



## **BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2011**

Members of the Board Curriculum Committee met on Monday, September 12, 2011, in the Dining Room at the Education Center. The following Board Members were in attendance: William Burkhardt, Michele Cann, Michael Faccinnetto, 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 7:00 p.m.

### **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

1. Mr. Stephen Antalics – 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem  
Mr. Antalics commented on the cut-back of pre-kindergarten programs in many school districts. He cited a study which stated it was detrimental to the students with regard to future performance in the K-12 system. He also spoke of a 2007 study conducted in Nevada which was designed to observe children in terms of social development. It was noted that those students who developed social skills during pre-kindergarten were more prepared when they entered the formal system of education. Mr. Antalics also commented about the dramatic difference in the children's test scores. He strongly urged the district to re-address education at the pre-kindergarten level. He suggested reinstating the program at the expense of an extracurricular activity.

### **DISTRICT GOALS – Dr. Roy**

Dr. Roy explained that the objective of the district goals draft was to provide high level goals which are easily communicated and provide direction for the district. He noted they were implementing an aligned system with improvement plans starting at the district level and flowing down through the school level. He explained that each of the support departments - Facilities, Human Resources, Student Services, Special Education, and Informational Technologies, were each developing improvement plans and objectives which will align with the drafted broad goals.

Dr. Roy explained that the set goals were framed by the *Roadmap to Educational Excellence* and based upon achievement and survey data. He pointed out the several listed academic goals. The goals were also formed based upon the ongoing work within the Business Department, addressing the audit report and operations review. The third goal which focused on professional development was a Human Resource Department goal. Dr. Roy explained that it was developed out of the need to provide opportunities for teachers and both professional and support staff to develop skills. Each of the topics were aligned with the achievement goals listed under district goal one.

Director Follweiler stated that she wanted to see goals in very simple words that could be “bolded” on the district website so that anyone who viewed them could see them along with the measurement. She asked if it could be done with everything stated on the document.

Dr. Roy agreed.

Director Follweiler suggested reviewing the goals as a board on a quarterly basis. She wanted to have an effortless manner to keep on track with regard to the district goals moving forward.

Director Leeson agreed with Director Follweiler’s suggestion in revealing clear measurements. She also believed that the board and district had done a lot of work in “turning the ship around” and it was heading in the right direction but she thought the primary focus should be on academics. She believed the district would continue to be financially challenged but they also needed to improve academic performance in the schools.

Director Faccinetto agreed with the goals and the format. He suggested updating the goals on the website as changes occurred or on a quarterly basis as stated by Director Follweiler. He also agreed with Director Leeson in that their core mission is to educate students.

Director Cann discussed the bulleted items on the goals document. She said there needed to be discussion as far as the targets listed on the website.

Dr. Roy suggested posting bulleted items on the first page with accompanying links to connect to more detailed information.

Director Leeson commented about Item 3 on the goals document. She suggested a more specific statement that included methods of measurement.

Dr. Roy said they could choose some of the professional development activities which could be measured through teacher and principal surveys. He added that the effectiveness of professional development should ultimately be revealed in Item 1 of the goals. In the interim they could perform measurement through surveys with regard to how people felt about their skills in some of those areas. Rather than listing everything, they could choose a few key items to measure.

Dr. Silva agreed in that the success of the professional staff development system is revealed in the achievement outcomes of students. He reflected on the Read 180 program with increased teacher training.

Director Follweiler commented that Item 3 was a means to get to the curriculum goal and wasn't actually a separate item. She noted that curriculum and safety was covered in the first section with finance covered in the second section.

Director Burkhardt suggested reconstructing the document prior to the Regular Board Meeting.

Dr. Roy stated they would include some language with regard to specific fund balance percentages.

