



Board of School Directors Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

Generated by Renai Cardillo on Tuesday, April 16, 2024

Members present: Nicholas Braccio, William Brong, Janet Flisak, Andrew Landis, Stephen Nelson, William Formica, Kimberly Wheeler, Michael Barnacz

Others present: Lisa Ball, Barbara Bescher, Todd Burns, Tamara Ferlick, Tom Ferlick, John Franzen, Frank Gallagher, Kevin Godshall (GKO) Jon Graf, Sue Hadfield, Laura Heineck, Christopher Hey, Katie Kennedy-Reilly, Fran Masin-Moyer, Michael Taylor, Megan Zweiback

1. Education-Personnel Committee

1.1 Elementary Winter Data Presentation

Education-Personnel Committee Chairperson, Mr. Landis called the meeting to order at 6:33 P.M.

Superintendent Gallagher announced that the Elementary Principals were in attendance as well as Special Education Supervisor, Ms. Bescher, for the Elementary School Data Presentation.

Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Technology Dr. Kennedy-Reilly thanked the Principals and Curriculum Supervisors for their attendance.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly reviewed the slide presentation noting the three priorities of the School District Comprehensive Plan to cultivate belonging, strengthen mental health supports and services, and to provide a strong education for all, giving priority to academic growth and achievement as well as expanding student opportunities.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly also noted the School District's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework which ensure the use of a collaborative and systematic approach to empower, challenge and support all through shared ownership in the growth of the whole child.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly spoke to the reporting of data of the multi-faceted approach to collect and transparently report data on students' learning to understand students' needs. The diagnosis of the challenge, the gathering of information/evidence related to the challenge, and the planning for interventions based on the information and evidence that was collected. The implementation of the interventions, and the evaluation of the results of the interventions.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly noted that all data is handled with care, as there are many data points, and multiple sets of data being reviewed at the student level, the classroom level, the grade level and the building level. She also spoke to the multiple measures of data; diagnostic, formative, performance-based, state, national and adaptive.

A slide was shown reflecting Growth & Achievement Medians & Distributions. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly reviewed the color coding symbolizing growth and achievement. A scatter plot depicted the performance percentile from fall to winter time periods. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly reviewed the Reading and Math data for elementary students. As she reviewed, Dr. Kennedy-Reilly stated that instructional decisions are made at the individual level by building principals and its team of educators who have reviewed the data, allowing for Growth Focused Actions.

Those Growth Focused Actions include engagement strategies, goal setting and conferencing with students. Communication with families including the sharing of student MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) reports.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly reviewed a slide that highlights data driven action points; identify gaps and opportunities, make informed decisions, engage learners, create opportunities, make connections, provide insights, target resources and support effective teaching and learning. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly stated that these actions are happening at all of our schools, at every grade level. She also noted that programming is identical in all six elementary buildings, however the strategies are individual to each school.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly introduced E.M.C. Elementary School Principal, Mrs. Ferlick who spoke about their school goals and the importance of providing peer coaching for teachers. Mrs. Ferlick noted the importance of celebrating student achievement and positive behavior on a regular basis.

Franconia Elementary School Principal, Mrs. Heineck spoke on three of their school priorities which include partnerships with parents, strengthening the relationship between Home & School and focusing on students individual needs during Falcon time.

Mr. Ferlick, Principal of Oak Ridge Elementary School spoke about the recent successes of parent engagement for Career Day, the implementation of WIN - What I Need time for student enrichment and support. He also commented on a first grade focus on Foundations as well as the collaboration over grade levels. Mr. Ferlick also commented on the outdoor school activity of sledding, noting how many students had not had the opportunity to do and were very excited about it.

Salford Hills Elementary School Principal, Mr. Burns spoke about also strengthening the Home & School relationship with streamlined communication. He indicated that a Check in and Check out process has proved very effective for a student who may be struggling, is assigned a mentor. Mr. Burns also commented on Mindful Monday to reinforce positive behavior and to support students who may be experiencing trauma or spontaneous behavior issues.

Mr. Graf, Principal of Vernfield Elementary School spoke about establishing learning expectations for all students. He explained the Vernfield Vision and how it remains a consistent goal setting action for students across all grade levels. Mr. Graf also spoke to the importance of social, emotional, learning and the introduction of a sensory room and how to best use it to benefit students.

Mrs. Hadfield, Principal of West Broad Street Elementary School spoke about the MTSS program and the use of the program and data to analyze a program, as well as interventions and enrichment. Mrs. Hadfield also spoke about parental engagement; including parent nights that covered topics such as digital safety and homework assistance. Mrs. Hadfield also noted the success of the 3rd Grade Musical, the addition of social media Instagram and the Bear Necessities Newsletter to communicate to families.

