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REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

Joel Barlow High School - Library Learning Commons

On on YouTube

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October 18, 2022 7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board members: D'Agostino, Johnston, O'Brien, Graziano, Denny, Lehberger, Pampel, Thompson

Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Almeida, Scrofani

Others: 6 members of the staff and public, and the videographer

CALL TO ORDER

M. D'Agostino called the Region 9 Board of Education Regular to order at 7:32 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the minutes of September 20, 2022, Regular Meeting as submitted. (Pampel, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

STUDENT COMMENT

Joel Barlow High School Student Government Representative, Owen Fellows, read from the Noteworthy News report, with highlights including: PSAT Testing Day was on October 12 and 357 students took the test. He noted that the students really appreciated the snacks and beverages provided by the PTSA; the Theatre Department's fall performance will be a contemporary version of "Oklahoma!" beginning Thursday Nov 10 - Sat. Nov 12; the JBHS Unified Sports team played its first soccer game of the season in Bethel; and, the football and girls' volleyball teams are undefeated so far this season. Student council is trying to start a Habitat for Humanity chapter at JBHS. Excitement about the upcoming Homecoming weekend festivities Nov.4-6, including a Homecoming Dance, Football game and a celebration bonfire.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon, said that there would be just two brief reports because of the lengthy report to come later in the meeting.

Joel Barlow High School Head of School, Dr. Mario Almeida, said he included a listing of new faculty, with photos, in the packet for Board members, and said that his report consisted of answers to questions BOE members had at the last meeting. In regard to a question about the number of minutes in a school year within the new daily schedule, he said that there were 6,700 minutes of instructional time in last year's block schedule and there is now 6,900 minutes of instructional time in the current schedule. In responding to the question of back-to-back study halls for students, Dr. Almeida said that there are no 9th

graders in this situation and that there are 76 students – approx 10% – in total, with back-to-back study halls (this number includes 40 Seniors).

Director of Finance, Technology & Operations, Sara Scrofani, reported that there are no significant concerns with the budget. She also reported that: given the supply chain challenges, they still need to finalize some 2022-2023 expenditures; at the November meeting, they anticipate asking the BOE to approve some adjustments for the hiring process; healthcare claims have increased, but that was anticipated; and, they have already started to organize the budget process for 2023-2024.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: GRANT ACCEPTANCES FOR JBHS ROBOTICS TEAM
M. D'Agostino said that he was disappointed with the tone of the administrative memo about grants because usually the administration and the Board work collaboratively. He said the Board has always accepted grants over \$500; that there's good reason for that, so that the Board and the administration maintain a strong relationship. M. D'Agostino said that moving forward he hoped that the Board would be asked to continue the practice of being asked to accept grants, rather than just being informed of them. Board members had questions about current grants for the Robotics team. JBHS Robotics Advisor, Ryan Paola, explained that the swerve drive is a drive mechanism that allows each wheel to turn individually, which allows your robot to move more effectively. He said the rest of the grants will be used for general support. C. Graziano commented that Policy 3280 requires BOE approval for grants of \$10K and more. M. D'Agostino said that it's always been the practice for the Board to accept grants and publicly express appreciation on behalf of the school community.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept, with great appreciation, the following grants for the Joel Barlow Robotics Team: \$3,500 from RTX-Raytheon; \$1,500 from Lockheed Martin; and \$4,520 from the Easton Learning Foundation to fund the development of the swerve drive robotics platform. (Lehberger, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION FOR APPROVAL OF NEW TEXTBOOKS FOR ASTRONOMY: PATHWAYS TO ASTRONOMY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: ENTREPRENEURSHIP

K. O'Brien said that she reviewed the textbooks and thought that the astronomy textbook was really good and very current.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the purchase and implementation of new textbooks for Astronomy: Pathways to Astronomy and Entrepreneurship: OpenStax Entrepreneurship. (O'Brien, Pampel). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION FOR APPROVAL: AUXILIARY GYM - HVAC AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

