



SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSONNEL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 5, 2012

Minutes

Present:

Amy Jennings, Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle School for Innovation; Al Coleman, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Beth Coleman, Heritage High School; Pam Alexander, Hutcherson Early Learning Center; Jane Snyder, Sandusky Middle School; Gretchen Morgan, Linkhorne Middle School; Verna Lamb, Robert S. Payne Elementary School; Lalla Sydnor, Sheffield Elementary School; Steve Singleton, Assistant Director of Personnel; Aaron Mabery, E. C. Glass High School; Chris Smith, Perrymont Elementary School; Daniel Rule, Dearington Elementary School for Innovation; Darlene Overstreet, School Nutrition; Elizabeth Rinckel, Paul Munro Elementary School; Donna Bennett, Amelia Pride Center; Jennifer Kerns, LAUREL Regional Program/Health Assistants; Linda Irwin, Bedford Hills; Krista Rawls-Fanning; E. C. Glass High School; Scott Abercrombie, Department of Facilities; Jason Ferguson, Department of Transportation; Brian Wray, Secondary Principals; Ralph Hayes, Environmental Services; Scott Brabrand, Superintendent; Wendie Sullivan, Recording Secretary

The Superintendent's Personnel Advisory Committee met in the Board Room at the School Administration Building beginning at 3:48 p.m. Dr. Brabrand opened the meeting and thanked every for their attendance.

The following questions and topics were discussed during the meeting.

- 1. I had many students not study for an exam that was only worth 10% of their grade. This low percentage does not help students going to college prepare for an exam.**

I propose the following:

4.0 subjects have an exam worth 15%

4.5 subjects have an exam worth 20%

5.0 subjects have an exam worth 25%

In the past, exams counted 25 percent of a student's semester grade. An analysis of that weight indicated that the exam grade rarely resulted in raising the semester grade by a letter grade or more. Most often, the exam grade did not change the semester grade, but there were a significant number of stances in which the exam grade lowered the semester grade by at least a letter grade.

Discussion about exam weight occurred in Secondary Leadership for several years. Two years ago, due to the shortened calendar, exams were eliminated. With a recommendation from Secondary Leadership and the secondary principals, exams were reinstated by the school board but with a reduced weight of 10 percent. The question will be forwarded to Secondary Leadership for further discussion.

2. I have a deep concern in high school math.

We are trying to teach too many students Algebra I in the 8th grade (or even earlier) when most students are not conceptually ready for algebra. Since Algebra I is the gateway course to high school math, failure to master conceptually the concepts in Algebra I leads to many problems in future courses. I teach AP calculus and I probably reteach as much algebra as I do calculus in the classroom. My AP scores have dropped accordingly.

What we call advanced courses in math (Alg2/Geo, Geo/Trig, Math Analysis) are no longer advanced because there are too many students in the courses (probably about 70% at EC Glass in my estimation because 70% of the 8th grade students were gifted and took Algebra I!). Students have a choice of basal level or advanced level courses. So what is happening is that an advanced math course is now an average level class. We need a strong in-between course in Algebra 2, Geometry and Trig that emphasize the basic concepts of each course. The advanced courses need to do the same, add more rigor to what is taught and give more challenging test problems in order to better prepare students for the rigor of AP calculus and AP statistics and indeed college mathematics. Also the advanced courses need to give enrichment over and beyond the SOLs. I had the displeasure of conforming the ADVANCED Math Analysis course outline strictly to the SOLs last summer, which left out much material that students didn't need for calculus but should know, such as advanced probability. The Math Analysis course needs to prepare students for both AP Calculus and AP Statistics.

For almost 50 years, Algebra I has been offered to eighth grade students. When this opportunity was first presented, the selected students were screened prior to being approached about the opportunity. Today, the selection process is much more open, with teachers, counselors, parents, and students participating in the discussion about completing Algebra I in eighth grade. About 40 percent of our students complete Algebra I in the eighth grade. Through last year, close to 100 percent of these eighth grade students were successful on the Algebra I SOL test. As a result of completing Algebra I in eighth grade, these students are on a path that could culminate in completing Calculus in high school. State-wide, there is a push for seventh grade students to complete Algebra I. We are exploring additional options for students through dual enrollment. We are also committed to developing a vertical articulation process so that teachers can meet and discuss

math instruction K-12. Teachers of all subjects, including mathematics, must continue to identify areas where re-teaching is needed and teach the children.

- 3. Have we formally evaluated the whole Skillful Teacher implementation yet and its impact on teacher instruction and student learning? If so, can we see the results? If not, when? Since we are investing so much time and money into the process.**

No formal evaluation has taken place, although over 500 participants have completed evaluations at the end of the course. The vast majority of these evaluations are very positive. Participants consistently report that professional collaboration with other teachers across the division is extremely valuable and meaningful. The most consistent negative relates to the perceived disorganization of the material provided by Research for Better Teaching. The area with the widest discrepancy is related to cultural proficiency, with comments ranging from "excellent training/needed" to "this is too much."

