

EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING  
JULY 1, 2020 -- 7:00 P.M.  
VIDEO CONFERENCE (ZOOM)  
MINUTES

- I. **The Chairperson**, Dr. Damary Bonilla, called the Education Programs & Resources Committee Meeting to order at 7:10 P.M. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance, Secretary Debra Wisotsky called for the roll.
  
- II. **Board Committee Members Present:** George Andrews, Rebecca Bear, Dr. Damary Bonilla and Debbie Kulick
  
- III. **School Personnel Present:** Brian Baddick, Tabitha Bradley, Trenee Lurry, Ryan Moran, Heather Piperato, Jeffrey Reichl, William Riker, Debra Wisotsky
  
- IV. **Members of the Public Present:** Keith Karkut, Keleisha Phillip-Stringer
  
- V. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDATION:** Motion was made by Rebecca Bear to approve the agenda for July 1, 2020 with members of the Committee reserving the right to add to the agenda and take further action in the best interest of the District. Motion was seconded by Debbie Kulick and carried unanimously, 4-0.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Motion was made by Rebecca Bear to approve the minutes from the June 3, 2020 meeting. Motion was seconded by Debbie Kulick and carried unanimously, 4-0.

**VI. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Dr. Bonilla began the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and stating that the meeting will continue the conversation from last month on the high school level programs offered along with two additional topics of interest to the community, which were based on feedback from parents and colleagues in the district.

Mr. Moran started by thanking the committee members, district employees and community members for their participation and willingness to discuss these important educational topics. He then introduced Mrs. Piperato to present the continuation of the overview of high school level programs and resources.

Mrs. Piperato thanked Mr. Moran and the committee for allowing her the opportunity to present. Mrs. Piperato stated that the last meeting focused on the intermediate and high school core classes while tonight will focus on high school electives. She shared that over the years, people come and go and we've had some pretty good choices of electives for students to choose from. We'd like to

look at why we offer certain electives over others, focusing on career clusters and the Monroe County career pathways group. Moving forward we would like to establish a system that allows us to review enrollment and interest in these electives and whether they are advantageous for students as they go off into the world today. The attachment you have been provided shows each elective, listed alphabetically by overall subject matter. The column on the left shows the career pathway and the right shows the courses that students can take during high school to distinguish and prepare themselves for what they want to do after high school.

### **Art**

- General Art
- Drawing and Fine Arts, which is really particular drawing and painting for very specific artistic purposes as opposed to commercial purposes, which is drawing.
- Digital Art, which takes advantage of the digital aspect of photography.
- Portfolio Prep, which helps student prepare their portfolio and themselves as an art student and is a pre-requisite for college.
- Ceramics and Sculpture

### **Business**

- General Business is offered in freshman year, where students must take either Intro to Business or World Language.
- We offer a very strong Accounting path.
- A strong Computer Science program.
- A Sports and Entertainment program, which has exploded in recent years and who would have ever thought that colleges now offer majors in fantasy football and fantasy teams.
- Entrepreneurship and what it takes to own and run a small business, which is more and more important these days as small business is the heart of our country.

### **English**

- Traditional offerings in English, Journalism, Yearbook, Public Speaking, Creative Writing, Drama and Film, all different offerings to appeal to various students.

### **Family & Consumer Science**

- General classes are offered and the three main branches which is Clothing/Fashion, Food Industry, which is one of our more popular classes, and Childcare.

### **Health & Physical Education**

- Advanced Strength & Conditioning and Lifeguarding/Water Safety

### **Mathematics**

- Primary pathway is in Computer Science focusing on Programming, Gaming and Coding and the behind the scenes aspect of math.

### **Music**

- We have a very strong Vocal and Instrumental program, we do because of lessons have string instruments, but we don't have a separate section for string as we keep it with Vocal and Instrumental. Many of these classes require a student performance in front of their peers, which is daunting for a high school student, those students who pursue music at that level are very prepared to be performers and hold themselves incredibly well in a public environment.

### **Science**

- Forensic Science

### **Social Studies**

- We offer a broad range of topics. We, primarily in the core subjects focus on History, Geography, Civics and Economics through the lens of US History and a little bit of World History. We augment that with our electives in Sociology, Psychology, and Government and Politics at the AP level.

