



**BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2010**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, February 8, 2010, in the Dining Room at the Education Center. The following Board Members were in attendance: William Burkhardt, Michele Cann, Judith Dexter, Michael Faccinetto, Irene Follweiler, and Loretta Leeson. Also in attendance were Dr. Thomas Persing, interim superintendent of schools; Dr. Margaret K. Barilla, consultant for curriculum and instruction; Thomas Washington, assistant superintendent for human resources; Dr. Dean Donaher, director of student services; district principals, and representatives of the press.

Director Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

No one addressed the Board of School Directors.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH – Mrs. Julie Victory

Mrs. Victory introduced the proposed changes to textbook changes for Grades 6 and 7. She noted there was no change to the Grade 8 textbook. She explained that last year the accelerated Grade 6 class utilized a pre-algebra book. In the current year, approximately one-half of the pre-algebra Grade 6 students were placed into Algebra I in Grade 7 with the other one-half placed into a 7-A course, which used a Grade 7 textbook with sections from the Grade 8 textbook. There was also the 7-B course, which utilized only the Grade 7 textbook. Mrs. Victory explained that her proposed change would be to use the Grade 7 textbook for the accelerated Grade 6 students. She said it was still an accelerated placement but had more association with fractions. She pointed out that if a student did not move on to Algebra I in Grade 7, they had some “catch-up” work to do related to fractions, which was critical to success in the subject. She stated that she had discussion with Director Leeson in the past about the program and also had discussion with teachers. She said there was a problem with the second group of grade 7 students who did not get placed into Algebra I.

Mrs. Victory stated that she had heard from many parents of students utilizing the Grade 7 textbook mixed with Grade 8 text and that the students had felt as if they had been demoted.

She expressed that it was not true in terms of the course content but added that she thought it was not good for students to have the perception that they were not successful. She suggested using the Grade 7 textbook for the accelerated course in Grade 6 and students not placed in Grade 7 Algebra I would use the pre-algebra textbook. She believed the students could handle the transition from the Grade 7 textbook to Algebra I and noted that it was done for many years because previously there was not a pre-algebra course or textbook. She commented that the pre-algebra textbook combined Grade 7 fraction and decimals, probability and statistics, along with beginning algebra. Mrs. Victory explained that they could not make the change next year because the students already had the pre-algebra book in Grade 6 so they could not use the same book in Grade 7. She suggested using the Grade 8 textbook because they already received a lot of the material at the present time. She pointed out that it was still an accelerated placement. She added that there would be no change to the 7-B course. She concluded that her recommendations would be in effect beginning in the 2011-2012 school year and forward.

Director Leeson commented that she received comment from the high school that the students were not arriving prepared in math and that it impacted not only their math progression but also science. She reviewed that she had often heard the statement about students who had a strong background in Algebra I would probably succeed in both math and science through high school.

Mrs. Victory agreed with Director Leeson's statement.

Director Leeson suggested having the best teachers in the district teach the Algebra I Course both at the middle and high school level. She inquired if there were high school certified Algebra teachers to teach Algebra I at the middle school level.

Mrs. Victory replied that they did not but noted that in terms of the state, she was aware of discussion with regard to having a secondary certified person to teach the course. She reviewed that all of their teachers were highly qualified, according to the state, and they did not have anyone teaching the subject who should not be teaching the subject. She added that she had been involved in discussions about the concern that the teacher might not be a secondary certified math teacher who was instructing the course.

Director Leeson commented that she knew the district had very qualified middle school teachers who would do an excellent job teaching the Algebra I course, but she wanted to be sure the students were receiving a "rock solid" foundation before moving up so they would experience success in math and science at the high school level.

Mrs. Victory brought attention to the two district math coaches assigned to the accelerated math program at the four middle schools who worked with the teachers and students. She said it was a safety gap measure put in place to assure a good Algebra I foundation.

Director Burkhardt inquired if the eighth grade math teachers were not certified.

Mrs. Victory replied that they had taken the Praxis examination.

Director Burkhardt replied that they did not go through rigorous college math program but were elementary certified. He commented that he thought it stopped in Grade 6.

