



Board of Education COMMITTEE REPORT

February 8, 2024

Curriculum

The Curriculum Committee met on February 5, 2024, to discuss the Future Educators Association, Social Emotional Learning, ESL Family Nights, and more.

New Jersey Future Educators Association (NJFEA): Principal Chris Baldassano, Kelly Chilakos, Jillian Alonso supported the formal establishment of a chapter of the NJFEA at PHS. Current FEA members Amrita Subedar and Jasmin Castellanos advocated for the chapter and spoke of their experiences. Activities include speakers, partnerships within the district, fundraisers, recruitment via the Pway Experience, internships, courses preparing students for a education careers, guest alumni, and hometown heroes. Students will attend a conference at Rider University in the spring.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL): Dr. Laura Heimlich gave a concise presentation concerning the many different aspects of our district's SEL curriculum, which falls under the umbrella of our Multi-Tiered, Systems of Support (MTSS). She elaborated on the overall goals, anchored around student belonging and the CASEL - 5 Core Competencies (Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making) which is a framework that helps cultivate skills and environments that advance students' learning and development.

Positive Behavior Support in Schools: Dr. Heimlich also described the PBSIS initiative, which provides a framework for SEL in schools along with the tiered models where explicit instruction takes place. Dr. Heimlich outlined the Pillars of Character Education, mentoring, and the district's partnership with The Haven. Ms. Nancy Corradino discussed the possibility of having a therapy dog program.

ESL Family Nights: Glennysha Jurado-Moran and Amritpal Bedi gave a brief overview of the ESL Family Nights (K-3, 4-5, and 6-8) which was a goal established by Dr. Baskerville to meet the needs of this population. Assistive technology was introduced, where parents used a QR code to an application called Talking Points that would allow any question to be asked and answered in their home language. An overview about the ESL Program was provided along with curriculum and other resources.

Curriculum Guide Review: Scott Hood explained the proposed ELA course modifications at PHS, which would offer alternatives to English 3 and English 4 offered to 11th- and 12th-graders. Currently the courses are offered at one grade level or the other. Based upon popularity and requests from

students, the purpose is to increase student choice and real-world engagement. The courses are Mythology and Composition, Race and Gender in Literature, and Speculation in Literature. Students enrolled in the courses will meet requirements for English 3 and English 4, respectively.

Artificial Intelligence: Dr. Baskerville explained that we are momentarily pausing discussion within the committee regarding AI until the district has done further research and work on developing a framework and policy. More information will be forthcoming.

Federal Funds Update: Dr. Baskerville gave a brief overview of the Federal Funds and their usages. He informed the committee of the following purposes and allocations for school year 2023-24:

- Title I: Targeted assistance at 6 Title 1 Schools (Eisenhower, Grandview, Arbor, Schor, Quibbletown, PHS) - \$937,938
- Title II: Professional Development for Teachers and Principals - \$175,701
- Title III: Language instruction for Multilanguage Learner - \$125,937
- Title III Immigrant: Language instruction for immigrant students - \$50,486
- Title IV: Support for Academic Programs - \$79,443
- ESSER funds expire in September.

PHS Italian Class: Dr. Baskerville explained that the Italian teacher has been on leave and gave the committee an update on what has been done to continue the instruction of the classes. This has been difficult due to a limited number of qualified instructors. Efforts have included seeking a qualified long-term substitute, speaking with other districts, exploring countless online synchronous and asynchronous platforms, and investigating a possible dual-enrollment agreement with Morris County College, which failed due to a lack of available time in the Morris County teacher schedules. The district currently use three advanced-level Rutgers Italian students, the Educere curriculum, and a certified staff member in the room during the class periods. Plans for next year are being discussed.

Additional Topics: Dr. Gordon asked about the possibility of additional languages being offered, e.g. Creole as a course or club. Dr. Baskerville explained the difference between creating a new curriculum and starting a club. Dr. Lieberman mentioned the need for parental instructions and support in Math using videos produced for parents.

Policy/Legislative

The Policy/Legislative Committee met on February 1, 2024, to discuss policy updates on religion in schools, video or audio recordings in schools, nonresident students, and more.

Proposed Policies

The Committee approved for First Reading:

- A proposed update to Policy 2270, Religion in Schools, incorporating recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education.
- Proposed updates to Policies 3324 and 4324, including new language prohibiting audio or video recording of staff or students except under certain conditions. The Committee added language requiring building administrators to publicize this prohibition to staff, students, and school communities.

