

Administrative Bulletin to Board Members

August 23, 2013

Superintendent Report

Bus Transportation

During and in between the last three board meetings we have had a lot of discussion about PreK. To date, we have had 40 new students' enrollments with a total of 25 students withdraws which increased our student population by 15. Because of where the students are located we found it necessary to make some minor changes on bus routes because several buses were full.

Probably the most notable change for this year was with the bus that last year drove into the Senior Citizen Center but is now picking those students up at the end of the road. The major reason for this change is that as soon as the bus turned into that road students began running to the bus from all different directions. There is no place to turn the bus in a circle, therefore it must back up and on several occasions once the driver loaded the students and began to back up a late student would come running to the bus. Thus, creating an extremely dangerous situation.

PreK

First, I would like to indicate that I am an extremely strong supporter of PreK and any other early intervention program. All the research clearly indicates that if you are going to decrease learning deficits it must be done so in the early ages. Research indicates that by sixth grade the best you can hope for is to insure every child's growth is at least one year. Which is to say that if a child is two years behind in the sixth grade the best we can hope for is to insure that child remains two years behind and doesn't drop lower than the two year deficit he or she has at that time.

There is absolutely no question that you can choose to use some of your emergency funding to run your own program. However, the following are issues you need to consider in making such a decision:

1. If you use the \$100,000 from emergency reserve next year you again need \$100,000 to be placed in emergency reserve or your emergency reserve will only be at \$200,000.
2. Once you open the door to a district run operation that is open to all and the chances are extremely great that you will end up with more students than can be accommodated by a single teacher and aide.

From my perspective, I did not feel it appropriate for me to advocate spending the emergency reserve for this program for the following reasons:

1. During the budget process the message I received from the board was that they wanted us to cut an additional \$50,000-\$60,000 from the budget. In order to do so the only proposals we could provide was to cut existing programs and reduce staff.
2. If we are to run a PreK program, which I would personally love to be able to do, we need to remember that next year we would definitely need to give strong consideration to cutting programs that presently exist in an effort to reduce some of the increase that would be caused by operating a PreK program.

Mrs. Corle and I are more than willing to move forward with any decision you as a board decided to make. We still firmly believe, as I have indicated verbally in the past, that once told to do so we would have the program up and running in three weeks.

I realize the decision on whether or not to operate a district run PreK program is an extremely difficult one for this board. It has been extremely difficult for me to not pick up the torch and cheer you forward to make a decision to run the program. As I indicated verbally at one of our meetings, eight years ago it would have been much easier to advocate moving forward because the economy of the community, state, and country was by far in much better shape at that time.

Natural Gas Line

After numerous emails and phone calls I have finally been able to talk to Columbia Gas's head engineer. The line that is presently to be installed will be a six inch line which he indicates will definitely be able to service the area and a small industrial park. The PSI through the line will be the biggest determining factor as to what they can actually service. At present time, PSI prescribed to be sent through the line is 15 PSI. This can be changed at a later time should there be a need to increase that. I have also been in contact with P&W who has indicated that they have had conversations with Columbia Gas but believe at this time they will not spend the money to upgrade their equipment in order to use natural gas. They have agreed to keep me posted should this change. They have also indicated that their facility would need 15 to 20 PSI in the line. Eric was also kind enough to check with his company who also uses natural gas for their kilns which run at 1900 degrees Fahrenheit, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They have a 5 inch line with 20 PSI. Therefore, knowing the five inch line going into the plant where Eric works has 20 pounds pressure. One of the things that John and I learned through working with the propane proposals is that the smaller the line the greater the pressure with propane gas but the larger the line the greater the pressure with natural gas. Reasons would indicate that the six inch line would be able to accommodate greater than 20 pounds PSI. The amount of PSI placed in the line is an issue that Columbia Gas will deal with in order to meet the needs of their customers. Should there be charges and cost associated with increasing the PSI in the line. I do not believe that should be an issue for the district but one for Columbia Gas and future customers to work on.

High School Report

First Day of School

The first day of school went very well. There were a few glitches with the VoTech transportation; however, with some work between Synder Bus Lines, FCAVTS and Central Fulton, most of the issues have been resolved. There is still a minor timing issue with some of the students returning from Central Fulton in time for their lunch but I feel strongly this will be resolved by the end of the week.