Mrs. Victory reflected on the highly qualified teacher requirement, which allowed a teacher to be highly qualified through the state's Praxis examination.

Director Burkhardt inquired if there were any highly qualified (by Praxis) teachers teaching high school math.

Mrs. Victory replied, "no."

Dr. Barilla commented that approximately 30 percent of the middle school math teachers were secondary certified.

Director Burkhardt inquired if they had trouble finding math certified instructors.

Mrs. Victory responded that it was extremely difficult to find 7-12 certified math teachers. She was not sure of the state's rationale to change the educational requirement.

Director Burkhardt asked about the math sequence for the average and struggling high school students.

Mrs. Victory replied that the Course 3 student who did well could move on to Honors Algebra I in high school. If the student does not move into that course, they could move to Academic Algebra I. She added that there was another Algebra I course which had the same content but was spread over one year and was referred to as Algebra I-A and I-B. She said there was tutoring available for students who needed assistance.

Director Dexter inquired if a regular student in Grade 6 had a choice of 7-A or 7-B for the interim solution.

Mrs. Victory said that it was a possibility and that she would not deny a student the opportunity. She noted the majority of the students would be going into a Grade 7 textbook but there was the possibility of some higher achieving students who would fit in.

Director Dexter asked about the differences in the Grade 8 textbook during the interim solution and the pre-algebra textbook in the proposed final solution.

Mrs. Victory explained that the pre-algebra textbook had an emphasis on algebra throughout and the Course 3 book gets there a bit more slowly. The Course 3 book developed numeracy skills first and the pre-algebra textbook developed numeracy skills along with algebra skills.

Director Dexter asked if the district owned the books for the program.

Mrs. Victory stated that she might need to purchase some Grade 8 textbooks and noted there was some money in the curriculum and instruction department budget.

She was attempting to determine if there were enough existing grade 8 textbooks to move over to Grade 7 for the year. She added that there was not a change in the books.

Director Dexter inquired about the percentage of students in each course category.

Mrs. Victory said it would be based on what happened this year. She explained that fifty percent of the last year's sixth graders who went into seventh grade were placed in Algebra I with the remaining fifty percent were placed in Course 2/3.

Director Dexter asked about how the program was being evaluated.

Mrs. Victory explained the criteria for student placement. She did not want to place a quota on the number of students in the accelerated math program so they had some mixed accelerated Grade 6 classes. There were some students in the class that were in the class for reasons such as their PSSA score but some who didn't quite make it but were in the class because they needed a certain number. They had some students who were struggling.

Director Follweiler inquired about what was needed for the proposal.

There was discussion about the various math courses available at the beginning of high school.

Director Burkhardt asked if they were attempting to change or compress the basic four levels of math including algebra, pre-algebra, honors algebra, and geometry.

Director Leeson noted that there were five courses.

Mrs. Victory explained that a student could be in Algebra I in Grade 8, who could be placed in geometry when they arrived at the high school.

Mrs. Victory stated that she wanted approval from the board but it was not an agenda item.

Dr. Barilla expressed that Mrs. Victory wanted the board members to be familiar with the changes.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS – Marci Ronald, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

Marci Ronald, representative from COMPASS Community Schools, gave a presentation on the program which had been operating in the district for the past five years. She brought attention to informational research articles in support of the program. One of the documents was from a publication of Education Week, titled, "Community Schools: Reform's Lesser-Known Frontier." She directed attention to a few sentences in the article which stated, "The Obama administration has taken up the task of settling the debate over whether America's schools should be reformed by raising standards or by expanding community-based supports. The verdict was a resounding yes to both sides."

Ms. Ronald noted that there was an awareness of a sense of accountability on a national level. She believed the community could be more intentionally connected to schools in a very powerful way.

She proceeded with a PowerPoint presentation explaining the model of Community Schools along with their philosophy and structure. She reviewed the historical relationship with the school district which had assisted with the launching of family centers and other areas of student support since 2005. She explained that their basic philosophy was based upon research about what children needed in order to have success. The concept was to create an intentional set of partnerships within a school in order to create conditions where children could maximize their learning potential. She reviewed the district's partnership with St. Luke's Hospital, which provided dental, vision, and medical support. The district's family centers had provided clothing, food, and other support services.

Ms. Ronald said the core ingredients involved the school principal, along with a community school coordinator employed by a lead agency and was stationed directly on site at the specific school to help coordinate and organize programs and services. The community school coordinator organized and energized community partners to bring support to the program. Every school had a site-based leadership team that was comprised of educators, parents, and community partners. She commented that the program was far more than bringing in more books for students but also about bringing in tutors and mentors to support critical issues. They had a results focused plan that was also integrated into the curriculum. She stated they created the type of vehicle where community partners could actually invest in the school and become actively engaged. The program's cornerstone was to help parents to become true partners in education.

Ms. Ronald reviewed that the program had created partnerships with Calypso, Fountain Hill, and Lincoln Elementary Schools. She explained that each school was paired with a different community based organization. Calypso was paired with Communities In Schools of the Lehigh Valley; Fountain Hill Elementary was partnered with Northampton Community College, Lincoln Elementary School was paired with the Center for Humanistic Change, and the newest partnership was with Broughal Middle School which was the first university assisted model. She explained the various resources offered from the United Way such as the coordination of the program, which was an essential ingredient for community schools. She added the organization had paid for transportation in the past as well as program costs distributed among the district's three sites, such as the pilot project called the Strengthening Families Project, which supported families who new to the English language. She emphasized that the organization had done their level best to ensure a connection to the district's own initiatives and community led initiatives. Ms. Ronald noted the United Way investment in the district had totaled nearly \$600,000 in the past five years, with the partnership investment bringing even more financial support. She believed there was an incredible level of parental involvement at all three sites because of their effective blend of systems in addition to the removal of barriers. She said there was also a sense of improved and positive climate and increased community engagement. She brought attention to a program called "The Leader In Me," which was based on "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." She noted it was a \$25,000 program that a donor wanted to bring to the schools with no cost to the district.

Ms. Ronald concluded that in order to support the program in the district she recommended the following four key actions:

- 1) Increase personal knowledge of the program such as visiting a site through an organized tour in order to have a greater understanding of the concept.
- 2) Insure the continued support of the superintendent and key administrators for the community school model. She suggested inviting their group to be part of the interview team or provide questions for the potential superintendent.
- 3) Help to build an awareness of the model. She reviewed that many people were not aware they were doing the work in the district for the past five years.
- 4) Strengthen the implementation of the community school model through supportive policies and procedures. She suggested providing increased building access to the community school coordinators.

Ms. Ronald introduced the building principals for the three community schools that were currently participating in the program. Dr. Elizabeth Conard from Calypso Elementary School provided a presentation in support of the Community Schools Program. She also included Nathan Stannard, the principal from Fountain Hill Elementary and Benita Draper, the principal from Lincoln Elementary who both contributed to the presentation.

Director Follweiler inquired as to how the specific groups were assigned to each particular school.

Ms. Ronald said they were traditionally selected based upon the principal's interests. They inquire with the district to see if there is a principal who would be agreeable to share the building with a community based organization and also sharing space and other resources.

Director Follweiler asked about the criteria which the benefactor needed to meet. She pointed out that their ideals might not match with the school. She questioned what controls were in place to protect the students.

Ms. Ronald responded that there were specific standards in place as to the implementation of the model. They had to be a community based organization which was connected to the higher education institution. They would never present an opportunity to the school if it did not fit within their philosophy. She thought they had fairly strong criteria to meet before presenting a program.

Mr. Stannard contributed that the afterschool mentoring program at his school involved ten to twelve mentors. The mentors received reading and math training and were also connected to the teachers to have knowledge about the skill deficit associated with the students. The students were receiving the extra help which they might not be receiving at home. They also had approximately 60 students participating in the Homework Club from Monday through Thursday which was held at various churches and was supported by Lehigh University students.

Director Dexter asked if he felt the programs would not exist or be as effective without the Community School model at Fountain Hill.

Mr. Stannard replied that he did not think they would be quite as effective. He pointed out the community school coordinator met with the Lehigh University officials and set up the scheduling and transportation for the students.

Ms. Draper stated that they made sure the community programs offered at Lincoln Elementary School were in direct alignment with their school based results plan. They looked at the yearly goals and their plan was in alignment. They made sure they were always meeting the standards. She noted their school was also a RTI school where reading intervention was offered for 40 minutes daily for four days during the week for all of the students. Prior to the community school model, it was difficult for them to provide such interventions for the students. She added that through their partnership, they had been able to receive the necessary support such as the State Farm Insurance Company. She also mentioned a recent event which had a goal to strengthen and increase student literacy. Ms. Draper described it as a family event that involved volunteers from the Center for Child Advocacy, Liberty Trust, and East Stroudsburg University to read aloud to the students based on the genres. She added that it would have been difficult to run the program without the community school coordinator who had the opportunity to connect with all of the partners to assist the school.

Director Dexter questioned if the event would have occurred without a coordinator or would it just have been more difficult to coordinate.

Ms. Draper replied that it would have been difficult to run the program without the community school coordinator who had the opportunity to connect with all of the partners who assisted the school.

Dr. Conard reflected on the loss of the ASPIRE funding which affected building coordinators who assisted in the coordination of the after-school programs. The role of the community school coordinator was then redefined and they had taken on some of the responsibilities of organizing many after school programs. She reviewed that many students had a limited experiential background but if they were exposed to after-school activities, which might not appear to be necessarily academic in nature, it helped them to gain background to make connections when exposed to educational information.

Dr. Conard provided a presentation that focused on the goals of the Community Schools Program. She shared that the common goals were to offer a quality education to all students; encourage positive youth development and a motivation to learn; to meet the basic physical, mental, and emotional needs of students and families; and to provide a safe, supportive, and respectful school environment. She stated that Calypso Elementary was a natural choice for a community school because all of their students walked to the building with the exception of a few students. She added that 55 percent of the student population qualified for free or reduced lunch and pointed out that when she first arrived at the school 12 years ago, the lunch program involved 24 percent of the students. Dr. Conard explained that the leadership team for each school met monthly to discuss goals and was composed of parents, teachers, community representatives, the community school coordinator, the principal, and in some cases the family center coordinator. She reviewed the 2009-2010 focus, which was the after-school programs, community partnerships, parent involvement activities, and family fun.

Dr. Conard provided the school board with a list of community partners involved with the program. She also brought attention to specific programs offered to the school such as volunteers from the First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem, who came to the school in October and served the parents a pancake breakfast and then planted shrubs on the grounds of the school. They also had programs encouraging family bonding such as “Donuts with Dads” and “Muffins with Moms,” in addition to grade level potluck dinners. She explained that the family center at Calypso worked very closely with the program; noting it was an extremely important component of a community school.

Dr. Conard expressed the importance of Calypso Elementary School giving back to the community by partnering with the West Bethlehem Food Bank in addition to a coat and blanket drive for New Bethany Ministries.

Mr. Stannard stated that Fountain Hill Elementary School was in partnership with Northampton Community College. They had the largest elementary school in the district with 83 percent of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Some of the goals in their results based plan was to increase family engagement, increase school-wide literacy, and increase community engagement. He reviewed some of the highlights of the program such as “Teacher Aide” Day, which involved the faculty members of the college donating items for the faculty of the elementary school. He also noted the celebration of Martin Luther King which resulted in a day of service performance at the community college in addition to a presentation held at the school which pertained to the “No Place For Hate” initiative. He also mentioned the Lehigh Valley “Cops-4-Kids” Program that promoted reading. Mr. Stannard also brought attention to the summer school program, which was tied into free attendance to summer camp sponsored by the Horizon For Youth Program at the community college. He reviewed additional highlights of the Community Schools Program including The DaVinci Center after school program which required parental involvement. A reading initiative was promoted by the community college; using their mascot to engage the students along with Lehigh University lacrosse players also participating in the program. He brought attention to a winter holiday event that involved Moravian Village, the community college and the Bethlehem Police Department which resulted in 101 students receiving gifts. Mr. Stannard conveyed that it was a struggle to have parents attend the parent-teacher conferences but with the availability of the Northampton Community College van, many parents are transported to the school. As a result their building had 76 percent attendance during the fall conferences. He believed the after-school program in itself showed the value of the community school model and the coordinator. He also reflected on the absence of the ASPIRE coordinator at the school so the community school coordinator picked up in that area which was very important.

Ms. Draper reflected on her past experiences with her building in New York City where they had a federally run program which was housed within and was opened up to community partners and organizations but there was still a disconnect between the program and the school itself. She added that there was a wealth of resources for the teachers to tap into but it was not being utilized. She commented that the Community Schools Program at Lincoln Elementary was successful in comparison to the one at her former building.

Ms. Draper said that the program helped to enhance academic programs, assisted families, and also gave the community the opportunity to see what was going on in the schools. She thought that parent leadership had increased over time and pointed out that some of the after school programs were run by the parents.

Director Follweiler thought it was important to have an understanding about the impact of the program.

Director Dexter inquired about Ms. Ronald statement regarding a freeze in the program expansion for the last few years. She asked if there was any hope if other schools in the district were interested in the concept.

Ms. Ronald brought attention to grant funding and community sponsorships. She added that the new Title I guidelines addressed community schools.

Director Dexter addressed Dr. Persing regarding the policy issue to accommodate the community school program in a better manner such as assisting them with building access.

Dr. Persing recommended communication with the superintendent of schools.

Director Dexter reviewed that by policy, the superintendent had the right to allocate keys.

Dr. Washington pointed out that they needed to have more discussion because they did not want to jeopardize the security of the district.

Director commented that she recently visited Calypso Elementary School and spent time with Lorna Velazquez who showed her how the Community Schools Program worked with the family center but also worked independently. She stated she was impressed with the program.

AGENDA ITEMS – FEBRUARY 22, 2010

A. Project Lead the Way (PLTW Grant) B. Highmark Challenge Grant

- A. Mrs. Cintrón requested permission to apply for both grants. She noted that the grant was developed with the assistance of Congressman Dent's office.

JoAnn Durante commented that the science department teachers, Mr. Kaufmann and Mrs. Fogarty, under the leadership of Beth Guarriello, had personally pursued the program by the pursuit of multiple political figures. She explained that they had the opportunity to tour Parkland School and witness the benefits of the program firsthand. She noted the program also supported future vocations such as engineering.

Mrs. Cintrón also commented on the incredible commitment by the science teachers at Liberty High School in their attempt to obtain support. She also credited Beth Guarriello with budget development for the program.

- B. Kathleen Quigney, the principal of the SPARK Prekindergarten Program, discussed the 8-week program sponsored by the Highmark Challenge Grant, which focused on manners and appropriate behavior towards one another. She noted that the teachers built onto the program by reiterating lessons.

The program will also take place at Broughal Middle School.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

- 1. Mr. Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethelhem -
Mr. Antalics referred to the certification of the middle school math teachers. He reflected on the informational article he had previously distributed at the previous meeting and said that it addressed the problem. He thought that some of the teachers who taught middle school math were not comfortable teaching high school mathematics. He also reviewed that students were struggling with math. He questioned if the students were struggling because they were intellectually incapable of comprehending the subject matter or was it the teachers who were not certified to teach math causing them to struggle. He questioned the number of math teachers who were certified to teach math. He urged internal testing of staff which could be monitored by Dr. Barilla. He once again referred to the informational article stating that the math content was too rigorous in concept and many teachers did not have the understanding. Mr. Antalics asked if the children were being deprived of adequate teaching which he believed to be a serious problem that demanded strong action. He also questioned if the students were able to learn math without the use of a handheld calculator.

OPEN FORUM

- A. Director Leeson brought attention to a question that arose a few weeks ago regarding a classroom with a broad spread of student reading levels. She noted that Dr. Barilla researched the class and provided the board with information that proved it to not be identifiable.
- B. Director Leeson noted that she had the opportunity to attend a county council meeting to speak about TIF (Tax Increment Financing) to get direction on how the county and school district should proceed. The outcome was that the City of Bethlehem, county council, and the school district would each obtain their own attorney to review the document. She also met with Jeff Parks from Musikfest and reviewed if they were doing anything significantly different than what was proposed with the original TIF. She suggested that Mr. Parks provide the board with information during a meeting about what would be occurring with the TIF money on the Southside.
- C. Director Follweiler discussed available dates to meet with regard to the superintendent's search. It was agreed that Tuesday, February 23 at 5:30 p.m. would be the next superintendent search meeting (executive session). She also noted that Drs. Vantine and Scott had some confidential applicant information to share with the board during the executive session. She agreed to post the information on the district website.

- D. Director McKeon recognized Michael Samuelson, a student from East Hills Middle School who won first place in the Lehigh Valley Math Counts competition. Ms. Mickolay, administrative assistant to the superintendent, stated that the student would be recognized at the March 15 Regular Board Meeting.
- E. Director Burkhardt addressed the data provided by Dr. Barilla regarding the Grade 11 College Preparatory English Class. He reviewed that 12 students in the classroom were considered proficient and 13 students were either not tested or not proficient. He commented that it was unacceptable and expressed his concern about preparation of the students for college.

Director Leeson noted another breakout also revealed two below basic students, three basic, four proficient, and eight advanced students all in one class.

Dr. Barilla responded that Julie Victory and Kathy Bast would explain ranging at the next meeting. She pointed out that she did not have experience with student ranging.

Director Dexter commented that the explanation about ranging because it was explained to the board in the past. They knew what they were supposed to have but she did not think they had anything that looked like it. She added that high school principals also told them that it was not possible to follow the given parameters with regard to class size and sections. She thought the issue was if it made sense to blend everybody together other than the honors and AP students.

Director Burkhardt stated that the two core areas were math and English. He reviewed that math had at least four or five levels and with English they were just talking about two levels. He said it simply did not compute.

Dr. Barilla noted that she provided Dr. Persing with a packet of information which she secured from the Pennsylvania Department of Education website with one topic on the rewarding of credit for physical education. Another topic was on the levels of high school academic subjects. She noted that she reviewed the information on other high school websites. She offered to provide the board with the information she obtained so they could see how other schools addressed ranging.

Dr. Barilla explained that Mrs. Victory described ranging as taking the honors students, and then taking the struggling students who were in Algebra I-A and Algebra I-B. The students in the middle were ranging. They would then take every fifth student. Dr. Barilla stated that she questioned how they would be able to do the schedule other than manually scheduling the students. She said the process would be difficult to accomplish on a high school level and added that she was not comfortable attempting to explain the process.

Director Leeson questioned if they could have a presentation on alternative programs and how they might be able to have future discussion on how other high schools were dealing with course selection.

Director Burkhardt pointed out that the schools were in processing of scheduling at the present time. He said that he would want to see some research, which showed how they would take theory and put it into the practical. He thought the concept was wonderful but he could not see it happening.

Dr. Persing commented that if they started to debate course selection next month, realistically it was too late for this year.

Director Dexter stated that there was never a perfect time to do it.

Dr. Persing said there was definitely time for the fall semester and next spring.

Director Dexter stated that the topic seemed to come up during various parent meetings in the district; especially parents of motivated students in need of a solid college preparatory program who were not receiving the needed academic challenge. She added that regardless of how the curriculum was written, it was not being delivered because of other issues going on in the classroom. She concluded they needed to address that part of the student population.

Director Burkhardt said the principals needed to stand up for what they fundamentally believed about course offering at the high schools and then ask for board support.

Director Leeson brought attention to the current teaming approach at Freedom High School and suggested to Dr. Barilla about a presentation for the board.

Director Dexter announced that an executive session regarding personnel, secretarial negotiations, and other items would immediately follow the meeting adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:

Donna Wenz
Confidential Secretary for the Department of Curriculum and Instruction