



BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MONDAY, JUNE 20, 2011

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, June 20, 2011, in the Dining Room at the Education Center. The following Board Members were in attendance: William Burkhardt, Michele Cann, Michael Faccinetto, Irene Follweiler, Loretta Leeson, Eugene McKeon, and Benjamin Tenaglia. Absent: Rosario Amato and Aurea Ortiz. Also in attendance were: Dr. Joseph Roy, superintendent of schools; Dr. Jack Silva, assistant superintendent for education; Frank Arbushites, director of technology; Dr. Dean Donaher, director of student services; Richard Agretto, director of special education; Janet Tate, supervisor of grants; Vivian Robledo-Shorey, supervisor of minority affairs; principals, teachers, and representatives of the press.

Director Burkhardt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

1. Mr. Stephen Antalics – 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem
Mr. Antalics commented on an agenda topic associated with school improvement. He shared that he heard that Detroit was turning over their lowest performing schools to the state because of poor performance. He noted it could have been attributed to either student quality or teacher quality. He reviewed that our district had a large number of elementary schools and suggested the possibility of transferring the teachers from the highest performing elementary school in the district to the lowest performing elementary school in the district. Mr. Antalics concluded that it would then provide insight as to the determination of student versus teacher quality.

ROADMAP TO EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND 2011-2012 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM GOALS AT A GLANCE

Dr. Silva reviewed updated information with regard to the proposed *Roadmap to Educational Excellence*. He provided an overview of goals associated with moving forward to the next academic year and the relation to where the district has been. He also shared that he was involved in meetings with district partners such as NCC, Lehigh University, and COMPASS Community Schools where they shared their support of the educational goals for the district.

Dr. Silva shared the draft of a brochure, which provided an easy navigation of the *Roadmap to Educational Excellence*. He provided details associated with the four learning criteria derived from the International Center for Leadership in Education. The areas covered involved Core Learning, Stretch Learning, Student Engagement, and Personal Skill Development. Dr. Silva emphasized the need to have the presence of all four criteria in order to have successful gains in school improvement. If one is missing, the environment tends to struggle. He shared that he had observed excellent planning in all areas within the past six months, but he had difficulty seeing them all come together in one school improvement plan. He commented that when schools didn't meet AYP, their school improvement template didn't focus on other areas but rather only the core learning plan. He reviewed the board's interest in moving away from a "district of schools" to a "school system" with an emphasis on the use of data, program evaluation and greater amounts of accountability. He believed the *Roadmap to Educational Excellence* provided direction in assisting community partners as well as the principals in the district.

Dr. Silva reviewed the connection of the roadmap to Educational Program Goals for 2011-2012, which addressed areas of organization, school improvement, assessment, curriculum and instruction, and professional development.

Organizational

- Execute program changes/curtailments caused by significant program budget reductions. Assist administrators, teacher-leaders, and teachers in adjusting to new programs, schedules, and staff compositions. Strengthen complementary relationships/partnerships with community-based organizations in support of BASD educational programs and students.
- Align supervision/development of curriculum/programs, assessment, and instruction to the BASD *Roadmap to Educational Excellence* and the organizational structure of the BASD.
- Focus Curriculum Committee Meetings on reports on achievement outcomes/program evaluation aligned to the roadmap, school improvement plans, and goals of the Board.
- Develop and extend the leadership capacity of BASD administrators and teacher-leaders to align to flat organizational structure. Redesign teacher-leader positions and job descriptions to reflect new organizational and budget realities.

School Improvement

- Begin an internal school improvement process aligned to the roadmap (including data-driven goals for core learning, stretch learning, student engagement, and personal skill development) for BASD schools that make AYP. Schools required to submit the PDE Getting Results Plans will not have to use the BASD school improvement process.
- Assist/Coordinate district leaders and principals to meet PDE strategic planning requirements.

Assessment

- Improve the BASD Assessment System (RTII Assessments/Benchmarking/READ 180) so that the benchmarking of reading, math, and writing aligns to standards, accurately assesses student progress, provides timely and meaningful data, respects instructional time, and supports good instruction.
- Successfully implement changes to state assessments (PSSA, Keystone Exams, Classroom Diagnostic Tests) in the BASD.