I met with every class the first day of school to review the changes to the discipline policy and review key items of importance such as: Dress Code, Anti-Bullying Policy, Tobacco Policy, Attendance, Graduation Project Details, Driving Privileges. Each meeting occurred in the auditorium taking four periods grouping them as Seniors, Juniors, Sophomore/Freshman, Jr High Students. While this is time consuming, I do believe it is important for this to occur on the first day of school so students realize the importance of the discipline policy and the student code of conduct. I do this meetings personally and face-to-face.

AC/building Issues

I have spent a great deal of time dealing with AC/building issues. The AC is still not working properly; however, HEIM is doing an excellent job with their response time and genuine care and concern in making sure everything is addressed immediately.

Welding Students

Mrs. Solomon, Mr. Burd, Mr. Nelson and I met with the senior welding students to discuss possible job opportunities for them with the Mellott Company and JLG. We have been able to adjust their schedules to ensure they are welding “completers” at the end of their third year in the program, as well as qualify for Co-Op and/or the Senior Challenge program so they are able to get good paying jobs. Right now, JLG is hiring welders for \$14-16/hour and they are very interested in the AVTS welding students. Keeping this student in the welding program is a huge accomplishment and hopefully will pay off when they take their NOCTI and AWS certifications.

Large Class Sizes

Due to some very large class sizes (31, 30, 29, etc) we have had to adjust schedules with students and teachers. An example of this is one the Algebra IB sections (this is a new course that was created due to a curriculum change at the end of the year to meet the demands of the Algebra I Keystone Exam) that is being taught by Julie Dickerhoff. It is physically impossible for Julie to fit 31 students in her classroom so with a huge amount of teamwork by Mrs. Solomon, Mrs. Dickerhoff, Mr. Hollenshead and Ms. Adams; we were able to create yet another section of Algebra IB that is being taught by Mr. Hollenshead. The high school math department is running on bare bones due to the lack of replacing Stephanie Hartman at the end of the 2012-2013 school year. Unfortunately, we were not able to offer AP Statistics this year because of this deficiency.

Teachers

In addition to the lack of AP Statistics, Mr. Hollenshead is teaching ALL math classes this year when he typically teaches part-time math and part-time science. Due to the change in the Science curriculum that occurred at the end of the 2011-2012 school year, the science courses are on a different rotation which allowed Mr. Hollenshead to teach all math courses this year; however, next year the high school truly does need to replace the math teacher that left in July 2013 in order for Mr. Hollenshead to pick those sciences courses back up for the 2014-2015 school year. This science change was made to meet the demands of the 8th grade PSSAs and the Biology Keystone Exams.

Mr. Sholes is teaching the first-ever AP English course this school year. Again, Mrs. Solomon and Mr. Sholes worked very hard to re-arrange the schedules of both junior and seniors that wanted to take this course in order to make it fit in our very tight schedule.

Dress Code Violations

There have been several dress code violations the first two days with junior high students wearing skirts or shorts that are inappropriately too short. They were made to change their clothes to meet the dress code requirements.

Last Year Seniors

Of the three seniors that did not meet the requirements to graduate in May of 2013, one actually completed all of his required course work over the summer and was awarded his diploma this week. Another one of the students has completed one of his courses and is beginning the second course. Upon completion of that course, he, too, will receive his diploma. The third student has selected to return to Southern Fulton to fulfill his requirements to graduate and I am working with him to find a solution in his scheduling needs to help him get the two credits he needs in order to receive a diploma. While this is truly excellent news, the fact that two of them did not graduate before the beginning of the new school year, Southern Fulton will be penalized on the School Performance Profile as these students did not graduate in the typical four years of high school.

Teacher In-Service

The high school staff participated in two days of in-service trainings that were very informative. We spent valuable time reviewing the Anti-Bullying Policy, being trained on the PA-ETEP system (the new teacher effectiveness tool), ALICE (the latest information on intruders) and the Danielson Framework for Teacher Evaluation. This training occurred at the elementary school as the high school building was still in the process of preparing for the first day of school.

High School Custodial Staff

The high school custodial staff worked extremely hard under intense circumstances (no AC, limited time) to get the building ready for students the first day. They truly need to be commended for their efforts. That staff has been remarkable throughout this beginning phase of the renovation. I appreciate all of their dedication and pride in their work. It has been a busy two days.