In summary, Dr. Kennedy-Reilly noted the importance of understanding the individual culture of each schools and also the sharing and collaboration between buildings, reiterating the model as a solid path for achievement and growth.

Mr. Landis thanked Dr. Kennedy-Reilly praised the availability of the MAP data to each of the buildings, indicating that it promotes a thread of continuity between all schools.

Ms. Wheeler thanked everyone for the availability and timeliness of the MAP reports for families. Ms. Wheeler also praised the building activities.

Mr. Braccio praised the principals and administration and noted his appreciation of the parental engagement piece.

Mr. Nelson praised the enthusiasm of the presentation. He thanked principals for their work and efforts.

Mrs. Flisak questioned some of the data reported and asked how it is being managed. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly noted that understanding by the student is critical to their success and the immediacy of the MAP report allows that success to occur.

Mr. Barnacz thanked everyone and also praised the parental engagement component.

Mr. Formica praised the principals for their work and expressed the importance of parental involvement. Mr. Formica also had favorable comment for the principals sharing of information.

A member of the public mentioned the lack of Home & School opportunities at the middle school and high school levels.

A member of the public requested that the presentation this evening be made available as an attachment to the public.

1.2 ELA K-8 Instructional Materials Presentation

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly presented a slide outlining the School District Reading and Writing Beliefs as she introduced the need for new core instructional materials. She stated that over the past 15 months, the school district has been doing

an intensive review of new primary and intermediate level materials to replace the current K-8 English Language Arts (ELA) materials. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly shared slides from the Pennsylvania Department of Education outlining PA Core ELA Standards. Details were shared on Structured Literacy and Instructional Expectations. After thoughtful and careful consideration the administration is recommending the purchase of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) materials.

Dr. Hey noted the massive undertaking of the project, commenting on the positive support of the team and teachers support. Dr. Hey asked about the vetting process and Dr. Kennedy-Reilly stated that 10 different companies were analyzed and the process was reviewed with a team and teachers. Dr. Hey reiterated that this process was months worth of work, review and evaluation. Mr. Landis acknowledged the volume of research and development to reach this point of recommendation.

Ms. Wheeler noted that she had the opportunity to meet with the publisher and stating her experience as an ELA teacher, she gives genuine support to the proposed materials. Ms. Wheeler asked about any negatives and Dr. Kennedy-Reilly said that teachers expressed concern that it seemed too far away and they are ready to go. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly noted that HMH will support professional development not only initially, but going forward for three years.

Mr. Braccio praised Dr. Kennedy-Reilly and team for the selection of the program and also praised Dr. Kennedy-Reilly for her negotiation with the company for its tiered pricing structure. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly noted that the special education teachers are also included as navigators in the professional development process.

Mrs. Flisak asked about the software updates and the digital migration of the program and Dr. Kennedy-Reilly responded that the data center will work with our Performance Matters. She confirmed that the Tech teams have confirmed the compatibility of the system.

Mr. Barnacz asked for cost of the items being replaced in an effort to obtain a true cost over time. Mr. Barnacz also asked about the tier system of support and how it is delivered to the student. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly noted that a teacher can often deliver the immediate support in the classroom and Tier 2 supports can be received during Falcon time or during a small group of supported instruction.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly indicated that some dip in achievement may occur as the new program is implemented. However the navigators and the internal development team have stated confidence in the program.

Mr. Barnacz asked about a cap in pricing and Dr. Kennedy-Reilly noted that the educational environment remains competitive and is unable to answer to whether a cap in pricing would exist, as it relates to the end of the six years.

Mr. Braccio expressed his support for the HMH program.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly responded to an inquiry regarding special educational needs within the program stating that its structure and scaffolding is already built-in to the the resources. Teachers saw that and immediately liked it.

The Committee agreed to move forward for Board approval at the April action meeting.

2. Finance Committee

2.1 2024-25 Budget Update

Chairperson of the Finance Committee, Mr. Nelson called the meeting to order at 8:06 P.M.

Mr. Nelson referenced the previous committee meeting which just presented new curriculum information, citing it as an example of just one of the costs associated with the instruction of students.

As Director of Business Affairs, Mr. Taylor opened his presentation, he spoke commented on the budget of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, noting that it is not resolved. He also stated that the school district continues to advocate for public school funding, and mentioned that he and other members of the administration were in Harrisburg earlier this week for that purpose.

Mr. Taylor reviewed a slide that depicted the Act 1 Index for the 2024-2025 school year. It also reflected a Tax Rate History for the school district. Mr. Taylor reiterated that the majority of funding comes from local revenues and reviewed a slide that shows actual collections and projections. He stated that all of the local revenues continue to be reviewed and analyzed.

Mr. Taylor reviewed two slides that highlighted the Governor's Proposed Budget. It highlighted investing in Basic Education Funding, Instituting reform to Cyber Charter school tuitions, Providing Career and Technical Education opportunities, Ensuring Safe and Healthy School Facilities, Supporting Pennsylvania's youngest learners, and Recruiting and Retraining Top Talen in Education.

Mr. Taylor reviewed slides that outlined the proposed Basic and Special Education Funding to the School District. He noted that Souderton is anticipating a 2.7% increase in Basic Education Funding and a 3.6% increase in Special Education Funding.

Mr. Taylor reviewed a slide outlining Federal Revenues and commented that it has been flat funded for Title and Access revenue. Expenditures slides were presented showing the costs associated with instruction for regular and special education programs as well as expenditures associated with support services; which include pupil health, operation and maintenance of plant services, and student transportation.

Mr. Taylor reviewed slides that outlined expenditures of non-instructional services that include student activities, scholarships and awards, building improvements, architecture and engineering services, debt service and budgetary reserve.

Slides were reviewed showing expenditures associated with salaries and benefits, for both regular education and special education. Additional slides detailed the growth of special education costs versus student enrollment. Mr. Taylor elaborated that while enrollment of special education students has increased, the costs of some of the specialized services needed has increased significantly.

Mr. Taylor reviewed slides that outlined the major expenditures associated with tuition costs. The slide showed the categories within tuition that include other schools districts within the state, Pennsylvania Charter Schools, non public schools, career and technology centers, and tuition to private residential rehabilitative institutions. An additional slide reflected the cost increases to tuition for special education students receiving special education in a charter school environment.

Mr. Taylor reviewed a slide that explained the proposed reforms to cyber charter school funding. The reform would align cyber tuition with the actual cost of online education, which would be a savings to all public school districts. The reform would set one tuition rate for Cyber Charter and would ultimately reduce the School District's current costs.

Mr. Taylor added future consideration for revenues that include continuing to monitor local revenues sources, and look to investments to maximize interest earnings. He noted that future consideration to reduce expenditures include the factoring of retirements, medical benefit trends, cyber enrollment changes, and Five Year Forecast and Trend Analysis.

Mr. Taylor reiterated that the School District is in a favorable place with its debt service and reviewed a slide that showed the School District's debt service as related to other schools in Montgomery County.

Mr. Taylor reviewed the Budget Calendar for future dates and listed the following:

5/8/2024	Finance Committee Meeting	Present Proposed Final Budget
5/23/2024	Board Action Meeting	Approve Proposed Final Budget
6/5/2024	Finance Committee Meeting	Present Final Budget
6/20/2024	Board Action Meeting	Approve Final Budget

Mr. Formica asked how the School District is expected to pass a Proposed budget without a state budget and Mr. Taylor responded that there are indications that a state budget may not occur before the end of June.

Mr. Formica expressed frustration over the process as the School Board attempts not to over tax its residents, but feels penalized in its funding amount because it kept its residents tax increases lower.

Mrs. Flisak expressed concerns over the special education increases and the cyber charter schools provision for special education students. Mr. Brong expressed concern on unfunded mandates that burden school districts.

Mr. Landis inquired about the Governors Proposed Budget and possible grant funding and Mr. Taylor responded that our construction manager partners seek out those grant opportunities for renovation and new construction.

Mr. Barnacz reiterated the need for the public to speak out to legislators about the serious need for a change in school district funding.

Mr. Braccio spoke to the frustration and confusion in the budgeting process as it relates to not over taxing residents,

while not putting the burden of too much debt on the School District seems to penalize the community.

Dr. Hey reiterated the frustration of School Law that requires school districts to pass a budget by June 30th each year.

A member of the audience commented on the recent referendum in a neighboring school district, stating it was not a failure. Mr. Taylor responded in agreement, that the process was not a failure, simply an example of the challenges school districts face when seeking referendum approvals from their resident tax base. That same member of the public asked about the Act 1 Index and why no one saw the potential problem of too low tax increases and Mr. Taylor responded that COVID stimulus monies may have impacted how decisions were made during that time.

Mr. Brong commented on tax increases in the past having previously been based on a local index.

Another member of the public asked about the current budget and the current deficit, noting that handouts would be helpful. That member of the public also asked about what other items are impacting the budget, besides special education costs. Mr. Taylor responded that there are over 10,000 line items in the budget and the district focuses on the high level budget items to reflect impact. Mr. Taylor stated that the budget presentation would be posted to the website and if there are additional questions after review, to contact him.

Mr. Taylor reiterated that the budget of a school district is very different from one in private industry. He noted that the budget process is an exercise in transparency to show the public how it is created and a process that is worked through, rather than simply posting a budget in June and asking for approval.

Mr. Nelson adjourned the Finance Committee Meeting at 9:03 P.M.

3. Operations Committee

3.1 Update on plans for Salford Hills Elementary and Indian Crest Middle School Renovations

Mr. Brong called the Operations Committee meeting to order at 9:04 P.M.

Mr. Brong itemized the agenda items and introduced Mr. Godshall from GKO Architects to outline the scope of the proposed projects.

Mr. Godshall spoke about the review of the educational spaces and adding future flexibility of District-wide Special Education programs, He commented on parity between the six elementary and the two middle schools.

Mr. Godshall reviewed a slide showing the site plan for Salford Hills which adds additional parking spaces, a larger enclosed area for the kindergarten playground. He noted that the current site circulation will be maintained for bus and car traffic as well as for walkers. The overall floor plan will add a secure entrance for the administrative area, and a third kindergarten room with toilet room. There will be more small group instruction (SGI) spaces, and a classroom for Technology and the addition of an Autistic Support Room.

Mr. Godshall noted that the Library would be moved to an area off of the entry lobby and those areas vacated by the library would be repurposed as classrooms. Mr. Godshall reviewed a slide that showed previous renovations and the items that are not being included in this renovation.

Mr. Godshall reviewed the Indian Crest Middle School site plan and stated that it would be scheduled to be bid in August. The Salford Hills proposed renovation would be bid in September, therefore there would be no concerns for timing.

Mr. Godshall noted there would be limited improvements to the site infrastructure and the current site circulation would be maintained. The proposed renovations would swap out the current fitness center with a 6th grade Science classroom. The fitness center would be relocated in the Athletic wing and renovations would be made to both Locker rooms. The art room would be moved to the space adjacent to Family Consumer Science. Renovations would also include the Life Skills and Autistic Support classrooms. He noted that the library would be reduced in size to add more classroom space and divided into small group spaces, a computer technology room and a computer lab. In addition separate MTSS spaces would also be added.

Mr. Godshall shared slides which showed the proposed renovations to the Guidance and Psychologist offices. An ADA student entrance would be created in the administration area. Improvement to Music rooms would increase the size of the orchestra room, remove the risers and create a choral music room.

Mr. Godshall reviewed previous renovations to Indian Crest Middle School and noted the items not included in the proposed project.

Mr. Braccio inquired about the lowered elevation of the old stage at Salford Hills and how it will be made ADA accessible and Mr. Godshall responded that the door would be moved. Mr. Braccio also asked about the HVAC unit and if it will be moved and Mr. Godshall indicated that it will most likely be moved to the roof.

Mrs. Wheeler asked about the need for lockers and Mr. Taylor responded that the proposed replacement will be for old lockers that are being removed. There will be less units in the school.

Mr. Barnacz praised the thinking for planning for future needs.

Mr. Brong asked about moving of the Indian Crest fitness center and Mr. Godshall responded that the corridor will be changed to realign with the stair tower.

3.2 Multi-purpose Field Discussion Update

Mr. Taylor noted the piezometer readings were completed. These results determined that the majority of the recorded groundwater depths exist below the soil mottling depths. Couple that with the lack of widespread soil mottling and the fine grain nature of the on site soils, it is believed the mottling is a result of poorly draining soils and not the underlying groundwater table, and therefore no changes are needed to the storm water plans. Mr. Taylor noted that the next Franconia Township Planning Commission is June 3rd, and that the District is also working with the County Conservation District for permitting approvals.

A brief discussion occurred about the possibility of creating a grass field without encroachment on protective buffer areas. Mr. Taylor indicated that an option would be presently shortly.

Mr. Brong asked why the township denied the creation of a new grass baseball field on an existing field with a setback.

3.3 Approve Bid for Trash & Recycling Disposal

Mr. Taylor indicated in the past the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit had put this service out as an RFP and this year they put out bids. Their lowest bid is Waste Management which is our current contractor.

The administrative recommendation is to take the lowest bid from the Intermediate Unit.

The Operations Committee agreed to move forward.

Mr. Brong adjourned the meeting at 9:44 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



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