



**BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 2009**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, August 10, 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, Richard Agretto, director of special education; and Board Members: Rosario Amato, Michele Cann, Judith Dexter, Dr. Craig Haytmanek, Irene Follweiler, Charlene Koch, Eugene McKeon, and Benjamin Tenaglia. Also in attendance were: Dr. Joseph A. Lewis, superintendent of schools; Dr. Thomas Persing, consultant; 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; Julie Victory, supervisor of mathematics; Frank Arbushites, acting director of technology; 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 the fact that he has heard rumors about the Career Academy being part of the possible cuts, and he had concerns about these cuts.
2. Mr. John Lafferty, 5015 Long Drive, Bethlehem, a representative of the Concerned Citizens of BASD, spoke noting that the newspaper is reporting possible teacher layoffs, and he would like to encourage the administration and the board to contact the teachers' union to discuss the possibility of restructuring employee benefits instead of laying off teachers. Dr. Lewis replied that he has met with the union representative, and they are looking at options in lieu of layoffs.

Mr. Amato stated that he felt the people in attendance at tonight's meeting should be aware of the possibility that the district may only be receiving 60 percent of the money from the state. Mrs. Dexter noted that Mr. Amato was out of turn and he should be speaking at open forum. Mr. McKeon then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Amato seconded the motion. Mr. McKeon withdrew his motion and the meeting continued.

PSSA UPDATES

Mrs. Katona presented an update on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) results for 2009. She noted that in July the Bethlehem Area School District (BASD) learned that, as a district, it reached the goal of meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). She noted that the 2008-2009 school year marked the second of three years in which the reading target was at a level of at least 63 percent of students tested reaching proficiency, and at least 56 percent of students tested reaching proficiency in mathematics. Nine elementary schools maintained the AYP status from last year: Asa Packer, Calypso, Farmersville, Freemansburg, Hanover, James Buchanan, Lincoln, Miller Heights, and Spring Garden Elementary Schools. Two middle schools: Nitschmann and Northeast Middle Schools, also maintained their AYP status. Four elementary schools: Governor Wolf, Marvine, Thomas Jefferson, and William Penn Elementary Schools, who were in “warning” status in 2008, met AYP in 2009. East Hills Middle School, which was in School Improvement II last year, is now “making progress”. Four schools: Clearview and Donegan Elementary Schools, Broughal Middle School, and Liberty High School made notable improvements. Fountain Hill Elementary School lost some progress in reading, but maintained status in mathematics. Freedom High School gave up some gains, especially in mathematics, and saw their scores impacted by temporarily housing the ESOL program. In addition, Freedom now has an African-American sub-group, which did not make AYP in its benchmark year. She explained that this year Pennsylvania was allowed to apply the “Growth Model” as one of the ways to measure proficiency, which was helpful to some of our schools, particularly those with IEP and ELL sub-groups. Mrs. Katona also explained that, unfortunately, using the growth model also meant that the state may no longer use the Pennsylvania Performance Index, or PPI. Had this formula been used, Donegan would have met AYP. As it was, the calculations used show that the ELL sub-group in reading missed AYP by .3%. She then went on to discuss areas for continued focus, specific actions taken to increase student achievement, especially noting the district-wide data workshops, as well as efforts in differentiating instruction and ensuring literacy across all subjects and grade levels. Mrs. Katona went on to identify critical next steps in order to maintain proficiency, and to continue helping those who have not met proficiency. She provided the board with charts to compare AYP reports from 2007-2008 with 2008-2009, and charts comparing AYP results based on 2009 data for grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

Mr. Tenaglia noted that he thought the ESOL program was moved to Freedom High School due to a lack of space. Mr. LaPorta replied that he has contacted the state and is waiting for an answer regarding the impact on Freedom High School. Mrs. Dexter stated that she thought that even though the ESOL program was housed at Freedom, students would be broken out by their home school. Dr. Lewis replied that the state changed rules this year. Mr. Tenaglia asked how this group could have such an impact on one school. Dr. Lewis replied that it had impacted multiple sub-groups.

Mrs. Follweiler complimented the district on its improvements. She then asked what new ideas the district would be trying next year for schools that still need improvement. Mrs. Katona replied that the district needs to look at what it implemented last year and make sure that all programs are in place correctly. She explained that the district does not need to try new things; they need to work on improving what is already in place. Mrs. Follweiler asked if there are any

areas that the district has tried and found not to be working. Mrs. Katona replied that the administration would be looking at these areas when they review individual action plans. She noted that the administration would like to see more data in the hands of teachers.

Mrs. Dexter noted that under the list of things to do, one thing that is missing is efforts to include parental involvement.

ACCELERATED MATH UPDATES

Mrs. Katona referred to the accelerated math update report, which she noted was put together by Mrs. Victory, supervisor of mathematics.

