

Tri-County Area School District

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Minutes from Special School Board Meeting Held November 28, 2016

Mark Bacon, President called the meeting to order at 6:05pm in the High School Library

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 Doreen Kruger, Annette Carroll, Gary Knuth, Kathy Knutson, Lisa Ertl, Michele Moore, Anthony Marinack, Shawn Jepson, Nicholas Marti and Amy Hopkins.

The "Pledge of Allegiance" was recited. Wayne Cummings made a motion, Jim Cesar seconded and carried on a voice vote to adopt the Agenda.

Mark Bacon turned the meeting over to Nicholas Marti after several handouts were passed out with results of the recent survey that was sent out via the newsletter and electronically to staff, parents and students. The survey was regarding possible policy changes for the grading scale and Co-Curricular Code. The handouts included a copy of the survey for reference, overall survey results, separate breakdowns of staff, parent and student survey results and comments and a snapshot of the Class of 2018 quarter grades and how grades would look at each of the different grading scales. On the overall results it showed a total of 311 responses. The makeup of the 311 responses is 53 staff, 55 parents and 203 students. If anyone made separate comments on questions they are displayed in the results and correlate to the question and response given.

Nick started by explaining the results of question one for each group-staff, parents and students. This question was in regards to what people's preferences were for the grading scale at Tri-County and if it should stay at 70% or change to either 60% or 65%. Results were gone through individually for each of the three groups and time given to review extra comments that were entered into the survey. Staff results for question 1 were: 64.2% for changing to 60%, 24.5% to stay at 70% and 11.3% to change to 65%. Parent results for question 1 were: 56.4% for changing to 60%, 25.5% to stay at 70% and 18.2% to change to 65%. Student results for question 1 were: 58.1% for changing to 60%, 19.2% to stay at 70% and 22.7% to change to 65%. It was noted that the results for each group came out very similar. Jerry Knutson asked if the students had gotten to see the other student's responses and comments and thought this would be a good idea. At this time they had not seen the results but Mark Bacon had commented that it was a public meeting and that the results and documentation would be public information.

It was suggested to move to the Class of 2018 handout as it pertained to the grading scale and different percentages. Nick explained the document and color coding. The bright green areas were AP courses, the bright yellow areas were special education students and the tan color was a student with significant ELL needs. Everyone

was allowed time to look over the handout. Nick gave out the mean average for each grading scale. The mean averages were as follows: 70% scale is 2.960, 65% scale is 3.089 and 60% scale is 3.242. Tony noted that some of the individual student percentages were over 100% and this is due to students being allowed extra credit assignments. Lisa Ertl asked if the Board changes the grading scale would it be retroactive. It would not be retroactive. It would take effect for the 2017-2018 school year. Current juniors becoming seniors next year would only have one year on the new grading scale. Board members thanked Nick on his time spent on gathering and compiling this information into a format that was easy to follow and understand. Annette Carroll commented on the Class of 2018 handout and said it was not an apples to apples comparison. She said it does not take into account the changes teachers might make if the grading scale changed. Those changes would be individualized to each teacher and their courses. So a student's grade may not go up as much as on the sample based on this factor. Wayne Cummings noted that this was understood but the handout was just a good snapshot of what it could look like. Jeff Hopkins asked Annette and Doreen how they would make adjustments if the grading scale changed. They might give less points for extra credit or weight homework, tests and quizzes differently. Doreen noted that no matter how they made changes each student would be given the same chances for extra credit or points. Jim Knutson stated that he understood that each teacher uses their own formula for grading and running their classes but wondered if teachers think this is the best way to run their classrooms right now why they would change based on changes to the grading scale. Jerry Knutson wondered how this would affect ACT and other test scores. Annette expressed that if the percentage is lowered the students may learn less and test scores might go down but it is just something you wouldn't know until we had actual results to look at. Sue Lederer agreed with Jim Knutson's comment on why you would change your grading and extra credit since it is in place to help students learn the material. Annette again expressed that they wouldn't take it away completely but rather assign a different point system to things. It was brought up that if a student doesn't have the knowledge base in a class but has the passing percentage can you make them take that class over. Doreen explained that if the student's percentage was passing it was up to the student whether they should take the same class over or move on to the next level. She has seen results both ways with students taking the class over and understanding more and moving on and doing just fine at the next level.