Curriculum & Instruction

- Revise/develop scopes-sequences and courses in core learning areas most immediately affected by the Keystone Examinations and Standards Aligned System. Revise programs/courses of greatest need: MS Science (8), MS Technology Application, Secondary Math, HS Science, new AP courses, Energy/Sustainability Education.
- Execute the action plans contained in the AP program evaluation and improve stretch learning outcomes.

Professional Development

- Conduct the needed training of staff resulting from extensive transfer of professional staff and program change/curtailment.
- In cooperation with K-12 administrators and the Act 48 Committee - develop and execute a 2011-2012 In-Service Plan that prescribes complementary responsibilities for professional development in the district, individual schools, and subject areas.
- Implement year one of Safer and Saner Schools/Restorative Practices training for Freedom and Liberty High Schools. (Dr. Silva brought attention to the commitment of Wells Fargo Bank to assist with a \$15,000 grant towards Restorative Practices which would cover the cost of materials. The remainder of the associated fees for the in-service programs will be at no cost because of an “in-kind” donation from the International Institute for Restorative Practices.)

Dr. Silva reviewed the benefits of the program associated with IIRP which focused on a common vocabulary and strategies to avoid primary conflict and repair it before it escalates. He predicted the students would benefit with regard to student engagement and achievement. He expressed concern about students becoming disconnected to school.

Director Follweiler inquired about data indicators to support the proposed programming.

Dr. Silva referred to the accompanying document titled, “High School Improvement Planning: Procedural FAQs” which showed the different types of data indicators within each one of the four learning criteria. He commented about the importance of the core area in relation to AYP and the challenge associated with certain sub-groups. He also noted that students’ ability to participate in advanced placement coursework is an excellent example of stretch learning. He also stated that it was important to address other indicators such as the number of students who have completed challenging math courses and their participation in certain academic competitions such as the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science. Dr. Silva also addressed the attendance rate and participation in co-curricular activities which should be part of the measurement with regard to student engagement within the district. He reviewed that there were concerns among teachers and parents regarding student engagement in school. The school improvement model needed to be robust enough to handle a varied degree of diversity.

Dr. Roy commented about the identified district level data points with a further listing of points at the school level which supported the district level.

Director Follweiler expressed concern to address areas which were specific to the needs of each school within the district.

Dr. Silva replied that the state standards, the roadmap, the school improvement design and the work of the work of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment department should all be moving in the same direction.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING: A FRAMEWORK IN SUPPORT OF THE ROADMAP

Dr. Silva reviewed the preliminary results of the 2011 School Improvement Survey which was distributed to students, teachers, and parents throughout the district. He pointed out there were over 3,200 students surveyed among the two high schools. He reviewed the questions which covered core, stretch, engagement, and personal character.

Dr. Silva also reviewed the preliminary results at the middle school level. He explained that the average difference between the perceptions of the students and teachers was 29.8 points on 15 questions. He expressed concern about the opinion of the students with regard to challenging books and materials in the classroom.

He thought there was more need to address the core and stretch areas in the school improvement plan at the middle school level and a greater need in the engagement area at the high school level.

Dr. Silva also briefly covered the elementary school survey results which revealed an average gap of 17 points between the teacher and student responses.

Dr. Silva encouraged the board members to review the results of the survey.

Director Leeson commented that the survey appeared to be very general in nature. She thought there was a need for more specific data. She noted that there was awareness about the identified issues. She pointed out that one of the biggest gaps was associated with study skills. She said there were concerns from parents about rigor and safety for many years.

She asked who would determine the greatest need with regard to the school improvement plan.

Dr. Silva replied that it would be him working along with the principals and their school improvement team.

Director Leeson felt the goal of students attending college, completing Algebra 2 and participating in a music program should be associated with core learning and not stretch learning.

Dr. Silva said the specific action steps were related to the principal and the team. They needed to be complementary steps which would be included in their budget and consistent with the district goals. The goals needed to building specific.

