

Tri-County Area School District

Plainfield, Wisconsin

Minutes from Special School Board Meeting
Held September 14, 2016

Mark Bacon-President called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the High School Library.

School board members present were: Mark Bacon, Cindy Baumgartner, Jeff Hopkins, Jim Knutson, Jim Cesar, Wayne Cummings, Peggy Buckholt, and Jerry Knutson. Sue Lederer was absent. A quorum was declared. Also present were Gary Knuth, Annette Carroll, Doreen Kruger, Jamie Helmrick, Jessica Rettler, Lorna LaPorte, Lisa Ertl, Lara Nugent, Jim Pieper, Bill Femal, Shawn Jepson, Nicholas Marti and Wendy Hetzel.

The "Pledge of Allegiance" was recited. Wayne Cummings made a motion; Jim Knutson seconded and carried on a voice vote to adopt the agenda. Mark announced that the meeting was being audio recorded and Wendy Hetzel stated, it was being recorded because Tony was at a conference in Madison.

School Board policies 345.01 Grading system and 370.00AR Interscholastic Athletics Co-Curricular Activities was looked at. The board looked at what groups were represented in these policies. Jeff Hopkins stated that he would like to see all co-curricular groups be held with the same accountability. FFA, clubs, pep band, etc. The present 370.00AR policy accounts for the 1 F rule of playing a sport, 2 F rule probation, still being able to practice only. Jeff then discussed our present grading scale being at 70% passing, and having higher academic scales than schools surrounding us. Nicholas Marti 7-12 Principal presented a handout with the data of 38 surrounding schools. (attached at the end of these minutes). We are one of the 5 schools of 18 in our CWC that have a 70% passing grading scale. The other 4 are Iola, Shiocton, Tigerton and Bonduel. Most schools around us are at a 60% passing grading scale.

Jim Cesar is more worried about our kids that are not doing well and need to get their diploma. WIAA will let the kids have 1 F and still be eligible and 2 F's be on probation, why would we want to make a more stringent rule than the WIAA? Jim is not in favor of changing the co-curricular policy. Jim is also worried about the kids not being able to participate; will that hurt the kids more than help them?

Jim asked Gary Knuth his opinion. Gary stated he liked the 370.00AR policy because it gives a student a chance to try the AP classes, or harder classes and they can get a lower grade or one failing grade and not have to give up sports. He is thinking if we change the 370.00AR policy that kids are not going to take a chance on a harder class if it will jeopardize a sport or activity. He is not in favor of the 60% passing grading scale.

Lara Nugent stated the importance of changing eligibility and holding students accountable is all well and good. But 1/3 of our student population is Hispanic, 61% of our students are free and reduced lunch, these kids need academics and they need co-curriculars to feel the sense of belonging. Lara feels that changing the eligibility or changing the grading scale may help with the 60% passing grade they may feel that they are excelling academically, it will shift self-esteem, and it will make a big difference in who's eligible and not eligible in getting more scholarships for these kids. The kids most of the time are missing by 3% or a grade of 67. They just fall short of that 70% passing grade scale. College admission goes on GPA and not always on grading. So our students that are getting graded on a 70% passing (instead of a 60% passing like in the next town over) are getting a lower GPA because of our higher grading system.

Jim Pieper stated he would like to see a way to differentiate grades between an AP Class and a regular class. What is the difference between a student getting an A in a regular class compared to a B in a AP class? Also, AP classes are already graded at the 60% passing grading scale (college % grading), so how do you do that? He would like to see AP go on a 5 pt. GPA scale as to our 4 pt. GPA scale that we have now. He thinks the board should look into the handbooks and define what they are considering non-curricular or co-curricular activities. But he likes the 2 F's on probation and 1 F still being able to play. But he really wants to see the difference in scales to give respect to the higher/harder classes such as AP.

Annette Carroll stated that these are separate issues. She does her classes on an overall points distribution of the whole class, not each assignment and is on a weight according to the %'s to pass the class. The % isn't the deal, it's the letter grade. It's weighted. Lara asked if on a 10 pt. quiz you get 7 out of 10, it's still 70%? Annette was asked do you do it on a bell curve? She stated No, it is weighted.

