

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Julie Altman, Christopher Browe, Diane Crocco, Rita Gedansky

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: James Horwitz, Thomas Hurley

Also Present: Charles Britton, Stanley Gedansky, Marianne Lippard, Marie McPadden, Chuck Pyne, Phyllis Swebilus, other members of the Public

A meeting of the Curriculum Committee of the Amity Regional Board of Education was held on Wednesday, July 17, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. in the Superintendent's Conference Room.

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

2. Discussion and Possible Action on La Misma Luna DVD

Participants at the meeting introduced themselves. Dr. McPadden and Dr. Britton offered an overview of the steps that were taken leading up to this meeting. Chuck Pyne complained to both Dr. Brady and Dr. Britton about the film *La Misma Luna*, which was shown during an AP Spanish class. Dr. McPadden gathered information and wrote a report representing her findings. Peter Silva teaches AP Spanish Language and Culture at Amity and wrote a letter in support of the use of this film. Dr. McPadden noted that Elena Serapiglia, Department Chair for World Language at the High School, wrote a letter of support, which is very comprehensive, addressing how the film is aligned with state and national standards.

Dr. McPadden said that *La Misma Luna* is about a mother who left her son to search for a better life. The son is being raised by his grandmother. The film is rated PG. The teachers use the film to develop critical listening and speaking skills. The College Board approved the film as a resource for AP Spanish classes. Dr. McPadden noted the College Board's high standards. The primary focus of the film is to look at family culture. Comprehension questions about the film are not political. The film has been shown for seven years at the High School.

Dr. Britton said that he took similar steps in reviewing the film and found it appropriate for use as a resource in AP Spanish. An alternative assignment was offered to the student whose parent complained about the film. The student elected to see the movie. *Schindler's List* has been shown before and parents can let the school know if they have a problem with their children seeing the film.

Dr. McPadden said that La Misma Luna is intended to expose students to the cultural side of the language that they are studying. To provide students more background about what they will be seeing, prior to showing the video, an overview can be provided. Mr. Pyne did not agree with Dr. McPadden's report. Dr. Brady recommended that the Board of Education review the complaint.

Mr. Browe questioned what class Schindler's List is shown in. Dr. Britton said that it is shown in social studies class.

Ms. Altman said that she saw the film and noted that the movie is fiction and isn't in any way being represented as a true account. She believes the film is in keeping with the mission of the District and the High School. She would like to think that every piece of curriculum and instruction helps to attain that mission. In the case of this film, it seems to be getting the students to think critically. In looking at the College Board information, this film appears to be within their goal. The movie represents primarily a nine-year-old's vocabulary. One of the positive aspects of the movie is that the language is easy to absorb. Illegal immigration is a complex legal issue. This is not the reason for showing the movie. The use of this film is in keeping with the mission. She thanked Mr. Pyne for bringing to the Board's attention that which he personally found objectionable.

Dr. McPadden said that the World Languages Chair surveyed other districts and 16 others in the state use this film, including Bethel, Westport and Madison. This is not to say that Amity should use the film because others do, but it is her understanding that the students loved the film. The film is shown for language development, not for political reasons. The issue of immigration wasn't discussed by the class.

Mr. Browe said that when providing exposure to a variety of educational materials, there is context that is assumed. He cited Romeo and Juliet as an example. Unless someone is an American Indian, we are all immigrants.

Ms. Gedansky said that if the film were shown for political reasons, then it should be discussed.

Ms. Altman said that if the concern is that the film depicts felonies, this is not the only resource in which felonies are portrayed. This is not a dominant perspective that is being portrayed. The student had a different perspective, went home and talked to her family about the film. The film got her thinking and did exactly what it was intended to do. The Committee doesn't need to take a formal vote, but is conveying this information to Mr. Pyne, who is here tonight.

Mr. Pyne said that he would like to be heard. He said that there has been discussion that we are world citizens, but we are Americans first. There is no question that this is politically sensitive material and represents a perspective that

he does not share. This film shouldn't belong in this context. There are other videos that could be shown. We should look at the political reality of 2013. Just because this film was shown a few years ago, that doesn't mean that it should be shown today. This film would be appropriate for a social studies class dealing with a discussion of immigration. He would support this as part of a larger discussion in a social studies class. It doesn't belong in a language class. Children absorb whatever information they are exposed to and need to be provided with an alternative view. Presenting one perspective does kids a disservice.

Mr. Browe questioned how Mr. Pyne about whether he would have a problem with this if the film was part of a college language class

Mr. Pyne said that he would have a problem with it.

Mr. Browe said that in a Latin class, when looking at Caesar's writing, students are studying the information that was written, not focusing on Rome taking over Europe.

Mr. Pyne said that this is going on right now. A one-sided interpretation was offered in this film. His daughter had to come home to discuss another perspective.

Ms. Altman said that she would contend that everything is from a unilateral perspective.

Mr. Pyne said that on this type of issue, two sides should be presented. This film insults Americans.

Mr. Browe said that this would not be a student's only exposure to immigration. This is a popular movie, which keeps the interest of students as they try to follow along with the dialogue. He does not view the movie as containing the level of propaganda that Mr. Pyne does.

Mr. Pyne said that he appreciated the opportunity to further articulate what he wrote in his letter. He feels that the kids are being done a disservice.

3. Discussion and Possible Action on New Text Books

It was noted that the book, "Disce! An Introductory Latin Course," would replace the current book, which is old and outdated. Another requested textbook is, "Zhen Bang," for Mandarin Chinese.

Dr. Britton noted that the number of students enrolling in Chinese language classes is increasing.

Dr. McPadden said that she is still gathering information about how old the other Chinese textbook is. The District attempts to replace textbooks every five or six years, but typically textbooks are used longer. We would like to use e-books, but isn't always possible. Additionally, students like to use a book.

Dr. Britton said that the old textbook couldn't be more than seven or eight years old.

Motion to approve new textbooks (Ms. Crocco, 2d Mr. Browe).

Vote in favor unanimous.

Motion passed.

4. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned upon mutual agreement at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Lippard, recording clerk