

BIG SPRING SCHOOL DISTRICT

Newville, Pennsylvania

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 2009

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I. CALL TO ORDER

The Committee of the Whole of the Board of School Directors for the Big Spring School District met in the Big Spring High School Large Group Room, Room 140, at 7:10 P.M. with President Wilbur Wolf, Jr., presiding. Seven (7) directors present: Wilbur Wolf, Jr., President; William Swanson, Vice President; Robert Lee Barrick, Secretary; Terry Lopp, Treasurer; Tarin Houpt; Richard Norris; William Piper.

Kingsley Blasco and Richard Roush were absent.

Others in attendance: Richard Fry, Superintendent; Jeanne Temple, Assistant Superintendent; Kevin Roberts, Director of Curriculum/Instruction and Educational Technology; Richard E. Kerr, Jr., Business Manager; and Brenda Line, Board Minutes. Also present: Jim Lyons, April Messenger, and Vickie Wallick.

II. PRESENTATIONS

A. Audit Review – Mr. Jim Lyons – Greenawalt and Company

Mr. Lyons provided the members of the Board of School Directors with copies of reports prepared by Greenawalt & Company. Please refer to the following documents that were included with this evening's regular Board meeting agenda:

- Big Spring School District, Supplementary Audit Report on Federal Award Programs, Year Ended June 30, 2009.
- Big Spring School District, Financial Statements, Year Ended June 30, 2009.

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II. PRESENTATIONS (Continued)

A. Audit Review (Continued)

Mr. Lyons reviewed the reports and answered questions. The following items were noted:

1. Review of Supplementary Audit Report on Federal Award Programs

- a. The total U.S. Department of Agriculture revenue/expenditures for Big Spring's food service in 2008-2009 was \$464,059; the total U.S. Department of Education amount was \$1,372,831; and the combined Federal awards for that time period totaled \$1,836,890. Refer to Page 6.
- b. Big Spring School District was determined to be a low-risk auditee, and there were no financial statement audit findings. Refer to Page 8.
- c. For the findings and questioned costs for major federal award programs, the auditors discovered that the District over-claimed meal reimbursements totaling \$21 in the month checked. The District's response is to review more closely the reports before submitting the point-of-sales daily report. Errors will be noted and corrected immediately. Refer to Page 9.
- d. One significant deficiency was discovered in the financial statement audit. A few members in the District business office team have direct control over day-to-day operation, accounting principles, and financial reporting. The business office has responded by reallocating responsibilities to adequately segregate duties and provide additional oversight. The finding was deemed resolved. Refer to Page 10.

2. Review of Supplementary Financial Statements, Year Ended June 30, 2009

- a. As noted on Page FS-1 and FS-2, the District has total assets in the amount of \$61,328,060 and liabilities of \$41,042,249, for total net assets of \$20,285,811 for the year ended June 30, 2009.
- b. Page FS-3 shows that the District's total fund balances decreased from \$2,833,981 in 2008 to \$2,145,471 in 2009.
- c. According to Page FS-8, the District lost \$563,614 by June 30, 2009, for food service operations. That is a decrease from the \$580,323 loss in the prior year. The decreased loss was related to the increase in meal subsidies from the State and Federal programs -- \$493,504 compared with \$400,095 in the prior year. Big Spring's food service operations calculations include estimates for utilities and staff salaries. Some schools do not include those items in the calculations for food service operations.
- d. Budgetary comparison information is found on the next-to-last page of this report. For the year ending June 30, 2009, the District's total revenues were \$38,450,349. This was \$218,795 over budget. The total expenditures came in under budget by \$272,019. With transfers between funds taken into consideration, the fund balance increased by \$112,130 and the budget was a balanced budget. Mr. Lyons reported that this is "extremely close when working with a \$38 million budget."