It was discussed about the comparisons to other 60% passing graded schools? Do colleges know if your grading scale is at 60% passing or 70% passing. Cindy Baumgartner stated they do. Nick said they don't because it would be a waste of their time to look at all those applications. They look more at the ACT. Cindy says they ask about your grading scale on the application. Lara said they ask if it's a 4.0 or 5.0 scale. Lara stated there is nowhere on a UW- Madison application where they ask for a grading scale, they just want a GPA not a grading scale.

Nicholas Marti, stated we have a very committed staff and they look out for the needs of our students. He handed out a paper that included 38 schools that he collected data on. 22 schools are at 60% passing, 4 schools are at 65% passing, 3 schools are at 67% passing and 8 schools are at 70% passing and 1 school is at Standard base scale (which is very confusing for everyone). Weyauwega/Freemont is shifting from the 70% passing to the 60% passing in this 2016-2017 school year and Nick is working with them to see how it is working for them. He would like to see this change, if it will happen, to be done for our 2017-2018 school year so it gives us more time to explore the possibilities; to see the strengths and weaknesses that this will create and see if it really will fit in our school system. Nick says with the broken homes, Spanish speaking parents/children translating, sometimes no shelter, sometimes no food, our population at Tri-County has many families and students dealing with lots of issues. With all that, several students are just missing passing by 3-5% with minimal support and minimal supervision. Nick also stated that maybe it would be a possibility to do a tiered grading scale for honors and AP classes.

The question was brought up? How many kids will gravitate towards 57% then? Will they still not pass? Will they drop down their standards to that level? That can't be answered Nick stated. But, Nick feels that more good/positive can come from the grading scale adjustment.

Jerry Knutson asked the question to the 9 teachers present, if a kid does his homework only will he pass a class? They all were in agreement, yes a kid will pass if they do their homework. The problem is they don't hand it in. They may get it done in class and don't hand it in. So it may not be ability sometime it is geared more towards accountability.

Doreen Kruger stated that we need to look at all the classes not just the AP classes, there are some classes as accounting, physics, calculus and other hard classes and all of them need to be accessed. Also she brought up a question about Special Education, will that be lowered? Right now that is at 60% passing grade. Are you going to lower that? That is something that should be looked into and maybe compared to the other 60% passing schools. They think Special Education grading should be even with other schools.

Lisa Ertl stated colleges are looking at grade point averages, so with ours being 70% passing that is a disadvantage to our students. Lisa also stated that if you didn't change the % for the High School could the Elementary be changed? The disappointment starts in 3rd grade, where they have come from S's to %'s which turn to letter grades and a student sees an F on an assignment and gets frustrated. It is setting a standard and their disappointment and self-esteem are already changing in 3rd grade.

They asked Jessica Rettler what she thought and Jessica uses a weighted scale also, she likes the 60% passing grade also. Lorna LaPorte was asked and Lorna explains that she lets the kids

also fix up the work, so they can better their grade. Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. Wayne stated that then they can learn from their mistakes. Cindy Baumgartner stated when they go to college they will not get that opportunity.

Jeff Hopkins stated if they are not doing the work, why do they get to play? There are students who stay eligible to play sports but in the offseason don't make the grades, and then can't graduate. It doesn't make sense. Also, it was stated that in the fall season the students stay eligible because of timing of sports starting in summer and when they actually get their grades. We need to put tools in place to have the kids get better and not have to worry about eligibility. They need to utilize the after school help or get help during the impact hour. It's hard to watch kids that have 3 F's playing in the pep band. They need to be held accountable. The board gets a report from Nick and Shawn and there are way too many F's on this report.

The board asked Jamie Helmrick what she thought, she is 50-50 on the 60% passing. There are lots of kids who try their hardest to get the 70% passing. There are kids who just struggle. But then there are kids who just do the minimum to be able to play sports. If they know they are going to play in the fall, they work really hard in the Spring so their grades are up. Jamie stated she thinks if we stay at 70% we should leave the 1 F rule. They go hand in hand.

