends
3. Aligning course content and assessments with the skills necessary for higher education and employment
 - A. Connecting with businesses and higher education
 - B. BASD committee representation
4. Institutionalizing additional support for students at risk
 - A. Supporting students in the classroom
 - B. Moving forward

Mrs. Katona went on to explain that we have to look at potential AP students as a result of PSAT testing. She has had discussions with both high school principals to see what they are doing to get these students to apply for AP classes. Mostly, they are asking teachers and counselors to encourage students, particularly those who might not otherwise think about taking these courses, to schedule them.

Mrs. Dexter stated that she has heard over and over again from parents that there is a gap between honors classes in high school and college prep courses. She stated that we need to raise the rigor in our college prep classes, and asked what we are doing to address this problem. Dr. Lewis replied that he brought up this subject at the high schools student advisory meeting today, and they had a great discussion on this topic. Students replied that a lot also depends on the teacher and noted that different teachers teach in different ways, and this comes across in their

classes. Mrs. Katona replied that it will always go back to our curriculum and the fact that teachers can modify, enrich, or enhance the curriculum. She also noted that we need to continue to work with our teachers to provide them with the assistance they may need. She commented that students recognized they are more apt to work harder for teachers that engage them.

Mrs. Dexter asked how are we assessing whether there is enough rigor in our schools and what are we doing with this information. Dr. Lewis replied that this is an ongoing topic at administrative/supervisory meetings. Mrs. Katona replied that we recently revamped our science curriculum. Mrs. Katona also explained that she has spoken with Dr. Jarvis from the University of Pennsylvania regarding how much our students are exposed to rigor in their course work.

Mr. McKeon stated that we must start to challenge our students. It is not always the teacher's fault; some students must be pushed harder than others. He asked, for example, if a homework requirement is still a part of the students' grades. Mrs. Katona replied that more homework does not mean rigor; homework should be a way for students to enhance what they have learned. Homework should be quality, not quantity.

Mrs. Leeson stated that at parent meetings she hears from some parents that we do not have enough rigor at the academic level at our high schools. She noted that there are some outstanding teachers out there, but mainly parents are telling her that their children are not getting what they need in their classes. Mrs. Katona replied that we should not accept the fact that we only have some outstanding teachers out there; we should be asking all our teachers to be teaching with rigor and high expectations. Mrs. Katona also stated that if parents are not getting what is expected for their children at each grade level, first they should be contacting the principal, and if they still are not getting results, they should be contacting her.

Mrs. Dexter noted that she met a student who recently graduated for one of our high schools who stated that she never had to do a paper in high school and now has to do one at college and asked Mrs. Dexter for help with reviewing her paper. Dr. Lewis and Mrs. Katona replied that they would like the name of that graduate student so they can research this claim. Dr. Lewis stated that there are very stringent standards in place in our high school so something like this should never occur, and we must make sure these standards are upheld.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she is hearing from some students who go on to college that they are not prepared for college. Dr. Lewis replied that the students he bumps into say that they are prepared. He also noted that the high school students that he talked to say that they are being challenged. Mrs. Leeson noted that we should be providing our students with the very best education we can give them. Dr. Lewis replied that this is exactly what Mrs. Katona is presenting. Mrs. Katona replied that nothing happens over night; it takes time. We are changing our way of teaching and learning, and it is working.

Mr. McKeon stated that he would like to see us survey graduate students every year, to find out their opinions. Mrs. Dexter replied that the survey sent out in 2003 provided interesting information. She noted that some students provided more information than what was asked for. Dr. Lewis replied that such a survey could be provided.

Dr. Lewis stated that we should also be pushing more students in dual enrollment. He noted that he had to return some of the dual enrollment money. Mrs. Leeson asked if dual enrollment can be done during the summer. Dr. Lewis replied that it cannot be done over the summer. Mrs. Leeson then asked what is being done to make students and parents more aware of dual enrollment. Mrs. Katona replied that at last month's dual enrollment meeting this same subject was discussed. It was decided to send out a survey to find out students' knowledge of dual enrollment. Mr. LaPorta noted that he has had parent and student meetings to make sure that all his students are aware of dual enrollment. He noted that next year he expects the largest number of Freedom High School students enrolled in dual enrollment, between 100-150 students.

Mrs. Dexter asked what we are doing to address honors and AP issues. Mrs. Katona replied that we are getting more counselors involved with potential AP and honors students. Mrs. Katona also noted that perhaps as we open up more honors classes and AP courses in more areas we will see greater results.

