

NORTH ALLEGHENY SCHOOL DISTRICT

MARCH 18, 2009 –WORK SESSION

MINUTES

Board in Attendance: Mrs. Grosheider, Mr. Hubert, Mrs. Bishop,
Mrs. Boujoukos, Mr. Cunningham, Mrs. Ludwig,
Mr. Pagone, Mr. Schwartzmier, Mr. Shuckrow

Board Absent: None.

Students in Attendance: Mr. Hamm; Ms. Peng

Also in Attendance: Dr. Green, Mr. Lucas (Solicitor), Mr. Botti,
Mr. Gaertner, Ms. Gaetano, Mr. Hopkins, Dr. Miller,
Dr. Steinhauer, Dr. Stropkaj, Dr. Wheat, Mrs. Ryan (Secretary)

MST in Attendance: Mr. Craig Slaubaugh, Principal – Hosack Elementary

The Board of School Directors of the North Allegheny School District convened for a **Work Session** on **Wednesday, March 18, 2009** in the **Board Room** of the **Central Administrative Offices**.

WORK SESSION

Mrs. Grosheider called the meeting to order at **7:30 p.m.** and all stood and recited *The Pledge of Allegiance*.

CALENDAR AND AGENDA

Mrs. Grosheider announced that the Board met in Executive Session at the conclusion of the last meeting to discuss a matter of litigation. The Board will not meet in Executive Session at the conclusion of this meeting.

Mrs. Grosheider reviewed the Calendar for March and April 2009. Tonight the Board will be presented with the Diversity Report. There are no reports scheduled for the March 25, 2009 meeting. Prior to the April 22, 2009 Work Session, the Board will have a Distinguished Achievement Awards ceremony. There are no reports scheduled for April.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Dave Brennan – spoke on behalf of the residents of Franklin Park Borough and the two builders of the Castletown Development. His concern was for the safety of the children due to the fact that the

bus stop in the plan is at the end of a dangerous road and at a dangerous intersection and is not in sight of the homes in the plan. He said it is an accident waiting to happen.

Jane Majerac – spoke about full-day kindergarten. She said that there have been fundamental changes in society and education including increases in single parent and dual-employment households that signal significant changes in American life compared to a generation ago. She noted that studies show that parents favor a full-day program that reduces the number of disruptions and transitions for kindergarteners, reduces child and parental stress, and increases the time for meaningful learning opportunities. She commented that Governor Rendell favors the commitment to full-day kindergarten because it provides better skills and better scores for the children of Pennsylvania.

Mark Majerac – is a nine-year veteran teacher in a local school district, with six years teaching kindergarten. He taught four years of half-day kindergarten and two years of full-day kindergarten and feels that his data is not only research-based, but authentic, because he collected it and experienced it. He said his students did phenomenally better with full-day kindergarten and it is the intangibles that make full-day kindergarten superior. Students are calm and patient, and it is kid-driven and relevant. He asked the School Board to strongly consider full-day kindergarten.

Sharon Volpe – spoke about full-day kindergarten. She said that nationally, 65% of kindergarteners attend a full-day program. Research has shown that children who attend a full-day program are better prepared to succeed in the first grade and beyond. From the *American Journal of Education*, they evaluate program effectiveness by how much children learned in Mathematics and Literacy over the kindergarten year. When children's social and academic backgrounds are taken into account, children who experience a full-day kindergarten are advantaged in terms of their cognitive learning. In her research, she could not find anything negative. She hopes that our District will consider full-day kindergarten.

Brenda Besket – spoke about full-day kindergarten from an emotional standpoint of the children. Her daughter has been in full-day daycare for sometime and will be attending kindergarten next fall. Her daughter is nervous because there will be much disruption during the day transferring to different places because of parents' schedules and having all-day kindergarten would eliminate some of that disruption. She wants her child to be excited about kindergarten, not nervous, and asked the Board to consider all-day kindergarten.

Jessica Glover – spoke about the bus stop at Castletown. She said the people in her Plan have been trying to get a bus for two years. The children are currently picked up at Rochester and Castetown Court, and they are not visible to anyone in the neighborhood and there are no sidewalks for the kids to stand. Rochester Road, with the "S" bends, is extremely hazardous, especially in inclement weather. Parents drive their children to the bus stop and cars are lined on the hillside so that the children are not unattended. They are asking for the same courtesy as other plans have gotten so that their children can be safe.