Gary Knuth asked what is the problem? We have 58 kids playing sports right now and only 3 kids are ineligible.

Nick doesn't like the message 1 F sends for eligibility, but is Okay with following WIAA guidelines.

Jerry Knutson asked for an explanation on how teachers grade % of tests, quizzes, and homework. Is it subjective or objective?

Annette Carroll stated her courses, being math, is very objective.

Gary Knuth stated his courses can be very subjective when grading projects.

Questions brought up to the board about these items? When will the board decide? They would like it to be decided by the 2017-2018 school year. Can a committee be formed? Answer was given, the board has chosen to do this as a Full Board, not as a committee. They would like to see more staff input? This is a public meeting and they are all invited to attend. So if they truly want to be a part in this decision they will attend the meetings just like you have all chose to do this evening.

Doreen stated, due to timing, 1 small area of curriculum could affect a quarter grade and cause them to be eligible or ineligible to play with the F at that time, but they can still pass the semester.

Bill Femal stated that he has 3 boys who are all different and wouldn't mind seeing the 60% passing because over 50% of the schools on the list Nick handed out of area schools are doing it already. Can they all be wrong? Our picture should be what are we doing for the kids? We should help more to graduate. Whether it is weighted or not, how it's graded and tabulated should be in the best interest of the kids. Bill thinks we should leave the athletic code alone. Try the 60% passing grading system for 1 or 2 years. We can always change back if it isn't working out.

Jim Knutson stated he remembers the 107% rule, many years ago, but he says he wasn't going to go there. He would like the teachers, if they are struggling and have curriculum needs, to ask the board for help with the adjustments to get less F's.

Nick will get information from Weyauwega/Fremont to find out how their process is going with the new change to 60% passing this year from 70% passing last year.

The group decided that these policies need to be intertwined together and can't be adjusted, one without the other.

Bill Femal stated he thinks most kids want to achieve. They are going to try to get the highest grade that they can, if we go to the 60% passing.

Nick will find out how Jen Montgomery's after school program is going. How many are attending? If we have kids with F's going for help or not.

Jamie asked if we can make the kids attend the afterschool program if they are getting 3 or more F's? Make the student and their parent sign and have more accountability.

At the next school board meeting, a date for the next special board meeting will be set.

Adjourned at 9:29 p.m.

Recorded by: Wendy Hetzel

Submitted by:

Peggy Buckholt, Clerk

GRADING SCALE COMPARISONS								
CENTRAL WISCONSIN CONFERENCE & OTHER AREA SCHOOLS								
CWC SCHOOLS			AREA SCHOOLS			OVERALL BREAKDOWN		
NO.	SCHOOL	LOWEST PASSING GRADE (%)	NO.	SCHOOL	LOWEST PASSING GRADE (%)	LOWEST PASSING GRADE (%)	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS (OUT OF 38)	PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS
1	Amherst	60	1	Colby	60	60	22	57.89%
2	Bowler	60	2	DC Everest	60			
3	Gresham	60	3	Edgar	60			
4	Manawa	60	4	Loyal	60			
5	Menominee Indian	60	5	Marshfield	60	65	4	10.53%
6	Port Edwards	60	6	Montello	60			
7	*Weyauwega-Fremont	*60	7	Mosinee	60			
8	Wittenberg-Birnamwood	60	8	Neillsville	60	67	3	7.89%
9	Almond-Bancroft	65	9	Pittsville	60			
10	Marion	65	10	SPASH	60			
11	Rosholt	65	11	Spencer	60			
12	Pacelli	67	12	Wausau	60	70	8	21.05%
13	Wild Rose	67	13	Westfield	60			
14	Bonduel	70	14	Wisconsin Rapids	60			
15	Iola-Scandinavia	70	15	Stratford	65			
16	Shiocton	70	16	Princeton	67	N/A - Standards-Based	1	2.63%
17	Tigerton	70	17	Auburndale	70			
18	Tri-County	70	18	Green Lake	70			
			19	Wautoma	70			
			20	Adams-Friendship	N/A - Standards-Based			

*Changing from 70 to 60 as of 2016-2017 school year