Mr. Tenaglia asked, regarding the chart on page 3, do you look at Liberty High School versus Freedom High School regarding percentages; is it working better at one school than the other? Mrs. Katona replied that she would work out the percentages and have further discussions with the principals.

Mrs. Leeson asked if we are still working with guidance counselors on pushing up students. Mrs. Katona replied that this can only happen if our counselors are involved. Dr. Donaher said that he and Mrs. Katona have spoken about bringing the counselors together to identify ways they can be more involved.

Mrs. Leeson then asked if we can use stimulus money for AP training. Mrs. Katona replied that hopefully teachers will be trained next year using Project 720 funds.

Mrs. Dexter stated that we need to raise the number of minority students in our AP and honors classes. She asked what does the administration and board need to do to accomplish this. Mrs. Katona replied that we need to start the process earlier than at the high school level; we need to start at the middle school level. She will talk with middle school administrators about their role in getting students into AP and honors classes.

Mrs. Dexter asked if it is possible for the district to supply a support network/learning centers for students who do not get the educational support they need at home. She would like to see the district develop supports for students to enable them to get into AP and honors courses and to succeed in these courses; it is very important for them to succeed. Mrs. Katona replied that we do currently provide tutoring services. Mr. LaPorta replied that Freedom High School is currently meeting with middle school counselors to create a rubric for student work ethics to enable students to move above and beyond the honors testing.

Mrs. Leeson asked if we have increased in the number of students who took the PSAT's at the sophomore level. Mrs. Katona replied that she will get this information to the board. Mrs. Leeson asked if the district could possibly pay for the tests at this grade level to lower the cost to students. Mrs. Katona replied that it was written into the Project 720 grant to cover 10th graders

who take the test. She also noted that it will be written into the grant again for next year, but noted that since the test is given on a Saturday, we cannot force students to come out and take the test. She has had discussions with principals regarding ways to encourage more students to take the tests.

Mrs. Leeson stated that she has heard that honors biology has not been successful, that most students are struggling in this class and feel that it is over their head. She asked what we are doing at the middle school level to help students prepare for this course. Mr. Smith replied that he has heard no reports that the class has not been successful. He noted that the middle school curriculum is brand new this year, and was written to provide more success for these students when they reach the high school level. Mr. Smith also noted that they are currently rewriting the high school biology curriculum and noted that they are not just watering it down. Mrs. Katona stated that she will bring information to the board at either the June or July Board Curriculum Committee Meeting regarding the number of students who dropped honors courses this year.

Mrs. Koch asked if the state is providing reimbursement money for dual enrollment. Mrs. Katona replied that she will bring this information to the next Board Curriculum Committee Meeting because it will not be available until then. Mrs. Koch stated that this may be one of the problems associated with students enrolling in dual enrollment, not knowing the amount of money they will be reimbursed. Mrs. Katona replied that there are opportunities available to parents who cannot afford the costs.

BROUGHAL MIDDLE SCHOOL OPEN ENROLLMENT PROPOSAL

Dr. Lewis presented for the board's consideration a recommendation for the possible open enrollment process at the new Broughal Middle School. The goal of the proposal would be for no additional students for the school year 2009-2010; for the 2010-2011 school year the proposal would be to increase grade six by 25, grade seven by 25, and 0 for grade eight; for the 2011-2012 school year, the proposal would be to increase grade six by 50, grade 7 by 25, and grade 8 by 25. He noted that acceptance for open enrollment would be based on a lottery system, not by a first-come-first-served system. Mrs. Leeson asked if we are looking at any increase in budgetary costs in the future with open enrollment. Dr. Lewis replied that it would be a \$0 increase, with parents responsible for transporting open enrollment students.

Mrs. Leeson asked if the administration is considering open enrollment for all four middle schools. Dr. Lewis replied, not at this time. He noted that, if in the future we make all four of our middle schools specialty schools, then we will look at the possibilities. Mrs. Leeson stated that she did not feel it was fair, if we open up one of our middle school to open enrollment, we should open up all four. Mrs. Koch asked if we have had any parents inquire about open enrollment. Dr. Lewis replied that we have had some inquiries. Mrs. Follweiler stated that she feels that we should eventually look at opening up all four middle schools to open enrollment, but felt that we should pilot Broughal Middle School first. Dr. Haytmanek asked if the district is tracking if this will affect the numbers in the catchment area. Dr. Lewis replied that we are already seeing it in some areas, and we will know more shortly. Mrs. Dexter stated that she would like to see the district do nothing right now. Mrs. Follweiler questioned why we should put it on hold. Mrs. Leeson stated that she would like to see it classified as a pilot program. Mrs. Dexter stated that