- Updates to Policy and Regulation 5111, Eligibility of Resident/Nonresident Students to incorporate recent updates to relevant statutory and code provisions. The updated policy and regulation carry forward the exemptions for nonresident students in the current versions.

Legislative

Mr. Rubin briefed the Committee on several legislative matters, including how the new sick-leave statute is being applied in practice, and Senate Bill 1812, establishing new criteria for determining whether a special-needs child qualifies for classification under the category "specific learning disability."

Culture, Climate & Community Relations

The Climate, Culture, and Community Relations Committee met on January 16, 2024, to discuss positive message, community partnerships, wellness services, and more.

Positive Messaging

- The monthly themes, quotes, and marquee images for December and January were shared and discussed, including the December theme of Generosity and Giving and marquee images for Muslim Heritage Month and Martin Luther King Day in January.
- The committee discussed the possibility of sharing weekly quotes via social media, school displays, and school communications, in addition to marquees.

Community Partnerships

- An update was shared about the recently formed partnership with Junior Achievement NJ. The PHS Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) students are receiving training from Junior Achievement to engage in a HS Heroes day, where they will visit M.L. King and Arbor intermediate schools to teach students about financial literacy.
- The committee will consider reaching out to the Malcolm Jenkins Foundation to inquire about community outreach efforts related to financial literacy.
- The district asked Jersey Cares about offering science presentations at Arbor School. In the meantime, they volunteered to engage fifth-grade classes at Arbor in Black History Month trivia activities in February.
- The Committee discussed ways to keep the outdoor libraries at King School (made by the Jersey Cares volunteer day in October) stocked with books. A suggestion was also made to reach out to the Piscataway Boy Scouts about building outdoor libraries at other schools.

Wellness Services

- The Committee discussed the results of the school start time survey, and the letter Dr. Ranelli shared with the school community.
- Those who attended the Haven Family Night in November shared details about the event. The Committee discussed its suggested revisions to the family night flyer that were used in advertising for the event.

New Business

- The Committee discussed the next steps of the district's work with Dr. Lanise Stevenson, the lead researcher for the district's equity audit. In the coming months, she will be conducting focus groups and semi-structured interviews with small groups of students, families, and staff.

Fiscal Planning & Operations

The Fiscal Planning and Operations Committee met on February 7, 2024, to discuss the 2024-2025 budget, project assessments, food services, and more.

2024-2025 Budget

- The Committee reviewed the 2024-2025 Preliminary Budget-Draft Information worksheet. The Committee discussed the proposed tax levy, state aid, and major expense categories.

Facility Capital Projects

- The District received notification of the award of \$177,487 in emergent funds to be applied to the PHS woodshop dust collection system.

Project Assessments

- Spiezle Architectural Group has provided a proposal to complete acoustical assessments for the PHS Anthony Gym and the Admin Building multipurpose room. Cost - \$13,900
- Spiezle has provided a proposal to assess PHS Media Center remodel options to include an e-sports gaming area. Cost - \$12,500
- The PHS woodshop dust collection system bid specifications will be available February 13. Door hardware project bid specifications are being finalized.
- Spiezle has provided a proposal to complete civil engineering work for paving of the PHS bus loop to complete the summer 2024 paving bid specifications. Cost - \$63,500

Energy Savings Improvement Program (ESIP)

- Siemens remains on track to complete the building management system upgrade in early April.

Food Services

- The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch is similar to prior year, in the range of 35-38 percent.
- Dr. Connors discussed the criteria for forming an ad-hoc committee for meal-charging policy. The Committee discussed the implications of the District adopting universal free lunch.
- Edvocate has begun working with the district on gathering information for the food service management company request for proposals. The District will be switching from a fixed-price contract to a cost-reimbursable contract.

New Jersey School Business Legislative

- Kevin Dehmer has been nominated to be Commissioner of the NJ Department of Education.
- Dr. Connors discussed several bills that were signed into law by Governor Murphy and bills under consideration by the Senate and Assembly Education Committees.

Business Office

- The Committee reviewed the current balance in the January 2024 NJARM investment account. The Committee reviewed information from the District's NJARM account adviser regarding investment options.
- The District sold 1,838 EY2020 Solar Renewable Energy Certificates at a price of \$207/SREC for a total of more than \$380,000. The original Quibbltown solar panels will reach the end of their 15-year qualification life in June 2024. The Committee reviewed a report of expiration dates for the other district-owned solar panels.