



Centennial School District Education Committee of the Board

Meeting of September 14, 2009

Minutes

Attendance:

Board

Thomas Hezel**
Betty Huf
Mark Miller
Michael Monaghan**
Cynthia Mueller
Andrew Pollock***
Thomas Reinboth
Jane Schrader Lynch*

Administrators

Michael Devitt
Jennifer Foight-Cressman
Susan Klyman
Sandy Homel
Catherine Newsham
Thomas Turnbaugh
Denise Wettstein

Staff

Community

Leigh Lieberman
Barbara Patrick
Michael Preston
Robert Schaffer

* Chair

** Committee member

*** Alternate member

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mrs. Schrader Lynch called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed all in attendance.

Mr. Hezel moved to approve the minutes from May 11, 2009 and June 8, 2009. Mr. Monaghan seconded the motion. The minutes were approved in a vote of 3-0 with revisions.

2009 PSSA RESULTS

Dr. Foight-Cressman and Dr. Devitt presented the data from the 2009 PSSA results. The district, middle schools, and elementary schools achieved Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2009. William Tennent High School (WTHS) did not achieve AYP and is now in Corrective Action Status, Year 2. Students receiving special education supports and services and economically disadvantaged students did not make significant enough progress for the high school to achieve AYP.

Dr. Devitt praised William Tennent High School's students as having achieved the highest scaled scores in the history of participation in the PSSA and emphasized that each class has demonstrated a clear linear progression and positive growth trend. Success was attributed to the following: the Board graduation requirement for PSSA proficiency, the employment of a PSSA specialist, the use of such programs as Study Island, READ 180, and Carnegie Math, a targeted tutoring program, and the Board's collective dedication of resources. Drs. Foight-Cressman and Devitt indicated that the district should be proud of the performance of our students, grades 3-11, as well as the dedication and quality of teaching on the part of our educators. They also recognized that the district needs to continue to support our special education and economically disadvantaged students. Mrs. Homel

Education Committee Minutes
September 14, 2009

praised the reading gains of our middle schoolers and informed the Board that most students were eligible to take a modern language in grade 8, including taking advantage of the expanded French and German offerings at William Tennent High School.

Mrs. Schrader Lynch questioned whether there was overlap between the special education and economically disadvantaged populations. Mrs. Homel indicated that she believes there is as much as a 60% overlap of the populations. Mrs. Mueller praised the use of Study Island and commented that even students with strong academic track records were using the program to challenge and motivate themselves.

Dr. Devitt provided an overview to the Committee of the various interventions that will occur over the 2009-2010 school year, including: the “Snack and Study” Center, continued recognition of PSSA “All Stars”, additional parent engagement, the formation of a William Tennent High School Academic Assistance Team, extended day and year learning opportunities, and continued partnership with our colleagues at the Intermediate Unit, PaTTAN, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Mrs. Schrader Lynch praised and thanked Dr. Devitt for his spirited and delightful presentation and the hard work he has accomplished at William Tennent High School in supporting and raising student achievement.

At the end of the PSSA data discussion, Mrs. Mueller raised the topic of senior privilege at William Tennent High School and reminded Directors that the pilot program needed to be formally approved. The Education Committee recommended that the senior privilege pilot be made a permanent option for qualifying seniors during the 2009-2010 school year. The Committee also recognized that awarding senior privilege may not be possible in subsequent years should the Commonwealth adopt the Keystone Exams. Mr. Monaghan made the motion to support the senior privilege and was seconded by Mr. Hezel. The Education Committee moved the motion to the full Board for approval in a vote of 3-0-0.

The Committee suggested the following wording for the resolution:

“Be it resolved that the Centennial School Board approves the practice of awarding senior privilege at William Tennent High School and directs that it be made permanent effective the 2009-2010 school year.”

