

BIG SPRING SCHOOL DISTRICT

Newville, Pennsylvania

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, APRIL 19, 2010

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I. CALL TO ORDER

The Committee of the Whole of the Board of School Directors for the Big Spring School District met in the Big Spring High School Large Group Room, Room 140, at 7:00 P.M. with President Wilbur Wolf, Jr., presiding. Six (6) directors present: Wilbur Wolf, Jr., President; William Swanson, Vice President; Robert Lee Barrick, Secretary; Terry Lopp, Treasurer; Tarin Houpt; and Richard Norris.

Kingsley Blasco joined the meeting in progress at 7:45 P.M.

William Piper and Richard Roush were absent.

Others in attendance: Richard Fry, Superintendent; Jeanne Temple, Assistant Superintendent; Kevin Roberts, Director of Curriculum/Instruction and Educational Technology; Richard E. Kerr, Jr., Business Manager; Steve Smith, High School Principal; Denny Clopper, The Valley Times-Star; and Brenda Line, Board Minutes. Also present: Susan Blessing, Jacob Blessing, Joseph Blessing, Charlene D'Amore, Kristina Dahlinger, Jacqueline Graham, Tyler Henry, Jenna Hurley, Kelly Hurley, Norma Keefer, Samantha Moyer, Jean Wadlinger, and Sherri Webber-Mains.

II. PRESENTATION

Ninth Grade Transition Work – Mr. Steven Smith, Principal and High School Staff - Jean Wadlinger, Sherri Webber-Mains, and Tyler Henry

Mr. Smith introduced the staff members present this evening and noted that Mrs. Mains and Mrs. Wadlinger were among the staff members who attended a conference in November regarding the freshman seminar course to be offered to the 270 students who will be in Grade 9 for the 2010-2011 school term. Mr. Smith noted that staff members are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for freshmen at all achievement levels.

Mr. Smith commended the Transition Subcommittee members who have been working hard to prepare for offering the freshman seminar course in the fall.

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II. PRESENTATION (Continued)

Ninth Grade Transition Work (Continued)

Mr. Smith, Mrs. Wadlinger, Mrs. Mains, and Mr. Henry offered a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Freshman Seminar Course, Fall 2010." Please refer to the attached seven-page hard copy of the presentation.

The following items were noted in addition to information included in the PowerPoint presentation:

1. This course is designed to ensure that all students understand the relevance of school to their profession or career after high school.
2. The main reason for offering this class: 62 percent of students who drop out of school students make their decision to drop out of school by November of the freshman year.
3. In response to a question from President Wolf, Mr. Fry indicated that he believes approximately 84 percent of Big Spring's 2005 freshman class graduated last school year.
4. This course is designed to help students understand what kind of profession or earning capacity one must have to maintain a particular lifestyle, such as living in a \$2 million home.
5. A District goal is to gear students toward lifelong learning, either in a career or college. If a student has a goal, the student is more likely to complete high school.
6. All teachers would have access to their students' 10-year plans and could use those plans to encourage and guide students toward completing those plans.
7. Many colleges have reported that just 45 percent of college freshmen return as sophomores the following year.
8. Members of the administration and professional staff would share the responsibility of teaching the freshman seminar course. Any teacher with certification could teach the course.
9. Schools offering the freshman seminar have experienced increased attendance, decreased dropout rate, and an increased number of students who make the honor roll.
10. The book used for this course is entitled *Career Choices*. The book meets 95 percent of the Pennsylvania freshman transition standards.
11. Students could select a few different career goals and use My10yearPLAN.com to determine which career to pursue.
12. In response to a question from Director Norris regarding a return on investment, Mr. Smith indicated that he would attempt to compile information for the Board related to the approximate percentage of decrease in the student dropout rate when this program is implemented. Mr. Smith indicated that the statistics from schools that have implemented this course have been "powerful" with regard to improved attendance, decreased dropout rate, and increased achievement.
13. Mr. Fry noted that over the past 10-12 years, Big Spring has had the highest or second-highest dropout rate in the Capital Area Intermediate Unit. Mr. Fry added that he believes this program could help support the process of attempting to help students succeed and graduate high school.
14. Mr. Fry noted that when reviewing the earning potential of a high school dropout compared with a student who earns a college degree, "one dropout pays for the program." Mr. Fry added that the course uses a need-focused approach to at-risk students. In addition, the course encourages even the class valedictorian to do a better job at preparing a 10-year plan.

