

## District Advisory Meeting: 1/7/10

In Attendance:

Fern Aefsky- Superintendent	Kim Atwell - BTA President
Diane D’Uva- BTA Vice President	Dawn Condello- Principal Glenham
Steve Borrello- Principal JVF	Dawn Clemens- BHS
Tom Clemens- RMS	Matt Carpenter- Sargent
Donna Snowden- Glenham	Lisa Biersack- South Avenue
Elizabeth Hanrahan- JVF	

### 1. Updates:

#### a. Elementary Report Cards

- i. Parent surveys were distributed after the last parent teacher conferences. Jean Lain created a spreadsheet and found that for the most part parents liked the report cards as they are (over 250 parents responded). In the past DRA reading grades were unclear. It was suggested to bring in reading teachers and special education teachers (literacy council) to work on the issue. Jean Lain will meet with Charlie Symon, Liz King, and Amy Dick about more customization of inputting, changing, and saving of information.
- ii. There has been difficulty with special area teachers in entering in their grades. This is because they are not able to just “click on Mrs. Snowden’s class”. They must go through all 4<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- iii. Many teachers are wondering if the report card categories are more for the teachers’ benefit than the parents.

#### b. Teacher Pay

- i. Kim Atwell stated that there is a conflict between BTA contract language and the law. The Collective Bargaining Agreement states that teachers must get paid prior to winter break. This would be the equivalent of getting a paycheck prior to services rendered which is illegal in New York.
- ii. We need to make sure that the conversation continues so that the membership is aware that their pay will be affected for the first paycheck of the school year.
- iii. Dr. Aefsky stated that this has been the law since 1995 and that it tends to come up when there’s a problem. This is a systemic issue (bus drivers, administrators, teachers, clerical, etc.) and their pay had to start after they started working. The district has already begun discussing fixing the problem prior to having issues with the State. Issue varies with time of Labor Day and Superintendents Conference Days. The old belief that working prior to Labor Day allows us to get paid earlier is incorrect and still illegal.
- iv. Atwell mentioned that in Washingtonville teachers work two days and get prorated paycheck, then go back on regular schedule. Fern and Annemarie are looking for a solution that will work for 12 month employees as well as the 10 month employees.
- v. Matt Carpenter mentioned that pay issues in general has become a distraction to teachers because of the need to pay bills. He felt that earlier in the school year it became “too big” of an issue but that it has gotten better.
- vi. Atwell said that it is a much smaller scale of problem currently and that teachers need to take greater responsibility to ensure they are being paid correctly. Although there has been central office turnover it seems like “we can’t get it right” (referring to paychecks) not just for teachers but TA’s and administrators as well. The BTA is very concerned and district administrators hear

more from the teachers because they are the largest group. The district needs to pinpoint what is creating the issue to be able to solve the problem.

- vii. Tom Clemens stated that payroll has been a “systemic incompetence over time”. He continued by saying that “if we ran our classroom that way we would be fired”. He asked why there is a consistent problem with payroll.
- viii. Atwell said that the magnitude of the issues in the past two years is a problem. The BTA members are becoming more educated and that is also bringing more issues to light. This problem is taking so much time when it should not be such an issue. More issues are being uncovered of past errors in payroll.
- ix. T. Clemens said that the district needs to be proactive in solving problems. This includes the issues with coaching and non coaching supplemental of what and when we should be paid.
- x. Dr. Aefsky stated that the district is working hard to ensure that people are paid correctly. She added that many issues stem from ambiguous contract language and past practices. She asked if there are currently any issues with “base pay” prior to adding in longevity or supplemental. The committee did not know of any.
- xi. Aefsky also mentioned that there were issues with the new finance software which did not roll over correctly. It is for that reason why it was decided to hold off including sick days on pay stubs to ensure that the information is correct. Additionally salary verification sheets will be given out earlier next school year, hopefully on the first day back. Furthermore, when teachers verify whether they want 21 or 25 pays, carbon copies will be made this year.
- xii. Dawn Clemens mentioned that on the pay verification sheets that the longevity time is still incorrect for those with previous experience credit. She asserted that the problem of longevity payment errors will continue until a solution can be found.
- xiii. Atwell stated that Fern, Annemarie and herself are working on the issue.

2. **Summer 2010-** Reminder that all school buildings will be closed for the summer except for RMS.

3. **Budget**

- a. The first Budget Finance Committee meeting was on January 4<sup>th</sup>. It is difficult for the district to make decisions because information is needed from the state.
- b. NYS has been holding back funding to schools across the state. BCSD has had \$900,000 held back (delayed aid payments) this school year. Dr. Aefsky stated that Beacon is currently okay as far as funding goes.
- c. The Governor is urging districts to use rainy day funds to make up for budget shortfalls when at the same time Patterson does not want NYS to use rainy day funds.
- d. Dr. Aefsky continued by saying that current lobbying effort now has a different tone. Dr. Aefsky is on the board of directors of the New York State Association of Small City School Districts (<http://scsd.neric.org/>). In that capacity she has been hearing the following:
  - i. The next two years are going to be the worst years in NYS in recent history and we will be fortunate to have a 10% cut. BCSD gets 2/3 of funding from state as a small city school and thus we will need to make cuts.
  - ii. There is a high likelihood that contingency budgets will be held to a 0% increase (down from 4% last year). This percentage is set by state.
  - iii. Federal stimulus money is being taken back by state and could be used by state to cover school aid shortfalls (meaning BCSD would not receive additional federal funding). Thus even if our State aid is the same as last year is would amount to \$1.4 million cut.
- e. Dr. Aefsky affirmed that the school district intends to maintain as many programs as possible.

