

Afterwards

A summary
of Wednesday's meeting
of the Board
of Education

December 5, 2007

Recognitions

Karianna Eide-Lindsay

Superintendent Dr. Raymond Bryant and Board President Dan Hurley presented a certificate of recognition to EFA student Karianna Eide-Lindsay, who was selected for both Area All-State and All-State choral groups.

Area All-State participants

District music chair Jay Stoltzfus, Dr. Bryant and Mr. Hurley recognized the following students for their selection to Area All-State ensembles:

Mixed choir: Katelyn Cooper, Colin Crowley, Jared Parker, Mike Davis, Isaac Miles and Steven Ostrander.

Orchestra: Phil Rakich, Chris Petrey, Alex Hughes, Jessica Roupp, Jen Morris, Kassie Kimball, Brittany Girardi, Shontae Cole, Danna Bohman, Christiana Eckel, Sarah Snyder, Alyssa Manchester, Kristen Cooper and Nellie Bennett.

Women's choir: Katie Curren, Rachel Thompson, Carly Wood, Tanika Brown and Mallory Davis.

Concert band: Laura Ackerman, Julia Frisk, Lyndsay Doyle, Ashley Frantellizzi, LaShonna Machmer, Marlyn Moore, Patti Tucker, Adam Sandore, Emily Forman and Gabrielle Cornish.

Dr. Bryant also recognized the following music teachers: Scott Kelley, Stuart McLean, Don Webster, Dr. Stoltzfus, Robert Dumas, Nancy Conley, Kimberly Henry and Mary Jane Eckel.

Cody Dondero

Broadway Middle School French teacher Chrystelle Spencer discussed student Cody Dondero, who was named a finalist in the "In Lafayette's Footsteps" contest sponsored by the French Embassy.

Amanda Mace and Melissa Brayman

Deputy Superintendent Joseph Hochreiter introduced Broadway Elementary teachers Amanda Mace and Melissa Bryaman, who were selected by the Instructional Center for Leadership in Education for a video on best practices.

Special education presentation

Hildreth Rose, regional SETRC and Transition Specialist for the Western and Midwest Region, discussed special education and the Committee on Special Education process. When a parent or teacher refers a student to special education, the school district must follow up and make parent contact. After the parent signs the consent to evaluate, the district must complete an evaluation of the student within 60 days.

The district must demonstrate all the interventions and strategies it has used to help the child before placing him or her in special education. A student cannot be eligible for special education services due to a lack of instruction in reading or math, or a limited proficiency in English.

The CSE must reach consensus on what services to offer, then make a recommendation to the Board, which either agrees to move forward or asks the committee to take another look.

Testing accommodations must be accommodations that are also used during instruction. The district must provide regular reports of student progress to parents.

Superintendent's report

Upward Bound grant

Cornell University has received a four-year grant to work with the Elmira and Groton school districts to help prepare low-income students who would be the first in their families to attend college.

New courses

Mr. Hochreiter provided the Board with new course proposals for the 2008-09 school year: Film Studies, Hot Topics in Science, The World at War, Local History in the Classroom, Introduction to Theatre and Music in Our Lives. The Board approved the courses.

Capital construction

Board member Robert Woods questioned what will be done to alleviate student crowding at Southside during construction.

The contractors believe the new science addition will be completed in September 2008, which will open up room to move students during other phases of the project.

The proposal on the table now is to put two trailers outside the athletic entrance to serve as the main office and guidance suite. All visitors would enter through the trailers.

The Board will discuss the Southside plans and plans for Washington and their effect on Booth at the December 19 meeting.

Mr. Woods also discussed the possibility of raising the Southside athletic field to allow turf to be placed there. The turf cannot be placed at the field's current height because digging into contaminated soil would be required, which would put the Southside project significantly over budget. Assistant Superintendent David Gleason will provide cost information about options for the field.