### **CORE LEARNING IMPROVEMENT PLAN – Dr. Silva**

Dr. Silva presented the Board with the 2011-2012 Core Learning Improvement Plan. He explained that the BASD's *Roadmap to Educational Excellence* prescribed a school improvement model which contained four areas of student performance: core learning, stretch learning, student engagement, and personal skill development. He focused on the area of core learning which dealt with student proficiency in reading and mathematics. He noted the 2011 PSSA results indicated that BASD did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP), with the specific area concern being IEP (special education) students not meeting *No Child Left Behind* achievement targets.

Dr. Silva presented plans for the students' improved core learning (proficiency in reading and math) for the 2011-2012 school year. The plans are consistent with the *BASD's Roadmap to Educational Excellence* and its corresponding *School Improvement Planning Model*. The core learning plans will assist the schools and district in making adequate yearly progress as defined by *No Child Left Behind*.

The first area of the plan is School Based Core Learning with each of the district's 22 schools contributing to the AYP by developing complementary Core Learning Plans. Each school's plan will use core learning data (2011 PSSA, Study Island Benchmarks) and student engagement data (Improvement Surveys and Code of Conduct) to develop specific goals and action steps to improve IEP students' reading and math achievement; elementary students' advanced reading achievement; along with student, teacher, and parent perceptions of school culture with regard to safety, respect, and feeling connected. Each plan must incorporate action steps specific to high-impact instructional practices with principal walk-through observations (Teachscape) of classrooms. Each school's data driven Core Learning Plan will be reviewed and approved by the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. To develop each principal's instructional leadership skills, the principals will regularly share strategies and data from their Core Learning Plans at faculty meetings and principal meetings throughout the year. In conclusion, review of each school's Core Learning Plan will be included as part of each principal's year-end performance evaluation.

Dr. Silva addressed the second area of the plan which is District-Wide Core Learning. In addition to supporting the individual schools with AYP Plans, the district will provide greater focus and support in areas affecting core learning.

Dr. Silva added that one area of focus would be Assessment of Student Learning with less time spent on testing and more time used for purposeful teaching and learning. The district will utilize Study Island which will also provide teachers with more targeted technology-based lessons to address student weaknesses. He stated that rapid and instructional-based assessments were fundamental with core learning. He also brought attention to the positive feedback received from teachers about the new assessment system.

Dr. Silva commented on instruction as another area of focus under the core learning. He stated the district would significantly increase the number of students using Read 180 and System 44, including maximizing the license use by monitoring student progress. Teachers would continue to be trained and coached by Scholastic, Inc. System 44 would be used with ESOL and IEP students whose literacy skills were significantly behind grade level. There would also be emphasis on best instructional practice of struggling learners such as sharpening the focus of Reading Apprenticeship in all content areas and emphasizing the use of vocabulary and summarization in math instruction. Dr. Silva stated there would be a program evaluation of secondary co-teaching. He explained that if the common practices and goals were addressed, co-teaching would approve along with the core performance of the students.

The next area of the plan addressed Math and English/Language Arts curriculum which would be aligned to higher “Keystone” (Career and College Ready) standards while maintaining the rigor such as the addition of Discrete Math and AP Statistics to the Program of Studies. The district would continue to work with Northampton Community College to align courses and assessments to entrance examination criteria. Dr. Silva noted that the NCC and CIU20 were strong supporters of a national staff development program called Power Math which focused on successful high impact instructional strategies. He said the district would be involving staff in the training as part of the action plan. He also reviewed that the administrators at East Hills Middle School did outstanding work in addressing the English/Language Arts Curriculum.

Student Engagement would also be included with the goal to close the “motivation gap” and improve high school student engagement by training the school community in Restorative Practices. Another goal would be to maintain, as best as possible without teaming, time and structure in the middle school schedule to focus on student engagement and personal skill development including the implementation of a character education program.

Dr. Silva shared the AYP Action Planning Template along with Read 180 student data with the Board of School Directors. The Read 180 data indicated that a total of 1,135 students used the program with 11 out of 12 schools exceeding an average of one year’s worth of reading growth. He also reviewed that 70 percent of students using System 44 had reading comprehension growth by the end of the academic year.