M. D'Agostino said that this project has been discussed very thoroughly through public discussions at previous BOE meetings and Facilities & Fields Committee meetings. He explained the scope of the work on this project includes: refurbishment of the gym floor, sports equipment, outside air HVAC rooftop units to the service the gym and training room, windows in the training room, removal of the gymnasium dividing wall, wrestling mat holders, new code-compliant bleachers, automated temperature controls, and special coverings for windows near the batting cage. C. Graziano asked about the timing of the project and any impact on the community. M. D'Agostino said that they had met with the athletic director and

that the timing of the project was acceptable. K. Thompson asked if the project would result in energy efficiencies. M. D'Agostino replied that it would because of the new more efficient HVAC units. C. Graziano asked for clarification on the bid process through the ezIQC system. M. D'Agostino explained that all vendors in the State ezIQC system have been fully vetted and chosen based on the lowest qualified bidder to serve each region. Additionally he explained that we are benefiting from lower pricing based on 2 years prior guaranteed cost structure.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept Price Proposal #108134.00 from Millennium Builders for \$640,998.34 for the JBHS Auxiliary Gym HVAC and Safety Improvement Project using the state approved ezIQC Procurement Process, and direct the Central Office Administration to issue a Purchase Order by November 1, 2022. This project will be funded through the Region 9 Capital Reserve Fund. (Denny, Graziano). Approved. Unanimous.

AGENDA CHANGE

Motion: Move to add a new Agenda Item D: Consideration for a Capital Reserve Fund Transfer. This addition moves Academic Performance down to become the new Agenda Item E. (Lehberger, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

M. D'Agostino explained per state statute, a Building Committee will be formed to oversee the JBHS Auxiliary Gym HVAC and Safety Improvement project.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education establish a Building Committee to be composed of members of the Region 9 Facilities and Fields Committee along with a community member to supervise and manage the JBHS Auxiliary Gym HVAC and Safety improvement Project. (Pampel, Denny). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION OF TRANSFER OF FUNDS

M. D'Agostino explained that, per State law, with this transfer today, any future contributions to the Capital Reserve this year will need to be reduced by the same amount as the transfer.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education authorize the transfer of \$4,399.81 from Line 03 Capital Projects to Line 11 Capital Reserve. Pending approval from the district audit firm. (Lehberger, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PRESENTATION ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Dr. McKinnon started the presentation by saying that it was divided into three parts: Assessments - Summative and Formative; District Improvement Plan - High Impact Instructional Strategies; and, School Improvement Plans - Action Steps. He gave an overview of the prior three years' Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) results for Easton and Redding's lower schools, saying that it was important to understand how our students were impacted in order to know how they are going into 9th grade at Barlow. Dr. McKinnon said that overall these students experienced a 5% decline in literacy scores and a 10% decline in math scores, which, he added, is similar to area districts and also districts across the country. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, gave an overview of the 3rd- 8th grade cohort that included test scores and the multi-pronged approach to address their issues. She said that the focus on reading at the elementary level is on the science of reading, and at the middle school level the reading focus is on the integration of vocabulary and grammar. She explained that currently more students are in need of extra content support. Additionally they are looking at the current math textbook and curriculum in the middle school math program, and where students are in need of more

intervention support. This part of the presentation also included a chart on the test scores of high need-students vs. non high-need students in the lower schools and the achievement gap between these two groups. Dr. Pierson Ugol explained that if we don't provide support to Special Ed and high need students our overall scores will continue to lag.

The presentation then shifted to JBHS academic performance and included presenters: JBHS Assistant Principal, Jason Schemm; JBHS Humanities Chair, Angela Staron; JBHS STEM Department Chair, Julie McTague; JBHS Assistant Principal, Dameon Kellogg; JBHS Director of Special Services, Tracy Hussey; Paula Panosas well as Dr. McKinnon and Dr. Almeida. The heavily data-filled presentation provided a 5-year look at JBHS students' SAT scores broken down into the verbal and math categories and with a comparison to the other DRG A schools. The presenters acknowledged recent low test scores, and also that the School Improvement Plan will be able to bring these scores back to where they once were. JT Schemm expressed that remote learning had a negative impact on student learning, particularly in Math. Angela Staron commented that teachers are excited about the cohesiveness and measurable goals of the plan to address student learning at all levels. Julie McTague reported that Barlow students' New Generation Science Standard (NGSS) test scores were well above the average, ranking 2nd (this year) in DRG A and 4th over the last three years. (The NGSS test has only been administered for three years.) D. Kellogg reviewed A chart on JBHS AP course enrollment showing an increase in AP test scores, but not necessarily enrollment in these courses; it was reported that a goal will be to improve the foundation courses and support for students who are looking to enroll in AP courses and support once they are in the courses.

