



**BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2010**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, September 20, 2010, in the Dining Room at the Education Center. The following Board Members were in attendance: Rosario Amato, William Burkhardt, Michele Cann, Michael Faccinetto, Irene Follweiler, Loretta Leeson, and Eugene McKeon. Aurea Ortiz arrived at 6:29 p.m. Also in attendance were Dr. Joseph Roy, superintendent of schools; Dr. Margaret K. Barilla, educational consultant as assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction; Mrs. Janet Tate, supervisor of grants; Mr. Richard Agretto, director of special education; Dr. Dean Donaher, director of student services; Thomas Washington, assistant superintendent for human resources; Dr. Joanne LoFaso, supervisor of literacy and full-day kindergarten; principals, teachers, and representatives of the press.

Director Leeson called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

Mr. Stephen Antalics – 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem

Mr. Antalics recalled his attendance at another past meeting in the district where data from various school districts was reviewed. He noted that the BASD came out on top because it was being compared to weaker districts. He complimented Dr. Barilla for her dedication to the district, including her accuracy and honesty in her approach. He requested she provide an objective overview of the quality of the district's reading and math programs with a focus on the quality of the teacher versus the student. He recalled a report published in the news that debated a concern about how well the students were performing versus achieving a good score. He thought Dr. Barilla's opinion would remain objective and honest.

**WELLER CENTER PROJECT – KIDS IN MOTION – Dr. Donaher**

Dr. Donaher introduced Lisa Liddington, the director of development for the Weller Center, along with Melissa Lee, president and CEO. They presented an overview to the board with regard to their health program titled "Kids in Motion." They reviewed the benefits of the program which included school based interventions on nutrition and physical activity for approximately 4,500 children in the district. The programs would take place between October 2010 and May 2011.

It was noted that Aetna has agreed to fund the program, which included family education nights, in addition to six parent education programs, which would take place at Lehigh Valley Children's Center facilities within the district. All programs were designed to target the specific barriers faced by low-income Hispanic youth and their families.

Ms. Lee reflected on the past history of the Weller Center's positive working relationship with the district. She brought attention to the longitudinal, evidenced, and researched based studies, which would be done with the assistance of Lehigh University, to evaluate the program. Ms. Lee added that teachers would be receiving pre and post-lesson plans which incorporated math and reading associated with the activities.

Director Cann questioned if the program would include all of the elementary and middle schools.

Ms. Lee stated all district elementary and middle schools would be involved so that all students receive the message.

Director Leeson expressed gratitude to Dr. Donaher and the Weller Center representatives for bringing the program to the district.

Dr. Donaher reviewed that the elementary and middle school principals were informed at an earlier date about the program.

### **READING PERFORMANCE/READ 180 UPDATE – Dr. LoFaso**

Dr. Joanne LoFaso presented the board with statistical data regarding the Read180/System 44 reading intervention program from Grade 3 to Grade 8. She reviewed the benefits of Read 180, which was utilized to break the cycle of failure, accelerate learning and give struggling literacy learners the opportunity to experience academic success in the classroom. She reviewed that System 44 was a foundational reading intervention that helped the most challenged students in grades 3 and higher master foundational phonics and decoding skills necessary to become fluent readers.

Dr. LoFaso noted there were twelve schools that utilized Read 180 in the past year, including Donegan, Fountain Hill, Freemansburg, Marvine, and William Penn Elementary Schools, the four middle schools, and the Middle Prep Literacy Academy. She explained the process by which the report of composite scores were calculated and also pointed out that Scholastic composed a very detailed analysis of the Read 180 data. She explained that although she didn't provide a full report, she thought it would provide an indication of how the students were growing in the Read 180 program. She provided the schedule of Scholastic's assessment with inventory taken at the beginning of the program, another analysis done in November in the event there was a need to adjust the program, a mid-year test, and finally a year-end assessment.

Dr. LoFaso said the Scantron Assessment was used as another benchmark for assessment. She pointed out the district would be utilizing the 4Sight Assessment in the current year. She presented data which compared the SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory) to the year-end Scantron results in Grades 3 through Grade 5.

