



Board of School Directors Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Generated by Renai Cardillo on Thursday, March 14, 2024

Board Members in attendance: Michael Barnacz, Nicholas Braccio, William Brong, Janet Flisak, William Formica, Ken Keith, Andrew Landis, Stephen Nelson and Kimberly Wheeler

Others in attendance: Frank Ball, Lisa Ball, Barbara Bescher, Carleen Flansbury, John Franzen, Kevin Godshall, Eric Hartman, Christopher Hey, Katie Kennedy-Reilly, Fran Masin-Moyer, Katie McCoy, Matthew Montagna, Jeff Pammer, Michael Taylor, Sam Varano, and Megan Zweiback

1. Education-Personnel Committee

1.1 Education-Personnel Presentation

Board member Mr. Landis called the meeting to order at 6:33 P.M.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Hey welcomed everyone, noting the new set up of Committee Meetings to accommodate recording of meetings. Dr. Hey stated that Superintendent Gallagher was absent from this evenings meeting as he was attending a legislative forum.

1.2 Review Revisions to Middle Level Social Studies Curriculum

Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment & Technology Dr. Kennedy-Reilly was introduced and announced the items on the Education-Personnel agenda. The first item to be discussed was the revisions to the middle school Social Studies curriculum. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly introduced teacher middle school social studies teacher Mr. Hartman who explained the revisions to the curriculum. Mr. Hartman stated that the content is the same, and the revisions are sequencing changes and an overhaul to assessments. He also stated that the changes will streamline student learning through middle school in preparation for high school courses.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly stated that the last revision to the middle school curriculum was approximately six years ago. She also noted that the revised curriculum will better align to digital assessments.

E-P chairperson Mr. Landis reiterated that the curriculum was not changing. Mr. Braccio and Mrs. Wheeler commented positively, noting they heard the presentation at the recent Curriculum Council meeting. Mr. Formica praised the willingness to adjust and change as necessary. Mr. Barnacz asked about the inclusion of Pennsylvania history and William Penn into the curriculum. Mr. Hartman responded that the instruction of Pennsylvania history including Pennsylvania as a colony, and Philadelphia being the centerpiece for The Constitution is embedded into Social Studies Curriculum. Mr. Keith also noted that Pennsylvania history is covered in the fourth grade (elementary) curriculum.

The Committee agreed to move forward with revisions to the middle school Social Studies curriculum.

1.3 Review Special Education Plan

Director of Pupil Services, Ms. Zweiback presented a slide showing an overview of the Special Education Plan Profile and Essentials. Ms. Zweiback noted that PDE requires that every school district revise and submit their plan every three years. The overview will include our students, teachers, related services and support staff. It will also review where our students attend school and what types of services the district provides. Ms. Zweiback indicated that focused areas of improvement are tied to the Bureau of Special Education Compliance Monitoring from January 2022 and our annual PIMS/PennData collection. Ms. Zweiback also noted that the plan will include a summary of training and professional development.

Ms. Zweiback introduced the following Special Education Supervisors: Elementary Special Education; Ms. Barbara Bescher; Middle Level Special Education, Ms. Carleen Flansbury; and High School Special Education, Mr. Matt Montagna.

A slide showing a review of the special education department was presented showing the number of special education students in 2022 was 1,172 or 19.3% of enrollment and currently is 1,210 students or 20.2% of enrollment. This slide also listed the number of teachers, paraprofessionals, behavior specialists, psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and Lakeside Counselors.

Ms. Zweiback noted that students attend all 9 regular school buildings in district and that the district provides a continuum of supports, services, and placements in and out of district. Ms. Zweiback stated that out of district placements are sometimes needed for students with highly complex disabilities such as blindness, deafness, significant autism, mental health and behavioral disorders.

Ms. Bescher stated that the school district had been notified of two areas needing improvement and planning. Indicator 3 which is Assessment and Indicator 5 which is Educational Environment. Ms. Bescher noted that within Indicator 3, the state targeted goal is to increase the participation rate in the PSSA. State defined target is 95% participation in ELA and Math. SASD participation rate was 95.7% and 94.8% respectively. State Target Goal: No more than 1% of total special education population participating in the PASA (Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment). SASD participation is 1.4%.