Dr. McKinnon said that high-level school districts select high-leverage areas for goals and then make sure the action steps are aligned across all schools in the district. He said that goals and priorities are what drive our action, resources and priorities and that these are what end up driving the budget. Dr. McKinnon said the District Improvement Plan (DIP) will be done by personnel at Central Office, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) will be done by leadership at the school level, and the Teacher Goals will be done by the faculty, with overlap between these three plans because alignment will equal increased student performance. He said that the District goals are: 1) High Impact Instructional Strategies; 2) Student Achievement; and, 3) Family Engagement & Climate. Dr. McKinnon outlined five instructional strategies toward the first goal as: 1) Learning Intention; (clear learning goals for students in each class). 2) Success Criteria; (measurable goals). 3) Feedback; 4) Classroom Discussion; and, 5) Higher Order Thinking Questions. He said that classroom teachers were presented with this plan last Spring and that they have already put these strategies into practice in their classrooms and administration is using the language to further refine areas for improvement. Dr. McKinnon said that one action step already in place is called a "Look Force," and involves a team of teachers who observe classrooms to either make recommendations about practices and/or commend teachers for their practices. He brought up the School Climate Dashboard on the SmartBoard and demonstrated to Board members how this site can be navigated by all community stakeholders, and also said that the DIP and SIP goals will be on the District web site, with full explanations of what it all means.

Dr. Almeida said that the approach will be to aim high, even though they might fall a bit short, rather than not aiming high at all. He said that in all the areas previously reported on - SAT, PSAT, AP and NGSS - the goal is to increase the percentage of students meeting benchmarks and the percentage of students going beyond benchmarks. Dr. Almerida said that this can be achieved with the action steps that include: professional learning for faculty, student learning objectives, faculty observation, data analysis, SRBI, 6-12 vertical alignment and student monitoring.

The presentation concluded with information on the academic intervention process and the student intervention team. It was reported that intervention teams are meeting on a Tri-District level in an effort to strengthen and align the system. Dr. Almeida explained that one of the most important goals is to improve the usage of the interventions already in place such as the math center, writing center and executive functioning coach. Additionally to identify students who need support before they get to the D and F list. Dr. Almeida has been reaching out to other DRG A districts to see how they have been providing support to students post pandemic.

A lengthy question and comment period followed for Board members, with questions including: with the College Board changing the SAT, how does this affect the school; what are executive functioning skills; how is chronic absenteeism being addressed; what is being done to encourage students to stretch themselves to higher-level classes; where do blue and green level students (these are students who have scored higher) fit into the intervention process; what high impact strategies are being done already; what is being done about SAT scores; what can be done with the deeper SAT scores; are we assessing Social Studies/History scores; what is the action step for chronic absenteeism; what is going on with the Math Interventionist position as our math scores need dramatic improvement; how will the school report back to the Board?

The panel of presenters responded: this is not the first time the College Board has changed the SAT format and we need to remember that the SAT score is only snapshot of the student; executive functioning is how a student approaches their studies; we are in constant communication with families if they are experiencing chronic absenteeism, it is at 16% currently and the goal is to get to 10% by the end of the school year; the Guidance Department always encourages students to reach their full potential and encourages students to take the course of study that's best for them; the Guidance Department and the administration does acknowledge the stress of all students, even those who are in the blue and green levels of academic achievement; student learning objectives are in all teachers' plans and objectives; the deeper SAT scores help us to dig in and understand and support students in specific areas; it was explained that there has been difficulty in finding someone for the Math Interventionist position, but that a few candidates are going to be interviewed later this week.

BOE members thanked the panel for the extensive report, and said that the information and data were helpful and insightful. They also commented: it might be better to encourage a student to take a risk with a higher level class, and if we provide a higher level of support that student will not fail; we need to look at the topic of weighted grading; it is surprising how little impact homework has on the results scale; could administration compose a list of teacher assignments, so that if some have a free period maybe those resources can be used as additional support for students; seems like this is a cultural change and shift in how we teach and even the language we use; we need to know what our peers in the DRG A have done to remain stable; bravo to the Science Department; can the word "intervention," be reframed, kids who need a little bit of help won't take advantage; instead of "intervention," maybe "resource," or "support" to be used; glad tonight was about the positive and getting back to where we once were.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting be adjourned. (Graziano, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 p.m.

Submitted by Karen O'Brien
Secretary, Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by,
Sarah Ota