Director Leeson requested a specific game plan with regard to the specific plans for each level. She asked for the benchmark goals for improvement. She inquired if thematic programs contributed to the goals. She reiterated the need for a specific plan rather than an overview.

Dr. Silva stated he would like to see a three percent annual increase at Liberty and Freedom High Schools on the AP Excellence and Equity Index per year for the next three years. He added that it would be difficult to achieve but it was noted on the roadmap.

Director Tenaglia addressed the results of the writing assessments within the district which have consistently been poor.

Dr. Silva said that it was something the school improvement needed to take very seriously.

Director McKeon asked about elective programs at the high school level that could enrich study skills for students.

Dr. Silva agreed and added there was discussion about retuning the middle school student schedule so that small groups of students could focus on specific topics such as study skills.

Director Leeson commented about the reduction in homework starting at the elementary level. She thought there should be a consistent level sustained which should increase at the same rate as the grade level increased.

Dr. Silva stated that as a rule of thumb, the student should receive 10 minutes of homework per grade level.

Director McKeon inquired if there was a district policy addressing the weight of homework assignments with regard to student grading.

Dr. Silva said he was not aware of a policy and deferred to Dr. Donaher.

Dr. Donaher reflected on a policy from 1992 which addressed a minimum amount of homework which applied to the final grade.

Dr. Silva thought there should be more conversation about the issue at both school and district levels.

Director Leeson thought they should look at actually how much homework is being assigned at each grade level and if there were gaps. She said that she has also heard that the students won't do the assignments.

Director Leeson asked about the cost of the brochure and the purpose of distribution.

Dr. Silva replied that it would cost \$199 by utilizing the services of the Vo-Tech School which in turn was an educational opportunity for the tech students. He thought the availability of the brochure would be helpful to parents, community partners, or someone who did business with the Bethlehem Area School District. He believed it provided clarity of focus.

STRETCH LEARNING: ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Dr. Silva reviewed the results of the Advanced Placement Program Evaluation which was compiled by the AP Program Evaluation Team. He explained the purpose and goal of the program was to provide qualified students with an opportunity for advance study in their junior or senior years in high school and earn college placement or credit. A student's success in an Advanced Placement course is commonly recognized as an indicator of academic rigor and college readiness. He provided an overview of the questions involved along with the action plan in place to address specific concerns. Dr. Silva noted that the district offered a wide and appropriate variety of courses with a plan to offer a specific section within the Program of Studies explaining AP course offerings/pathways. He also addressed the need to expand the number of students taking the courses. He stated there was a need for a systemic approach to align practice and performance. Part of the future plan was to replace local "honors" courses with AP courses, to bring greater equity to instructional time within semesters, and to discontinue the senior examination exemption. He added that the AP course student could be exempted from the final examination by taking the AP examination in May. He thought it was a direct incentive for AP course participation. Dr. Silva also suggested addressing the cost associated with the examination such as community partners to assist with scholarships. The stretch learning goal associated with the district roadmap was to achieve a three percent annual increase at both high schools.

Director Cann expressed the hope that guidance counselors would have a greater impact on the students with regard to course counseling. She thought the counselors were involved with discipline issues which took them away from academic assistance.

Dr. Silva said that a number of individuals had an impact on students in addition to counselors such as their teachers. He explained that the fourth goal of the evaluation was to share the goals of AP participation and achievement with all stakeholders.

Dr. Roy commented that by using the Grade 8 PSSA results as an indicator for potential consideration for future AP course enrollment. He said it was important to identify pathways in the earlier grades.

Director Cann thought that the definition of college prep has lessened in rigor over time with the AP and Honors courses being more appropriate for college preparation. She thought that AP courses were the only stretch offering at the present time. She thought the action plan was a very good step in the right direction.

Director Leeson complimented Dr. Silva about the detail associated with the AP Program Evaluation. She believed the organization of course selection should be addressed with the parents before the students selected their courses. She also reviewed the ability for students to save college on expenses by taking advantage of the opportunity to enroll in AP courses. She believed that the information should be shared with parents in Grade 8. She said the Bethlehem Foundation could be a consideration for funding support for students who could not afford to take the AP Examination. She pointed out that students scheduled for AP courses late in the day were at a disadvantage if they were dismissed early because of extra-curricular activities.