she would like to see it revisited in February to see what the numbers look like. Mr. McKeon asked, if we defer on this now will it push back the whole cycle? Dr. Lewis replied that we want to send the message that this is a signature school, if we wait until February to decide, budget wise, it may be too late. Mrs. Dexter stated that she would like to see what new problems, if any, arise. Mr. McKeon stated that he would like to see a recommendation by July for a pilot program. Mrs. Follweiler agreed that she would like to see it set up as a pilot program now. Mrs. Dexter stated that, if the numbers are too low, she would like to see the percentages increased. Dr. Lewis reminded the board that we built this building with this plan in mind as a pilot school, and stated that they can always adjust the numbers later. Mr. McKeon stated that he would like to see us pilot Broughal next year and then possibly open up one middle school at a time to open enrollment. Dr. Lewis stated that students with open enrollment would then attend the high school they would normally attend, no matter which middle school they attend.

The board agreed to the administration's recommendation to pilot Broughal Middle School. Mrs. Katona agreed to bring the specifics to the July Board Curriculum Committee Meeting.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MEETING REPORT

Mr. Agretto explained to the board that a Gifted and Talented Committee Meeting was held on May 6, 2009, involving PAC members, administrators, and teachers. He noted that they discussed what the next step would be with math acceleration. He explained that Mrs. Victory was not able to attend the meeting but had provided Mr. Agretto and the committee with information regarding what has occurred this year as well as plans for next year. Mrs. Victory's information explained that, in early May of 2009, all 6th grade pre-algebra students were tested with the Orleans-Hanna Algebra Prognosis Test. Based upon test results, as well as grades in pre-algebra and scores on the PSSA Math 6, students may be placed in algebra 1 in 7th grade. Mrs. Victory was asked about flexible grouping in our elementary schools, and she commented that we are encouraging flexible grouping at all buildings.

Mrs. Leeson asked if there is any discussion of having algebra 1, then algebra 2 before geometry. Mrs. Victory replied that she had placed courses in that sequence in another district and it worked, but research from several years ago indicates that it does not matter whether geometry precedes algebra 2 or vice versa. The main reason to have geometry before algebra 2 is so students have geometry before they take the PSSA's. Mrs. Leeson asked if we have ever thought about adding a statistics course after algebra 1? Mrs. Victory replied that some algebra 2 is often required for a full statistics course, but statistics is already embedded in BASD algebra 1, geometry, and algebra 2 courses. Mrs. Leeson noted that we have a great mathematics program and asked if we are also looking at accelerating any of our other programs. Mr. Agretto replied, not at this time.

Mr. Agretto went on to explain that all administrators have been alerted that Chapter 16 regulations have changed. He noted that all gifted support teachers participated in an in-service presentation by King/Spry, followed by meetings with King/Spry for administrators, school psychologists, educational support teachers, home-school visitors, and supervisors of special education. He then went on to review a *School Law Bullet*, which is a news publication put out

by King/Spry, which explains the changes. He noted that the new forms and formats, along with annotated versions for Chapter 16, have yet to be posted on the PDE Website.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE MAY 18, 2009, REGULAR BOARD MEETING

The board reviewed the following agenda items for placement on the May 18, 2009, Regular Board Meeting:

1. Textbook Recommendations:

A. Middle School Social Studies

Mrs. Katona explained that at the March 10, 2008, Board Curriculum Committee Meeting, information was presented regarding a proposed pilot at the middle school level. Upon completion of the pilot on April 27, 2009, an analysis of pilot teachers' evaluation data of text characteristics was conducted. Customer service, in-service trainings, and cost effectiveness for both companies were reviewed. With this information in mind, the administration is recommending to the board the purchase of social studies textbooks from Pearson/Prentice Hall for the middle school level in anticipation of the 2009-2010 school year. Mrs. Koch asked if anyone has reviewed these books for accuracy, stating that in previous social studies books, information was incorrectly. Mr. Weyman, the representative from Pearson/Prentice Hall replied that he will check with his marketing group to see if they have noticed any discrepancies.