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II. PRESENTATION (Continued)

Ninth Grade Transition Work (Continued)

15. Mr. Norris indicated that he agrees these items are very important to address, given his life experience with his classmates who gave up on college, many while attempting to earn degrees that one could not fathom how it would apply to life.
16. The freshman seminar course and the pathways go hand in hand to prepare students to be successful.
17. The Accountability Block Grant funds would be used to fund the course, applying the principle that the course is designed to limit the high school dropout rate. As of now, the sustainability of the Accountability Block Grant is approximately two years. After that, a different funding option would be considered.
18. The freshman seminar course is designed to help improve the success of a student ranked #1 as well as the success of a student ranked #240 and all the students in between.
19. Even though a student knows early in life that college attendance is in that student's future, this course is designed to guide that student in a path that would be most suitable to the individual.
20. Mr. Norris suggested that the administration should consider offering this course in Grade 8 because it might be too late for some students to hear this information in Grade 9. Mr. Norris encouraged the administration to begin addressing at least some of the critical information in Grade 8.
21. The members of the Board of School Directors were provided with copies of the course materials for the freshman seminar course to review.
22. Lesson plans and "extremely spelled out" guidelines for the freshman seminar course are provided by the publishers so that teachers are not required to spend hours writing the curriculum or preparing to teach the course.
23. The program is written with Pennsylvania standards in mind. A program for each state has been designed according to each state's standards.
24. Middle school guidance counselors are making an effort to encourage students to consider a profession unique and compatible with the individual. Professionals are being invited to speak to students in courses related to that person's profession. For example, an engineer would speak to a science class and address the relevance of science to a particular career.
25. President Wolf encouraged the counselors to ensure that students consider the way in which wages paid for a particular profession.
26. Mr. Smith noted that the freshman seminar course offers students a "big dose of realism" but usually does not discourage a student from selecting a career that is most suitable for that individual.
27. Mr. Norris encouraged the staff to ensure that a student determines a gifted area and establishes whether there is a need for workers in that particular profession in the geographical area in which the individual would like to live and work. Mrs. Mains noted that the Pennsylvania Department of Labor publishes job categories and job openings each year, and students could be provided with that information. Staff members use those statistics to prepare students to develop the 10-year plan.

President Wolf thanked Mr. Smith, Mr. Henry, Mrs. Mains, Mrs. Wadlinger for their presentation and for encouraging students to achieve success in life.

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III. PREVIEW OF THE AGENDA

A. Combine and Address

President Wolf requested that the Board address XIII., NEW BUSINESS, A., PERSONNEL CONCERNS, Items A-1 through A-9 as a single action item.

B. Earned Income Tax

Mr. Kerr reported two notable issues related to the earned income tax (EIT) year-to-date summary:

1. EIT collections are behind by several hundred thousand dollars compared with prior years; however, Mr. Kerr believes this deficit will be corrected in the fall when the warehouse in the District comes online. Mr. Kerr indicated that he would monitor EIT collections throughout the year and report to the Board.
2. Expenditures are "off significantly" because this year a cash management program is used that pays bond bills only when they are due. Otherwise, the District is on track with expenditures, and they are slightly less than last year.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Norris, seconded by Swanson to adjourn. Roll call vote: Voting Yes: Blasco, Hout, Norris, Lopp, Barrick, Swanson, and Wolf. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 P.M.



Robert Lee Barrick, Secretary