- i. It costs \$125,000 to run summer school. There are discussions about cuts to the program or potentially not having summer school. Cutting summer school is the equivalent of saving two teaching positions.
  - ii. We need to be prepared for what we don't know yet.
  - iii. The district is looking at every group for potential cuts including: clerical, teachers, and administrators. Buildings and grounds will likely be unaffected since they have already been cut over the past few years. The district is also examining mandated vs. non mandated programs.
  - iv. Kindergarten class sizes have increased possibly because people are not sending kids to private school because of economy.
- f. The Arts in Education Community Foundation was set up under Lloyd Jaeger. That foundation is being merged into the Beacon Educational Foundation. There will be more information on this foundation given at the 1/11/10 BOE meeting. This foundation will be seeking grants and fundraising. There will be a separate board of directors which will include board of education members, Dr. Aefsky, and four community members.
- i. Matt Carpenter asked about Pete Seeger's donation of \$20,000 for the Calico Ball. Dr. Aefsky stated that we will have Calico Ball this school year but with some modifications. We will not be using Seeger's entire donation (it will go into the foundation). Community members are working on writing grants for additional funding.
  - ii. The Beacon Educational Foundation is planning a golf outing in association with DIA for additional fundraising.
  - iii. There are many community groups which are losing funding including: Green Teen, The Marathon Project, and Hudson Valley River and Estuary Association. The foundation is hoping to be able to aid these groups.
  - iv. Dr. Aefsky has met with local bank presidents to ask for donations.
  - v. The Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce has allowed BHS to join for a reduced rate and high school students are creating commercials for local businesses.
- g. Kim Atwell asked Dr. Aefsky if the worst case scenario happens and Beacon does not get the funding we depend on, at what point will the district notify people who will be losing their jobs? Dr. Aefsky responded this will happen once there is a board approved budget. This should be in March.
- h. Dawn Clemens asked about the possibility of the district offering a grant writing workshop so that teachers can apply for grants to help to lessen the impact of budget cuts. Dr. Aefsky said that she would work on getting a workshop together.

#### **4. Building Cleanliness**

- a. Donna Snowden (Glenham) stated that after coming back from winter break classrooms were not cleaned, desk tops are not being cleaned when school is in session, sinks are not being cleaned (including soap and paper towel dispensers). Snowden asked what can be done about the issue, she is concerned about "festering germs".
- b. Dawn Condello has spoken to several night time custodians who stated that they were doing other things and thus could not do their regular cleaning. She stated that Glenham has been pretty clean over the past few years but that she currently has concerns about students being out sick with H1N1. The vacuum cleaner has not working and the custodians were given an electric broom to clean with. Russ has been notified.

#### **5. Snow Removal**

- a. Donna Snowden mentioned that the parking lot at Glenham has been tremendously icy and that parking spaces are not being plowed when every space is needed. She counted six spaces that were not plowed during the last storm.

- b. Dr. Aefsky stated that BCSD gets their sand from the City of Beacon and thus had to wait for the City's delivery (they were out of sand). She continued by saying that some walks were not shoveled because it is "better to have snow down rather than to have to scrape ice". She said that she will see that something is done about the parking spots. As far as the high school is concerned, Dr. Aefsky mentioned that many teachers arrive early before custodial staff has the ability to do snow removal.
- c. Dawn Condello stated that no sand was delivered to Glenham on the day of the storm.
- d. Tom Clemens asked if BCSD has a storage facility for sand and salt. Dr. Aefsky replied that we do not and that we pick up supplies from the City of Beacon when they are needed.
- e. Dr. Aefsky also mentioned that the County said that they will not plow the road leading to the bus garage if there is an accumulation of less than two inches because of budgetary issues.
- f. She continued by saying that "we are not going to be able to control all of the issues". The district paid \$4,000 for people to come in during the Sunday storm and thus we did not have a 2 hour delay.
- g. Kim Atwell stated that staff has a short temper with the issue of snow removal because of the long history of problems in the past.
- h. Tom Clemens added that refreezing is also an issue and that the district cannot clean up once and then forget about it.

**6. School Schedules**

- a. Dr. Aefsky reminded the group about the discussion that occurred last year about changing the start time for the Elementary schools. This discussion was a result of problems with students getting to school late.
- b. The district is looking into the possibility of RMS and BHS starting at the same time and combining bus routes for the two schools. They will be examining whether that would help with the Elementary students' arrival. With realignment, we do have the bussing capacity for combined middle and high school runs.
- c. On January 19<sup>th</sup> a new transportation director be starting in the district. He will be researching data.

**7. District Calendar**

- a. There is a possibility that the first day that teachers will be able to enter the buildings will be the first day after Labor Day.
- b. Dutchess County administrations discussed the possibility of starting school prior to Labor Day. This would be a complication for Beacon because of the summer construction, late Labor Day, and the date of Rosh Hashanah. There is a possibility of half days for students during the first week of school.
- c. Lisa Biersack suggested that the Report Card Conferences should be closer to the end of the marking quarters. Also, it was suggested to have the conferences on a Thursday as opposed to a Wednesday since it makes for a really long day.

**8. Other**

- a. District Plan for School-Based Planning and Shared Decision-Making (Part 100 Regulations of educational law) are required by the state. They are due by 2/1. Dr. Aefsky gave the committee a draft to look over.
- b. The next District Advisory Committee meeting will be in March or April after the BOE adopts a budget and prior to the district budget vote.

These minutes are respectfully submitted by Dawn Clemens.