Upcoming Events

Open House – The high school Open House is scheduled to occur on Thursday, August 29, 2013 from 6:00-7:30 p.m. In conjunction with the Open House, we are going to have Jamie Taylor from the Center for Families co-conduct (with our Anti-Bullying Committee) the annual Community KickOff to the Olweus Program. This will take approximately 15 minutes of the time and we will run a mock schedule the remainder of the evening.

Fall sports open this week! Good luck to all of the Indian teams!

Wednesday, August 28, 2013 at 6:00 p.m., Dr. Mandek, a cardiology specialist, is coming to present to the entire coaching staff (and anyone else who is interested) on the importance of understanding cardiac arrest and the new guidelines that have been put in place by PIAA.

Curriculum meetings have been taking place over the first two weeks of school and will continue throughout the school year (this is typical).

Gas line installation is scheduled to begin on Monday, August 26, 2013.

Curriculum Info

USDE officially approved PA's No Child Left Behind waiver request, which means:

1. The approved waiver is designed to improve Pennsylvania education in three areas: making sure all our students are ready for careers or college; developing recognition and accountability standards by the state for all public schools; improving and supporting effective teachers and principals in all our classrooms.
2. Pennsylvania's students need to be graduating from high school with high-quality academic credentials regardless of their career path. The state has developed high-quality assessments to make sure students achieve those academic standards.
3. Recognizing academic achievement and holding public schools accountable are essential to ensuring that taxpayer dollars are being invested in education programs that benefit students. Beginning in the fall, students, parents, taxpayers and educators will have access to user-friendly information that shows academic progress of all public school buildings across the state.

4. Through the use of the recently developed School Performance Profile, which will provide a comprehensive overview of multiple measures of student achievement, Pennsylvania citizens will be able to determine the quality of the educational programs in their schools and how students are performing.
5. The new educator evaluation system, signed into law last year by Corbett, will assess educators on multiple measures of student achievement, will provide schools with access to comprehensive resources to improve classroom instruction and provide professional development to teachers, principals and superintendents.
6. The new evaluation system will be in place for classroom teachers beginning with the 2013-14 school year and for principals and specialists in the 2014-15 school year.
7. The waiver also abolishes the adequate yearly progress designation for each school building and school district. In its place will be the School Performance Profile that will be used to measure the academic progress of all public schools.
8. Title I schools, those with a high percentage of low-income students, will receive a federal designation of “Priority,” “Focus” or “Reward” based on four annual measurable objectives:
 - a. Student participation on the math and reading Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams and the algebra I, biology and literature Keystone Exams;
 - b. Student graduation or attendance rate;
 - c. Closing the achievement gap of all students – reducing the number of students who score below proficient on the PSSA, Keystone Exams and the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) by 50 percent over a six-year period; and
 - d. Closing the achievement gap of historically underperforming students – reducing the number of students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged and English language learners who score below proficient on the PSSA, Keystone Exams and the PASA by 50 percent over a six-year period.

Schools designated as “Priority” or “Focus” will have access to intervention and support services from the state Department of Education to assist them in improving student achievement.

Schools that do not fall into a Title I category will receive a School Performance Profiles score rather than a federal designation, but will also have access to all the interventions and supports available.

For all public school buildings across the state, the School Performance Profile will provide a building-level academic score, which will be based on multiple indicators of academic achievement, including student performance on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment and Keystone Exams; closing the achievement gap; graduation rate; promotion rate; and attendance rate.

The high school staff meets regularly to review, measure, assess and change curriculum as needed based on the standards and core competencies that are mandated by the legislature. Pennsylvania recently changed the “Common Core” standards to the “Pennsylvania Core Standards” in order to stand apart from being tied into a national curriculum. While this change is mostly semantic, there are changes that need to be addressed.

Currently, students are required to take the PSSAs (which are not assessing the PA Core Standards but the standards previously set) in grades 7th & 8th. The 7th graders are required to take Math and Reading. The 8th graders are required to take Science, Writing, Math and Reading. In addition, if an 8th grader is in a

Keystone Exam course (Algebra I) they must also take that exam. PDE has not issued a timeline on when the 7th & 8th grade PSSAs will be changed to address the new PA Core Standards.

Students in ANY grade taking Algebra I, Biology or Literature (Grade 10) are required to take the end of year exam, known as the Keystone Exam. These exams are now being used to measure the growth and academic success of our school.

