

BOARD BRIEF

Worksession Meeting

September 14, 2009

AT THE September 14, 2009 MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, THE BOARD TOOK ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS...

COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Rovtar indicated that the Board had received a copy of a letter received from the Board Attorney today with regard to a pending legal matter.

Mrs. Scanlon reported that she had received a couple of telephone calls from parents regarding bus issues and a number of calls that were very complimentary regarding how nice the school buildings looked. The school year appears to have gotten off to a very smooth start.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Buildings and Grounds Committee – Mr. Dreyer reported that the Buildings and Grounds Committee had met this evening prior to the start of the Worksession. The committee met with three representatives from Temco. The committee discussed the summer work that was done. In addition to the landscaping at Millington, which was funded by the PTO, Temco painted the trim, leaders and gutters. The building looks wonderful. All of the hallways in the schools were also painted. Temco provided an overview of their use of the School Dudes work order system. They are competing and closing out 80% of work orders within a month. The percentage would probably be higher, but there are some duplicate and unapproved orders in the system. The work order volume has increased with the teachers return, but Temco staff are working to address the work orders as quickly as possible.

A meeting will be scheduled with the Recreation Department soon to discuss gym time use and requests by outside groups.

Policy Committee – Mr. Carbone indicated that there are a number of policies on the agenda this evening for a first reading and some for approval upon a second reading. Many of these policies have been updated to conform to the accountability regulations.

Curriculum Committee – Mr. Carbone indicated that there are four curriculum guides on this evening's agenda for approval. The Curriculum Committee will be reviewing the 8th grade math curriculum next week and then the math curriculum guide will be ready for Board approval. In conjunction with the Language Arts Curriculum, the committee has asked Dr. Wetherell to provide a listing of the novels and trade books that are used by the teachers.

Legislative Liaison – Ms. Barone reported that she regularly received the legislative updates from the New Jersey School Boards Association. According to the most recent report, regionalization and consolidation seems to be stalled at the moment due to the election.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Progress on 2009-2010 district goals

Dr. Rovtar outlined the action plan for the district's four goals for 2009-2010.

1. **Raise NJASK scores, particularly in mathematics.**
 1. The district will shift to the NJPASS assessment for Grades 1 and 2 (NJ Proficiency Assessment of State Standards). This test, published by Riverside Publishing, is aligned with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. It is designed to help districts identify students' strengths and weaknesses to allow teachers to target classroom instruction more effectively. It is a criterion-referenced and research-based assessment which provides a test experience similar to what students will encounter on the NJASK beginning in grade 3.

Language Arts – students respond to a writing prompt based on a picture; listen to a passage, and answer questions about what they have heard and read several passages and answer questions about what they have read (Grade 1 students follow along as the teacher reads several passages. The students read one passage independently). Students also respond to a writing prompt based on a poem.

Listening – Working with the passage – includes applying listening skills associated with passage comprehension such as recognizing the main idea and supporting details, getting information, paraphrasing meaning and recognizing organization of text and purpose for reading. Analyzing the passage – includes analyzing and evaluating the passage by using skills such as asking questions, predicting meaning, developing opinions, drawing conclusions and interpreting conventions of print.

Mathematics – students are assessed in the same math topics as are included on NJASK:

Number Sense, Operations and Properties – students demonstrate an understanding of number space, operations and properties through comparing and performing operations on numbers.

Measurement – students demonstrate the ability to describe and compare the measurable attributes of objects using the metric and customary systems of measurement.

Spatial Sense and Geometry – students demonstrate spatial sense and geometry by investigating symmetry, perimeter, and common properties.

Data Analysis, Probability, and Discrete Mathematics – students demonstrate the ability to determine the probability of events and to analyze and interpret data.

Patterns and Algebra – students demonstrate the ability to recognize and generalize a variety of patterns and relationships, including those with numbers and shapes.

A separate district-developed Reading Comprehension Assessment will also be administered for 2nd grade students as the NJPASS focuses of assessing listening comprehension.

2. The concept of data-driven decision-making in the classroom will be introduced and will be a consistent focus during the 2009-2010 school year.