Dr. LoFaso also addressed middle school student results using the Scantron Assessment. She pointed out that mid-year results were used for Grade 9 because the students received the intervention during the fall semester. She commented about data showing student improvement by mid-year. She also noted there were students who did not have to complete the Read 180 program with the possibility for them to exit the intervention if their scores markedly increased during the academic year. She provided the example of 150 Grade 10 students scoring below proficient in the fall SRI Assessment, but by year-end, only 24 students continued to receive Read 180 services.

Director Leeson inquired about the high school data for students who were released from or dropped out of the program.

Dr. LoFaso said the data was in Performance Tracker. At the end of the year, Scholastic exported the data from the district's server and produced a report. She said the data was returned to the district and then was uploaded onto Performance Tracker.

Director Leeson reviewed Dr. LoFaso's statement about the 126 students who departed the program in Grade 10 and their disposition as to whether or not they reached proficiency.

Dr. LoFaso stated some of the cases involved students who had just left the program. She explained that she created a focus group when she looked at the beginning SRI scores and then compared the results to Scantron Assessments.

Director Leeson commented about the information missing with regard to the students who were moved out of the program because they met proficiency. She also inquired why the students would remain in the Read 180 Program in the fall if they tested as proficient or advanced.

Dr. LoFaso stated the first test was the screening process but the second assessment given in November was the time when program adjustments were made on the Lexiles.

Director Follweiler inquired about the testing process for students to qualify advancement out of the program.

Dr. LoFaso replied that generally when a student participates in the program, they customarily remained in the program for one school year. Because she had recently acquired the responsibility, her familiarity with the secondary level was not as clear as the elementary program.

Director Follweiler wondered if the data quoted earlier included students who opted to leave the program. She asked if the 126 students who had advanced did so because of their increased scores.

Dr. LoFaso stated the scores were composite and it spoke in general terms. She called greater attention to the Scholastic report.

Director Tenaglia commented that more detail should be provided about the change in the program participants with regard to leaving the intervention by their own choice or if they successfully tested out of the program.

Dr. Barilla stated the two high school principals were requested to attend the meeting but were not present. She said she would inquire about the details associated with the 126 students who exited the program because it was not an option for them to drop the program.

Director Leeson wondered if the issue was associated with block scheduling.

Dr. LoFaso noted that the intervention was a 90-minute session. She said it would be beneficial to have further discussion with the principals.

Director Burkhardt reflected on the history of the offered programs and the elementary students typically made improvements but when they arrived at the upper middle and high school levels, little change is noted. He questioned the success of the programs as compared to other previous reading programs. He questioned if the students were being pulled out for the intervention. He asked how the program was delivered to the students. He inquired about research to support the program. He did not think the scores were any better than what he had historically observed. He expressed concern about the secondary students giving up other important skilled-level courses such as business education or the Vo-Tech program which might be more of a benefit for them to move on with their lives.

Dr. LoFaso discussed the literacy framework designed for the secondary level. She emphasized the necessity of reading in order to succeed in all subject matter. She said the students needed to keep learning how to read.

Director Burkhardt expressed concern about the students being pulled-out from their classes at the high school level. He questioned if it was an effective strategy at the high school level and requested additional research to support the program.

Director Amato reflected on the various programs offered in the past. He asked what they were not doing in their efforts to offer programs to enhance the high school students with reading and comprehension skills. He asked Director Burkhardt his opinion about what happened to the students at the high school level.

Director Burkhardt thought the greater challenge began in middle school and it became worse at the high school level. He reflected on the approach of connecting reading across the curriculum and not a stand-alone program.

Dr. LoFaso reviewed the basic structure of the program and said it was based upon the Lexile system with a goal to increase the students' text reading level. The students engaged in activities to strengthen their vocabulary and comprehension.

Dr. Barilla brought attention to other programs in place at the high school level such as Reading Apprenticeship, which tied into other areas in the curriculum such as math, social studies, and science. She also pointed out the critical literacy course at the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade level.

Dr. Barilla explained that the students at Freedom High School read text at their interest and ability level 90 minutes every day and then moved into a traditional English class during the second half of the academic year. It did not exist in Grade 11. She commented about the PSSA scores showing significant growth in reading at the middle schools and then dropped off after Grade 8. She thought the Reading Apprenticeship Program associated with the Colonial Intermediate Unit probably had the greatest impact on the teachers and students.