Response

Mrs. Grosheider explained that our Protocol Officer, Mrs. Beth Ludwig, will communicate with all speakers in writing, and it will be done as promptly as possible after gathering all the information

needed. She also commented about the kindergarten issue and wanted the speakers to know that the Administration is in the process of looking at the issues surrounding all-day kindergarten and we are not in a position at this point to make any decision. More research needs to be done and more data needs to be collected, because the District is data-driven. She pointed out, however, that there is a divide in the community regarding all-day kindergarten and the District will make the best decision that they can for the District. A report will be produced that is research-based, and it will be studied carefully and they will try to come to a decision.

Mrs. Grosheider thanked all the speakers for coming to express their views.

DIVERSITY REPORT

Dr. Green introduced this report with some background. Diversity began as a community project in 1992 and has remained a focal point of this Board. Dr. Green acknowledged the display board in the back of the room with winning entries from the annual Diversity Expression Contest, which is held every year. All students throughout the District are invited to express their thoughts and views on diversity and the gallery of winning entries travels throughout the District and the community.

Dr. Green introduced the presenters: **Dr. William Stropkaj**, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education and Curriculum and **Mr. Craig Slaubaugh**, Principal of Hosack Elementary School and the Chairperson of the Dr. Marcia Martin Unity/Diversity Committee.

Dr. Stropkaj explained that the Diversity Initiative established in 1992 focused on five areas:

1. Commitment and support of the Diversity Initiative
2. Strategic Planning
3. Recruitment, hiring and retaining minority candidates
4. Building partnerships
5. Respecting Human Diversity Implementation Committee

Highlights of the 2008 Report are:

- Diversity continues to be an area of focus for the District and has a prominent position in professional development, publications, and student and staff activities.
- Administration and staff continue to improve their professional understanding and ability to address issues of Diversity.
- School District programs and curriculum reflect important Diversity issues.
- Student participation and submission of written works and fine arts design to the Diversity Expression Contest continues to demonstrate student interest in the area of Diversity with 485 entries. The quality of student art, poetry, multimedia presentations, and other forms of artistic mediums show high levels of artistic excellence.

- The Diversity Puppet Show continues to be an effective avenue in communicating with our second grade students regarding the relevance of Diversity in our District.
- The District continues to explore and develop increased Diversity opportunities for students and staff.
- Partnerships and collaboration with parents and the community are evident at the Building and District level.
- The recruitment and hiring of qualified minority administrative and staff candidates continues to be a priority for the District.
- The number of student incidents of harassment remains at a very low level. This past year, the number of incidents was at an all time low for the last five years with 15 incidents of harassment reported.
- The administration and staff have become more effective in responding to reported incidents of harassment and have demonstrated, through documentation, a more comprehensive approach in tracking and addressing incidents of harassment.

Mr. Slaubaugh explained that professional development is a major component of our induction program with new staff members. In February, all of our inductees participated in a diversity in-service. Each building also has a one-half day in-service time to develop a building-based in-service that deals with a variety of topics. The Diversity Expression Contest had 485 entries from all schools and the quality of the submissions was insightful and inspirational. Mrs. Merry Ann Houser, from Ingomar Middle School, continues to work with the 6th graders to present the Diversity Puppet Show to our second graders, as well as students from other outlining school districts. Our Minority Recruiter continues to recruit, hire and retain minority candidates.

Mr. Slaubaugh continued with updates that were identified:

- Offer the Diversity Expression Contest and associated activities for K-12 students.
- Sponsor the Diversity Puppet Show for all District second graders and invite guests from surrounding school districts.
- Incorporate a Diversity theme at the annual District Opening Day In-Service.
- Communicate with the community regarding the activities of the School District regarding Diversity through newsletters and publications and consider new venues of communication.
- Monitor differences in student academic performance based on gender on the various assessments administered in the District. Implement improved pedagogical strategies as appropriate to ensure comparable levels of high performance.

- Explore additional avenues and venues for the recruitment of qualified minority administrative, teaching, and staff candidates. Continue to maintain a Minority Recruiter to assist with the District's efforts.
- Enhance and expand the Diversity section on the School District's website.
- Provide Professional Development opportunities for staff regarding Diversity.
- Provide and expand opportunities for students and staff to participate in activities dealing with Diversity.
- Provide School District Administration and staff with training regarding the North Allegheny School District's Respecting Human Diversity Policy.
- Maintain an up-to-date directory of multicultural and Diversity resources for administrative and staff reference.

