

Tri-County Area School District

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Minutes from Special School Board Meeting Held December 5, 2016

Mark Bacon, President called the meeting to order at 6:03pm in the District Office Board Room.

School Board Members present were: Mark Bacon, Jeff Hopkins, Cindy Baumgartner, Jim Cesar, Wayne Cummings, Jim Knutson, Susan Lederer and Jerry Knutson. Peggy Buckholt was absent. A quorum was declared. Also present were Gary Knuth, Kathy Knutson, Bill Femal, Anthony Marinack, Shawn Jepson, Nicholas Marti and Amy Hopkins.

The "Pledge of Allegiance" was recited. Jeff Hopkins made a motion, Sue Lederer seconded and carried on a voice vote to adopt the Agenda.

Mark Bacon asked if anyone had any thoughts or input on policy 345.01 AR Grading System. Jerry Knutson asked the group if the change was made to move the grading system to 60% who would we be helping and who would we be hurting. He asked the group if they thought there were any downfalls to making the change. Mark commented that he thought if we change the grading system the AP courses would be affected if there wasn't a change made to come up with a weighting system for grades for those classes. Jim Knutson thought that is wasn't right to weight the AP courses as it was not fair to students not taking those courses as far as overall grade point earning potential. He thought the benefit of the AP was the potential of taking a test and getting college credits. Jerry asked if changing the grading system would help improve test scores. He asked if it was better for a student to pass a class at 60% and move on to something else or fail at a 60% and have to retake the course. Nick explained that it could go either way depending on the individual. Some would do just fine moving on and others would benefit from retaking a class. Jim Cesar brought up the argument of are we hurting students by not having an equivalent grading system compared to surrounding schools. It comes down to what benefits the kids the most. Jim C. also brought up the survey and that a majority voted on moving to the 60% grading system. Even if you don't factor in the students results the staff and parents still had around 60% voting to move to the 60% grading system. Mark interjected if changing the grading system would improve kids test scores and would they get a better education. Would we be more on par with other schools and students around the state. Jerry K. noted that we need to take a look at the bigger picture and look at where the student's paths are taking them. Not all students are college bound and will this change help others that are going into the workforce or trade school after school. Jim C. pointed out that we need a variety of people in society and not just all college graduates. Jim K. remarked that we are competing for students and for people moving into the community. He thought the top students would be fine no matter what the grading scale was set at and wondered if making a change would motivate some of the students earning lower percentages. He suggested we need to look at testing and how they do. We need to look at the end product and find ways to make that better and if we need to make other adjustments for example extra help for teachers or curriculum changes. Jeff Hopkins brought up that we need to focus on one thing at a time. He agreed that we do compete with other communities and that we do want higher standards but we also want the right fit for our current community and the different dynamics we might have here versus somewhere else. He felt it is a positive gain to make a change to the grading scale and that the positive outweighed any negatives. Cindy asked Nick if we had ACT score comparisons to other schools currently at the 60% grading system to see if we had higher scores with the 70% grading scale. He did not have that information but thought that you could find some of that by contacting area schools at the 60% to see where they currently fell. He also stated that it has only been the last two years that all juniors were required to take the ACT test so you would have to start with those years to make an

accurate comparison. Jim K. had a handout from the DPI showing ACT test result and AP Test Result comparison of Tri-County and the other nine schools in our current conference. Nick pointed out that these results were before it was mandatory for all juniors to take the ACT test and that is wouldn't be a fair assessment without all students. Jerry K. mentioned that he would also like to see data of the percentage of our students going on to college versus other schools in our area. Jim K. touched on the fact that we do have more students taking AP courses and being successful and that we have had great success with Math League. He would like to find a way to motivate the students in the middle and bottom of the pack as far as percentages and grades to bring them up to a higher level. Jim C. pointed out that moving to a 60% grading system would motivate some to do better and others it might not have any affect at all. There is no way to know. Jim K. commented that we do offer several other great programs to help kids excel such as EE and Band. Wayne Cummings stated that it won't matter if the grading scale is at 70% or 60% but what is important is what the students are actually learning. He doesn't feel there is a negative impact in making a change. Jim C. brought up again that we need to level the playing field to become more in line with area schools. Sue Lederer agreed with early comments and that making a change to the grading system would benefit the college bound students and the ones in the middle of the pack. She also thought it would help motivate the students on the lower end to move up. Mark Bacon expressed that it would benefit the kids in the middle of the class the most as it would give their GPA a boost and would help if they were college bound. Tony Marinack's thoughts were that you need a High School diploma to get most any job these days. Making a change might open some doors for students and allow them to pass and to get that High School diploma that will help them get a job.

Jim Cesar made a motion, Sue Lederer seconded to change the grading scale from the current 70% to the 60% grading scale.

Before the vote more discussion came up surrounding the weighting of AP courses if the grading system changed. After some discussion the Board gave Nick official directive to form a committee of staff to come up with a weighting system for AP or other honors courses that will be presented at a later date. Nick stated that he should have a proposal ready to present at the January Board Meeting as to have a decision made before scheduling started for the 2017-2018 school year.

Mark Bacon handed out to the Board our current 345.01 AR Grading Policy, an Option 2 example and Option 3 example of the policy with changes. The Option 2 example changed the wording of the policy to reflect a move to a 65% grading system starting with the 2017-2018 school year. The Option 3 example changed the wording of the policy to reflect a move to a 60% grading system starting with the 2017-2018 school year.

Jim Cesar amended his motion, Sue Lederer seconded to change policy 345.01 AR Grading System to reflect changes made in the Option 3 handout. The 70% grading system would remain in effect for now and that the change to the 60% grading system would begin with the 2017-2018 school year. Motion carried on a voice vote.

A Special Meeting date was set for Tuesday January 3, 2017 at 6:00pm in the District Office Board Room to discuss questions two and three from the recent survey surrounding policy 370.00 AR Interscholastic Athletics Co-Curricular Code.

Adjourned at 6:54 pm
Recorded by: Amy Hopkins

Submitted By:

Peggy Buckholt, Clerk