



Centennial School District Education Committee of the Board

Meeting of December 21, 2009

Minutes

Attendance:

<u>Board</u>	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Presenter</u>
Mark Miller	Donna Dunar	Hope Banchi	Joseph Faust	Jane Daschbach
Michael Hartline***	Jennifer Foight-Cressman	Rose McKeivitt	Leigh Lieberman	
Cynthia Mueller**	Sandy Homel			
Andrew Pollock**	Susan Klyman			
Jane Schrader Lynch*	Keely Mahan			
	Kelley O'Leary			
	Eileen Poroszok			
	Thomas Turnbaugh			
	Denise Wettstein			

- * 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. She introduced Mrs. Mueller as a new committee member and stated that she would be an asset to the committee.

Dr. Pollock moved to approve the minutes from November 23, 2009. Mrs. Schrader Lynch seconded the motion. The minutes were approved in a vote of 2-1.

KINDERGARTEN UPDATE

Dr. Foight-Cressman provided a history of Kindergarten programming in Centennial School District and summarized the recommendations of the prior Kindergarten Committee. These recommendations included the discontinuation of pre-screening with the Gesell, curtailment of the developmental Kindergarten and transitional first grade programs, and implementation of full-day Kindergarten. Dr. Jane Daschbach, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Early Learning Specialist, was in attendance to provide the Commonwealth's perspective and PDE's recommendations regarding ideal programming for Kindergartners. Dr. Daschbach has served as an early childhood teacher, building principal, district administrator, superintendent of schools, and coordinator of federal programs. She has worked for the Department of Defense as an educational consultant, directed Reading First at the Commonwealth level, and now serves as PDE's Early Learning Specialist.

Dr. Daschbach thanked the Education Committee for inviting her to speak and indicated that her role was to provide guidance so that the Board might make well-informed decisions and provide the best educational program possible while remaining fiscally responsible. Based on research and grounded in her extensive professional experience, Dr. Daschbach made the following recommendations: eliminate pre-screening with the Gesell and curtail the developmental Kindergarten and transitional first grade programs. Dr. Daschbach is also a strong advocate for full-day Kindergarten, if a district is able to fund the program.

Dr. Daschbach stated that a developmental program is equal to retention in Kindergarten and that there is no research base to support such a program. Very few districts in Pennsylvania offer developmental Kindergarten. She also indicated that the Gesell is not intended to be used as a placement test and that it falsely identifies 30%-50% of students as not ready for Kindergarten. Children of color, students who speak other languages, who require special education supports and services, come from impoverished economic backgrounds, and boys are disproportionately represented in retention programs, including developmental Kindergarten programs. Dr. Daschbach stressed that we should welcome all Kindergarten student and make the program fit their needs rather than make the children fit our program. Keeping class sizes small, preferably below seventeen children, has more impact on student success and achievement than any other factor emphasized Dr. Daschbach.

Mrs. Mueller expressed concern that administration was considering curtailing a program that had been successful in the past and wondered whether there was longitudinal data to warrant the change. Dr. Daschbach indicated that it was not unusual for a district not to have tracked this information over time. Mr. Miller asked whether funding was available to support full-day Kindergarten and expressed concern that other districts that have offered full-day programs have had to revert to half-day due to fiscal constraints. Dr. Daschbach indicated that the district currently receives Accountability Block Grant (ABG) funds that are intended to subsidize full-day Kindergarten. Those funds are currently being used, in part, to subsidize the transitional first grade classes.

Mr. Miller informed Dr. Daschbach that the new and renovated elementary building designs include the capacity for full-day Kindergarten and enquired as to the ideal square footage required for optimal early childhood teaching and learning. She responded that 1,100 square feet is the appropriate size for seventeen children and one teacher. Mr. Miller followed up by asking how many students could be accommodated with the addition of an aide; she stated no more than twenty-five. Dr. Turnbaugh, who has overseen the implementation of full-day programs in his former districts, noted that he was pleased that the Board had approved designing the buildings to accommodate full-day Kindergarten and stated that it would take approximately \$900,000 to staff the program.

Mrs. Schrader Lynch commented that the age of the research provided concerned her. Dr. Daschbach acknowledged that the research provided was almost ten years old, but that the recommendations had not changed. For instance, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) position statement on “(Still) Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement” is currently listed on NAEYC’s website and is as true today as when it was published a decade ago.

Mrs. Schrader Lynch asked what PDE’s stance is on the admission of children who are precocious and ready for Kindergarten, but do not meet the district’s cut-off date. Dr. Daschbach responded that districts should have a policy in place to address such situations.

Mrs. Schrader Lynch stated that the Education Committee was privileged and honored to have Dr. Daschbach attend the meeting and thanked her for her information and attendance.

JANUARY 15, 2010, SENIOR DAY

Having reviewed district documentation, it was determined that there had not been Board action to eliminate Senior Day. Committee members agreed that it was at administrative discretion as to whether Senior Day should be held on January 15, 2010. Mrs. Poroszok and Ms. Banchi advocated the high school administration's position that the day be observed and complimented this year's graduating class for their hard work, positive nature, and decorum. Directors entertained initial discussion regarding permitting graduation to be held on the 180th day that school is in session rather than the last student day. The Board will determine the date of graduation, as in past years, at a Board meeting later this spring once the danger of snow and the necessity for subsequent make-up days has past.

Dr. Pollock made the motion to adjourn and was seconded by Mrs. Mueller. The motion passed 3-0. Mrs. Schrader Lynch thanked all in attendance for their attention and participation and adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

JFC/rc