Dr. Stropkaj discussed the Harassment Tracking Form, which is a small part of the Diversity Initiative and all staff is made aware of the existence of the anti-harassment form. The Counselors and Administrators are required to complete the form and the Building Administrators are required to submit all forms to the Superintendent. These forms are reviewed and are analyzed. Over the course of five years, we have seen a decrease in the number of incidents reported. In 2008, we had 15 incidents of some form of harassment reported, the lowest number in the five years that this has been tracked.

Next Steps were identified:

- Continue to offer the Diversity Expression Contest and associated activities for K-12 students.
- Continue to sponsor the Diversity Puppet Show for all District second graders and invite guests from surrounding school Districts.
- Continue to incorporate a Diversity theme at the annual District Opening Day In-Service.
- Continue to use newsletters, publications and the website in communicating Diversity activities with the community.
- Continue to monitor student academic performance based on gender on various assessments administered by the District.
- Continue to implement pedagogical strategies as appropriate to ensure comparable levels of high performance of both males and females in all subject areas.

- Continue to use venues for the recruitment of qualified minority administrative, teaching, and staff candidates in addition to continuing to maintain a Minority Recruiter to assist with the District's efforts.
- Continue to provide professional development opportunities for staff regarding Diversity.
- Continue to provide and expand opportunities for students and staff to participate in Diversity activities.
- Continue to provide School District Administration and staff with training regarding the North Allegheny School District's Respecting Human Diversity Policy.
- Continue to update the current directory of Multicultural and Diversity resources for administrative and staff references.
- Track the participation and achievement of males and females in the advanced Math pathways and Reading/English.

The Board thanked Dr. Stropkaj and Mr. Slaubaugh for the report. They thanked Mr. Slaubaugh for his continued leadership on this committee.

Questions from the Board

Mrs. Boujoukos asked if there is any interaction between the young guests who come to the school to see the puppet show and our students.

Mr. Slaubaugh said it is like a field trip for the guests. It is a partnership but it has not been taken further, although it has been discussed. Possibly it could be expanded to a pen-pal level.

Mrs. Boujoukos asked what kinds of ideas will be used when we get our new website up and running for the diversity link.

Mr. Slaubaugh said we currently have the Diversity Expression Contest winners and the entry form available online but he thinks that we could provide an update of some of the things that are going on in the District like the activities of the Multi-Cultural Student Union. NATV could get involved by providing some video of activities. We could have links to community agencies like the Anti-Racism Coalition. These are some ideas but they need further discussion.

Mrs. Boujoukos commented on the importance of our students being able to live and work in a global world and she suggested that we make a better use of our International Exchange Students. She mentioned one student in particular from Saudi Arabia who loves to talk about his country, but he has not been invited to do that in the school forum. We need to find a way to involve these students more.

Mrs. Boujoukos commented on the tracking form and is pleased with the low numbers. She said they are where they should be, with higher numbers at the middle level and then they drop off at the

high school level as students mature, so we must be doing something right. She asked about repeat offenders.

Dr. Stropkaj said the Committee did look at repeat offenders and if that did occur and the educational measures that were in place were not helping, then other venues were implemented.

Mrs. Bishop commented on the Signing Choir who performed at the Opening In-service for the staff and said it was a great diversity component and very inspirational. She asked about students who are involved in incidents and asked about the educational component of what we are doing with kids and do we involve the parents in our communications.

Dr. Stropkaj said the families are involved in the process. Our School Counselors are also very involved with the students in teaching them how to handle various issues. Letters are written to parents inviting them to review the tracking forms and the educational component that is attached. Each incident involves a series of meetings with the student, and parents are aware of what takes place. The Principals are very involved also and they strive to instill a culture of acceptance and respect in their respective schools.

Mrs. Ludwig asked if the students who do the signing are ever highlighted at some of our school assemblies or events because it would be beneficial for all the students to see.

Mr. Slaubaugh said that because of time restraints for the students and their busy schedules, this is usually not done. One year, however, Mrs. Houser did take a small group of students and the puppets to the Martin Luther King Day breakfast. The puppets will also be special "guests" at the ESL Family Night next Thursday.

Mrs. Grosheider asked when the minority recruiting is scheduled because minority recruiting is a very important component of what we do. .