### **Technology Education**

- Technology Education used to be called Industrial Arts. We offer four main pathways. MCTI has some of these offerings too, we concentrate on these here for those students who do not want to do the ½ day program at MCTI in order to remain in their home school. We have Graphic Arts, Drawing and Engineering (Architectural pathway), Electronic Arts and Wood Technology.

### **World Language**

- We offer three world languages beginning at the middle level, as you remember, all the way up to Level 7. Because of our block schedule we can offer this many electives. Number of days taken can result in AP level and even beyond that.

Mrs. Piperato also included a chart at the end to remind everyone of the breakdown of required electives and how many credits in each 2 Humanities, 1 Computer Literacy (which we will probably come to you soon with a proposition to most likely get rid of, as computer literacy is embedded pretty much in every course that we have, 0.5 Family & Computer Science and 5.5 Any and All Others.

Dr. Bonilla asked if the changes you might consider are only in Humanities and Computer Literacy? Mrs. Piperato replied all will be considered starting with Computer Literacy, but also we will look at why we offer what we offer.

Ms. Bear asked if all courses are offered at both North and South High Schools; because, some of these I did not see on my sons course selection sheet? AP Sociology is one not offered at North, I know that. Mrs. Piperato replied that all courses are listed in the Program of Studies and we have worked hard over the last two years to be sure all is listed at both locations. If not, I really need to know that. Ms. Bear also stated she did not see Vocal Technique and Styling and Fashion/Clothing Construction, Advanced Drawing and Painting and Advanced Sculptures. Mrs. Piperato replied that some courses are grade level

specific. Ms. Bear replied, but my son is a junior, so I believe he would be offered the same classes at North. I want to see equity at North and South and that all courses are offered at both schools. Mrs. Piperato stated, although they are offered traditionally, some courses never have enough enrollment such as gender studies, so we can't run a course with only five or six students. She shared that Amy Polmounter and Josh Fuller have collaborated over the last two years on the Program of Studies and I have asked them to look at courses that do not enroll after 3 years, and my suggestion would be maybe offer the course only every two years. Ms. Bear suggested allowing students at North to participate perhaps by Zoom with South if the course is not able to be offered at North, vis versa for South. She stated, I understand an art class is more hands on, but a gender studies course could be attended through Zoom live with the class at the other location. Mrs. Piperato shared we used to have distance learning with cameras set up in the classrooms, but now with laptops we can probably do it.

Ms. Kulick inquired that she did not see the EMT/First Responder course listed. Mr. Moran stated that the course is not included in the elective list as it is dual enrollment class run by Northampton Community College and communicated by counselors and teachers to students who wish to participate. We are currently running 14 students North and 25 student enrolled at South. This past year EMT/First Responder was only at HS South but this year it will be offered at both. Mr. Moran also thanked Ms. Bear for her suggestion for students to participate virtually when a course is not offered at one location and that this is something the curriculum office and administrative team can look at to see how to make all courses available as well as our courses at ESACA where students can go to a classroom and participate in and/or a hybrid schedule some brick and mortar and some online. We will definitely discuss this as an Education Committee moving forward in this process. Dr. Bonilla added that this process will be more seamless now after the experience we have all gone through. Mrs. Piperato shared that the Downingtown School District, which has a prestigious academy, they opened it up for students to take as many credits as they wanted. They have since rethought that philosophy, as there were a lot of things socially and emotionally that they should have considered first. Students were exhausting themselves taking the most credits at the highest level that they could. It would be great to take advantage of virtual opportunities but we still need to cognizant in regulating students both physically and emotionally that they are not getting in over their heads. Dr. Bonilla stated that she is so proud coming out of Covid and with all the uncertainties in the world that we have the right mindset for upcoming decisions. Dr. Riker added families believe taking as many credits and AP courses as they can will be a student's ticket to a post-secondary job or college of their choice and the reality is it's just not true. This idea has been part of our educational system mentality and we need to recognize that there are no guarantees. I encourage students to take courses you want and that are important to you which keeps them motivated. School is not something we do TO students it is something we do FOR students. Dr. Bonilla agreed that this should be an important part of decision making moving forward. She appreciates the trauma-informed approaches we are doing as a district and especially after the last couple of months of uncertainty. I am a fan of educating the public and having these important discussions.

