

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of March 7, 2013

PRESENT: Larry Breech, Cheryl Kessler, Susan Myers, Frank Suchwala, Kathee Stark

The meeting began at 6:30 pm with a review of the minutes of the last meeting. Kathee then briefly discussed the results from the Keystone exams. The results were generally quite good, and preparations are underway to begin the tutoring which is required before those not testing proficient or advanced retake the exam(s). Students who passed all three tests will be provided the option of leaving at 2:30 pm for the remainder of the school year. Permission slips must be signed by parents, and the signatures will be verified by phone.

The ramifications of the Keystone exams were discussed. The next round of testing is late May, and results will not be returned until July 8. At that time, schedules will have to be adjusted to provide teachers to tutor the students who must, by law, have remediation prior to being retested. This is likely to be a substantial alteration of the instructional program. The committee discussed options for staffing for next year. Because of the notification requirements in the state laws and the uncertainty of course needs for next year, the committee recommends that extensive notification be given.

There was a discussion about the new teacher evaluation plan which is being implemented through mandate from PDE. This new tool will begin to be used in all school districts during the 2013-2014 school year. It is estimated that the entire process will require at least six hours per teacher. That assumes that people are knowledgeable about the process and are in agreement on the outcomes. PDE is recommending a move to a differentiated supervision model. This would require most teachers to be evaluated through the formal observation process every three years. The other two years would be spent improving instruction or engaging in other practices to improve student achievement. This interim process would also be evaluated.

There was a review of three factors which will be part of the PA School Profiles when it is released. Kathee indicated that there is room for improvement of SAT scores. Math and English teachers have discussed options. They will be providing students with a focused review prior to the administration dates in spring. If improvement is not seen, a course will be implemented next year.

Another factor influencing the school profiles will be participation in and results of AP exams. Courses have a longer time this year, so the results will be studied. Recent articles have begun to question the value of AP courses and advocate for college courses for students. Kathee indicated that a study in Texas found substantial increases in the numbers of students who graduated from college among those who took at least one college courses during high school as opposed to those who did not do so, even though the students were from similar backgrounds.

Students seem reluctant to attend classes at Bloomsburg University under Dual Enrollment, so there was a lengthy discussion of options available for Luzerne County Community College (LCCC) to partner with us to provide courses here. They are willing to send a teacher, or the students may avail themselves of online options. The district received monies for a scholarship last spring, and a decision on the use of the funds from the Hyde-Beck scholarship has not been determined. The committee recommends that these funds be used to defray the costs of college courses taken while in district for those students who are interested in being part of the LCCC initiative.

Larry led a discussion of options available through the IU for virtual field trips, some of which are available in an interactive mode. The IU personnel are willing to come to the district with the equipment which is necessary for this to occur. Kathee will be studying some of the possibilities this can afford to the students of the district.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathee Stark