When the teachers returned in September, they were given the MAT or NJASK scores for both the students that were in their class in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. What will be created is a philosophy that if a child were to be rated as partially proficient based on the 2010 NJASK, the reaction from each teacher should not be “Oh, I’m not surprised,” but rather “Oh, I am shocked!” given the differentiation of instruction, intervention, and targeted instruction that will occur with the students in their class.

During the two September Pre-Service days this year, teachers were given printouts with all of the standardized test results for their 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 students. Teachers were asked to review the 2008-2009 results to gauge whether the results are what they had anticipated. If there are surprises, teachers should reflect on those outcomes in light of the instruction that they provided.

For their 2009-2010 students, teachers were given a spreadsheet and will chart the assessment data for the students in their class(es). Each teacher will be asked to develop a list of the **significant issues** for each of their students who have either failed to attain proficiency or have scored in the lower range of the proficiency band. This listing should be kept in the grade book or plan book and referred to frequently during the course of the year. *Principals will verify that each teacher has completed this assessment analysis for their students.*

Teachers will meet on a weekly basis by grade level (Gillette and Millington) or department (Central) during the month of September during common planning or unassigned time to brainstorm strategies, tasks, activities, etc. that they feel will be most effective in addressing the identified significant issues for their students. *By the end of September each grade level or department will submit a summary of the identified strategies, etc. to the Building Principal for review. The Principal will in turn forward this information to the Superintendent.*

Lesson Plans will be reviewed on a regular basis by all building principals. Lesson plans should include references to strategies or other anecdotal information about how the significant issues of the students are being addressed.

3. The DiBELS assessment will be used again at Gillette School and will be introduced at second grade this year. DiBELS provides important information to teachers in terms of the development of Basic Early Literacy Skills. Teachers can use this information to differentiate instruction to help student become secure in their reading skills. This year a DiBELS “team” has been created to administer the assessments (done three times during the year) to the students in Kindergarten, first and second grade. The team consists of Dr. Wetherell, Mrs. Dawson, the Basic Skills teachers in Millington and Gillette schools and Dr. Rovtar.

2. Pass the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) state monitoring

The district QSAC Committee met beginning last winter and through the spring to review and discuss all of the Indicators on the District Performance Review (DPR) Checklists in each of the five areas: Fiscal Management, Governance, Instruction and Program, Operations and Personnel. In order to be rated as a High Performing District, we must achieve a minimum of 80% on each of the DPR checklists. Our Committee ratings indicate that we have met the standards. The checklists will be presented to the Board for approval in October. The checklists will then be submitted to the Executive County Superintendent. Our on site visit by the County Office staff has been scheduled for November 24th.

3. Improve Community Relations

- **Monitor effectiveness of custodial outsourcing**

Reports from the building principals at the start of the year indicated that the building were well prepared over the summer. Custodial and maintenance issues are reviewed and discussed at administrative council meetings.

The Buildings and Grounds Committee will meet periodically with the Temco supervisory staff to review status and effectiveness.

The School Dudes software is operational for school work orders. It is being used by teachers and administrators. Completed work orders are documented in the system.

- **TV Broadcast of board meetings**

Broadcasting of meetings began August 17th.

- **Educating the public regarding issues associated with Regionalization/Consolidation**

A new “tab” has been created on the district website to provide information on regionalization and consolidation for the public. The regional districts will be organizing an informational meeting for the public which will most likely be held at Watchung Hills Regional High School in November.

- **Technology**

While Mr. Blinder has been exploring low or no-cost options to improve Internet speed, there are still significant problems in this area.

More than 200 of the district computers are in their eighth year of service. Parts and memory are beginning to fail. Repairs over the summer consumed a great deal of Mr. Blinder’s time.

Through reports to the Board and reports by the Technology Committee the public will be made aware of the district’s need to replace computers and explore ways to improve Internet speed.

The 2010-2011 budget should include funding to enter into a lease-purchase agreement to acquire new computers and create a schedule of equipment replacement so that equipment is replaced on a cyclical basis before the end of its useful life.

- **Budget**

The Budget Development Process will be initiated at the building level in October. As the district budget is compiled, the Finance Committee will meet to review, discuss and provide input. The budget development process will be reported at Board meetings by Mr. Esposito and Mr. McCarthy, Chair of the Finance Committee.