Mr. Moran thanked Mrs. Piperato and Mrs. Bradley for their work on our programs and resources K-12. The information they have provided to the committee is the beginning point and now we can look at recommendations moving forward that meet the needs of our students and leverage their voice and choice in technology and programs across the district.

## **Summer Programs**

Mr. Moran thanked the committee and board for their support for district K-5 summer programs in past and they have now expanded the program for grades 6-8. Based on how we ended the year, we felt it was essential to continue to engage students throughout the summer months in educational programs. The elementary "Summer Cruising" program has 382 students among out six elementary buildings who are led on a 4-week exploration of various continents. It is a great opportunity for students, led by our teachers, to explore geography, animal life, plant life, food, culture, art and music from around the world understanding the diverse continents. Families have the option of participating in all four weeks or weekly opportunities. It allows flexibility to accommodate all families. Staff through Dr. Bradley worked tirelessly to turn this program from an in person to virtual platform. We are seeing it is successful with our students. He shared a collage of students during their summer learning. The program is available digitally and we also have non-digital tasks to engage with family members. It gives students time to step away from the computer during the day to complete offline tasks building and creating. Again, 382 students are enrolled, 67 chose non-digital and all information was sent home or picked by the parents and we have 315 all digitally. This allows us to meet the needs of all students.

Dr. Bonilla shared that her sons are participating in the summer program and have done so in the past. She appreciates the effort that goes into all the activities and the break in between for offline activities as well. Her sons are enjoying the program so far. It is an essential piece for students to have time away from the screen so they are not just sitting at a computer all day. Dr. Bonilla also stated she appreciates the flexibility for earlier or later start times which is great for families. It is important that families have the ability to choose how much time or how little time they wish to devote to the program.

Mr. Moran shared that Mrs. Piperato did a great job working with the teachers on developing the new Summer Academy program for Grades 6-8 and what it would look like based on the teachers' proposals. They developed 18 different 4-day long sessions across 4-week program. The program also offered offline time away from the computer as well. Some of the sessions included wildlife conservation, coding, laser engraving, Spiderman expert, and a person who impacted history. The staff developed the sessions from data they obtained from a student survey on their interests. The Summer Academy has 73 students from both Lehman and JTL enrolled across the 18 sessions for a total of 260 enrolled in multiple sessions over the 4 weeks. The district also offered in-person opportunity to come to the building for those students who didn't have access to a computer. Mr. Moran stated that this is our first year for grades 6-8 and that we will obtain feedback from students, parents and staff on how we might improve this program moving forward. Mrs. Piperato shared that she received an email today from a teacher thanking her stating how the program had impacted her as a teacher. She missed the students so much since Covid and is so thrilled to have contact with students over the summer months. Mrs. Piperato and Mr. Moran thanked committee for allowing them to be able to offer this program over the summer.

## **DEI**

Dr. Bonilla shared that since she came on along with the three new members of board and in talking with administrators I know embedding DEI more through school year and long term it is now even

elevated after the experience we have had over the last few months. On Monday, I spoke with the new CEO of NSBA, a Latina for the first time, about DEI efforts and what they are looking at, where the gaps and opportunities are and I look forward to the partnership as it is not just a discussion for the short term but for the long term curriculum, organizational, and cultural components. As a DEI practitioner, I've led a national coalition for the last 14 years before January and I know this is not an overnight situation or put in place tomorrow. There is a process of education, training and a lot of commitment to do this successfully. I'm looking forward to tonight's discussion and opening it up to public participation to see what we can implement sooner and what is longer term. Dr. Bonilla then asked Dr. Riker to speak about his involvement and participation in discussions throughout the community on DEI.

