



**BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2009**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, September 14, 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, Irene Follweiler, Charlene Koch, Eugene McKeon, Loretta Leeson, and Benjamin Tenaglia. Also in attendance were: Dr. Joseph A. Lewis, superintendent of schools; Dr. Thomas Persing, consultant; Thomas Washington, assistant superintendent for human resources; Frank Arbushites, acting director of technology; Kathleen Bast, coordinator of literacy/ELS K-12; 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 a study done recently on the intellectual capability of students at the elementary level, and undetected eye sight problems at that level. He inquired if the Bethlehem Area School District (BASD) provides vision screening. Dr. Lewis replied that the BASD does vision screening through a partnership with St. Luke's Hospital. It was noted that any child needing glasses can receive a voucher to obtain them.
2. Mrs. Karen Dolan, 55 Bridle Path Road, Bethlehem, also a teacher at Liberty High School, spoke regarding the Illick's Mill Project course she teaches and the fact that the curriculum may be changed radically.

Dr. Lewis explained to Mrs. Dolan that he had just received information from the Bethlehem Education Association (BEA) regarding a union grievance and did not want her comments to jeopardize her contractual rights should the grievance become a hearing before the board.

Mrs. Dolan chose to continue with her comments and explained the history of the Illick's Mill Project. She noted that the project began in 2001 with the assistance of former Liberty High School principal Mr. Burkhardt, Mr. Perfetti, and the board at that time.

3. Kevin Bearse, Rachael Royer, and Jimmy Sawyer, Liberty High School students currently in the Illick's Mill Project class, each spoke regarding their worthwhile experiences in the class.

READING REALIGNMENT

Mrs. Katona noted that, after identifying the number of reading teachers remaining following the budget cuts from Reading Recovery, she, Mrs. Cintron, and Mr. Washington worked through a formula to determine distribution of reading teachers out of the General Obligation Budget (GOB) and Title I funding. She then presented a chart that showed the ranking of allocation entitlement for each school based on the formula used for redistribution. She noted that Mrs. Bast is working with principals on how to best use their reading specialists.

Mrs. Cann noted that parents at Asa Packer Elementary School have stated their concerns to her that their school still has students with reading difficulties even though they are not a Title school. Mrs. Katona responded that the formula covered Title schools first but did not exclude all other schools.

Mrs. Leeson noted that the administration originally recommended cutting six reading positions with realignment. She asked why the administration recommended cutting more reading positions. Mrs. Katona replied that the administration was asked to bring recommendations to the board for non-mandated program, and upon speaking about the reading cuts further with Dr. Lewis, the administration then recommended cutting only three positions; this was not approved. Mrs. Leeson stated that this redistribution information should have been presented to the board prior to making the cuts. Mr. Washington responded that this redistribution is a result of the budget cuts, and it could not be completed until after the cuts were made. Dr. Lewis noted that there is a possibility that the district will still receive state funding, at which time it would be possible to add back three and one-half reading positions. He also noted that the information presented is showing how the administration redistributed the remaining positions by using the Title I formula, because that is where the funding comes from.

Mr. Amato stated that this is an important program, and any cuts would not provide what this program was put in place to do. He stated that everyone knew that cuts would hurt this program.

Mrs. Leeson noted that when the Reading Recovery program was originally realigned, it freed up some teachers. She explained that she thought these additional cuts would also free up some reading teachers and have small groups instead of one-on-one. Mrs. Cann stated that it was her understanding that, with the recommendation by the administration to cut reading teachers, the district would still be able to replace the one-on-one with small groups. Dr. Lewis replied that both are correct. He noted that he has met with elementary principals and they are not happy with the current situation. He explained that this does not mean that this program will not work, students will still be receiving help in small groups of three or five to one.

Mr. Amato stated that the program went from one-on-one to small groups. Now more cuts are being made, further diluting the program, and making it weaker. He noted that the board had a chance to put some positions back but voted it down.

Mrs. Dexter noted that the information provided by Mrs. Katona was information only and will be revisited if more funding becomes available.

BUSINESS PROGRAM AUDIT

Mrs. Katona informed the board that our district is scheduled for a program evaluation to be conducted by the Bureau of Career and Technical Education (BCTE) during the 2010-2011 school year. Our business department chairpersons, Mr. Martucci and Mrs. Jordan, have begun to examine the criteria necessary for the evaluation, and will be working with several departments to ensure we are appropriately prepared. She noted that the board will be apprised of progress as we move through the school year.

SAT REPORT

Mrs. Katona provided the board with a copy of the College Board's High School Basic Report. The reports from each high school show SAT results from the seniors of 2009. Mrs. Katona noted that the District Integrated Report, which outlines the district's students' results across a multitude of tests, and which provides greater insight to the students who took the SAT, will not be available for another few weeks. Once that information is available, Mrs. Katona will provide a more in-depth report, which will include a summary that compares results from 2009 with those from 2008, based on the various areas from the report. In the interim, the High School Basic Reports from Liberty and Freedom High Schools provide an overview of the general results.