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II. PRESENTATIONS (Continued)

A. Audit Review (Continued)

**2. Review of Supplementary Financial Statements, Year Ended June 30, 2009
(Continued)**

- e. The auditors provided the District with a letter informing the District that the auditors recognized one new accounting issue, "other post-employment benefits," or OPEB. This includes health insurance the District offers to retirees. The District had an actuarial study done to address this topic. When retirees stay on the health plan, even with paying a premium, on average, the District pays out more than the retiree pays in premium. This was a new topic that all schools the size of Big Spring were required to implement this year. Refer to FS-25, FS-26, and FS-27. The District has selected to have the UAAL amortized over a period of 30 years.

Mr. Lyons encouraged Board members to contact him or Mr. Kerr with questions related to the audit.

President Wolf thanked Mr. Lyons for his report.

B. Race to the Top Initiative - Administration

Mr. Fry and Mrs. Temple offered a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Race to the Top Application Requirements, Presentation to the Big Spring Board of School Directors, Monday, January 18, 2010." Please refer to the attached hard copy of the presentation.

Mr. Fry reviewed the Race to the Top (RTTT) Application Requirements as follows:

1. The State's application for Race to the Top is due January 19, 2010.
2. The District has already implemented many of the initiatives that RTTT requires and continues to show progress in student achievement. From a practitioner's standpoint, Big Spring is "in good shape."
3. RTTT is an opportunity to accelerate our academic gains by utilizing resources to implement school-based improvements on a broad scale and hold ourselves accountable for the results.
4. RTTT builds upon the strategies and practices we have been using in our schools that have resulted in gains in student achievement over recent years.
5. We have learned from research and practice that when specific behavior and practices are implemented and aligned in a comprehensive manner, the result can be achievement gains for every child.

While NCLB focused on students who were not achieving at grade level or not at benchmark standards, RTTT would provide money to the upper level as well to ensure that they have appropriate growth during a year. There will be a system implemented that differentiates in a manner to allow those students to meet their capabilities.

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II. PRESENTATIONS (Continued)

B. Race to the Top Initiative (Continued)

6. RTTT – Six Primary Objectives

- a. Strengthening and expanding the Standards Aligned System (SAS) and developing data systems: This will apply to K-12. The standards will be updated with no major changes. There has been a debate regarding local control on this issue. These are federal standards based on international standards.
- b. Developing work class human capital pipeline for teachers and leaders: The District is in great shape on this item, including the HR department's updated booklet and modifications to the hiring process. This will help the District to fill hard-to-find positions. The District is not required to pull candidates from this network, but it will be a helpful hiring tool.
- c. Developing a multi-measure evaluation system for teachers and leaders: There is not a lot of positive research on merit pay in education. It is difficult to offer a merit system, especially at the secondary level.
- d. Creating a coherent approach to professional development: Big Spring is in "good shape" for this item.
- e. School Turnarounds: This does not affect Big Spring.
- f. Evaluating programs to identify and spread best practices: This item will happen with time at Big Spring. RTTT schools share what is effective. This includes existing programs as well as programs implemented in the future. The State will recommend the data-collection system to use. Part of the federal money will be used for PDE to develop SAS. The benchmark 4 sight testing loses credibility at the secondary level because those tests don't drive instruction the way it is needed. Teachers benefit from the benchmarks; however, it is more of an "autopsy" of a student's achievement. Keystone exams are included in this item.

7. Standards Aligned System (Initiatives already included in Big Spring's curriculum are in boldfaced type.)

- **Quality curriculum aligned with standards, assessments, instruction, materials,** and interventions. Mr. Fry is not sure what the State will implement for Keystone Exam courses. The infrastructure for this in the State is nonexistent. More than likely they will contract out to companies that are completing SAS for other states.
- **Assessment system that informs instruction** on a timely and regular basis.
- **Student data system that identifies students as academically at risk** and provides timely alerts to teachers and parents. There is a plan to alert teachers and parents of at-risk students in the future using a system that interacts with teachers' online gradebooks.
- **Student data system that provides student data** and communicates with PIMS. Collaborative time for teachers to review data to drive instruction can be a challenge. The two-hour-delay days help provide this collaboration time. This directed agenda for collaboration has had a huge impact across the curriculum.