Director Leeson thought some of the older students were making grade but there was a greater challenge with moving them onto grade level as compared to the lower grades. She suggested doing more research as to the disposition of the high school students who had participated in the program.

Director Amato again questioned why the positive results decreased at the high school level. He recalled that it could be accomplished because he read about a school in California where a heavily populated group of academically struggling minority students made drastic changes in their progress. He asked what could be done to bridge the gap so the students could be successful at the next level.

Director Leeson reviewed that the data was being presented tonight in order to allow for questions and then Dr. LoFaso could investigate and return with answers.

Dr. Roy reflected that high school teachers were not traditionally trained to teach reading such as elementary and middle school teachers. The presumption was that students should already know how to read when they arrived at high school and that had to change. He thought the Reading Apprenticeship Program was a program for the decent readers to good readers, but the smaller groups of students who remained behind at the high school level had a greater challenge and needed a targeted reading intervention. He added that there was a much wider swath of students that needed trained teachers to teach effective reading in the content areas. He thought it was a combination of both with motivation being a huge factor at the high school level. He suggested further reconciliation on the high school Scholastic data, which showed students attaining annual Lexile growth.

Director Tenaglia commented about the disparity between high schools in terms of the gains.

Director Leeson commented that goal of the presentation was to gather questions for a more in-depth review of the project.

Director McKeon suggested changing the assessment timeline in the future.

Dr. LoFaso commented about new teachers often lacking the skills to teach reading. She reviewed the need for initiatives to strengthen their skills.

Director Ortiz inquired if the reading curriculum was the same at every elementary school. She noted that Broughal Middle School was utilizing a core program and extending it to Grade 6. She emphasized how improvements would be made with further education provided to the teachers.

She commented that the successful programs should be implemented at all of the schools at the same level.

Dr. LoFaso stated there was a core reading program at the elementary level and pointed out that Broughal Middle School was extending the McMillan Reading Program to some sixth grade classes, which was also a core program in existence for the past six years. She said it was not the program but the teacher who made the program successful so professional development accompanied the program.

Director Ortiz inquired if there was a particular model that was proven to be successful in the past.

Dr. LoFaso replied there was a successful model created by Kathy Bast and other teachers for Grades 1 through Grade 5, in addition to the Standards Aligned System. She said the district's teachers and principals have been attending training to navigate the SAS system.

Director Leeson commented about the past programs and strategies, which had success. She pointed out that discussion this evening was to analyze the programs, ask the tough questions, getting answers back with the hope to tweak and take some of the good programs, but they were just at the beginning stages.

#### **READING RESTRUCTURING – Dr. LoFaso**

Dr. LoFaso reviewed the Reading Redesign Plan, which was implemented in the 2008-2009 school year with a goal to improve the efficiency in which reading interventions were provided in grade one for struggling readers. She noted that the restructuring of the Reading Recovery teachers and reading specialists allowed almost twenty percent more struggling first graders to receive either one-to-one or small group intervention. The elementary principals were given the choice of adopting the redesign plan, maintain Reading Recovery one-to-one tutoring or implement a combination of the two interventions. The abstracted data revealed the students who received small group reading intervention during 2008-2009 made statistically similar gains as those who received one-to-one tutoring. When comparing the gain made in 2009 to 2008 with regard to those receiving one-to-one; the results were almost identical. She pointed out that comparisons between gains made in 2009 (Redesign Group) with 2008 (Reading Recovery) should be made with caution as the results represent different student cohorts. She also noted that the Reading Recovery Program was no longer in place so there is no longer a base for comparison. She reflected on the past history of training multiple professionals in the district in the Reading Recovery Program and thought it probably contributed to the solid scores in the elementary schools.

Dr. LoFaso stated the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) for 2009-2010, which was administered at the beginning of the year to 879 first graders in 16 of the district's elementary schools revealed a proficiency result of 70 percent. She pointed out the first grade increased by 194 students during the school year. The results from the spring DRA assessment indicated that 82 percent of 1073 first grade students were proficient.