Director Leeson also believed students should take final examinations and not be exempted as part of college preparation.

Director Faccinetto reviewed some of the data from the school improvement survey. He thought there might be a large number of students who were not being counseled about the AP courses. He also agreed with the requirement for the students to take final examinations. He also did not think it appropriate for a student to be turned away from taking an AP examination due to finances.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MAP/SAFER AND SANER SCHOOLS

Dr. Silva reviewed that the professional development days would involve training in Restorative Practices (IIRP). He said the principals would begin their training sessions this month with a ramp-up of the “train-the-trainer” model. He felt it would be a good companion piece to the Code of Conduct in strengthening student engagement and improving school culture.

Director Leeson expressed concern about the professional development days to involve staff development with regard to academics. She thought the high school, in particular, was in need of more staff development for the teachers.

Dr. Silva explained that the program required very specific, blocked-out instructional training time in order for the teachers to receive the full effect of the program. He said the school improvement planning would be accomplished on conference days and TDA’s.

Dr. Roy reviewed that one of the greatest concerns of parents were associated with the Code of Conduct and safety within the district. He explained the need to become fully engaged in the program which directly addressed issues frequently addressed by parents.

NEW TEXTBOOKS FOR 2011-2012

Dr. Silva introduced five textbooks which were in need of board approval prior to the 2011-2012 academic year. He stated the textbooks, which were available for board and public review, were reviewed by teacher committees and department chairpersons prior to presentation.

Director Leeson inquired if there was sufficient enrollment to support the new courses.

Dr. Silva replied affirmatively.

Director Leeson asked about a policy with regard to students returning textbooks at the end of the academic year.

Dr. Silva replied that he would inquire about the policy with the principals.

Director Burkhardt commented about past practice where the student did not receive their final grade until a textbook was returned or a note received from the office documenting payment.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT REVIEW – DR. DONAHER

Dr. Donaher reviewed changes associated with the Student Code of Conduct which addressed specific descriptions with certain areas of the discipline code. He stated he would be presenting the yearly statistical data associated with categorical offenses. He further explained that the Safe Schools Report was due at the end of July because there was a need to obtain verification after a documentation review by the five law enforcement agencies affiliated with the district. He noted there were some categorical changes over the years so he needed to assess the data to ensure accuracy of the report.

Dr. Donaher pointed out some goals which he hoped to accomplish this summer including the creation of a manual for administrators and teachers, in addition to a character education piece for the elementary schools, which he thought would fit in along with some of the student engagement information associated with Restorative Practices.

Dr. Donaher stated the meetings would continue with potential habitual offenders as they progressed through grade levels, such as students who had three suspensions or more. He stressed the importance of working with the habitual offenders.

Dr. Donaher noted he had increased communication with the BEA about their concerns, in addition to more communication with the principals and assistant principals to ensure that situations were handled with consistency. He spoke of the need for counselors to find alternate ways to provide support for the students such as outside agencies and after-school programs.

Director Leeson inquired about a survey which was supposed to be done in April to determine if the implemented changes had an influence within the schools.

Dr. Donaher reported that a survey was not done this year.

Director Leeson said a review of the Code of Conduct was normally done by observing total infractions and how they compared to previous years.

Dr. Donaher responded that the report would be given in July.

Director Leeson said they usually received the report earlier in order to make changes to the Code of Conduct to print and implement in September.

Director Burkhardt stated that the present requested changes did not appear to be influenced by data associated with numbers.

Director Leeson thought there was a possibility they would want to change other things once they reviewed the data.

Dr. Donaher discussed “point of emphasis” which addressed the numbers as something they wanted to emphasize for the following school year if they felt an area was not being consistently enforced or enforced to the extent it needed.

Dr. Donaher commented that he was not sure about changing the code because of certain numbers. He explained that the present changes were considered because of certain omissions or concerns about misinterpretation of the code.

Director Leeson believed there was a need to obtain data for review. She pointed out that they instituted the reinvigoration of the Code of Conduct but they still needed information as to what actually has happened. She asked how it was determined that the schools were being more consistent than in previous years.