4. Explore Controlling Costs with regard to special education, transportation and health insurance.

The district may possibly accept some tuition students from other public school districts into our preschool disabled programs. This unanticipated revenue will help offset our operating costs.

Mr. Esposito has implemented the VersaTrans software which allows for better management of the transportation routes and data.

Health insurance costs were reduced through the contract settlement with the LHEA. The district will utilize our health benefits consultant to explore other provider options to determine if cost savings can be realized.

Administrative Structure

The Central School Principal position was advertised yesterday in the Star Ledger. There have been comments made that perhaps this might be a good time to restructure the administration and questions have been raised as to whether three principals are needed. Dr. Rovtar stated that the principal, as instructional leader in the school, is a critical position. There have been numerous administrative support positions eliminated over the past 10 years, assistant principals, Deans of Students, and yet the principals have been asked to do more and more. For example, the New Jersey Department of Education has adopted a new structure for professional development committees. Beginning next year, each school building must have its own professional development committee with the principal being part of that team. Dr. Rovtar provided the Board with a chart which shows the various responsibilities of each administrative position in the district. While the Gillette School Principal position is currently a part time position, we benefit from the combination of that position with the part time Assistant Superintendent position that Dr. Wetherell also holds. While the principal position is part time, we have a full time principal presence in the school, which is important. We also benefit from our current arrangement in sharing a Director of Special Services with Harding Township. We have no health benefit expenses for Mrs. Yavelberg and only pay for her services when she is here – there are no sick or vacation days. We are fortunate to have such a dynamic leader in this department with tremendous experience in the field.

We are also not in a position to be able to close as school. Periodically that has also been raised as an administrative or cost savings measure. There are currently about 200 students in Gillette School. They could not be accommodated at Millington. Likewise, there is no room for the 5th grade at Central School based on our current enrollment.

Dr. Rovtar responded to several questions from Board members regarding the administrative structure. In order to share a principal between buildings, we would need to obtain the approval of the Executive County Superintendent. Each school is expected to have a dedicated principal. It is rare in New Jersey for a principal to be shared between two schools. In such cases, the school typically has a “lead teacher” stipend position or an assistant principal to cover on a regular basis when the principal is out of the building.

On September 2nd all elementary, special education and language arts teachers from Central School participated in a day-long workshop, “Teachers as Writers.” The workshop was presented as part of our partnership with the National Writing Project at Rutgers University. The teacher participated in a number of activities to increase their awareness of the writing process and were made aware of some instructional techniques that can be incorporated into lessons to help engage students in the writing process and strengthen their skills. A second workshop will be held on our half-day inservice in October.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT’S UPDATE

Dr. Wetherell thanked the Gillette School staff for a very smooth opening. Considering that half the school’s population is attending school for the first time, this is a big task, but everyone worked together to welcome the new students and help them get acquainted with their new school. Back to School Night at Gillette School will be on September 22nd. The SKIP, KIT and Kindergarten parents will come at 6:45 p.m. The first grade parents will come at 8:10 p.m. The DiBELS team will be assessing the Basic Early Literacy Skills of all Kindergarten, first and second grade students over the next week. This information is then provided to the classroom teachers to assist them in working with the students in their class. There are four curriculum guides being recommended for approval this evening. The math curriculum will be reviewed and finalized by the curriculum committee next week.

Dr. Wetherell indicated that the enrollment for Gillette School is: Preschool Disabled Half Day – 17, Preschool Disabled Full Day – 5, Kindergarten – 88 and First Grade 89 – a total enrollment of 199.

Dr. Wetherell stated that she would like to thank Mr. Cimino for all of his support and assistance over the years that they have worked together in the district. She stated that Mr. Cimino was always focused on what was right for the students. He attended every lunch period and every after school activity. She wished him the best in the future.

ADMINISTRATORS AND TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR'S UPDATES

Mrs. Dawson provided the following report for Millington School: Staff In-Service was held on Sept. 2nd. Mrs. Dawson met with grade level teams, including special education teachers, to review test scores and student achievement. They first examined the break down of student scores in grades 3-5 on the NJASK from 2007-2009. Mrs. Dawson reviewed the school goals with each grade level. The goals set are ambitious, but Mrs. Dawson believes the teachers are ready and eager to meet this challenge. Last year, Millington School set a goal of raising the number of students in the Advanced Proficient range for LAL with a focus on writing. This goal was met even with the raised cut score. The teachers are on board with a teamwork approach and Mrs. Dawson believes that we will see significant gains with the students at Millington School.