Dr. Roy reviewed the data comparisons in the beginning of the year and compared it to the data obtained in the spring. He estimated that most of the students who entered the district during the school year tested below basic.

Dr. LoFaso said that the students who were not present in the district at the beginning of the year could be removed from the data observed through Performance Tracker in order to arrive at an accurate report.

Dr. Roy inquired if it was typical for the first grade students, as a group, to come in at the beginning of the school year as weaker readers.

Dr. LoFaso agreed that it was a possibility. She also pointed out the negative effect of transient students entering, departing, and sometimes returning to the district.

Dr. Barilla commented about the Reading Recovery training provided to the teachers in the past and how it was still beneficial to the students. She reflected on her observation of teachers when she visited the schools. She pointed out the strategies taught to the teachers in the program had fared very well in the classroom with the students reaping the benefit.

Director Leeson inquired about training additional teachers in a program such as Reading Recovery in consideration that they were no longer participating in the program.

Dr. LoFaso commented about copyright restrictions but added that other customized programs could be created and delivered to the teachers.

Dr. Barilla reviewed a graduate course based upon the structure of Reading Recovery taught by Mary Beth Rucker and offered by Wilkes University. She reflected upon past communication with the reading specialists at Donegan Elementary, and realized the undergraduate reading training for elementary teachers was not very strong so morning team interventions were held in the various grade levels. Along with the intervention, a district-wide graduate literacy course was offered based upon the Reading Recovery strategies. There was sufficient district enrollment to offer the program for the past two years.

Director Leeson thought it was well worth the time and energy to train the teachers in the strategies associated with literacy.

Dr. LoFaso commented about the newly instituted training brought forth by Dr. Zahorchak at Allentown School District. She believed if they were faithful to the original design of the program then they would see a positive effect.

Director Faccinnetto made a suggestion to readdress the Reading Recovery Program if it was successful. He understood that the program was expensive but his focus was on a successful program. He inquired about the testing sessions in the fall and spring and whether the focus was on accuracy or comprehension.

Dr. LoFaso explained that the DRA measured the students' text reading level, which involved accuracy and comprehension. It provided information to the teachers with regard to what the children could read.

Director Burkhardt addressed the high school reading support programs across the curriculum.

Dr. Roy commented that the Colonial Intermediate Unit recently received a grant associated with Reading Apprenticeship, which would enhance the initiative at the high school level.

Director Leeson addressed the reading programs used in the schools and inquired if each school had a choice with regard to the one-to-one program versus group approach.

Dr. LoFaso said the training was primarily a small group approach with the exception of the before or after school programs where one of the reading specialists was previously trained in Reading Recovery.

Director Ortiz asked if money was being spent on unsuccessful programs as opposed to a program such as Reading Recovery.

Dr. LoFaso believed that providing the teachers with educational support would lead to success.

### **Agenda Item for September 27, 2010 Regular Board Meeting**

The Board of School Directors approved the following agenda item for presentation at the upcoming September Regular Board Meeting:

- A. Community Service Agencies – Dr. Donaher  
Dr. Donaher reviewed the additional agencies and organizations under consideration for the Community Service Program.

### **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

Mr. Stephen Antalics - 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem

Mr. Antalics commented about earlier discussion and brought attention to Dr. LoFaso's statement referring to one's need to "learn to read and then read to learn." He did not expect a teacher specializing in science, music, social studies, or French to teach a student how to read because it should occur beforehand. He reviewed his recent experience with a foreign elementary school student who attended a school in the district. He asked the child what he liked about his school and the child replied that he liked that it was so easy. Mr. Antalics said the child appeared to be bright because he challenged him in chess. He also shared that he was aware the student was held back at his previous school in another country because he was not successful in reading. Mr. Antalics suggested approaching the problem in simplistic terms and if the students could not successfully read, they should be retained. Their entire future was based upon their ability to read.

## **OPEN FORUM**

Director Follweiler brought attention to a recent communication regarding AP courses. She asked if Dr. Barilla had received a copy and agreed to email her the communication.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

Donna L. Wenz

Confidential Secretary – Department of Curriculum and Instruction