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II. PRESENTATIONS (Continued)

B. Race to the Top Initiative (Continued)

8. Human Capital Pipeline (Initiatives already included in Big Spring's curriculum are in boldfaced type.)

- **Develop a human capital pipeline to attract and retain effective teachers.**
- **Provide signing/retention bonuses for effective teachers** and principals in **hard-to-staff subjects** and schools.
- **Provide incentives for teachers who pursue certifications.**
- Develop a **common application for prospective teachers** in order to facilitate the on-line marketplace. Big Spring is using an online application now.

9. Multi-Measure Evaluation (Initiatives already included in Big Spring's curriculum are in boldfaced type.)

- Develop and implement multi-measure evaluation system for teachers that includes data on student growth as a significant factor and developed with teacher input.
- Annual evaluation of teachers that include timely and constructive feedback and provided data on student growth for classes and schools.
- Provide training to teachers on the effective use of the data system.
- **Use evaluations to inform discussion about professional development, compensation, promotion, retention, tenure, and removal of teacher after ample opportunity to improve.** Big Spring has implemented all of these items except the compensation aspect. The District views achievement on a building level. If the building does not meet its goals, an inservice would be conducted on reasons why the goals were not met.

In response to a question from Director Barrick, Mr. Fry indicated that the RTTT target for achievement is lower and more realistic than the NCLB achievement goals. The administration attempts to identify teachers who need to grow, and tools are provided for those teachers to improve.

10. Professional Development (Initiatives already included in Big Spring's curriculum are in boldfaced type.)

- **Provide professional development to teachers and principals based on needs evidenced by teacher and principal evaluation results.**
- **Provide training in the use of data for differentiated instruction, high rigor courses, SAS tools, RtII and the development of individual learning paths.**
- Ensure that district professional development aligns with RTTT requirements.

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II. PRESENTATIONS (Continued)

B. Race to the Top Initiative (Continued)

11. Timelines

- Letter of Intent – December 18, 2009
- MOU (3 signatures) – January 13, 2010
- PA Application due – January 19, 2010
- PA Award –
- SD Application due – 90 days after PDE award.

BSEA officers have been assured that “if RTTT goes in a direction we are not comfortable, we will pull out.” If the State says “no” to Big Spring’s merit component, the District will pull out and forfeit the RTTT money. Administrators are not comfortable negotiating to get merit pay that does not have research to support it. By January 2011, the State is expected to have developed a merit component.

There are Big Spring teachers who are participating on a committee to develop a model curriculum for the State. The State is attempting to make this a participatory process, and they are inviting 15 teachers to participate on committees to develop a curriculum for each subject..

III. PREVIEW OF THE AGENDA

A. Combine and Address

President Wolf requested that the Board address XIII., NEW BUSINESS, A., PERSONNEL CONCERNS, Items A-1 through A-21, as a single action item, and Items H, I, J, and K as a single action item.

B. XIII., NEW BUSINESS, Item D., Memorandums of Understanding

In response to a question from Director Piper, Mr. Fry indicated that, as outlined on page AF.9 of the Memorandum of Understanding by and between the Pennsylvania State Police and the Big Spring School District, members of the administration (principals and vice principals) would be included in Item A-1, In Loco Parentis.

Mr. Fry indicated that Newville Borough Police attend to 98 percent of the incidents requiring a police presence at the District’s schools. From a grant perspective, this Memorandum of Understanding with the State Police is required.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Swanson, seconded by Norris to adjourn. Roll call vote: Voting Yes: Houpt, Norris, Piper, Lopp, Barrick, Swanson, and Wolf. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 P.M.



Robert Lee Barrick, Secretary