Dr. Donaher replied that he thought the information was quantitative and qualitative with the quantitative data being provided next month. As far as qualitative data, he said he was not hearing the concerns expressed in the previous year.

Director Leeson said she was hearing sporadic reports of concern about procedure. She stated she would like to see the results of a survey after the program update in consideration that they obtained a survey prior to the program update.

Dr. Roy pointed out they met weekly with the BEA President to review issues or concerns. He further explained about the need to address the Code of Conduct updates at the present time because of the opportunity for the district to obtain student planners and assignment books at no cost which contained the information.

Director Tenaglia addressed an area of proposed change. He cited a previous student hearing which involved a threat of safety issue. He recommended deleting the word “total” in the last sentence of the proposed new language for Level IV infractions. He explained that the legal counselor stated that a prohibited behavior at Liberty High School was not a threat to the “total” school community.

Dr. Roy said that the current language should be changed in Level II, III, as well as Level IV.

Dr. Donaher noted that he would change the verbiage of the statement.

Director Cann inquired if 357 (Fighting) was considered a Level IV.

Dr. Donaher explained that it was a Level III but it could be raised to a Level IV if there was substantial physical injury sustained. He further explained about the state’s definition of assault which involved a perpetrator and a victim whereas a fight involved two victims and two perpetrators. He expressed that he wanted to separate the incidents in the district information when he provided a report.

Director Leeson asked about moving fighting and physical assault to a Level IV in consideration of intent to cause physical harm. She recalled past incidents which involved fighting which were thankfully stopped before there was serious physical injury. She pointed out there was an intent for serious physical harm. She suggested a Level III – altercation category.

Dr. Donaher addressed the endangerment description in Level III which some schools would use if two students are involved in a “pushing” match. He added if the situation escalated with fists being thrown with students striking each other, it then became a Level III – physical assault.

Director Leeson requested Level III – physical assault/fighting be moved to Level IV. She believed it should be taken very seriously.

Director McKeon agreed with Director Leeson’s opinion.

Director Faccinnetto also agreed that serious fighting should be a Level IV infraction. He also recommended the addition of drug possession to a Level IV status.

Dr. Donaher noted that there was a separate drug and alcohol use policy which would have to be readdressed. He further explained that the policy is written to encourage students to obtain assistance. They would have to address the policy first before changing the Code of Conduct.

Director Cann reviewed the past decisions made with regard to the various levels. She said it would be a major change as compared to the present code of conduct. She reflected that the code was revised to define physical assault as a Level III and serious injury resulting from a physical assault categorized as a Level IV. The current Level IV expellable offenses involve assault which results in a serious injury and assault of a teacher.

Dr. Donaher commented that a physical assault which led to an endangerment to the school community such as a riot could be raised to Level IV. He added that drug possession with intent to sell or deliver could be raised to a Level IV offense.

Director Cann added that a student could presently possess all the drugs they want and it was not considered a Level IV offense unless the determination was made about intent to deliver.

Director Burkhardt noted the lack of delineation between the various school levels. He pointed out the need to differentiate between elementary and high school students. He expressed concern about two students fighting at the elementary level being expelled under the Level IV category.

Director Leeson noted that students were not necessarily expelled after a hearing process. She recalled a middle school student who pre-planned an assault on another student which was not considered a serious assault. She did not think fighting should be tolerated in the district.

Dr. Roy expressed concern about categorizing all fights at a Level IV. He strongly cautioned against the consideration. He did not agree to require all fights as an automatic expulsion situation. He stated they were handled at the administrative level with issued suspensions. The action would basically take all conflicts out of the hands of the principals and counselors who deal with the students and hold them accountable. He thought the problems created would far outweigh what they thought would be accomplished.

Director Cann suggested moving forward with the present changes and asked to reconsider further discussion in the future to consider changes for the following year.

Dr. Donaher suggested waiting for the July report to review the data.

Dr. Roy suggested a review of the data before making any changes. He said the increase of expulsion hearings would have a major impact on board resources.

Director Faccinetto commented about the student survey and pointed out that the students have expressed their concern about safety in their schools.

