

PHOENIXVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

BOARD CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
Monday, August 6, 2007

Call Meeting to Order, Nancy McAvoy, Chairperson

Mr. Keith Wickstrom called the August 6, 2007 Board Curriculum Committee Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held in the Administration Building Conference Room.

Board Curriculum Committee Members Present: Mr. Keith Wickstrom and Mr. Bill Mea

Board Curriculum Committee Member Absent: Mrs. Nancy McAvoy

Other Board Member Present: Mrs. Jill Slawecki, Board President; and Mr. Fred Parry

Also in Attendance: Dr. Maria Schwab, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Margaret Pearsall, Supervisor of Reading; Ms. Carolyn Marchetti, Supervisor of Mathematics, Mrs. Ann Marie Geissel, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Mrs. Rita Lynn, Supervisor of Special Education; Mr. Scott Davidheiser, Middle School Assistant Principal; Mrs. Mary Myers, PAEA President and Middle School Teacher; Mr. John Odell, PAEA representative and Middle School Teacher; and Mrs. Nan Odenthal, Community Relations Coordinator.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the June 4, 2006 meeting were approved and accepted as presented.

Informational

Middle School Reading Apprenticeship Pilot

Mr. Scott Davidheiser, Middle School Assistant Principal, noted that the Standards Reading course has been restructured. This course targets students falling below two or more grade levels in reading. Reading specialists and the regular classroom teacher will co-teach this class. In addition, a Literacy Apprenticeship course will be piloted. The Collins Writing Process will also be used this year. This process deals with different types of writing. A pre and post assessment will be used to track student achievement. In response to a question from Mr. Parry as to which students participate in this class; Mr. Davidheiser noted that the students are regular education students. There was discussion regarding grading and measurements. Mrs. Pearsall noted that students have problems with comprehension, motivation, and sustaining interest. Using the reading specialists in this class will provide targeted instruction. The skills learned in this class can also be used in other classes. Students are identified by placement on the PSSA as to basic and below basic. Students will be measured on district assessments. This course will take the place of a world language course.

Middle School Scheduling Changes

Mr. Davidheiser remarked that the Middle School schedule will include an independent advisory reading class. No instructional time is lost. The Phantom Pride Advisory Program includes groups of students who will engage in reading, silent reading, reading with the teacher, and writing.

Update on Performance Pathways Training

Dr. Schwab remarked that there are 120 to 130 teachers being trained in TechPaths, the curriculum mapping part of Performance Pathways, this summer. Elementary, special education and math teachers at the high school are being trained. During the fall the rest of the teachers will be trained. In mid-September, teacher trainers will be trained in Performance Tracker. They in turn will teach our teachers. Performance Tracker will enable us to track students' progress. Training teachers in Performance Pathways will take place over two to two and a half years. Dr. Schwab noted that this program is an amazing resource.

Update on SAFE Program

Ms. Marchetti remarked that the Summer SAFE program, housed at Barkley Elementary School, began about a month ago. Students receive an hour of reading and an hour of math instruction. Feedback from teachers is very positive and they are able to focus on what students need. Pre tests were administered and a post test will be administered at the end of the program. Mrs. Pearsall added that student attendance has been good and providing bussing improves student attendance. Mrs. Myers, summer school teacher, noted that it is a tremendous luxury to have small class sizes and being able to focus on students. There are incentives for students which were provided by Brian Harr, onsite director of the program, plus Ken Winston and Christena Hamilton. Mrs. Pearsall noted that having the students at Barkley has caused the custodial staff to adjust their schedules, but they have been wonderful in coordinating those efforts. Dr. Schwab remarked that it is hopeful that the program will advance students' skills. It is hoped that next year students from Schuylkill and East Pikeland can participate.

In response to a question from Mr. Mea, Dr. Schwab noted that the Instant Success summer music program was a bit of a disappointment. There were only three students participating, perhaps due to the fact that the information was sent out late. Teachers are already preparing to promote this program next year. She believes that it is an important program and hopes it be given a chance next year.

Strategic Planning

Dr. Schwab noted that as a Phase Three School District, our Strategic Plan is due September 2008. This year the Plan will be completed electronic. The goals of the Strategic Plan this time are focused on student achievement. At this time, a Steering Committee is being developed, which will be comprised of parents, students, Board Members, teachers from area preschools, teachers from each district school, a representative from CAT-Pickering and representatives from PSEA, etc. The approval of the Steering Committee will be included on the September Board Meeting Agenda. Under Board Approval items on the Agenda, is an item regarding a Service Contract Agreement with the CCIU. In response to a question from Mr. Parry, Dr. Schwab noted that the whole Plan is to be rewritten as requirements have changed. The service contract with the CCIU will be headed by Dr. Melody Wilt who has worked on other Strategic Plans and will be a great asset to our District.

Special Education Corrective Action Plan

Mrs. Geissel remarked that as a result of the special education audit, there are areas that the school district must remedy. Mrs. Geissel noted that she is being proactive in addressing the results of the audit by developing a Special Education Corrective Action Plan. An area of concern is the fact that a majority of the students placed outside our district are autistic or require multiple disability support. Mrs. Geissel noted that she will implement the plan by managing one area at a time. She noted that if students are housed in our district, it will be possible to recoup the cost of speech therapy, etc. There are a number of autistic students and the costs for services are increasing. In response to a question from Mr. Parry, Mrs. Geissel noted that money could be saved in subsequent years if these students are brought back to our district. However, this would involve full time autistic teachers, full time assistants, speech teachers, physical therapists, etc. According to the Plan, representatives of the Pennsylvania Department of Education will visit the school district every three to six months. Other increases in staff necessary to implement the Corrective Action Plan include additional clerical positions, a special education supervisor, etc. In response to a question from Mrs. Slaweki, Mrs. Geissel noted that we are to comply with the Gaskin Decision and place students in the least restrictive environment. If parents do not want their child in the district they will not have a choice if our district provides that service. Mrs. Geissel also remarked that the district has three years to reduce the number of outside placements. Mr. Mea noted that the plan is great, but is also a lot of work.

Library Media Center Usage Report

Dr. Schwab noted that this information shows usage at district libraries for the month of May 2007.

Board Approval

Approval of 2007 Pennsylvania Youth Survey

Mrs. Geissel noted that this is a drug and alcohol survey which has been completed in the past. This survey will be completed by the end of September or the beginning of October. Students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 complete the survey. The Board Curriculum Committee recommended that this Board approval item be included on the August 16, 2007 Board Meeting Agenda.

Approval and Acceptance of Federal Program Funds – 2007-2008

Mrs. Pearsall remarked that this item was discussed at the June 4, 2007 Board Curriculum Committee meeting. It is possible that the allocated amounts may change. The Board Curriculum Committee recommended that this Board approval item be included on the August 16, 2007 Board Meeting Agenda.

Approval of Service Contract Agreement with the Chester County Intermediate Unit

Dr. Schwab noted that this item was discussed under Informational Items above. The Board Curriculum Committee recommended that this Board approval item be included on the August 16, 2007 Board Meeting Agenda.

Approval to Discard Library Books

Dr. Schwab remarked that each year librarians weed books from their collections to make room for new books. Discarding these library books requires Board approval. The Board Curriculum Committee recommended that this Board approval item be included on the August 16, 2007 Board Meeting Agenda.

Mr. Parry asked about the Curriculum Cycle, weaknesses that the district faces regarding curriculum, and goals. Dr. Schwab responded that the curriculum cycle is on track, weaknesses were due to pieces of curriculum being completed at different times. This has been addressed. Dr. Schwab noted that the goals will be discussed at the Board Meeting.

Other

Dr. Schwab noted that another item for Board approval was received regarding a Graduate Study Request. Mr. Frank Garritano, Schuylkill Elementary School Principal, is requesting permission to conduct a research study at the high school on the Apangea web-based math course. This is a requirement for his dissertation. The Board Curriculum Committee recommended that this item be included on the August 16, 2007 Board Meeting Agenda.

Dr. Schwab remarked that she received information from LaTanya Gratsy regarding the Million Dollar March. They are encouraging fathers to walk their child to school on the first day.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, September 10, 2007, 7:00 p.m. in the High School Library. In addition, Dr. Schwab requested that the next two meeting dates be set. Those meetings will be held Monday, October 8 and Monday, November 5. They will both be held in the High School Library.

Mr. Mea inquired about a group of concerned parents that he heard about. Mrs. Slawewski noted that this is a group of parents which began about three to four months ago.

Public Comment

Mary Myers, PAEA Representative and Schuylkill Township Resident

Mrs. Myers commented on the Special Education Corrective Action Plan and the number of students placed in our schools.

Adjournment

Mr. Wickstrom adjourned the meeting at 8:31 p.m.

Keith Wickstrom, Substitute Chairperson

Minutes were prepared by Kris McArthur, Administrative Assistant to Dr. Maria Schwab, Assistant Superintendent.