Within Indicator 5: Educational Environment State Target Goal: the state's target goal is to increase District's percentage of students served at the "Itinerant" level of support (80% or more of their day in the regular education classroom). State defined target is 61%, SASD baseline is 52.5%. State Target Goal: Decrease District's percentage of students served in other locations (approved private schools, other private facilities). State defined target is 4.4%, SASD baseline is 8.5%. Ms. Bescher indicated that these areas will remain a focus for the district over the course of several years.

Middle Level Supervisor Ms. Flansbury, reviewed the Professional Development Plans required by the state as well as Teacher Survey Feedback. Ms. Flansbury spoke about the various types of professional development offered to our special education teachers including the desired IEP development and goal creation plan for students.

Mrs. Zweiback introduced the mental and behavioral health supports offered in the schools, citing the assignment of district psychologists to train and assist teachers and administration how to meet the mental health needs of our students. Ms. Zweiback explained Sensory Rooms and Calming spaces helping students to manage emotions and behavior without removal from the classroom.

High School Special Education Supervisor, Mr. Montagna cited the effectiveness of Therapy Dog visits to our schools. He also mentioned the development of a school mural, designed and painted by teacher volunteers to create a welcoming space. He also noted the team and relationship building of the Unified Sports program. This program has experienced quite a bit of success at the high school and will be moving to the middle schools.

Ms. Zweiback shared the timeline of the Spec Education Plan. The Steering Committee met on February 22nd and received feedback for improvement. The plan was presented at the March 1 Curriculum Council and was well received. The full plan will be posted on the school district website for 30 days and is scheduled to appear on the April 25 Board Action agenda for full approval.

Dr. Hey thanked Ms. Zweiback and team for their presentation commenting that Special Education is a very challenging but is also very rewarding. He reiterated that at this time the district is seeking permission to post the plan on its website for public viewing.

Mr. Landis asked about the suggested PDE targets and the science behind those targeted values. Ms. Zweiback noted that the actual science often feels like a secret, but the district is always trying to meet those targets as part of district-wide continued improvement.

Mr. Braccio and Mrs. Wheeler commented positively on the Special Education Plan and its content. Mr. Barnacz asked about classroom time and how sensory classroom time is determined. Ms. Bescher responded that those times are designated within the student IEP.

Mr. Formica and Mr. Nelson thanked everyone for their work on the Plan. Mrs. Flisak inquired about the number of students currently in out of district educational placements and Ms. Zweiback responded that we have approximately 90 students in out of district placements. She noted that some students are as local as The Vantage Program and others are beyond county lines. Ms. Zweiback also indicated that students needs are met on an individual basis.

Mr. Barnacz asked about in-classroom time and how time is managed within the sensory classroom spaces and Mrs. Bescher commented that those times are designated within a student IEP.

A member of the audience, Mr. Rothholz of Harleysville, offered kudos to the team and commented favorably on professional development for general education teachers working with special education teachers.

The Committee agreed to post the Special Education Plan publicly for 30 days.

1.4 Secondary Data Presentation

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly announced the Secondary Schools Data presentation, and introduced Middle School principals, Ms. McCoy and Dr. Pammer and High School Principal, Dr. Varano.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly reviewed slides that depicted the alignment of the Comprehensive Plan to academic growth and achievement for all students. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly explained the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in all of the district schools which support the academic, behavioral and social emotional growth of the whole child.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly highlighted the various methods to collect and transparently report on student learning. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly cited the challenges associated with the diagnosis and collection of data in an effort to plan for intervention, implementation and evaluation.

A slide outlining Growth and Achievement was reviewed. It explained the use of growth percentiles to understand student scores and how those score changes compare to national norms. This is also directly related to Achievement Comparison to understand how a group of students scores change across two testing events.

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) were reviewed for middle level Reading and Math. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly spoke to the effective use of the MAP Report. This report is a summary of how a student is performing academically and measures a student's skill level. Teachers can utilize the report to check student performance, tailor classroom instruction and set goals for students. The MAP Report also allows for the measurement of achievement to students nationwide, as well as measuring a student's personal growth over the school year.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly reviewed the use of data at the student level, by classroom, at grade level, by building and district-wide. By utilizing the information building principals are able to identify gaps and create opportunities for extensions. The data allows for teachers to make connections to instruction, provide insight, and target resources.

Indian Crest Middle School Principal, Ms. McCoy reviewed the current school goal to create a sense of belonging by holding Student Forums. She also noted that the MAP data allows students to set personal goals for achievement through conferencing.

Indian Valley Middle School Principal, Dr. Pammer reviewed the tiers of reflection and enhancement that are currently in place to support students academic growth and achievement. He cited Focus Groups, and School Counseling Check-Ins.

High School Principal, Dr. Varano reviewed a slide highlighting the goals of the high school which include revitalizing 5th Block to revise its lessons for freshmen and build communication regarding the college and career calendar to students and parents. Staff development for teachers assisting them to meet the needs of today's students, including opportunities to work with behavioral specialists, book groups, and peer observations. Adding peaceful and purposeful conversations along with Restorative Practices Group.

Mr. Landis commented on the Family Report and the ability to use the specific data to support students needs. Mr. Braccio commented on the effective use of data and praised the principals for their leadership in their schools. Mrs. Wheeler commented favorably on the Family Report, finding value in it as a parent. She also commented on positive communication from teachers.

Mr. Formica commented on implementation of Performance Matters and its quick use to monitor individual students needs.

Mr. Keith and Mrs. Flisak both commented on the quick response (implemented use) of the data. Mr. Barnacz asked how the teacher peer plan impacts teachers and Dr. Varano responded that the informal nature of it, allows for relationship building. Mr. Brong commented favorably on the use of technology.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly also stated that the district review of its Reading and Writing Program continues, it is progressing well and an update will be provided later this year.

A member of the public, Mr. Souchet of Franconia inquired about MAP data and Dr. Kennedy-Reilly stated that it is nationally normed, and this data is made available to teachers and principals at the individual classroom level, as well as by grade and building level.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly acknowledged that the district does have two schools designated (TSI) as having targeted support needs. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly reinforced that a collaborative process of District Administration and School Administration exists to support the growth and achievement to meet the needs of the sub group student populations.

Mr. Landis adjourned the Education-Personnel Meeting at 7:51 P.M.

2. Operations Committee

2.1 Update on plans for West Broad Elementary Renovations

Mr. Brong called the Operations Meeting to order at 7:56 P.M.

Director of Business Affairs, Mr. Taylor introduced Mr. Godshall from GKO Architects. Mr. Godshall gave an overview of the process necessary to plan for the proposed renovation of West Broad Street Elementary School. He outlined the Planning Commission and Township requirements toward the first step of receiving land development approval. All indications to move forward would be conditional as the project would also require approval by Montgomery County. The overall time line is approximately six months.

Mr. Godshall reviewed a presentation that highlighted the West Broad Street Elementary School existing site plan, noting the proposed renovation would replace the modular classrooms, extend the car line, add additional parking to the site, add fencing around the playground and maintain current site circulation for buses, cars and walkers.

Mr. Godshall noted that there would be minor layout changes to the existing building. Those changes would be to the toilet rooms, and the Guidance/Psychologists Suite. The proposed addition would include six new classrooms, a special education classroom, an EL classroom, Art and Music classrooms, and MTSS classrooms as well as space for speech and reading specialists.

Mr. Godshall reviewed some of the original building structures from 1966, noting that exterior windows and metal soffits are included in the scope of proposed work. Interior improvements include ceilings and flooring, doors, casework, toilet rooms, some kitchen equipment, mechanical systems, lighting and data wiring to update security and public address systems. Mr. Godshall noted work that is not included in the proposed improvement include exterior roofing which was replaced in 2013 and the sidewalks.

Mr. Godshall also reviewed the renovations to the section of the building from 2001 indicating that some exterior work could be performed and that some interior finishes would also be improved. A timeline outlining an anticipated land development approval in the Fall of 2024 after which GESA and public bids would be received and reviewed. Upon approval, construction could begin in the Summer of 2025 and be completed by the Summer of 2027.

Mr. Brong asked about the HVAC unit and Mr. Godshall responded that it is a vertical unit and that a gas boiler would be introduced to the property. Mr. Braccio inquired about grade elevation changes and ADA compliance. Mr. Godshall indicated that all improvements would be ADA compliant.

Mr. Formica asked about the section of the roof that was not being replaced and Mr. Ball indicated that it currently has a 25 year warranty from its install in 2013.

Mr. Nelson inquired about the bus drop off area and Mr. Godshall responded that there are five buses serving West Broad Street ES. Mr. Nelson expressed concerns about change orders. Mr. Godshall commented on the physical inspections of the school and the understanding of an older building translates to writing and creating bid specifications on a project in an effort to eliminate change orders. Mr. Taylor also noted the deliberate steps that have been taken by GKO and ICS to collaborate and minimize unexpected change orders.

2.2 Multi-purpose Field Discussion Update

Mr. Taylor gave an update on the progress of the Professional Work Agreement with ELA Sport of Lititz, PA as it relates to the land development process for the construction of synthetic athletic fields on the high school campus. Mr. Taylor spoke of soil sampling and drainage on the proposed site and that three months of readings are needed for a submission to be reviewed by the Township in May.

Mr. Taylor noted that the Township had granted variances for exterior lighting of the fields but denied the variance to create and install a new grass field on the Moyer Road side of the campus. Mr. Taylor discussed several options for a potential grass field elsewhere.

Mr. Barnacz expressed concerns about potential health concerns associated with synthetic fields and Mr. Taylor acknowledged the concern but note that synthetic field inserts are no longer made from recycled tires, but are newly manufactured materials.

Mr. Brong adjourned the Operations Committee meeting at 8:24 P.M.

3. Finance Committee

3.1 2024-25 Budget Update

Mr. Nelson called the Finance Committee Meeting to order at 8:28 P.M.

Mr. Nelson commented on a school district budget process and how it differs from a private business. Dr. Hey commented on the local tax base of the school district, noting that it is considered a bedroom community where costs of the school district fall mainly to its homeowners.

Mr. Taylor reviewed a slide presentation which outlined real estate tax collection and the budgeted collection amount of 97%. He also reviewed real estate interim taxes, earned income taxes, delinquent taxes, per capita taxes, transfer taxes and earnings on investments. Mr. Taylor noted that all of the aforementioned items are considered revenues to the school district.

Mr. Taylor reviewed a slide outlining the current Act 1 Index, and the tax rate history of the school district. Mr. Taylor noted that the Act 1 Index is the state's measure for determining property tax increases justified by wage inflation. Mr Taylor noted that the index is calculated separately for each fiscal year.

Mr. Taylor reviewed a slide that depicted the PA Governor's proposed budget and its investment in Basic Education Funding, Cyber Charter Reform, and a provision for Career and Technical Education opportunities. Mr. Taylor also noted that preliminary projections for Basic Education Funding seem to support districts who have historically reached the Act 1 Index in their real estate tax increases.

Mr. Taylor reviewed federal revenues which include Title I, II, III, and IV as well as Access and Medical Assistance, appear to be flat funded for the upcoming school year with no significant increases.

Mr. Taylor spoke to expenditures by function which include instruction and support services. Special Education services were cited as an area of concern with cost increases and individual student needs.

Mr. Taylor noted that revenues and expenditures will continue to be monitored within a Five-Year Forecast and Trend Analysis.

Mr. Taylor spoke on the debt service structure of the district which will still allow for construction projects without sacrifice to student services or supports. A final slide was shared showing a budget overview and the impact of millage increases by percentage to support the budgeted expenditures of \$156,682,821. A deficit would remain of approximately \$5M at a full 5.3% Act 1 Index tax increase.

Mrs. Flisak asked about the current real estate collection amount and Mr. Taylor responded that it is based on a 97% collection rate. Mrs. Flisak inquired on the fund balance and Mr. Taylor explained the Board Policy to maintain a fund balance of 4 - 8% of its total budget. The State limit is 8% of unassigned fund balance.

Mr. Formica inquired about cyber security insurance and services and Mr. Taylor stated that those costs continue to increase as threats increase globally. Mr. Formica also asked about the state budget and Mr. Taylor indicated that there really is not an expectation of change to our Basic Education funding allocation.

Dr. Hey indicated that professional services continue to be a challenge and the district continues to strive to provide services in the most cost-effective manner.

Mrs. Wheeler asked about student enrollment and Dr. Hey indicated that although it has been on the decline for the past ten years, overall costs continue to rise. Services are still increasing.

Mr. Keith commented positively on the district's debt service plan.

Mr. Barnacz stated that the public should make their voices heard about educational funding. He also thanked the administration for their work on the budget.

Mr. Nelson adjourned the Finance Committee Meeting at 9:19 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Taylor, C.P.A.
Board Secretary / Director of Business Affairs