During the session, the teachers were given the scores for students they taught last year. They examined the breakdowns and took the time to analyze student results. They were then given the individual scores of the students they have this year. They logged in the scores in the areas of LAL and Math on a data analysis sheet. They have until the end of this month to complete a student rationale sheet. This sheet will be included with the Lesson Plan book. It will assist the teachers with development of lessons and instructional strategies. It is our goal that the learning styles of all students will be addressed in all subject areas. They will also develop a timeline per grade level to assess student achievement in-house from Oct.-May in the areas of LAL and Math. The benchmark assessments will allow them to continue to move instruction forward throughout the year.

At the September 3rd Faculty meeting, teachers were given their faculty manuals and Mrs. Dawson reviewed all pertinent information including the policies relating to Affirmative Action, Teacher Evaluations and Harassment, Bullying, Intimidation and Threatening Behaviors.

School opened on September 8th. Students seemed excited to be back. September 11th was Red, White and Blue Day. Code of Conduct Assemblies for each grade level will be held on September 15th. Back to School Night is scheduled for September 29th. Grades 4 & 5 at 6:45 p.m., Grades 2 & 3 at 8:15 p.m. Enrollment at Millington School is currently: Grade 2 -102, Grade 3 - 115, Grade 4 - 120, Grade 5 - 111.

Mr. Cimino stated that he wanted to recognize the Central School teachers, staff and Temco for a very smooth opening of school. He has been dealing with some parent phone calls, as happens each year, with regard to Horizon placement. Central School enrollment is currently 125 students in 6th grade, 116 students in 7th grade and 136 students in 8th grade. Mr. Cimino will be holding Code of Conduct assemblies for each grade level on September 17th. There will be a change to the magazine drive this year. In previous years all of the profits went to the 8th grade. This year a separate account will be created for each student and their sales applied to their expenses for the 8th grade trip when they reach 8th grade. September 22nd is picture day at Central School. Back to School Night will be on September 23rd.

In terms of the data driven instruction initiative, all of the teams were given the CoGAT, NJASK, and prior year grades for all of their students for last year and this year. At the opening address, Dr. Rovtar indicated to all of the faculty that we all own the NJASK results and need to work cooperatively to improve student achievement. Test results had not been discussed in that way before. Grade level teams are logging their interventions with the goal of moving students from partial proficiency to proficiency and from proficiency to advanced proficiency.

Mrs. Yavelberg stated that her department recognized the significant expense associated with special education programs. The Child Study Team and special education teams work hard to try to keep the costs in line. The district has a very strong Child Study Team and benefits from a very strong partnership with the administration.

In Mr. Blinder's absence, Dr. Rovtar provided the following information: Smartboards were installed and are being used in Mr. Freyre's 5th grade classroom (grant from FORCE and PTO) and Mrs. Sepe's 8th grade Math classroom. The district is taking advantage of the Free FIOS service at all 3 schools. With teachers & students back on the system we are seeing extreme slowness at Central and Millington Schools with Internet access. It

is operated by the Cerebral Palsy Association of Middlesex County, not the Middlesex County Regional Educational Services Commission. All contracts and payments for the 2008-2009 school year, Extended School Year Program and 2009-2010 school should be revised to reflect the correct operator of the program.

- Approved occupational and physical therapy services for student #2011827. The Center for Lifelong Learning will provide one 30-minute session of O.T. per week and one 30-minute session of P.T. per week at the student's school for the 2009-2010 school year. The total annual cost for O.T. is \$1,591.00 and \$1,591.00 for P.T.
- Approved Behavioral Consultant, Michelle Lawton, to provide two hours of service at a rate of \$125.00 per hour to observe student #7675887735 and student #7361968197 and to plan and provide staff training for the teachers of these students.
- Approved Behavioral Consultant, Michelle Lawton, as a Board of Education contractor to provide services for the 2009-2010 school year. Services to be provided included planning, consulting and providing staff training for district teachers of autistic students. The consultant's fee is \$125.00 per hour, not to exceed 30 hours.