Skillful Teacher serves as the foundation for the division's school improvement. It provides common language, effective strategies for instructional delivery/formative assessments, and ideas for relationship building with students. Skillful Teacher is funded through federal grants.

- 4. Adding a supplement for administrators when they receive doctorate degrees? We have one for teachers...Why not administrators? It would only encourage administrators to grow in knowledge.**

A formal request should be made to the salary committee that is formed annually to study this topic and make a recommendation to the school board for consideration.

- 5. Can we rework the schedule so that a student who fails first semester can retake that first semester course in the spring? This would mean the student would take the second semester in the fall of the following year.**

The challenges are staffing and scheduling. These challenges are not necessarily insurmountable. With the availability of online options like E2020, principals and counselors have some options to consider ways for students to make up credits during the year as well as in summer school. Often, these students need a teacher and not an online program, which can create scheduling and staffing complications. We will continue to look at options in order to provide opportunities for students to earn credits towards graduation.

- 6. Many students at ECG do not take 7 classes. We have study halls in our cafeteria every period and they are full (some have over 50 students.) Can we consider going back to an optional 7 period day?**

This is a budget issue and has already been reviewed for the 2012-13 school year. We do not have money in the budget to make the early bus run that we used to have. This also has to do with bus availability in regard to elementary school hours and bus runs.

- 7. I am very concerned about our current cell phone and electronic device policy. We are flirting with danger for our teachers, students, and school system. It is only a matter of time before someone videos something damaging and puts it out on the web. I was on a field trip recently and the students with me received a video of a fight that took place in the hallway. It looked like a riot and that the students were out of control. Please consider stopping the use of these devices in the building during the day.**

The current policy does not allow cell phones to be in the possession of elementary students at school. At the middle school level, students are allowed to bring cell phones with them, but they are to remain in a locker or book bag and out of sight during the course of the school day. Students are permitted to use these devices at school in the morning and after the school day ends. At the high school level, the school board approved allowing students to possess cell phones during the course of the school day; however, they are not to be visible or used during an instructional period. Changes to the policy were made to offer some flexibility for school administrators who were inundated with time spent on disciplinary actions associated with the “no cell phones policy” previously in place. Many of the problems we are currently encountering are building-level enforcement issues and should be addressed by the building principal.

- 8. Would LCS consider providing WiFi in its schools for our students/teachers who use their own laptops for school-related work??**

The current long-range plan for technology includes adding wireless access points at all of our sites. We have begun the process of installing a minimum of two in common areas (cafeteria or office) at each building. With the installation of these devices, our goal is to provide a “Guest Network,” which will allow individuals to access the Internet using personal devices. This feature may be available as early as the beginning of the 2012-13 school year.

- 9. Elementary schools across the division are seeing an increase in challenging and severe behaviors. It is very difficult to teach when you have to deal with disruptive students. Is there a possibility that LCS will establish an elementary alternative education program?**

Truancy is becoming a real concern. We are seeing an increase in unexcused absences, tardies, and early dismissals. Will LCS consider revising the truancy policy in order to establish more effective practices?

The school division's code of student conduct and discipline policies and regulations are reactive rather than proactive. The number of challenging behaviors, referrals, and suspensions on all levels is increasing, and this needs to be addressed by developing a division-wide proactive approach to student behavior. Our character education and positive behavior intervention programs are not mandated by the division administration and are consequently not consistently adhered to in all schools.

This inconsistency is reflected in our discipline and alternative education programs, which are not defined on a division-wide basis. We currently do not have a director of alternative education, and the duties associated with the position have been delegated to the director of student services without clear, division-wide objectives.

An overarching plan for alternative education needs to be developed which considers enrollment, expectations, and accountability so that the school division can meet the needs of students who are experiencing behavioral difficulties and truancy issues.

- 10. The daily schedule has not been given to teachers yet for next year. It was rumored that classes would start earlier and that high school teachers had to be in the building by 7:15 a.m., can we get clarification on the start times for next year?**

The 2012-13 student day for high school students is 7:35 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., a five-minute earlier start. The teacher day is schedule to start five minutes earlier as well, 7:25 a.m. – 2:55 p.m.

- 11. It was brought to the attention of the SPAC committee before about KRONOS being added to computers in buildings so the people who have to clock in can have that access instead of having to walk through a large building, such as Heritage to clock in at a particular location. Is that going to happen? If so, when?**

We presently have the licensing to provide "Terminal Access" to KRONOS for employees. However, we are in the process of piloting the use of this feature with employees to determine its effectiveness. We have encountered a greater ratio of payroll errors due to inaccurate manual entry of data such as employee badge numbers and time punches, which do not occur with the swipe system that automatically logs this information. A decision will be forthcoming from the department of finance regarding the feasibility of offering this option to employees.

- 12. Last year our upfront sick days were taken away and it was said there was a possibility to get that reinstated for next year. Have we heard anything about that yet?**

This option was not under consideration for the 2012-13 school year as it is a costly program. The school division does not have the funding for this type of program at this time.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.