

BOARD NOTES
March 23, 2009

The regular meeting of the School Board was held on Monday, March 23, 2009 in the LGI Room of the New Prairie Middle School with all board members present.

Rich Shail reviewed the guidelines for speaking on agenda items.

The board adopted the agenda as presented.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRESENTATION

- Clara Clark presented the New Prairie High School Career Academies. There are six academies. The career academic sequence is a flexible sequence of courses designed to help a student explore and prepare for a specific career area or group of related occupations. The academies offered are:
 - Arts & Communications
 - Teaching Academy
 - Bio-Medical Sciences
 - Business Academy
 - Construction
 - Engineering

Students explained the electives offered under each academy. Many programs offer both high school and post-secondary credits. Mrs. Clark advised that they just signed an agreement with the Carpenter's Union for the Building Trades students who can earn an apprenticeship.

Rich Shail asked if these programs could have been offered without a Block 8 schedule. Clara said the block helps. We would not be able to offer as much.

- The board recognized Jill Fisher who was selected as 2009 Regional Academic All-Star.

- Casey Gumm talked about the High Ability Program. She said the plan must address the learning needs of all students, including programs and services for exceptional learners. She reviewed the High Ability Mission statement which includes six goals. This year they started working with the Middle School teachers. They have developed short term and long term goals. They are meeting with parents in the fall and spring. The program has received a \$500 grant to spend on resources. They are also working on an identification process. Some areas they want to expand are:
 - Establish a website on high ability for parents and staff
 - Licensing for more teachers
 - Mentoring for next year to work with HA students
 - Counselors to meet with HA students
 - Staff Development
 - Parent Meetings - one each quarter
 - Take Middle School collaboration to the elementary school

Bernie said when you talk about High Ability, you are talking academics. How do we address high ability in other areas? Casey said right now our mandate is just academics. We need to focus on this right now and then hope to move into other areas. We have also questioned other subject areas other than Reading and Math.

- The School Board recognized the following groups for their accomplishments:
 - FBLA participation in State Leadership Conference. Several members qualified for Nationals. Mrs. Jerzak announced that 98% of our students received seventh place or above and they received Outstanding Chapter in the State.
 - High School Swim Team for State Participation
 - High School Robotics Team
 - Prairie View's High Ability students for their Outstanding Dedication to Learning or Exceptional Achievement
 - Recognized Regional Spelling Bee Winners - Brandon Zimmerman, Lisa Fischer and Brandee Pietrzak
 - Young Astronauts - Olive Elementary School - Scored 96% overall
 - Math Bowl - Rolling Prairie - Received 1st Place in their division
 - Middle School Wrestling Team - Northern State Conference Champions
 - Quinn Romstadt selected for National Book Competition Award
 - Thom Smith - Named Coach of the Year for Class AA Boys Track and Field

Rich Shail said this is why we are proud to be teachers, parents, board members and administrators. He wants to thank everyone for a wonderful job.

- The board approved the Consent Agenda as follows:
 - Minutes - February 23, 2009
 - Financial Reports
 - Claims
 - Payroll
 - Personnel as follows:

CERTIFIED

- Resignations/Retirements/Leaves
 1. Jennie Kopkowski - 2nd Grade Teacher - Olive Elementary - Retirement effective June 1, 2009
 2. Susan Koziel - 5th Grade Teacher - Prairie View - Leave of Absence beginning March 1, 2009 thru March 17, 2009
- Employment - Extra-Curricular
 1. Debbie Varga - Practical Arts Department Chair - NPHS
 2. Josh Bolakowski - Wrestling Coach - Prairie View

NON-CERTIFIED

- Resignations/Retirements/Leaves
 1. Dawn Ortega - Lunchroom Assistant - Rolling Prairie - Resignation effective 3/09/09
- Employment - Extra-Curricular
 1. Randy Curless - Assistant Softball - NPHS
 2. Eric Lower - Co-Boys/Girls Swimming - NPMS
 3. Wes Hobart - Wrestling - Rolling Prairie

Reports

- Superintendent's Report
 - Dr. Bender reviewed the Stimulus Package. We are expected to receive \$78,000 in Title I monies for two years. We are also expected to received \$230,000 in incentive building monies; however, that could change. There is to be an increase of \$300,000 for special needs which will increase by \$340,000 for the second year. Dr. Bender said the IDEA has been cut substantially over the past few years. For Title I incentive monies, we are looking at Angie Hambling and Marcia Kelly to develop some programs. They are looking at pre-school programs at the trailer park for Hispanic children.
 - Keith Dennis advised that \$25,000 has been collected from textbook fees. A second letter went to over 520 people on Thursday and given a deadline of April 3rd. Those individuals will then be turned over to a collection agency. We have had some success and have cleaned up a lot of records. We have about \$75,000 left on this year's money. Treasurers are working hard to clean up the records so we don't have a repeat of this.
- Board/Administration Retreat was held on February 11th with Michael Adamson of the ISBA and another retreat on March 11th with the board and administration.
- State Financial Situation
 - Dr. Bender advised that we receive information daily. Late this afternoon the legislation presented an amendment to SB 388 to accelerate implementation of the Circuit Breaker. This is supposed to be a property tax relief. We depend on property tax funding. There was a \$200 million loss this year. Our General Fund is now funded by the state
- Dr. Bender reviewed the Cash Flow
 - February ending balance was \$917,000
 - March ending balance - \$362,000 (we will receive \$1.28 million in grant monies from the state)
 - April anticipated ending balance - \$882,000
 - May anticipated ending balance - \$89,000 without borrowing

LaPorte County assured us the provisional bills should come in around April. We have not received property tax monies from LaPorte. We have borrowed \$3 million from the Indiana Bond Bank. We may have to borrow again in June. This is the second year of the budget that has not been approved by the county or state.