Anticipating these exams, Southern Fulton High School has been participating in the field tests that PDE has been conducted, for the previous three years in order to get a jump on the assessments and be able to truly set a baseline for where our students are and where they need to go. We have been taking these exams to prepare the students, as well as ourselves so we had a clear understanding of the massive curriculum overhaul that was required.

Since participating in the field tests and actual exams, we have had extensive revisions to the math and science curriculums. We have been working with the 4th & 5th grade science teachers to cooperatively access, not only the content of instruction, but also the timing of instruction to ensure students are receiving the instruction they need in order to prepare and successfully participate in the PSSA Science and the Biology Keystone Exams. We were able to re-align the curriculum to meet the needs of all students, beginning in grade 4 – 12. This is an on-going process; however, I believe we are making great strides in our science program.

My goal is to begin an AP Biology course in the 2014-2015 school year; however, that will require some creative scheduling and, again, I need to stress the importance of replacing the full time math position that was left vacant at the departure of Stephanie Hartman.

The math department is constantly reviewing data and uses that data to make informed curricular decisions. The past year we spent months as a PA LEADs district working on Algebra I, which allowed us to find our deficiencies and then address them by creating new courses to meet the needs of students who may struggle with Algebraic concepts. As a result of this, we have created Algebra IA and Algebra IB which takes the typical Algebra I course and breaks it into conceptual “chunks” that are found on the Algebra I Keystone Exam. In addition, we have revamped the College Algebra course to meet the PA Core Standards which are assessed on the Algebra I Keystone Exam.

The high school data analysis teams spends a minimum of two full days in the summer reviewing data/scores/assessment to determine our strengths, weaknesses and then creates an action plan to address these needs. We have been doing this every year since I have been the principal at Southern Fulton High School.

With the addition of the AP English course and the hiring of a new junior high English teacher, the English department is again addressing curriculum needs as a group. When the 11th grade PSSAs were eliminated, the assessments were moved to the sophomore year; therefore, giving us one less academic year to prepare our students. This change has resulted in the addition of vocabulary books being re-introduced in the junior high grades as well as more difficult vocabulary occurring in grades 9 and 10 (SAT type). We have the HUGE benefit of having a full time reading teacher for the junior high students and I know this is one of the reasons our 7th & 8th graders score so well on the PSSAs. Junior High students have 2 full years of English and 2 full year of Reading.

The social studies department work closely to determine coursework and readiness of the students. While there is currently not an assessment correlated to the social studies subject area, there is chatter at PDE

that one may be coming our way soon. I am anticipating this assessment and will work with the department so we are all prepared when and if this initiative takes place.

All teachers, specialty areas included, take part in the data analysis that occurs on an annual basis. These instructors are active in the curriculum discussions and truly care about the academic success of the students. They often do cross-curricular activities to reinforce the learning that has been taught in the academic areas. Several examples of this are: art classes uses geometric concepts that students been taught in Geometry to create art projects with specific requirements to meet the PA Core standards, the keyboarding classes use the vocabulary words from their 9th grade English course to practice their keyboarding skills, the health classes incorporate the biology of the human body into their lessons tying concepts directly back to science, the music class uses mathematical concepts to create original musical pieces using technology to play and present to the class.

We currently have the following AVTS enrollment: Drafting & Design = 1, Allied Health = 8, Construction Trades = 2, PC Repair/Networking = 4, Ag Production = 2, Ag Mechanics = 10, Welding = 22, Child Care = 7

Enrollment Numbers

7th Grade = 61
8th Grade = 64
9th Grade = 84
10th Grade = 76
11th Grade = 51
12th Grade = 61
Total = 397

Elementary Report

Enrollment

The elementary enrollment is currently 408 students. We ended the 2012-2013 school year with 412 students in grades Kindergarten through Grade six.. We have the following students currently enrolled in each grade level. Kindergarten has 51 students. Grade one has 60 students. Grade two has 55 students. Grade three has 54 students. Grade four has 60 students. Grade five has 60 students. Grade six has 68 students.

Open House

The elementary held our Open House/Meet the Teacher Night on Monday, August 19, 2013 from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM. Each grade level reported that the evening was well attended by parents and children. Parents had an opportunity to meet with the grade level and special area teachers. Cafeteria staff was also available to provide finger scanning for new students as well as to allow parents an opportunity to infuse their child's account with funds. I shared a brief overview of important safety information and other pertinent facts. I also held a small session in the cafeteria to review the beginning of the year parent/guardian paperwork and to answer any specific questions for parents. Mrs. Younker was available to answer questions for parents regarding services for their children.