There were no other comments on question one so Mark suggested moving on to discuss question 2 of the survey. Question 2 of the survey was in regards to the Co-Curricular Code. The results were gone over in the same manner as the first question and each grouping was looked at separately. The overall results of question 2 were: 36.7% for option 1, 25.7% for option 2, 21.9% for option 4 and 15.8% for option 3. The results for staff were: 39.6% for option 4, 37.7% for option 1, 11.3% for both options 2 and 3. The results for parents were: 36.4% for option 1, 32.7% for option 4, 23.6% for option 2 and 7.3% for option 3. The results for students were: 36.5% for option 1, 30% for option 2, 19.2% for option 3 and 14.3% for option 4. Jerry Knutson asked if people answered the question based on the current grading scale or off of their answer for question 1. There was no way to determine this but Mark Bacon commented that he answered the question as its own separate item. Jim Caesar said it was all good information and thanked Nick again for all his work, but it was too much to digest and really go through during the meeting. Lisa Ertl was concerned that since she did not receive the survey electronically through the school messenger that others might not have either. Nick noted that the survey was in the newsletter, shared electronically in an email to staff and students and sent out via text through school messenger. He was not aware of any glitches in sending it out electronically.

There were no other comments on question two so Mark shifted everyone over to look at question number 3 of the survey. This question was regarding what activities should fall under the rules of the Co-Curricular code. Nick stated this was harder to breakdown as there were so many individual options. Results were broken down into three categories: all activities listed, no new activities or a mix of the listed activities. The staff results were: 50.9% for all activities, 39.6% for a mix of the activities, and 9.4% for no new activities. The parent results were: 43.6% for all activities, 32.7% for a mix of the activities and 23.6% for no new activities. The student results were: 42.4%

for a mix of the activities, 29.1% for all activities and 28.6% for no new activities. After having time to review comments Lisa Ertl gave her opinion that based on some of the student comments they did not fully understand the question. At this time Board members agreed they would need time to really look over all the results and information to make a better decision. Jerry Knutson went back to the Class of 2018 handout of grades and asked Nick if he thought the other grade levels would have similar results. Nick said he chose this class because it is currently the largest of the 4 classes in the high school so that it might give a better base of information. Jim Caesar mentioned the 7th and 8th grade results in the paper and that he was impressed that more than 60 students made honors, or highest honors. Nick said between the two grades that are probably around 100 students total.

Discussion moved to item B on the agenda, the District Report Card Data. Tony handed out 2013-14 results, 2015-16 results and report card talking points from the DPI. Tony stated that the District report card was released on November 17th and that he had received it prior to that for review. He also stated that there were no report cards done in 2014-15 so there were no results for that year. Nick, Shawn Jepson and Tony shared their concerns with the report card calculations with staff at the DPI. They explained that based on legislative directives the numbers are based on a sliding scale to take into account poverty. A weighting system was used based on growth versus achievement. This is explained a little on the Talking Points handout. Nick and Tony also met with Scott Krug to discuss the negative impact of these changes to how the report card is calculated. This has not just affected Tri-County in a negative way but many other schools across the state as well. This change has prompted many schools to issue complaints to the DPI. Tony said it is hard to get specific item analysis from the tests so we know what areas our students might be struggling with. This would help tremendously on knowing where to start making adjustments. The administration has already taken steps to first review our Math curriculum and then move to review our English curriculum, as these are the two largest tested areas. They have been working with specialists from CESA on our curriculum to try and close any gaps we might have. Shawn had an example that they are going to focus on more geometry through the year in the elementary as this seems to be a large portion of testing questions. The elementary teachers use several tools to help monitor progress including: Star testing, IXL and Moby Max. Nick also said that the testing has changed every year for the last three years and that the report card is trying to make comparisons and show results based on three different types of assessments. These numbers are just going to be hard to get accurate since the assessments have changed. Along with the curriculum work with CESA, Tony said the principals are talking with staff on ideas and objectives to help in getting these scores up. Jim Caesar said each grade level is different and that we are dealing with human beings and that each class has a different make up of kids. You can get a big swing on grades and testing from one year to the next. He also stated that people moving to the area look at these report card scores but don't fully understand them or how that number is arrived at. He wondered how this score is really helping anyone.

At this point Tony asked how the board wanted to move forward on the survey results. Jeff Hopkins suggested it might be best to tackle one question at a time and start with the grading scale first. A special meeting was set for December 5th at 6:00pm in the District Office Board Room for discussion and action for possible changes to the grading scale, policy 345.01 AR.

Adjourned at 8:15 pm
Recorded by: Amy Hopkins

Submitted By:

Peggy Buckholt, Clerk