Ms. Gaetano said the Pittsburgh Education Recruitment Conference is scheduled for April 2 and Ms. Gaetano will be attending with our minority recruiter, Ms. Tammy Nelson, and also Mr. Bob Devlin. It is a well-attended event and Ms. Nelson will be seeking quality candidates whom she will pre-screen and will propose for interviewing. Those candidates will be considered as we begin to have opportunities for next year.

Announcement

Mrs. Grosheider highlighted an upcoming event, which is part of our diversity initiative. The **ESL** (English as a Second Language) **Family Night** will be on Thursday, March 26, 2009 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Carson Middle School Foyer. Mrs. Grosheider encouraged Board Members to attend, as well as community members.

Mrs. Grosheider, on behalf of the Board, thanked Dr. Stropkaj and Mr. Slaubaugh for their excellent presentation. She said that we are very impressed with where the District is going on this initiative and Marcia Martin would be proud.

REVIEW OF BOARD FOLDER

The Board reviewed all items as contained in the Board Folder for March 25, 2009. There was some discussion.

During review of the **Student Activities Report**, Andy Hamm and Lili Peng gave an update of recent and upcoming student activities.

Mr. Hamm said that the LEAD Conference was a success, which was the last Student Council conference of the year in Harrisburg. NASH had six workshop presenters at this conference and both NASH and NAI won the Council of Excellence for 2009. The NASH Musical, *Beauty and the Beast*, had rave reviews and he congratulated all who were involved. It was a sold-out production every night. The National Honor Society Spring Induction will be held on Thursday, April 16. He wished the Orchestra and Marching Band good luck on their annual trips.

Ms. Peng reported that NAIdol will take place on Friday, March 20. Money raised will go to various charities around the area. She congratulated the PMEA All-Eastern representatives from NASH, which is a great honor. The NA Speech and Debate Team has had students qualify at the national level. She also wished luck to the Forensics Team which is going to States this weekend.

Mrs. Grosheider pointed out that Andy Hamm was one of the presenters at the LEAD Conference. Mrs. Boujoukos mentioned that Lili Peng will be part of the Euro Challenge Competition in April, and the Board is very proud of our student representatives and the excellent role models that they portray.

During review of the **Superintendent's Report**, Dr. Green mentioned that Board Policy #3890, which is a revised policy, will be requested for adoption next week.

Dr. Green also reviewed her Good News Report, as follows:

- ★ **Ms. Colleen Byrnes, a seventh grade English and Reading teacher at Ingomar Middle School**, was recently recognized by the Pennsylvania Middle School Association (PMSA). Ms. Byrnes was one of seven teachers in the state who received a *Promising Practitioner Award* at the PMSA State Professional Development Institute in Harrisburg. The Promising Practitioner Award is presented to teachers who are just beginning their middle school careers. These beginning teachers have made a positive impact on both their school and community. They incorporate effective middle level practices in their everyday teaching.
- ★ **Ms. Sharon Volpe, Forensics coach at North Allegheny Senior High School**, will be honored in June by the National Forensics League (NFL) with her Third Diamond Key in recognition of her devotional dedication in training effective leadership skills. Diamond Keys are granted to coaches on a points-based system. Coaches receive one-tenth of their students' points. On attaining a total of 1,500 points, coaches are entitled to wear a diamond-set NFL key or pin; additional diamonds accrue at 3,000, 6,000, 10,000, and each 3,000 points thereafter. The minimum time for each diamond is five years as an NFL member coach. Under Ms. Volpe's instructions, her students earned over 88,850 credit points. Since the founding of the NFL in 1925, there have been only 504 coaches honored with a Third Diamond Key.

SPEAKERS

There were no speakers who came forward to address the Board.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Mrs. Grosheider announced that on March 27, 2009 there will be a **Make-A-Wish** event at NAI.

Mr. Pagone explained that it will begin with a basketball game at 6:00 p.m. featuring Transportation/Purchasing vs. Maintenance/Facilities. The McKnight Staff vs. McKnight Parents will take place at 7:00 p.m. They are looking at involving different groups in the games with the ROTC presenting the Colors prior to the game. In addition, they plan to have someone from the District sing the "National Anthem" and to have a school group of musicians perform. Afterwards there will be a concert in the Auditorium by "Intransit."

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Grosheider adjourned the meeting at **9:03 p.m.** The Board did not meet in Executive Session at the conclusion of the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose Mary Ryan, Secretary
North Allegheny School Board