Director Burkhardt commented that it was refreshing to see plans coming forth that were well thought out, comprehensive and encompassed all of the schools. He thought they had turned a major corner with regard to having the schools operating as a system.

Director Tenaglia addressed the Read 180 data with regard to Northeast Middle School and said it appeared they were doing something different than the other secondary schools. He thought the results did not warrant the difference in methodology. He asked about Dr. Silva's comment related to the school's progress and that he observed improvement in other areas.

Dr. Silva stated there would be future conversation with Northeast Middle School Improvement Team in developing their plan and addressing the effective use of Read 180. He noted the school had previously experienced high volume use and high achievement.

Dr. Roy commented that Read 180 was an interventional tool so if students were pulled in that weren't behind, the results would not reveal as much progress because those students would not need to make as much progress.

Ms. Hilton, Liberty High School Principal and former assistant principal at Northeast Middle School shared that the school had a unique model by allowing Read 180 to be available for every language arts class in Grade 6. She said when Scholastic analyzed data; the criteria reviewed included pre/post tests and eighteen sessions on their software. There may be students on the software for eighteen sessions because they don't necessarily meet the criteria for Read 180 intervention so those students were mixed in with the data analysis which would bring down the average Lexile growth. If they only looked at the students in the classes which were on 180 days and had 100 sessions, she believed they would be the students with the higher Lexile gains within Northeast Middle School. She believed the school had a unique model but she thought the company would be moving toward this integrated model as opposed to having an isolated program.

Director Leeson commented that she was very encouraged about the use of not only PSSA measures but also using Northampton Community College Entrance Examinations as a measure and goals that went beyond the state aligned system. She said she was pleased to hear that students would be ready and prepared for college level courses. She inquired if the Board could obtain copies of the proposed middle school Algebra I and Character Education Curriculum. She also inquired about the Keystone Algebra I Examination.

Dr. Silva agreed to provide the requested curriculum pieces to the Board and added that the Keystone Algebra I Examination results were estimated to be available by September 15. He also commented about the expected results, and predicted they would have a lot of room for growth given the fact that the students were tested at the career and college ready standards before all the school districts developed the curricula.

Dr. Leeson commented about the need for the students to have a "rock" solid foundation in Algebra I but they also had to pay attention to the skill sets of students coming into that level of mathematics. She pointed out a weakness in computation coming into some of the higher level courses.

Dr. Silva replied that the committee created a "lock-step" scope and sequence aligned to the Keystone Examination for Algebra I and how it looked when backed up a year in Pre-Algebra.

Director Leeson brought attention to co-teaching and said the co-teachers were pulled out of some of the high school classes with special education students.

Ms. Hilton replied that Liberty High School had to refocus their priorities because of the staff reductions. She said she believed the co-teaching was revamped to focus on the math and English co-taught classes because they were primary core subjects.

Ms. Hilton stated they were striving for greater efficiency with the use of co-teaching and utilizing the teachers to the best of their ability in as many classes and subjects across the content areas.

Director Leeson inquired about recapturing instructional time in the classroom. She shared her observations such as announcements which disrupt the classroom during the day which breaks the rhythm and accumulates as lost instructional time over the course of the year. She also addressed assembly programs and reflected on a school that chose not to participate in any assemblies or field trips because their goal was to recapture instructional time and keep students on task. She thought it might be somewhat extreme but she thought they needed to look at their instructional time beginning at the third grade.

Dr. Silva commented about the amount of lost time with previous inefficient student assessment was multiple as compared to the interruptions due to principal announcements. He thought a more efficient assessment system would regain instructional time.

Director McKeon recalled that elementary dismissal time was approximately 3:30 p.m. and the students were being prepared for dismissal closer to 3:00 p.m. He understood the need for preparation during the winter months but he had concern about the accumulative impact of the loss of time of the school year.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

Dr. Silva shared that the high school principals, academic assistant principals, and department chairpersons were in the process of developing the 2012-2013 Program of Studies. He noted their goal was to have changes for review at the next Board Curriculum Committee Meeting.

## **AGENDA ITEMS FOR SEPTEMBER 26, 2011, REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

Director Burkhardt received board approval to list the following remaining agenda items for the September 26, 2011 Regular Board Meeting:

### **A. District Goals**

Director Follweiler suggested including the updated copy of the Item 3 revision in the District Goals for the following week's mailing if it was completed.

## **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

1. Mr. Stephen Antalics – 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem  
Mr. Antalics commented on Director Leeson’s emphasis this evening on attention to academics. He also referred to an earlier comment about offering better education but don’t raise taxes. He said that he heard a number of people at various board or committee meetings speak about character building associated with sports. He inquired if the district had done a study addressing student involvement in sports and band and if it improved their academic performance.

Dr. Silva said he was not familiar with a study done within the district.

Mr. Antalics shared that if the district did not want to increase taxes because of public outcry, then something had to “give” if the district really wanted to improve academics.

## **OPEN FORUM**

Director McKeon asked Dr. Roy if he could provide a report with regard to the number of *No Child Left Behind* students who transferred from one school in the district to another district school.

Dr. Roy said they were approaching the end of the period where students had the option to select an alternate school. He agreed to share the information after the enrollment window ends.

Director Leeson inquired about PSSA data from the charter schools.

Dr. Silva responded that the schools had to publicly report the information so they would be able to review it in the newspaper. He said he would also request the information to share with the Board of Directors.

Director Leeson announced that the S.A.T. preparation course for Southside student residents would be offered for high school students. The cost of the course is \$25, which Director Leeson noted had a significantly higher value.

Director Leeson stated she heard that a number of high school senior students were leaving classes early because they were not fully enrolled in classes because of budget cuts. She reflected that during previous budget discussions, the board agreed to put it back into the budget.

Dr. Silva said the staffing levels were there to accommodate and schedule the students.

Director Leeson mentioned that often times what one heard and what actually occurred are different.

Dr. Silva agreed to inquire about the student schedules.

Director Follweiler also reviewed a distant rumor about the student schedules.

Dr. Roy commented that staffing was replaced in order to accommodate the student schedules.

Director Follweiler asked about a medical academy charter school advertisement mailed to residents of the district. She asked if the district had to approve the charter school.

Dr. Roy said he did not have any information about the school.

Director Follweiler addressed the statement made earlier by Mr. Antalics with regard to pre-kindergarten in the district and to seek out funding from other programs within the district. She said it reminded her that a budget cycle was approaching and her recommendation was to know exactly what their legal responsibility was as far as the core subject areas and then start to build from that point. She said that she was aware that pre-kindergarten and sports were not legal requirements of the district. She suggested keeping it in mind as they moved forward with the budget process.

Dr. Silva recalled that he did a study on the SPARK Program with limited data.

Director Follweiler noted that Mr. Antalics' information was not connected to a survey from within the Bethlehem Area School District. She commented about national studies with regard to student participation in extra-curricular activities resulting in better scores. She thought it was something to be cognizant of as they moved into next year's budget cycle.

Director Tenaglia inquired about the correlation of the survey data.

Director Follweiler said the discussion was age old and pointed out that band was considered an academic subject in the district as opposed to extracurricular.

Director Cann commented about the student schedules at the high school and the reasoning why they had lighter schedules.

Director Leeson stated she was never aware of the practice. She pointed out that 50 percent of the students did not pass the PSSA math assessment. She didn't believe it was a standing practice for the students to leave when they "feel like it." She said the students had the option of taking a study hall if they completed their required courses. She also commented on the discussion associated with pre-kindergarten. She was curious if student progress held beyond the early years of elementary school with regard to the district's pre-kindergarten students.

Director Burkhardt commented that one could find positive reports on either side of the pre-kindergarten debate. He didn't think there was anything actually definitive on either side from his observations over the years.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

Donna L. Wenz  
Confidential Secretary – Department of Educational Program