ELEMENTARY CLASS SIZE POLICY AND ELEMENTARY RENOVATION AND BUILDING PROJECT AND SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM REQUIREMENTS FOR ELEMENTARY RENOVATION AND BUILDING PROJECT

In order to design the elementary buildings, the Burt, Hill architects required additional direction regarding the Board’s interest in including space for special education classrooms and full-day Kindergarten. The need for these additional classrooms, in tandem with the current policy regarding class size, necessitated discussion by the Education Committee. To meet the potential needs of students requiring special education supports and services and the implementation of full-day Kindergarten, five additional rooms would be required in each school.

Principal Architect Michael Preston, Mrs. Klyman, Director of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Ms. Newsham, Supervisor of Special Education–Elementary, presented information regarding the need for specialized special education rooms, such as sensory rooms for students receiving autistic services. There is also a need to provide space for intensive learning support and hearing impaired/language support classrooms. By including such rooms in the planning process, the Special Education Office would be able to bring students who are currently in outside placements back within the district. Mrs. Mueller expressed support both for the financial savings and legal compliance considerations in returning students to the district.

Directors expressed support for smaller class sizes in grades Kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. Directors recommended consideration of class size between 17 and 20 children. Dr. Turnbaugh indicated that the building could be designed without a revision to policy.

The Education Committee accepted and supported the recommendation of administration to begin the process of reviewing the feasibility of the transfer of entity of several special education classes from the Bucks County Intermediate Unit to the Centennial School District. The Education Committee moved this item to the Finance Committee for a complete cost/benefit analysis in a vote of 3-0-0.

The Education Committee also recommended administration create the educational specifications in designing the new elementary facilities to reflect a Kindergarten class size of fewer than 25 students. No further Board action was needed as the consensus of the directors present was taken. The topic will return to the Operations Committee as the architects proceed through the design stages and report out.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE

Dr. Foight-Cressman provided a brief overview of the goals and composition of the Full-Day Kindergarten Exploratory Committee. Mrs. Wettstein, Dr. Pollack, and Mr. Miller attended a Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) conference devoted to Kindergarten concerns in August 2009. Mrs. Wettstein, Dr. Pollack, Mr. Miller, Dr. Turnbaugh, and Dr. Foight-Cressman are scheduled to meet with Dr. Jane Daschbach, PDE's Early Learning Specialist, Office of Child Development and Early Learning, on September 22, 2009, to discuss the implementation of full-day Kindergarten in Centennial School District and to gain a better understanding of possible funding sources.

After reviewing the list of committee members, Mr. Monaghan recommended that administration seek out a member from the community's senior population. Mr. Hezel questioned whether a pilot program was under consideration. Dr. Turnbaugh indicated that, should the district have the resources to move forward with full-day Kindergarten implementation, a plan would need to be created to phase in the program with the new building renovation and construction timeline. Mrs. Schrader Lynch expressed concern that if the district were to implement full-day Kindergarten, it should be phased in rather than considered a pilot program. Mr. Miller agreed and stated that the district would need to commit fully to the implementation over time so that it would not need to later rescind the program, due to lack of funding, as other districts have had to do.

Following the full-day Kindergarten discussion, the issue of where the Special Experience Room (SER)/Planetarium is to be located was raised. Mrs. Schrader Lynch and Mr. Hezel expressed interest in keeping this facility within the district and supported the relocation of the SER to one of the new elementary campuses. Mr. Miller voiced support for creating a partnership with the newly created Johnsville Centrifuge and Science Museum, Inc., and the relocation of the facility to the Warminster museum site. Mr. Monaghan expressed concern for that idea and wondered what would happen to the facility should the museum close. Mrs. Schrader Lynch requested that the Board entertain further conversation on this important matter.

Mr. Hezel made the motion to adjourn and was seconded by Mr. Monaghan. The motion passed 3-0. Mrs. Schrader Lynch thanked all in attendance for their attention and participation and adjourned the meeting at 9:16 p.m.

JFC/rc