- DOE Issues

Dr. Bender advised that the ISTA and Indiana Public School Superintendent's Association are working hand in hand for the first time to express ISTEP concerns to Tony Bennett.

Dr. Bennett met with five area superintendents in LaPorte recently to discuss ten pre-constructed questions centered around:

- Stimulus Package
- Transfer Tuition
- Budget Preparation
- Professional Development Days
- Reorganization of School Corporations
- Property Tax for 2007 and 2008
- State take-over for payroll and benefits
- Charter Schools
- Student Data Management Systems
- AP tests paid by the state

- Dr. Bender said we still do not know if we will receive funding for full-day kindergarten.
- Dr. Bender reviewed AYP scores. He advised that Indiana will be a pilot state for differentiated accountability. This process defines the ramifications of AYP.

Dr. Bender advised that special education students are required to take a test that we know they are not able to function in those areas. They usually operate two grade levels below their chronological age. Our teachers are working hard for these students to pass. The goal is to move into Safe Harbor. Free and reduced determines Title I schools.

- Textbook Adoption - Social Studies

The projections for K-8 would cost about \$85,000. Book rental would go up in grades 6-8. We need to decide whether we want to do this adoption.

- DLGF proposed tax rate and budget timelines have been moved up. We will be approving the budget in August rather than September. It will be the third budget not approved by the state.
- Professional Development Days and Parent/Teacher Conferences

We have traditionally offered Parent/Teacher conferences K-12. It is very difficult in the high school and middle school. The six half days are gone according to the state. Those days are beneficial because of the requirements of the school improvement plans. We will have to look at something different. The requirement of 180 days is firm. We will not be able to do parent conferences as we have done in the past because it would not meet the 180 days. We are not sure how things will change.

- Waiver for 180 days

When we shorten the days, we still have to pay the teachers which is about \$60,000. We do not look for the waivers. We need to do this for our students. The calendar for the 2009-2010 school year will have to be re-opened. We will be meeting with the teacher's association to discuss this. We want to continue Parent/Teacher conferences, but will look at it differently.

Bernie said there was some emphasis on bills that addressed full days for professional development rather than half days. Will this change the 180-day requirement? Dr. Bender said we will have to see what happens with the situation. The Governor is also pushing for a flat-line budget. We are required to pay teachers for steps. That would not create a flat-line budget. We are doing a good job with what we have to provide for the needs of our students. Summer school will be approved and that is funded by the state.

ACTION ITEMS

- The board approved the 2009 CPF Amendment Hearing. There were no comments from the public.
- The board approved the 2009 CPF Amendment and Resolution as presented.
- The board approved the Certificate of Authority with Wells Fargo Brokerage. This is a money market funding invested in securities for schools.

- The board approved summer school for 2009 for Category 1 courses at the high school. We will also offer Exploratory Music which is a Category 2. This will be funded thru Title II funds. There is a minimum of 15 student participation for any courses offered. Al Williamson asked what the reimbursement will be. Dr. Bender said the state indicates a 105% reimbursement, but we usually receive about 85%.
- The board approved lawn mowing quotations for the middle school for one year with C.J.'s at the cost of \$275 per mowing.
- The board approved the 2009 midyear funding program with the Indiana Bond Bank for borrowing in June if necessary.

DISCUSSION

- Dr. Bender reviewed the concern of parents taking students out of school for vacations during ISTEP. We encourage family time, but the issue is we have a window to give this testing and there is accountability that comes with it. There were 200 days of combined absences for the two week period of ISTEP this spring alone. The elementary and middle schools must find time to get these students tested before the materials are returned to the state. Students then have to take the test in 1 ½ days when they return from vacation. We are waiting for a policy change for the board to review regarding vacations. We don't experience as much of a problem in the high school because you have a three-day window for GQE. Also, if you miss ten days, you lose credits. We have had parents who withdraw their kids from school and re-enroll. It does not get that student out of testing. It reflects upon us as a failure. It is an assessment that we have out there and we want to encourage parents to talk to other parents not to have their kids miss school. Bernie asked if it was worse since we moved to spring testing. Dr. Bender does not think it is any different. He feels it goes back to the low rates at this time of the year for travel.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Dale Groves would like to congratulate all the students who were recognized this evening. He said too often we focus on the negatives. It is wonderful to see so many students recognized for the right things. It is a shame the media was not present.
- Dale said he was able to attend the Science Fair at Olive. There was a lot of work put into this program. He wants to congratulate the students and staff.

- Dale said he enjoyed the 100 people for 100 minutes program at the high school. There were a lot of nice comments, especially from the students. He learned a lot. He would encourage everyone to have more conversations. It was very worthwhile. Thank you for putting that on.
- Bernie said he recently heard we just recognize athletics. Tonight showed that we are not all about athletic recognition. The bulk of recognition tonight was academic and not just athletics.
- Bernie said there was conversation at our retreat that minutes should only reflect the motions made. He wants to compliment Joann Evans for the minutes and the way she gets the information back to us, especially after training. It brings things back to mind. It is very valuable.
- Rich said at the retreat we talked about Strategic Planning. He said it opened his eyes to the need to address some areas. He found some areas that could utilize the strategic planning, even if it is things we do well. It is a wonderful tool that we should utilize.