



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE COUNTY

Curriculum Advisory Committee

February 23, 2006

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Constance Dennis, Marianne DeVargas, Susan Ehr, Patricia Howell, Susan Jacobse, Lois Redmond, Charles Spire, John Traube, Virginia Wallace, Rebecca White

Committee Members Absent: Elaine Armani, Lori Bronder, Alicia Reyes, Lisa Torres

Lee County School Personnel Present: Mr. Robert Chilmonik, Dr. Constance Jones, Dr. Larry Tihen

Recording Secretary: Sherry Pearsall

Reading/Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chairperson, Ginny Wallace.

Minutes from the January meeting were dispensed and reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes with amended changes (*it was suggested by some members*) from John Traube was made by Connie Dennis and seconded by Patsy Howell. The vote was carried unanimously.

Board Members' Report

Mr. Chilmonik would like to propose a vocational program that would encourage students to enroll in rigorous math and science curriculum classes and asked for committee members input and suggestions. Lee County has a core of extremely bright students this offering would be directed to. John Traube suggested looking at the models of 3 top New York City schools: Stuyvesant High School, Brooklyn Technical High School and Bronx High School of Science. Mr. Traube strongly feels these programs need to begin in middle school, not high school. Dr. Tihen stated that our highest achieving students are going into dual enrollment classes, (which do not teach the higher level math classes), as opposed to advanced math classes. Our students are being given the incentive of college credit and the district paying for these classes. Resource funding allocations would have to be made to move this forward and keep our students competitive. A suggestion was made to provide incentives to students that take advanced math classes, stay in our local area for post-secondary education or return to the area, if educated out of state. Mrs. Wallace proposed forming a subcommittee to research more on the subject and bring back ideas to the March meeting. Marianne DeVargas, Patsy Howell, and John Traube volunteered as subcommittee members. Dr. Tihen noted that District Coordinators, Rick Tully (Science) and Sharon Vandeventer (Math) would be available resources. Dr. Redmond suggested contacting NASA as a resource.

Old Business

New Business

Dr. Tihen presented academic plan updates this evening. Committee members were made aware that the *Language!* program has been implemented across the District this year to meet the States' reading requirement. Given the short notification by the State (late last June), 76%-90.12% of our students have been placed. Level II high school students who have passed the 10th grade FCAT can test out,

which accounts for some of the missing students. Students have to be identified and placed in classes. The *Language!* program was adopted in Lee County for all Level I & II students in middle school and all Level I students in high school. An assessment will be conducted on all students the last week of March by Sopris West. Sopris West will score the tests, place the students in classes for next year and return the data results to teachers by the end of us this year. This will save the District approximately \$40,000-\$50,000. We will take the FCAT DSS scores and correlate them to the placement in the assessment for *Language!* Programs that look for a one-year miracle are doomed to failure. Differentiated instruction is necessary according to the students we receive. This summer, two full weeks of *Language!* training (5 days each) will be offered to middle and high school teachers, in addition to Reading Endorsement classes.

Committee Member follow-up questions:

Are graduation rates and dropout rates related to FCAT?

We have a straight linear relationship between dropout rates and how well students read. Dr. Tihen stated that you can predict dropouts by looking at reading scores. FCAT is here, we need to be prepared. If electives are dropped, how are we motivating students to stay in school? Mr. Chilmonik mentioned the availability of activities: sports, clubs, after school activities. The highest priority is our students being able to read.

Where are we at with the hiring of reading coaches?

Ideally, all schools should have a reading coach to meet the increase of at-risk students. Reading coaches are a support system. The District has received additional grant funding this year bringing the number of elementary coaches from 17 to 23. These coaches are placed in the schools with the most at-risk students. This is the first year we have placed coaches in the middle and high schools. Currently, we have 23 coaches working at the secondary level. Coaches receive 2 weeks of training from the State and they then meet weekly to further this training on reading strategies. Some of these coach positions are part-time. The goal for next year is to hire an additional 12 secondary reading coaches, covering highest risk schools first.

Dr. Tihen shared reading data and research information. Data revealed a consistent pattern showing a chronic problem from third grade with a student's ability to decode reading fluency. This is a curricular problem. No second or third grade program previously taught phonological awareness. Unfortunately, our curriculums are not written in a way to take care of students who "don't get it" the first time. The curriculum continues to move on, even when students don't. 40% of our students are at either moderate or high risk. We are working towards teaching the skills, not the book. We need to provide teachers with the information they need. Materials need to be matched to student need.

Good of the Order

Dr. Jones – Dispersed a handout on graduation rates showing the history from 1998 to the present

John Traube-

Where are we, is anything being done on moving forward with the comprehensive middle school concept? Dr. Jones stated we are waiting to see what legislation is passed, as there is a potential of moving to a required 12-credit and new system for middle schools. Overall, all middle schools have reduced their electives because of reading requirements.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m. The next meeting of the Curriculum Advisory Committee is scheduled for:

March 23, 2006, at 6:00 p.m. in the Superintendent's Conference Room on the third floor of the Dr. James A. Adams Public Education Center, 2055 Central Ave., Ft. Myers, Fl.

Respectfully submitted,
Sherry Pearsall