Dr. Roy commented that they could not “expel” their way to safe schools. He thought they could be proactive by building a more positive climate which was the purpose of Restorative Practices. He added that the program has made dramatic improvements in school climates and influenced a decline in violence and discipline referrals. He believed that by being proactive, they could reduce the incidents of wrongdoing.

Director Leeson said the information including data needed to be reviewed much earlier in the year so they could be ready to make changes for the following academic year.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- Dr. Silva reviewed the approaching agreement with COMPASS Community Schools involving Broughal Middle School, Lincoln, Calypso, and Fountain Hill Elementary Schools.
- Dr. Silva updated the board about a deadline change notice from PDE for the revision of Getting Results School Improvement Plans. The due date has been changed to July 1. The reports will be presented to the board by the school principals during the July Board Curriculum Committee Meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR JUNE 27, 2011, REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Director Burkhardt received board approval to list the following items on the June 27, 2011 Regular Board Meeting agenda:

- A. Student Code of Conduct Revisions Approval – See previous discussion
- B. Middle School Summer School
Dr. Donaher reviewed details associated with the Middle School Summer School Program. He noted that the program will be centrally located and will begin on Tuesday, July 5.

Director Tenaglia inquired about the current enrollment.

Dr. Donaher replied there were approximately 50 students registered in the program at the present time.

Director Follweiler inquired about the funding source in consideration that each Middle school budget was contributing to the program. She asked if she should be concerned about the source of the building budget affected by the contribution.

Dr. Donaher replied that the cost would be approximately \$3,000 to \$4,000 per school for each of the four schools. He said he received support for the program from the principals.

Director Follweiler wondered what was sacrificed in each building budget to cover the cost associated with the summer school program.

Director Leeson said expenditures were previously cut-off at the building level in October so the principals weren't really able to spend the allocated funds. She was concerned about a district policy requiring the students to attend summer school if they failed two courses. She asked why it wasn't funded on a district-wide basis. She thought if each school had a remaining balance; it should be returned to the general fund and then reallocated for the summer school program.

Dr. Roy explained that each middle school ran a remediation program. Rather than each building running a separate program, the money was pooled and the students attended the program at a central location. In essence they were doing more with less because they were previously running two different programs.

C. Athletic Ticket Prices

Dr. Donaher addressed the updated charges for admission to district athletic events.

Director McKeon addressed charging for admission for certain athletic events such as volleyball, soccer, and field hockey in order to generate additional revenue. He thought there should be admission charged if the stadium lights were used.

Dr. Donaher replied that personnel costs to collect fees, in addition to many people having the Family All Sports Pass. The costs might outweigh the profit. He said he would reconsider Director McKeon's suggestion and request a review of the attendance at the events.

D. Tuition Rates for Child Care

E. Laura Bush Foundation Grant

F. Tuition Waiver Students

Director Leeson inquired about the cost associated with student tuition for the district. She asked if the district received reimbursement for the students making the request to remain enrolled in the district. She thought it might be an area to evaluate with regard to the budget if the students were requesting to remain in the district.

Dr. Silva agreed to inquire about the cost with Mrs. Gober.

Director McKeon inquired about the state voucher system. He inquired if the student transferred to another school district within Pennsylvania would the district be able to bill for reimbursement.

Dr. Roy stated that it was agreeable as long as they arrived with their voucher.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

1. Mrs. Lisa Weider – 3086 Shakespeare Road, Bethlehem
Mrs. Weider expressed that she was extremely impressed by Dr. Silva's presentation earlier in the evening. She added that she absolutely loved the school district, noting that East Hills Middle School was their best experience so far in the district. She believed that a student who feels that their teacher cares about them is a number one indicator in the success of a child. She expressed that she was in agreement with Director Leeson with regard to the majority of her statements. She said she was concerned about the loss of teaming but had confidence that the district would have an alternate plan. She also commented about family/consumer science and industrial arts classes. She recommended they be considered as electives.

Mrs. Weider complimented her daughter's teacher, Mrs. Frederick, who took the time to address study skills with the students. She recommended incorporating study skills into the middle school curriculum. She shared that her daughter has not been challenged with writing and language arts curriculum for a very long time and did not have advanced reading opportunities in the classroom.