Personnel

- Approved the following appointments:

<u>Sport/activity</u>	<u>Advisor</u>	<u>Stipend</u>
Newspaper advisor	Andrew Gillespie	\$1,821.28**
Student Council Advisor	Dan Salzer	\$1,821.28
Boys' Soccer Coach	Michael Lisbona	\$2,659.29*
Girls' Soccer Coach	Marco Freyre	\$2,659.29*
Boys' Basketball	Peter Hockmeyer	\$2,659.29*
Girls' Basketball	Kerri Corvino	\$2,659.29*
Boys' Baseball	Marco Freyre	\$2,659.29*
Girls' Softball	Peter Hockmeyer	\$2,659.29*
Yearbook Advisor	Guy Buffone	\$ 632.72*
	Kathryn Ralston	\$ 632.72*
Cross Country Coach	Maura Aimette	\$1,329.64*
	Charles Mott	\$1,329.64*
Booster Club	John Birckhead	\$1,821.28*
Orchestra/Band Advisor	Eileen Shanagher	\$1,768.37*
	John Birckhead	\$1,506.39*
Choral Director	John Birckhead	\$2,159.51*

*Stipends to be paid from existing activity account balances and/or pay to play/participate fees paid.

** Stipend to be paid through PTO contribution.

- Approved the lateral advancement on the salary guide for the teaching staff members listed below. Salary guide advancement is based on submission to the superintendent of documentation of graduate credit earned in accordance with the LHEA contract:

Johnathan Birckhead	from BA Step 3	\$45,695.00 to BA+30/MA Step 3	\$48,495.00
Rachel Vachon	from BA Step 8	\$52,900.00 to BA+30/MA Step 8	\$55,700.00

- Approved the appointment of the following lunch aides for the 2009-2010 school year:

Ann Hurlock	2.25 hours per day	\$5,818.47 annual salary
Helen Koss	1.50 hours per day	\$3,730.50 annual salary

- Approved a preservice observation field experience as part of the Early Childhood Education Program for 10 hours during the fall 2009 semester for Kimberly Karasewicz to be completed at Gillette School.

- Approved the appointment of the following people to the Substitute Teacher List for the 2009-2010 school year:

Kelly Baker	Victoria Caprari
Romana Fedasiuk	Barbara Koppersmith
	Jennifer White

- Approved the appointment of the following people to the Substitute Secretary List for the 2009-2010 school year:

Barbara Koppersmith

Policy

The policy committee noted that Policy 3541 – Transportation was reviewed by the Policy Committee on August 26, 2009. No revisions or updates to the policy are required at this time.

- Approved the first reading of the following policies:

3327	Relations with Vendors
3541.32	District Owned Vehicles
4112.8	Nepotism
5113	Absence and Excuse of Missing Children
5141.2	Illness
5142	Pupil Safety

- Approved the second reading of the following policies:

3326	Payments for Goods and Services
5000	Concepts and Roles in Student Personnel

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Scanlon stated that tomorrow evening there is a meeting of the regional district board of education presidents and vice presidents. She will report on the meeting at the September 21st meeting.

Dr. Verlezza asked if the Finance Committee would look into the feasibility of refinancing the district's debt service. Mr. Esposito responded that this issue was just discussed with the auditor last week. He did not feel that our rates are high enough to benefit from refinancing, but Mr. Esposito indicated that he would check on it.

Dr. Rae stated that it is important that the community understand the ramifications of regionalization and consolidation of school districts. If a meeting is held, it would be helpful to provide a summary for the community. We should also provide an article to the Echoes Sentinel to help get the work out to the public.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no comments from the public at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

FUTURE MEETING DATES

September 21, 2009 – Regular Meeting – Town Hall – 7:30 p.m.

October 12, 2009 – Workshop Meeting – Town Hall – 7:30 p.m.

October 26, 2009 – Regular Meeting – Town Hall – 7:30 p.m.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IS ENCOURAGED AT ALL BOARD MEETINGS
THE BOARD BRIEF DOES NOT REPRESENT OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF
EDUCATION.**