Mrs. Dexter inquired about the district's policy on assigning math credit to students when they have taken such courses through colleges or universities. She was concerned that this credit is not being assigned to students toward their required 4.0 math credits in high school. She would like the curriculum and instruction office to find out how grades from Lehigh and other colleges are counted by other school districts, such as Parkland. She stated that it seems that BASD students are penalized in terms of GPA when they take college mathematics courses through dual enrollment. She would like Mrs. Katona to look into this and come back with a recommendation, possibly within three months.

Mrs. Victory indicated that the district also needs to develop course requirements for students who complete the BASD mathematics sequence prior to their senior year. She commented that it is possible for students to complete our mathematics requirements prior to their junior year, then go for two years without a mathematics course. She believes this is not a good idea for college intending students.

Mrs. Cann stated that all college courses affect the GPA, not only mathematics, so that in examining policy, we should consider all subjects.

PROJECT LEAD THE WAY

Mrs. Durante, with the assistance of Beth Guarriello, Mark Hoffman, Michele Fogerty, and Mike Wagner, gave a presentation on Project Lead the Way. They explained that Project Lead the Way is a four-year, flexible sequence of pre-engineering courses that, when combined with college preparatory mathematics and science courses in high school, introduces students to the scope, rigor, and discipline of engineering and engineering technology prior to entering college. Ms. Guarriello explained that the main stumbling block would be the cost of the program at a time when the district does not have extra funds. She noted that the cost would be \$300,000 for the initial four-year program, but this cost would be spread out over the four years. She explained that the group is currently meeting with politicians to try to find funding outside the district. They are asking for approval to place this item on the agenda for the August 17, 2009, Regular Board Meeting with the stipulation that no funding would come from the General Operating Budget (GOB).

Mr. Amato stated that, if we don't offer this program to our students, someone is likely to take the idea and start a charter school. He agreed that we need to provide our students with these types of courses.

Mr. Wagner stated that some of our students complete their required math courses early, and this would tie in with the needs of these students. He also noted that this would be a joint effort between the science and mathematical departments.

Mrs. Durante noted that she did a survey of incoming ninth graders and ten percent stated an interest in this type of course.

Mrs. Follweiler noted that the financial information was only for the program itself and asked how staffing would be covered. Ms. Guarriello explained that it would require one teacher per semester to begin with, but if the program expanded, it could require an additional teacher. She also stated that it would be treated as an elective.

Mr. Amato asked what the requirements or standards would be for a freshman to qualify to get into the program, and what happens at the completion of four years. Ms. Guarriello replied that the program would require math proficiency in Algebra 1. There is also an application and interview process so that students admitted are truly interested in being in this program. She also noted that the program would be open to more than honor students. At the end of the four-year program, students can opt to pay for a college assessment exam, for which they could earn college credits.

Mrs. Koch inquired as to what would happen after the first year and the course is going well, but the district cannot find continuing funding. Ms. Guarriello replied that most of the first year's costs are capital costs and are not recurring.

Mr. Weiss, from Project Lead the Way, noted that if the contract is signed with his company in October, and the district cannot find the funding, there would be no cost obligations.

Mrs. Dexter polled the board members and all agreed to place this item on the agenda for the August 17, 2009, Regular Board Meeting, with the stipulation that no funding would come from the GOB.

THEMATIC PROGRAM – SENTENTIA PROGRAM AT EAST HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mrs. Katona explained that a lack of proper certification among East Hills Middle School teachers has resulted in the discontinuation of the thematic program Monogacci. The required background, knowledge, and training involved with the Monogacci program made it very personnel specific, beyond what the school is able to accommodate at this time. In an effort to continue offering opportunities for students to be a part of thematic programs, two teachers from East Hills Middle School have joined together to propose a new seventh grade program, "Sententia". Mrs. Katona explained that Mr. Carpenter was not available this evening to explain

the new program, but he provided a description of and a general schedule for the program, which has literacy at its core.

Mrs. Follweiler asked if there would be any additional costs. Mrs. Katona replied that the district supports thematic programs. She stated that the program would cost less than the Monogacci program, and they would only have two field trips. She noted that they are willing to fundraise the cost of the buses if funding would not be available through the district. Mrs. Follweiler asked if the additional cost savings from the other program would go back into the GOB. Mrs. Katona and Dr. Lewis replied that they would look into this and get back to her.

Mrs. Follweiler stated that the information presented to the board was very broad, and she would like more information, such as what would a typical day for this course look like. Mrs. Katona and Dr. Lewis replied that the Mr. Carpenter is not available to contact, but they will get more information and include it in the board mail out on Friday.

Mr. Tenaglia asked, with all the discussions on possible budget cuts, how the administration could justify a new program. Dr. Lewis replied that there would not be any additional costs associated with the new program.

Mrs. Koch stated that she did not understand the new program enough to vote yes. She stated that she would like to hear a presentation on the program directly from Mr. Carpenter. Dr. Lewis replied that he would look into having Mr. Carpenter give a presentation to the board at the beginning of the August 17, 2009, Regular Board Meeting.

Mr. McKeon stated that students are all set to go into a program that has not even been approved by the board yet. Mr. McKeon and other board members agreed that they were not given enough time to review the new program before the start of the school year.