B. High School, Grades 11 and 12 English

Mrs. Katona explained that at the April 14, 2008, Board Curriculum Committee Meeting, information was presented regarding a proposed pilot in grades 11 and 12, in order to choose one of two textbooks to be used in English classes. Upon completion of the pilot on April 27, 2009, an analysis of pilot teachers' evaluation data of text characteristics was conducted. On-line resources and student supplements were scrutinized for their ability to meet the needs of all learners. Customer service, in-service trainings, and cost effectiveness for both companies have been reviewed. With this information in mind, the administration is recommending to the board the purchase of English 11 and English 12 textbooks from Pearson/Prentice Hall for the high school level in anticipation of the 2009-2010 school year.

The board approved placing both of these items on the agenda for the May 18, 2009, Regular Board Meeting.

2. Middle School Summer Program – 2009

Dr. Donaher noted that this proposal is similar to last year's district-wide program, but only modified, with a cost not to exceed \$25,000. Middle school students in grades 6, 7, and 8 who have failed two core academic subjects will be required to participate in the summer school remediation program. If a student has failed more than two core academic subjects, the student will be retained. The twenty-day program will focus on reading and mathematics, with the emphasis in reading on reading in the content area. Mrs. Follweiler asked why we can't charge for middle school summer school like we do for the high school program. Dr. Lewis stated that if we charged, we would lose these students, unlike high school students

who need the program to get enough credits to graduate. Mr. Amato asked if these students cannot get it during the regular school year, how are they going to get it in 30 days. Mrs. Leeson and Mrs. Dexter stated that they would like more information from Dr. Donaher regarding the success rate of the middle school summer school remediation program before the May 18, 2009, Regular Board Meeting.

The board approved placing this item on the agenda for the May 18, 2009, Regular Board Meeting, pending receipt of Dr. Donaher's additional information.

3. Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc. – Innovative Summer Youth Program Grant
4. Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc. – Innovative Summer Youth Program Grant – Career Academy

Dr. Lewis explained that Mr. Agretto and Mr. Gilliland are running both of these programs and asked the board to support them at no cost to the district. Mrs. Leeson asked if we can extend it beyond the Career Academy. Dr. Lewis replied that it was offered to all principals, but these were the only ones who responded; the reason being that these are the students who have a real need; other students do not qualify, so those principals did not apply.

The board approved placing both of these items on the agenda for the May 18, 2009, Regular Board Meeting.

5. Community Service Agencies
 - A. Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor
 - B. Hispanic American Organization

Dr. Donaher explained that both of these proposals were previously presented to the board and are being resubmitted after changes were made. He noted that supervisors would be present with students at all times. He reminded the board that if parents do not approve of certain agencies, they do not have to allow their children to volunteer for these agencies.

Board members decided to pull both these items because they felt that both have the possibility of providing an unsafe environment for our students.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Nothing to report.

OPEN FORUM

1. Mr. Amato stated that he felt that we are slowing chipping away at our athletic programs, most recently with middle school soccer. He stated that with all the cuts that have been taken out of the athletic budget, we soon will not be able to provide the excellent athletic programs

we have developed. He used the Allentown School District as an example, stating that with all their cuts over the years, they can no longer provide a quality program.

Mr. Amato also stated that in the past both high schools have held their All-Sports Banquets at the Northampton Community Center, and now have been reduced to serving a can of coke and a pack of crackers to honor the teams. He stated that the Ed and May Glagola era of running the all-sports booster clubs and the stadium concession stands has come to an end. He noted that the money they earned from the fall stadium concession stands went mostly to the funding of the all-sports banquet, which is now being done away with. He noted that the running of the stadium concession stands during the fall season is being taken out of the hands of the district and will be run solely by the two high school booster clubs. He noted that the stands were open for all middle school and high school athletic events held in the stadium and the final profits were divided 60% between the two high school booster clubs and 40% back to the district. He questioned how the booster clubs will be able to man the concession stands when they had trouble manning them when the district was in charge. Dr. Donaher replied that Freedom and Liberty High Schools' booster clubs submitted proposals to run the stadium concession stands during the fall season. Mrs. Leeson stated that the proposals were presented by both athletic directors stating that the booster clubs would run the concession stands. She asked if there would be any oversight by the district; who would be doing the checks and balances? Mrs. Leeson stated that she would like to see a yearly audit similar to what is done currently. Dr. Donaher replied that the booster clubs are not BASD organizations, so BASD would have no control over them. He stated that he and the two athletic directors would be responsible for all accounting, and would be on hand when any money is being counted. The proposal is to be sent to our solicitor for review and an assessment of the district's liability in this circumstance.

2. Mrs. Leeson asked that the administration look into the check from Air Products for BASD's participation in Scholastic Scrimmage. She would like to know where the money has been deposited.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:

Charlotte L. Zimmerman
Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction