

Quality Assurance Committee Meeting
MINUTES
March 13, 2006

Board Members in Attendance:

Commissioner Thompson
Commissioner Henley

Staff Members in Attendance:

Marie Cianca
Debbie Harloff
Andrew McGowan
C. Michael Robinson
Gary Smith
Gloria Sullivan

Meeting convened at 6:10 p.m. by Commissioner Thompson.

Music Textbook Adoption Proposal

Ms. Harloff, Director of the Arts, presented information regarding the proposed adoption of an Elementary Music series for grades K-6. A volunteer committee of staff, parents and community partners from the Eastman School of Music convened in October. The group developed a "Textbook Review Criteria" rubric and evaluated each option accordingly. Based on the group's rubric the Silver Burdett series scored notably higher than the other two.

Gary Smith, Director of Purchasing, negotiated the cost of the series from the original \$917,978.99 to \$645,325.85. The price includes 43 Bose SoundDocks with iPod systems. The adoption would provide one classroom set of the Silver Burdette Music Series to each elementary school. Unlike subject area texts, it is not necessary to provide each child with a music book.

The District last adopted an elementary music series in the 1980s. In previous years, funds for textbooks were added to the budgets of schools and principals had discretion. The Superintendent has revised this to a District-wide process. The Superintendent has created a \$650K budget this year for the adoption of a music textbook series at the elementary level, coupled with the intention of proposing a secondary level music textbook adoption for 2006-07.

Commissioner Henley inquired whether the textbooks chosen were developmentally appropriate for each grade level.

Ms. Harloff indicated that the series was developmentally appropriate. Grade level content builds on skills that were developed in the previous grade level.

Commissioner Thompson asked whether the savings on the purchase price of the textbook would be absorbed in maintenance.

Mr. Smith indicated that the SoundDock system would come with a warranty and he felt that maintenance, if needed at all, would be minimal.

Motion to recommend elementary music textbook to full Board made by Commissioner Henley, seconded by Commissioner Thompson. Approved 2-0.

JROTC Update

Commissioner Thompson stated that further information regarding the JROTC program had been provided to Commissioners. Commissioner Henley said the information did help to answer questions that he had concerning dollar amounts tied to the program.

Commissioner Thompson stated that she would like more information on other District programs that foster the same kinds of experiences that are attained through the JROTC program. Dr. Sullivan explained that she is working with Board staff to construct a matrix of District programs and their attributes. She also said they are working on the other information requested by the Commissioners.

Commission Thompson asked if it was acceptable to extend the JROTC examination for another 30 days.

Commissioner Henley moved to extend the vote for another 30 days. Commissioner Thompson seconded the motion. Approved 2-0.

Grade 6 to 7, 2005-2006 for 2006-2007 Promotion

Ms. Hancock, Mr. Robinson and Dr. Cianca provided written materials that outlined administrative procedures regarding the promotion of 6th grade students to 7th grade for the 2006-07 school year. The goal is for students leaving the 6th grade to have at least the literacy level of a 5th grader. Students who perform at this level have the literacy foundation for success as they move forward. The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is the primary tool used to determine a student's reading level. Dr. Cianca said that students are given the DRA three times per year -- in October, March and May -- and that achievement is also examined between October and March. Discussions at the building level project achievement levels expected for students in May.

Mr. Robinson believes that the guidelines will bring consistency in building-level implementation of the Academic Standards and Assessment Policy. The Academic Intervention Services Plan, which is developed for all students who are not meeting standards, notifies parents that their child may be remaining an additional year at the current grade.

Commissioner Thompson inquired whether parents with a child who may be retained had been notified. Dr. Cianca stated that parents were to be notified in January regarding their child's academic progress and that further notifications were to be sent to parents. She explained that some schools are now also calling parents and inviting them to come to school to have conversations with their child's teacher, school teams, or the principal, and that many schools are doing both; sending letters and calling. Dr. Cianca reviewed the District's Academic Intervention Services. Parents are to be informed of their child's achievement and additional measures are required to assist struggling students. In November letters went to the parents of students who were receiving AIS services. Also, at each parent teacher conference, there is to be a discussion about the process and activities available to support students. The administrative guidelines are in place to ensure that these conversations are conducted.

Mr. Robinson stated that there is a building level appeals process that parents can exercise if there is a question about teacher recommendations. Commissioner Henley suggested that the DRA is just one tool that measures achievement. He feels more comfortable knowing that there is an appeal process available to parents.

Mr. Robinson stated that there are plans to hold a 6th grade summer school program for students to bolster reading, which would provide students with additional opportunities to continue on to 7th grade.

Commissioner Thompson stated that she was in favor of high standards, provided that the tools to get students where they need to go are provided to them.

Mr. Robinson said the elementary setting has more teachers who have specialized training and literacy focus. This is the best place for literacy assistance to occur. He provided a brief outline of programs available to support students in Grade 7: Doubling ELA seat time to between 60 to 80 minutes per day, doubling the amount of resources available to students, implementation of the Ramp-Up to Literacy Program, after school programs two days per week, transition programs in the summer, and teacher training.

Commissioner Thompson asked what assurances were principals and teachers providing to the parents of retained students that the additional year would ensure success. Mrs. Hancock stated that a plan will be developed for each retained student that will indicate what will be done to ensure the child's success. She continued that principals have gotten the message that students can not stay back and have the same experiences. It is the responsibility of the principal as the instructional leader to see to this.

Managed Choice

Commissioner Thompson said it was her understanding that the District is in the third year of the Managed Choice policy. Mr. Robinson stated that the Division Chiefs were not aware that the Quality Assurance Committee desired to discuss Managed Choice and therefore they were not prepared for the meeting.

Commissioner Henley commented that there is more dialogue in "City Living Sundays" about the Managed Choice Policy than any other issue. Commissioner Thompson indicated that she would discuss this matter with the Superintendent soon. Mr. Robinson suggested that conversations regarding Managed Choice occur sooner rather than later due to the March 24th registration process target date.

Committee procedures/mechanics

Commissioner Thompson proposed to move this item to the next meeting. Commissioner Henley seconded the motion.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m. after a motion by Commissioner Henley. Commissioner Thompson seconded the motion.

Next monthly meeting

Monday, April 10, 6:15 p.m.