Teacher Training

Teachers and staff attended the following trainings on Monday, August 19, 2013, and Tuesday, August 20, 2013. These trainings included: Confidentiality, PA-EETEP (Pennsylvania Electronic Evaluation Portal), Olweus Anti-Bullying Program updates, ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate), and Teacher Effectiveness. Mrs. Younker and staff presented critical updates on confidentiality in regards to student information, services to students (including English Language Learner information), and health services updates. Faculty and administration attended an important webinar on implementing the new Teacher Effectiveness evaluation program for observations and evaluations, PA-EETEP. Tuesday, August 20, 2013, all staff attended training updates on the district Olweus Anti-Bullying Program. This program was brought to the districts in the county through a grant by the Fulton County Center for Families. All school personnel attended training on the ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate) for school safety. The elementary school will be reviewing our safety protocols with appropriate local law enforcement to update our plans in the event of an emergency. During the afternoon session on Tuesday, August 20, 2013, faculty and administration attended a session detailing the changes to Teacher Evaluation as documented in Chapter 19 Title 22 of the Public School Code (printed in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on June 22, 2013). Paralleling those changes, Governor Tom Corbett announced Tuesday that the U.S. Department of Education has approved the state's No Child Left Behind waiver request. In addition to the new teacher evaluation system, the waiver changes how academic progress is measured in Pennsylvania Schools. A School Performance Profile will be used to detail the academic progress. This profile includes PSSA and Keystone Exam participation and performance, student graduation and attendance rates, and closing achievement gaps for students.

Curricular Updates

The elementary school faculty and administration find it necessary to update our curriculum yearly to best meet the needs of our children. Through this process, we began to make the necessary curricular updates in our science offerings in grade 6 to align more closely to the student needs in Keystone Exam during the 2011-2012 school year. Following those updates, I provided staff with draft information on Pennsylvania Common Core Standards. During the summer, staff began the process of reviewing their currently curricula in mathematics and science and aligning that curricula to the PA Common Core Standards. We deemed this necessary as students were slated to be tested on these standards on the Grades 3-5 Mathematics and English/Language Arts PSSA exams during the 2013-2014 school year. Selected staff attended training at Tuscarora IU 11 (at no additional cost to the district) and shared their knowledge with the faculty during meetings held at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. Faculty updated all facets of their courses to reflect these changes in the standards while not compromising the taught and tested curricula on the current PSSA Math and Reading exams. Course content and lesson plans reflect this shift to the PA Common Core Standards starting with the 2012-2013 school year. Faculty in grades 3-5 had an opportunity to administer a PSSA Writing Field Test in February 2013. Faculty members gleaned a wealth of understanding of the new testing format through this field test opportunity. Faculty continued to update their curricula in Mathematics and Language Arts throughout the year. We also worked to demonstrate this shift to deeper understanding of Mathematics and Language Arts through more thorough questions on our teacher-developed end of marking period assessments. Through the budgeting process, each grade level has augmented their teaching resources to reflect this. Please see attached timeline for a visual representation of the curricular work completed at the elementary level.

News from across the state demonstrates a hold on implementation of these standards. Governor Tom Corbett has put final approval of the new standards on hold due to backlash that began this past spring. State officials state that the decision to update the state standards was brought about by the dilemma that students were graduating from high school without the skills to enter the workforce, military, or higher education. The Senate Education Committee has scheduled its next meeting on Common Core for August 29, 2013. Please note that the regulations will need to clear both the House

and Senate Education Committees and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission for final approval.

I have included specific attachments detailing the work of curricula updating in the elementary school for the 2012-2013 school year. Regardless of the changes that are matriculated from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Southern Fulton Elementary assesses our students through varied methods and provides instruction that meets the needs of our students using a variety of instructional methods.

Business Manager Report

Several Board members have requested the General Fund Balance as of June 30, 2013. Until the audit for the year ending June 30, 2013 is completed, I will not have an accurate number to present. The local auditor will be starting the audit prior to the next board meeting in September and will be able to assist me in calculating an estimated ending balance. But please keep in mind, this will be an estimate.

Amita Munson

Superintendent/Board Secretary
Southern Fulton School District