



**BOARD HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2008**

Members of the Board Human Resources Committee met on Monday, September 15, 2008, at 9:35 p.m. in the Education Center's Dining Room. Present were Human Resources Committee Member Thomas Washington, assistant superintendent for human resources; and Board Members: Judith Dexter, Irene Follweiler, Dr. Craig Haytmanek, 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; Richard Agretto, director of special education; Mary Katona, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction; Robin Lutcher, director of information technologies; Eric Smith, supervisor of science; and representatives of the press.

Mrs. Follweiler called the meeting to order at 9:35 p.m.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

Nothing to report.

**STRATEGIC PLAN PRESENTATION**

Mr. Washington presented discussions on three basic areas: the educational technology program, FOSS kits, and school counselors.

1. Educational Technology Program –

Mrs. Lutcher presented an update on the Bethlehem Area School District's educational technology program. With regard to the current SKILL 21 program, she stated that at Broughal Middle School class sets are used for all core content areas. Students are assigned a laptop in each classroom. The related arts areas do not have class sets. Laptops are stored in locked cabinets in each classroom. At East Hills, Nitschmann, and Northeast Middle Schools they use one-to-one assignment of laptops. Students pick up their laptops in the morning and take them to all classes. They are used in both the content and related arts classes. Laptops are stored in locked crates that are secured to the counter with security cables and bolts.

Mrs. Lutchter then reported that, after reviewing the results of the present technology initiatives, members of the educational technology sub-committee put forth the following recommendations:

1. All students should have access to technology to support effective instruction and learning to achieve 21st Century Skills.
2. Technology initiatives should be fully funded.
3. Additional staffing will be needed.
4. Professional development for all teachers is essential and should be ongoing, relevant, and leveled for the individual teacher.
5. At the elementary level, classroom computers should be placed with carts that can be shared. The recommended ratio is one cart for four classrooms.
6. At the middle school level, the district's position is not necessarily 1:1, but all students should have access to technology. We are looking at the model currently in place at Broughal Middle School. Classroom sets of laptops are secured in each classroom and do not travel with the students.
7. At the high school level, the Classrooms For the Future (CFF) initiative should be continued. Additional classrooms should be added as funding becomes available. Additional staff should be trained as CFF teachers and classrooms should be shared. The recommendation is one classroom for up to four CFF trained teachers. At the high schools, additional carts should be purchased for the non-core content areas.
8. At all levels, staff computers should be replaced when the student computers are replaced.
9. A four-year replacement cycle should be implemented for both instructional and administrative technology.
10. An Educational Technology Committee should be established and should meet quarterly to monitor and evaluate the Educational Technology Plan.

Mrs. Leeson asked what the cost would be for the technology initiative as proposed.

Mrs. Lutchter replied that it would be around \$6,000,000 to fund all aspects of the proposal. She noted that the committee looked at other models then concentrated on what they felt would be best for all students. She also noted that the current leasing cost of \$1,000,000 needs to be at the \$2,000,000 target for the refreshing cycle to be accomplished.

Mrs. Dexter requested the names of committee members who are not BASD employees.

Mrs. Dexter stated that we need a recommendation that is best for the district, but will keep within our current budget, and will keep in mind the impact on future budgets.

Dr. Lewis replied that reports show that 3 to 4 percent of a district's budget should be spent on technology. He stated that the board has the right to say how much can be funded each year, but they must look at the needs of all students. He also noted that endorsing this recommendation does not mean that the board will fund all costs each year. Mrs. Leeson disagreed, stating that if the board approved the recommendation, they must commit to funding it.

Mrs. Lutchter reminded the board that these estimates do not include all costs associated with the program. She noted that you would have to add on employee salaries, etc.

The board agreed that they would like to see a revised proposal which would increase technology staff and possibly reduce the 1:1 initiative to more classroom carts, without reducing services such as READ 180.

## 2. FOSS Kits –

In response to questions regarding the FOSS program, Mr. Smith presented the board with information to address their concerns.

The first concern raised was that the FOSS program did not adequately address state and national standards in science, or adequately prepare students for the science PSSA test. Mr. Smith stated that it is clear from state support of the kit based “Science, It’s Elementary” program that the state believes in kit-based science to prepare students for both the PSSA and further study in science. He noted that the National Science Teachers Association supports the importance of early experiences in science so that students develop problem-solving skills that empower them to participate in an increasingly scientific and technological world. It is proven that elementary school students learn science best when they are (1) involved in first-hand exploration and investigation and inquiry/process skills are nurtured; (2) content is organized on the basis of broad conceptual themes common to all science disciplines; and (3) mathematics and communication skills are an integral part of science instruction. He also stated that elementary school students value science best when inquiry skills and positive attitudes are modeled by the teacher and others involved in the education process.

The second concern raised was that there is no research base for using the kit-based science program. Mr. Smith provided a sample research study demonstrating the positive effect of kit-based science programs on science and writing scores. More recent data from the “Science, It’s Elementary” program demonstrates the increase in scores from students receiving kit-based content instruction.

The third concern raised was the cost of the FOSS program over traditional textbook-based programs. The packet included a spreadsheet detailing the cost savings of the FOSS program over textbook programs, especially if that textbook program also includes a hands-on science component. Mr. Smith stated that it should also be noted that more than half of the FOSS kits have already been purchased, increasing the differential between the textbook and FOSS costs. Additionally, he assured the board that yearly reviews of FOSS replacement costs are done to ensure that the replacement costs are in line with what other companies would charge for the same materials. There are no specialized or designated FOSS components that would artificially raise our prices.

Mrs. Dexter asked about the evaluation process. Mr. Smith replied that he is waiting for the PSSA scores. He also stated that teachers reply that FOSS kits have sparked an interest in science and students look forward to science classes.

### 3. School Counselors –

Mr. Washington discussed the possibility of adding specialty counselors and lowering the ratio to 1:250, which is recommended by the American Council of School Counselors. He noted that a lower ratio would ensure counselors being able to spend more time with students. He suggested the addition of three more counselors over a four-year period with a budget increase of \$160,000; or the possibility of creating a position of coordinator of counselor services. He noted that his plan would address needs at all levels, since elementary, middle, and high schools all have various needs. Mr. Washington also noted that counselors are asking for lower ratios.

Mrs. Leeson replied that she felt high schools need more counselors to handle the needs of college-bound students. All board members agreed that there is a need for more high school counselor services.

### **OPEN FORUM**

Nothing to report.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 p.m., with an executive session immediately following.

Minutes Prepared By:

Charlotte L. Zimmerman

Administrative Assistant to the Assistant to the Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction