



## **BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2010**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, March 8, 2010, in the Dining Room at the Education Center. The following Board Members were in attendance: Rosario Amato, William Burkhardt, Michele Cann, Judith Dexter, Michael Faccinetto, Irene Follweiler, Loretta Leeson, Eugene McKeon, and Aurea Ortiz. Also in attendance were Dr. Thomas Persing, interim superintendent; Dr. Margaret K. Barilla, educational consultant as assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction; Thomas Washington, assistant superintendent for human resources; Richard Agretto, director of special education; Frank Arbushites, director of technology; Iris Cintrón, supervisor of minority affairs, governmental programs and grants; Doris Correll, coordinator of English acquisition; and representatives of the press.

Mrs. Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

### **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

Mr. Stephen Antalics, of 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem, commented on a previous statement he made regarding 66 percent of middle school math teachers not being prepared to teach math. He questioned if any action had been taken since the previous meeting.

Dr. Persing responded that Dr. Barilla had addressed the issue and had suggested professional staff development.

Dr. Barilla stated that she met with the math department chairpersons today and they were addressing the issue.

Mr. Antalics commented that the situation should not have happened if it was being properly monitored by administration. He compared the situation to a recent development in a New England state where all of the teachers of the district were dismissed for their incompetence.

Dr. Persing pointed out that the teachers were not incompetent. They were certified and qualified through the Praxis examination administered by the state.

Mr. Antalics also commented about information he received on NPR radio that referred to teachers who majored in elementary education rather than in math because of the challenge.

## **ANNUAL MEASURABLE ACHIEVEMENTS OBJECTIVES UPDATE (AMAO) –**

Mrs. Correll, Coordinator of English Acquisition, provided an update of the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Program. She stated that “No Child Left Behind” required that ELL (English Language Learners) be tested annually to document language proficiency in addition to the PSSA. She explained that the WIDA (World Class Instructional Design and Instruction) was a consortium of 22 states. She noted that Pennsylvania came on board in 2005. As with the PSSA test, the district is accountable for showing progress and meeting set scores. Mrs. Correll further explained that with the PSSA assessments, the students’ scores were used to determine the district’s adequate yearly progress (AYP). The WIDA ACCESS assessment was used to determine the district’s annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAO). She stressed the importance of making sufficient gains on the WIDA. She reviewed the criteria for the AMAOs which included an increase in the level of English proficiency, the number of exited ELLs per year, and the percentage of ELLs who attained proficiency on the PSSA. She noted that failure to meet on AMAO criterion would mandate a district improvement plan.

Mrs. Correll further explained that the state had rushed to provide the federal government with information for Title III funding and therefore submitted a flawed formula, which had unattainable goals, but had rectified their error this year. She added they were making strides in preparing the reports, but were behind in getting them out to districts. The reports were due to be distributed during the first week of February, but were presently being held until workshops could be provided to explain the charting of target scores for English acquisition. She said she was in communication with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and had been informed they would be mailing the AMAO report soon.

Mrs. Correll introduced the eMetric for ELLs Website, which had posted the WIDA: ACCESS 2008-2009 scores on February 4, 2010. She explained that it demonstrated a graph of student scores for every school. If the student scores were in red or blue, they were ready to exit or had already exited the program. She commented that the website provided valuable information that she would share with principals at their monthly curriculum meetings. She would also share the information with teachers on March 28. Mrs. Correll said she was working with Mr. Arbushites to import the student scores into Performance Tracker in order to improve the ease of use for all teachers in the district.

She brought attention to SAS (Standard Aligned Systems), which was a method by which an instructor could refer to curricular information related to specific regular education classes. She stated that the Pennsylvania Department of Education had incorporated ESOL strategies, standards, and descriptors to the Pennsylvania standards, within an electronic format, which was accessible to all teachers and not just ESOL specialists.

Director Follweiler questioned the various levels of the program.

Mrs. Correll stated that levels one and two (preproduction and beginner) were considered playground language and levels three and four (intermediate and advanced) were a greater challenge to the students due to the intensity of the academic language needed to achieve academic success.

Mrs. Correll added that each student was evaluated on an individual basis, according to his or her needs and strengths. She pointed out that a student could be receptive to a concept, but if they had to explain it, they could have a challenge.

Director Ortiz questioned tracking transfer students from another district.

Mrs. Correll replied that they used WIDA results for placement if they were up to date within a year. She concluded that the district's policy was to align ESOL instruction to the regular education curriculum. There was a need for English Language Learners (ELLs) to acquire English as they simultaneously learned content at grade level so they could be mainstreamed with their peers.

### **PSSA UPDATE – Dr. Barilla**

Dr. Barilla reviewed the PSSA assessment schedule for schools. She noted one of the changes was that students were to be given as much time as necessary to complete the examinations.

She also reviewed the PSSA 2009 results and noted there was further explanation in the booklet, which she distributed.

Dr. Barilla explained the various graphs which accompanied the literature. She pointed out the goal was to have improved student performance scores. She showed both district and state level results. She reviewed important dates regarding the PSSA testing schedule, which appeared to be a challenge because it was a compressed schedule.

Dr. Barilla also brought attention to the adaptive tests referred to as PSSA-M. She noted that the district had the opportunity to pre-register the identified students who would be given the examination.

She also addressed the importance of providing the students with a quality education and balancing the PSSA testing preparation with the regular curriculum.

She reviewed the target average scores for the current year and the year to follow.

Director Leeson commented that it was clear they had a lot of work to do, after observing the scores. She agreed with Dr. Barilla in that if a student was receiving a quality education; it would also take care of PSSA preparation. She questioned if students had an awareness of the availability of the unlimited time for testing.

Dr. Barilla replied affirmatively and added that it would be emphasized with the students that had IEPs.

Director Leeson asked if Dr. Barilla supported the half-day schedule.

Dr. Barilla agreed.

Michael Wagner from Liberty High School made the comment that the algebra students were behind because of snow days.

Director Leeson suggested covering more in Algebra I in order to prepare the students with regard to eligible content.

Dr. Barilla brought attention to anchors and how the teachers were told to focus on content for PSSA preparation.

Director Ortiz questioned the time limit on the PSSA.

Dr. Barilla pointed out that the teachers needed to be reminded to have awareness.

Director Dexter suggested that all teachers write, “NO TIME LIMIT” on their blackboards in the classrooms.

#### **PA PACT GRANT UPDATE – Dr. Barilla/Mrs. Cintrón –**

Dr. Barilla stated that the item was informational in order to update the board as to the use of the grant funding. She reviewed the list of program offerings covered under the grant, which included:

- Scantron Testing – used to identify students in need of after school tutoring
- Lehigh Valley Writing Project
- Elementary laptops and middle school computer labs
- Professional development – resiliency training, elementary literacy, and middle level mathematics
- Science books

Director Burkhardt inquired if the money was part of the federal stimulus.

Mrs. Cintrón said the board was previously informed about the items.

Director Dexter stated she was not previously aware of all of the listed items.

Director Leeson said that she recalled reviewing the PA Pact Grant with various categories but did not recall discussion with regard to all of the line items.

Mrs. Cintrón stated that the \$600,000 for technology was originally part of the general operating budget which would be reimbursed through the grant. She emphasized that it was not additional spending.

Director Leeson inquired about the use of \$600,000 for elementary laptops. She questioned if the teachers’ laptops were being replaced.

Mr. Arbushites described the computer set-up in the elementary schools. He noted that the AI (Academic Integration) teacher might move from classroom to classroom which would necessitate mobile units.

Mrs. Cintrón commented that there was \$800,000 budgeted for teacher tuition reimbursement through the grant. She noted that the after-school coordinators were being paid from a different grant at the Title I schools.

#### **AGENDA ITEMS FOR MARCH 15, 2010 REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

- A. Lowe's Toolbox for Education Grant – Calypso Elementary School – Reading**
- B. Lowe's Toolbox for Education Grant – Calypso Elementary School – Technology**
- C. Lowe's Toolbox for Education Grant – Marvine Family Center**
- D. Sprint Character Education Grant – Building Character through Community Service**
- E. Dual Enrollment**

Mrs. Cintrón provided the board members with details associated with the Lowe's Toolbox for Education Grant. She noted that the grants were capped at \$5,000. She noted a previous grant was distributed to the Calypso Family Center for furniture and added that the Marvine Family Center was presently a recipient.

Director Leeson inquired if all schools were notified about the availability of the grant.

Mrs. Cintrón replied that she was not presently aware of other schools but she was aware of the family center applicants because she periodically met with them.

Director Leeson suggested that all schools be notified about the grant opportunity.

Mrs. Cintrón explained that she was not the initiator of the grant and another staff member became aware of the grant. She agreed to notify the other schools about the opportunity.

Director Dexter inquired about the Sprint Character Education Grant.

Mrs. Cintrón commented that the program which built character through community service programs.

Mrs. Cintrón addressed the dual enrollment application and noted that the district was applying for \$111,000 based on projections for the next school year.

The above listed agenda items were considered together by members of the board and given approval to be listed on the agenda for the March 15, 2010, Regular Board Meeting.

#### **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

No one addressed the board of school directors.

## **OPEN FORUM**

Director Leeson reflected on the situation last year where students became involved in programs that had not gone through the approval process. She reviewed that the district had a formal approval process, which went through administration and then on to the board. She thought the process had been lost over the past couple of years and didn't want to get into a position of declining a program that wasn't ready for the students. She inquired with Dr. Barilla about forthcoming new programs.

Dr. Barilla replied that she was not aware of any new programs. She asked the board to share information if they were aware of any questionable programs.

Director Burkhardt commented that he was present at the Ilick's Mill Board of Directors Meeting during the past week, which would soon become the Gertrude Fox Environmental Center. He noted that there were some planned modifications to that program for the fall. He believed that Mrs. Dolan was going to arrange a time to meet with Dr. Barilla.

Ms. Mickolay, the superintendent's administrative assistant, stated that she had contacted their office.

Director Leeson brought attention to the teaming program at Freedom High School. She did not believe they had the opportunity to review the program that was already in place for the present year. She added that she heard there would be some new AP programs at the high school level.

Dr. Persing stated that he did not know of a formal application submitted.

Dr. Barilla pointed out that in her curriculum history, the deadline for new curriculum was October 31 in order for successful implementation. There was a need for a timeline in order for successful scheduling and enrollment.

Dr. Persing said he was not privy to what was in place previously and asked Mr. Washington if he was aware of any new AP courses.

Mr. Washington replied that he understood they were working on them but did not know when they planned to implement them. He did not recall seeing in the course listings.

Director Leeson expressed that they would not necessarily object to any of the ideas.

Director Dexter pointed out that curriculum changes, including the addition of deletion of courses, had to come before the board as a matter of policy. She added that a few years ago, the high school deleted some electives without board approval.

Dr. Barilla inquired if the board received a listing of all approved courses.

Director Dexter replied that they did not for this year but did so in previous years.

Dr. Barilla asked if the board approved the courses within the course selection guide distributed in January and if they typically approved the courses.

Director Burkhardt stated they didn't during his tenure as a principal.

Dr. Barilla reviewed that any course changes should come before the board.

Director Dexter addressed the amount of \$600,000 for the computer lab and asked if it was an expense because it was not highlighted in yellow.

Director McKeon thought the yellow highlighted area came out of the general operating budget.

Mrs. Cintrón stated that the yellow highlighted figures came out of the general operating budget.

Director Dexter noted that the \$600,000 was not in yellow and asked if they spent that amount which was more than what the board knew about.

Director Burkhardt asked if they were already purchased.

An individual replied, "no."

Mrs. Cintrón said that the figure should have the yellow highlight.

Director Dexter thought it needed to be double-checked. She had concern that an expense that large was representing an expansion of the technology program and thought it was a board issue.

Director Leeson stated that she believed the board asked administration to look at all technology with regard to cost. She brought attention to questions regarding the one-to-one laptop program. She thought they would look overall at how they were spending money in technology and how they could be more efficient and still provide a high quality technology program to the students. She thought they might be missing some of the standard technology at the high school level. She pointed out that they were still using overhead projectors instead of computers. She was concerned that the students at the new Broughal Middle School had new technology and then would be going into an environment that might not be as technology rich at the high school level. She asked how they could present a quality 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program to the students at a more efficient cost.

Director Dexter inquired about when they could receive more information about the technology status.

Dr. Persing replied within the next month.

Director Dexter expressed that it was a large amount of money to look at in consideration of the current budget scenario.

Director Amato asked if the money could not be used for technology, would it then be lost.

He noted that it was stimulus money, which was supposed to be earmarked for certain things, and it was not used, it would be lost.

Director Dexter suggested that administration bring them the answer to the question.

Mrs. Cintrón said that at this juncture in time, her concern was that items had to be ordered and received prior to June 30. She said that technology was a big-ticket item. She said the information was submitted to the board previously and she thought it was approved.

Director Leeson stated that she did not have a complaint about what was submitted but when she looked at computer labs, it was significantly different than finding out that there were computer labs at the middle school along with laptops and then finding out that this purchase was for elementary schools. She added that they were told they would be replacing the teachers' computers.

Mrs. Cintrón said she would check on it and inform the board, but she did not believe that expenditure would have been allowed and some type of switch took place.

Director Leeson said the board had to watch every nickel and dime.

Director Dexter asked if the entire amount was not used on technology, could it be used on textbooks. She knew about a complaint regarding 20-year old social studies textbooks in the elementary schools and other complaints about aged textbooks. Her concern was if they were adding technology at the expense of textbooks. She did not want to lose money if the grant was specific to only one item and it could not be changed at this point. She thought board discussion was needed and asked if the information would be available at the next curriculum board meeting.

Director Ortiz commented that with her own experience working with grants, if the grant was designated for computers, it could not be changed for the purchase of textbooks.

Director Dexter said that she thought that some grant money could be redirected on some grants.

Mrs. Cintrón stated that the grant was approved and accepted as submitted. When it was written in coordination with cabinet and the Curriculum Office, she did not necessarily have to itemize, but there was the need for balance based on the parameters of the grant. She said she would inquire if it could be used for something else but it would necessitate doing a budget revision involving a narrative and it may put the money in jeopardy.

Director Amato departed the meeting at 9:19 p.m.

Director Dexter thought they saw the information during November.

Mrs. Cintrón said the grants were submitted based upon the recommendations of the administration.

Director Dexter brought attention on how they expanded from Grade 9 and 10 computers without the board's consent and added that there was attention brought to that issue. She added that they did not want a repeat of that situation. She noted that the board was elected to make decisions about the priorities of spending in the district so if they had a grant before them for \$3,000,000, the board should have a say in setting the priorities for how it was spent. Director Dexter said they would of course want the recommendations of the administration to justify it. She added that Dr. Lewis stated that he would bring the priorities to the board and he did not do it. She thought it was the first time the board saw the plan to spend \$600,000 on technology and thought the board wanted to have more discussion on it. She asked if there was any leeway in the grant because the board might recommend that textbook replacement was a higher priority. She asked if there was a plan in operation for next year's PA Pact Grant in case there was one available. She thought that it was ready to go last April so if there was a list of things they would like to ask for in the event they did receive a grant; she thought there was time now to have discussion and set priorities.

Director Follweiler commented about the purchase of the computers at the elementary level with the grant funding and how would they deal with the associated ongoing expenses. If it was a lease agreement for one year, she inquired about the subsequent years. She also asked about maintenance fees if it was a buy-out. She pointed out that they had to look at the big picture to make sure the grant would cover the item with no other associated costs. If all of it was not covered by the grant, the board might make a different decision.

Director Ortiz commented that if they cannot change it they might risk losing the money.

Director Dexter concluded that there was a need to address Director Follweiler's concern as to whether they had the support in place to maintain the system.

Director Leeson announced an executive session to immediately follow adjournment, which would address personnel, secretarial negotiations, and disciplinary actions.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

Donna L. Wenz  
Confidential Secretary – Department of Curriculum and Instruction