Mrs. Weider believed there was a need to raise their standards and expectations and thought the students would live up to them.

Mrs. Weider stated there was never enough homework assigned to her daughter. She also said the middle ranged students got lost in the system. She said there should not be a grade assigned to homework but rather credit or non-credit given. She thought the seed for honors courses should be dropped in Grade 6. She said it should be mentioned more often throughout the district.

Mrs. Weider believed the range of disciplinary action should vary among the student levels. She also recommended allowing students to possess cell phones at school but they should keep them in their lockers. She didn't think the teachers had the time to write-up the infractions. She mentioned Facebook and videos being posted from within the school, which could be a liability for the district.

2. Mr. Stephen Antalics – 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem

Mr. Antalics spoke of an educator, Alexandra Robbins, who wrote a fascinating book called “The Geeks Shall Inherit The Earth.” He thought it should be required reading for district administrators and teachers. He shared the following excerpt from the book –

“For all the thousands of dollars some schools are spending on anti-bullying campaigns and anti-discrimination by promoting some activities above others; the school is telling students essentially who should be picked on and who shouldn’t. There are plenty of positive things that teachers can do such as pairing unlikely students to work together in class and make sure all different students from cliques are treated equally. Teachers should also be mindful of their own friendships at school. Students are extremely sensitive to school hierarchies and can sense cliques among teachers also.”

Mr. Antalics thought her recommendations were contrary to what was being done within districts across the country. He strongly urged Dr. Roy to obtain copies of the book to share with the district guidance counselors.

Mr. Antalics also commented about final examinations. He said he never was given them in high school and then when he had a final examination in college, he was not prepared. He advised administration and the board to agree on giving the students the examinations.

Director Leeson complimented the first speaker and added that the district was fortunate to have her as a parent. She said there was a need to address the cell phone policy. She thought they should evaluate how other districts were handling the issue.

She inquired about the benefit of thematic programs. She was unsure if there was a benefit associated with programs. She was concerned about supporting them in the short term as opposed to losing them and then restarting the programs in the future. She thought there was a previous study done with the students involved in the Monogacci Program with data revealing measureable gains. She recalled there was a review of the original student levels and also their PSSA performance and compared them with a control group. She noted that the proficient students became advanced and the basic students became proficient. In addition there was an overall increase in the grades of the students. Director Leeson thought the course should be transferred to the column for course reconsideration if data was found to be supportive if there was additional funding available.

Director Burkhardt thought that the enrichment could have been provided by the educational teams. He was unsure if the current thematic teams performed the same structure as the previous thematic programs.

Director Leeson thought it would be revealed in the data because they would be looking at East Hills and Nitschmann Middle Schools through the present year. One would be able to see if there were enrichment activities done by the teams. If there was a staggering difference between a thematic program and a teamed approach, it might be seen.

Director Burkhardt said they would have to determine if the approach was similar to the set-up of the Monogacci Program. He was not aware if the current thematic teams had the same student structure as far as a cross-section of the population.

Director Follweiler made comment about the drafted pamphlet and thought it was an excellent example of district transparency. She also recommended running a highlighted parental stream on the website to remind parents about certain information.

Director Tenaglia inquired about the mentoring program at Broughal Middle School.

Dr. Roy said the program partnered with retired members of the community. He said there would need to be adjustments to the program due to schedule changes but he thought they could continue with another format.

Dr. Silva stated it was their intention to maintain the program.

Director Faccinetto recommended decluttering the home page of the district web site.

Director Leeson recalled that two teachers and a guidance counselor were involved in the We Mentor Program. She was curious as to why they needed that number of people to manage the program.

Dr. Roy replied that the program format would be readdressed.

Director Leeson inquired about teaming at Freedom High School.

Dr. Silva said it would be addressed at the July Curriculum Committee Meeting. He added that Mr. LaPorta and Mrs. Harper would be using the program evaluation format which he used for the Advanced Placement Program Evaluation.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

Donna L. Wenz
Confidential Secretary – Department of Educational Programs