Mrs. Dexter polled the board on this agenda item. Board members agreed to place it on the agenda for the August 17, 2009, Regular Board Meeting, with the agreement that more information would be sent out to the board in the next board mail out and a presentation would be made at the beginning of the August 17, 2009, Regular Board Meeting. Mrs. Follweiler stated that she did not want to give anyone false hopes; the program would have to be reviewed before board members will give approval.

REVIEW OF THE 2008-2009 STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT DATA

Dr. Donaher presented a report on the breakdown of Level III and Level IV infractions, with individual school charts comparing 2003-2004 through 2008-2009 school years. He explained that an examination of the data reveals that district wide, Level III infractions rose from 4,237 for the 2007-2008 school year to 4,870 for the 2008-2009 school year, which represents a 14.9 percent increase. District wide, the total number of students suspended increased from 968 for the 2007-2008 school year to 973 for the 2008-2009 school year, an increase of 0.5 percent. Dr. Donaher then proceeded to explain recommendations offered to help maintain a safe, secure, and orderly environment.

Mrs. Follweiler asked if the increase percentage was because of more infractions occurring, or the result of more teachers reporting the infractions. Dr. Donaher replied that he is trying to obtain more detailed data on all infractions.

Mr. Amato stated that repeated insubordination means that the Code of Conduct is not doing the job it was put in place to do. He stated that we are not doing our job to get these kids out of our classrooms, and provide a safe environment. These repeat offenders are disrupting the system and they do not belong in our classrooms.

Mrs. Koch stated that she agrees with Mr. Amato regarding habitual offenders. They take up the time of a teacher who should be teaching. She stated that we no longer have a program to place these offenders into where, if when they were returned to our classrooms and were still disruptive, they were out of our system. Now we keep these students in our classrooms offense after offense.

Dr. Donaher noted that he is currently working on next year's changes to the Code of Conduct.

OPEN FORUM

Mrs. Cann made a point of order to move Open Forum before Courtesy of the Floor, all board members agreed.

1. Mrs. Koch stated that she had asked for information on all classes with fourteen students or less students. Dr. Lewis replied that information on this was sent to board members last week.
2. Mrs. Koch noted the fact that the district cannot get rid of teachers in order to balance the budget. Dr. Lewis replied that this is correct; a district can only reduce programs or change class sizes to reduce the budget. Mrs. Koch stated that she hopes the administration looks at combining small classes and attrition when making budget cuts. Dr. Lewis replied that it is a shame that the senators are on vacation while our administrators and board members are here trying to solve our budget problems.
3. Mr. Amato stated that the public should realize that no one wants to cut anything; but the fact remains that the district may only be receiving 60 percent of its allocated amount. The district will either have to borrow money or bite the bullet now and reduce non-mandated programs. The district has to have a plan in place now; it is only three weeks until the start of school.

Mr. McKeon stated the fact that the board does not have to vote on budget cuts; they can ask the superintendent to make recommended cuts. He noted that every month that a decision is not made, the district is spending \$400,000.

Mrs. Follweiler noted that the state has not passed its budget yet, but we had to pass our budget. She asked if Dr. Lewis can make recommendations on how to meet our budget.

Dr. Lewis replied that it would be a travesty to open the school year with all programs still in place, then later make cuts. He stated that it would not be fair to our people. He noted that he would be presenting recommendations during the Board Human Resources Committee Meeting, at which time the board can direct him as to which cuts to make.

4. Dr. Lewis stated that he had one item for open discussion, which he would like to place on the agenda for the August 17, 2009, Regular Board Meeting. He noted that the miscellaneous work on the Northeast Middle School project is so small that it does not attract bidders, so he would like permission to award the work to one single contractor. It would still have to go out for bids, but they would specify that the work will be awarded to one single contractor. It would also still have to be sent to the Secretary of Education for approval.

Mrs. Dexter polled the board members and it was the consensus of the board to place this item on the agenda for the August 17, 2009, Regular Board Meeting.

5. Mr. Tenaglia stated that the board received information regarding class sizes for Freedom High School and he is looking for the same information for Liberty High School. Dr. Lewis replied that he just received the information for Liberty High School and would be forwarding it to board members. Mr. Tenaglia noted that some of the class sizes at Freedom High School are small. Mr. LaPorta replied that counselors are still working to get 100 percent of the scheduling complete, but they are not there yet. Mrs. Koch stated that she would like to see special education classes marked separately.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

1. Carol Schachter, 714 Fourteenth Avenue, Bethlehem, spoke stating that she has called both of her government representatives today. She also noted that she has always been in favor of technology and the RASA program. She stated that RASA gives students a new start in a new place. She asked that, since our district is about teaching children, please find a way to keep these programs.
2. Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding the fact that parents need to look at their legal rights regarding the district not providing students with the help they need, such as keeping the Career Academy.
3. Mr. John Lafferty, 5015 Long Drive, Bethlehem, asked that in the future, for the sake of the people in the audience, could the administration please spell out all acronyms.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

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