Mrs. Leeson stated that Freedom High School had 321 seniors take the test and asked how many seniors Freedom High School currently has. Mr. LaPorta replied that there are currently approximately 510-515 seniors.

Mrs. Dexter noted that SAT and ACT tests results matter and she would like to see both of our high schools do something positive regarding preparation for these tests. She stated that our district needs to develop opportunities for our students to receive preparation classes outside the regular course day.

Dr. Lewis stated that Mrs. Katona will have a detailed report shortly which will include information on the top 10 percent with breakdowns.

Mrs. Dexter stated that she agrees that the top 10 to 20 percent are doing well, but we still need to step up what we are doing for all our students.

Dr. Lewis noted that he and Mrs. Katona have met with a provider who has had good success with bringing scores up, but have not taken it any further. Mrs. Dexter responded that this is the type of partnership the district should be looking at.

Mrs. Leeson asked if scores are the same or down from last year. Mrs. Katona replied that she needs to wait until the final report is received to review the scores.

Mrs. Leeson requested a copy of the ACT report.

Mr. Amato asked what the cost of this program is, and asked if it is worth the expense or should this money be used instead for the Reading Recovery program.

Mrs. Leeson replied that she also is in favor of Reading Recovery, but noted that this program is not only for high-end students, but for all students. She noted that there were a large number of students sitting in study halls and now they will be placed in SAT classes.

Mrs. Koch stated that she agreed with Mr. Amato.

Mr. McKeon asked if Northampton Community College requires SAT's. Dr. Lewis replied that they do.

AGENDA ITEM

1. Title III – Part A of No Child Left Behind

The board reviewed this agenda item, which will be placed on the agenda for the September 21, 2009, Regular Board Meeting.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

1. Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, spoke regarding the information he heard at tonight's meeting regarding the Illicks Mill Project. He stated that it is a successful program and he is at a loss as to why it is being put back into a regular classroom program. He asked if this decision came about because of the Broughal Middle School situation; who on the curriculum level made the decision to change the program, and why; and what is gained by the change?

OPEN FORUM

1. Mrs. Dexter asked Dr. Lewis for any information on why curriculum changes were being considered. Dr. Lewis replied that he had received an e-mail from Mrs. Durante stating that some student athletes were not being accepted by the NCAA clearing house, thus making them ineligible for scholarships and/or financial aid. He stated that this information initiated a review. He stated that he had just received information from the Bethlehem Education Association (BEA) regarding a union grievance, but had not had the opportunity to review all the information. He noted the following:
1. No one is recommending shutting down the program.
 2. If the issue is with not getting students a core credit, the administration must look at the curriculum.
 3. The administration needs the opportunity to go back and review the curriculum.
 4. Social studies requirements are also involved.
 5. Need to review the curriculum at the state level and NCAA level.
 6. Is there a need to realign or possibly offer as an elective.

Mr. McKeon noted that the NCAA has set up a number of credits for student athletes, and if you do not have the required number of credits, they will not clear you. He noted that if NCAA is looking at credits, then Ivy League schools are possibly looking at the same information.

Mrs. Follweiler asked if this is the first time that NCAA has questioned our curriculum. Dr. Lewis replied that NCAA informed the district that 2007 would be the last year they accepted it, and it would not be accepted in 2008. He also noted that both high schools appealed this charge.

Mrs. Leeson asked if students in the Illick's Mill Project classes are proficient or advanced going into the PSSA's. Mrs. Durante replied that they most certainly are.

2. Mr. McKeon noted that Governor Wolf Elementary School parents are telling him that there are no social studies books in their classrooms. Mrs. Katona replied that this is a concern which was brought up last year. After much discussion with Dr. Lewis and Mrs. Aulisio, it was decided that the best solution was for teachers to have access to resources other than the outdated books. Mrs. Aulisio has provided teachers with a list of other resources they can use. She noted that the books are still in our schools waiting to be removed. Since they are still on site, they will be redistributed to the teachers to work with for now. Mrs. Katona noted that a new curriculum and textbook selection will take place throughout the year. When the curriculum is complete, it will be placed on line.

Mrs. Leeson asked why we do not have books. Mrs. Katona replied that when we get a new curriculum, the district will purchase new books. Mrs. Leeson asked why we do not just use the old books until we get new ones. Mrs. Katona replied that parents were complaining that the information in the old books was outdated, but to address the current concerns, the old texts will go back to the classrooms.

3. Mrs. Koch stated that she would like to see the curriculum for local history to see if the inaccuracy has been corrected.
4. Mr. McKeon also stated that parents are noting that more time is being spent on PSSA subjects and time for other subjects is being cut back.
5. Mrs. Leeson stated that the new accelerated mathematics program is in place since last year. She noted that this year some students have moved to the accelerated seventh grade program and some have not, and she would like a summary of the program and any changes.
6. Mrs. Leeson stated that Mrs. Shive from the Liberty High School Block Watch called her to thank her, stating that the changes at Liberty High School are working beautifully.
7. Mrs. Dexter congratulated Mr. LaPorta on the moving ceremony held at Freedom on September 11th. She also complimented Mrs. Durante on the Liberty High School open house, held on Sunday, September 13, 2009.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

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