Visitors to the Board

EFA teacher Anne Caruana discussed the historical pattern of teacher contracts and negotiations.

Diven Parent Partner Crystal Baker asked if the Board had chosen a replacement for Timothy Blandford as the Diven Board rep.

Ted Lax asked how the change to block will benefit EFA, how those benefits will be measured and what the basis for the decision was. **A fact sheet answering these questions is attached to this document.**

Barton Graham discussed the Board's acquisition of a property near Riverside Elementary School.

Jay Stoltzfus asked that the alignment of schedules at the high schools provide appropriate opportunities for students in all areas of study.

Consent items

The Board approved minutes, donations, an amendment to Dr. Bryant's contract, cooperative bidding and CSE recommendations

Personnel

The Board approved personnel recommendations.

Fact Sheet

The issue: EFA block scheduling

Elmira Free Academy will transition to a block schedule in September 2008.

Background

- ✓ When former Superintendent Laura Sherwood led the school district, the school board made a decision to align the schedules of EFA and Southside High School. EFA was given time to demonstrate that a traditional schedule could be successful; when academic outcomes did not change, the board made the decision to move EFA to a block schedule. When he joined the district in 2005, current Superintendent Dr. Raymond Bryant was charged with moving EFA to the block by September 2007. An audit by the Center for Curriculum Renewal in 2006 reaffirmed the decision. In the fall of 2006, the administration at EFA requested additional time to prepare for the move. In December 2006, the board reaffirmed the decision to move to the block and granted EFA an additional year.
- ✓ EFA administration created a thorough transition plan, highlighting communication to students and families, building awareness with teaching staff and providing targeted staff development to all teaching staff.
- ✓ EFA staff and administration and district administration have been preparing for the transition with professional development about teaching in the block, meetings with parents and students regarding the change, observations of other schools in the block, including Southside, and an examination of the current schedule.

What does the change mean?

- ✓ A block schedule differs from the traditional nine-period schedule in that fewer classes are held each day, but for a longer period of time. Classes generally run for 80 minutes with four classes (plus lunch) per day. One semester is equal to 20 weeks of instruction (September to January, and February to June).
- ✓ Rather than running all year, courses are generally completed in one semester. Classes that must be offered all year, such as music performance groups, may be held during the daily advisement period.

Benefits of the block

- ✓ Fewer class changes.
- ✓ Less hallway traffic results in fewer opportunities for student behavior problems.
- ✓ The longer instructional period results in increased time on task for students.
- ✓ Longer classes give teachers time to teach subjects in greater depth, affording the opportunity to utilize multiple research-based instructional strategies within one class period.
- ✓ Longer instructional periods result in increased instructional time for students at no extra cost to taxpayers. For example, once block scheduling is implemented at EFA, there will be 3,600 hours of additional instructional time, even with current teachers' salaries and school day schedule. This is achieved because teachers in the block schedule teach six classes a year, while teachers in the traditional schedule teach five classes a year.
- ✓ Smaller class size, which allows teachers to support students' different needs and learning styles. Data shows that when teachers make lesson plans for longer class periods, they include at least three different activities for students.
- ✓ At a maximum, students would be enrolled in four different classes each semester, increasing student attention, focus and preparedness for these courses.
- ✓ Increased number of students fully subscribed in school because students take four courses each semester instead of eight.
- ✓ Fewer study halls. Currently at EFA there are 132 study halls, and many students have multiple study halls. When a student has two or three study halls in a row, the likelihood of behavior problems increases dramatically.
- ✓ Within the regular school day, students will have an opportunity to access their teachers during an advisement period for additional support, extension activities, remediation, etc.
- ✓ Because more classes are being taught, there is a greater opportunity for additional electives, advanced placement classes and remediation classes, again, at no extra cost to taxpayers.
- ✓ Data suggests that once teachers adjust their traditional lesson plans to block scheduling – usually after experiencing it for two or more years – teachers are more favorable to it.