Dr. Riker shared the district has been working on and I started attending a Monroe County monthly committee of DEI facilitators, community members, business leaders, and educators since the fall of 2019. They have gained some traction, focusing on providing more training to educate the community and business leaders. As a district, we have been looking at DEI long before some of the events happening in our nation. I also started meeting with one of our North teachers and HS North administration on what we could do with in-house training associated with DEI. We started back in January and had some good traction going in February until we had to close schools. We have reengaged in those conversation over the last couple of weeks. I'm happy to report this training will begin this month at our Administrative Retreat where our team, along with security and school police will participate in what will eventually be 7 different sessions around topics associated with DEI. These topics include looking at demographics, implicit bias, micro aggressions, culture and cultural competency, culturally responsive teaching, code switching culture, discipline and how we can better serve our community. We are also looking at expanding that and how we offer training to our teachers between now and the beginning of the school year, so we are not waiting until the school year begins to continue our work and efforts in getting everyone on the same page in engaging in these conversations. The other thing we are looking at in our high schools is to implement a program where teachers during homeroom have some scripted content and lessons on topics that they work with students on as part of the homeroom period. We plan to incorporate DEI topics in homeroom for all students in HS and are looking at how to incorporate at intermediate and elementary level as well. We are also having conversations about some training of staff before putting them in these situation and that they are comfortable having these discussions on DEI and helping facilitate those conversations with students. We are also looking to do a SWAT analysis which identifies our strength and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats that are around DEI and the topics that I've discussed and to take a deeper dive into curriculum and current program offerings, policies, budgets and resources to be sure equity does exist throughout all of our programs and those areas. We are looking to train groups in each of our buildings to conduct an equity audit in those areas in order to collect info and make those changes. We've also looked at the development of programs; however, we feel it is important to take our existing programs, conduct the equity audit, and make adjustment before we start adding new things to that. Dr. Riker added that it was good timing that last month PSBA released two optional policies for school boards to consider related to educational equity as well as trauma-informed approaches. We have been working as a district on trauma-informed approaches for just over a year now. The webinar I participated in with PSBA had indicated that they had worked on those policies for almost a year and a half. The important thing is that it is a long process. The presentation created a continuum of readiness that they really wanted districts to do before just adopting these policies just for the purpose of having

them. That districts really went through the equity audit to know that they were ready and had created that continuum before just adopting these policies on equity and trauma-informed, should boards choose to do so. It was a good session that provided the backdrop that this is something that takes time and you have many conversations around these topics and a lot of analysis that has to be done on what we currently have, so we can make some adjustments and determine where the district is on the continuum before adopting those policies. Last week I also participated in the first meeting with Dr. Stockman of ESU who facilitated the meeting along with one of our administrators and a former administrator from Pocono Mountain School District. The meeting focused working with schools and minorities looking to pursue educational careers so we would bring more teachers, administrators and employees into our school systems so that our students get to see people that look like them and people that could have those conversations as well. It was the first meeting of many and I am very interested in pursuing that with that committee. The important thing for me, and everyone I think, is I'm not just interested in talking about it but actually doing the work/actionable items and engaging in dialogue we need around DEI to make the adjustments and add the components that are important for our students, staff and community. It has been a long process already and we have a long way to go.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Dr. Riker for his commitment and hard work toward equity. I know the team is committed to it and I'm proud of the district as I talk with others around the state and country and realize that not everybody is paying attention and that not everyone is aware and sensitive to these issues. I had the opportunity today to talk to the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Latino Commission that I sit on and I talked about elevating the discussion. We are in the process of arranging a call with Secretary Rivera, and I know Dr. Riker has been part of call through the IU, but we want to facilitate a discussion for the broader community. When that is arranged, I will make the information available to our community to ask their questions.

Ms. Bear stated she is happy that these discussions are taking place. She also suggested looking at the possibility, budget permitting, of an administrative position of Director of DEI to be sure we are staying on top of this, rather than letting it go by the wayside six months from now.

Ms. Kulick shared she also wants something opened for parents and guardians to be able to attend a roundtable discussion or panel on what we are doing as a district. Ms. Bear and Dr. Bonilla agreed. She stated one of the goals of this committee is to get more engagement at all levels of the community and I hope that this committee is the place we can engage more stakeholders, specifically parents and guardians because this impacts the community as a whole. It is important to take our time so that we are going about it the right way, having right discussions and not rushing it. We are here for four years so we will make sure it is not falling by the wayside. The time is right and it is necessary to work together to get this done.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Mr. Andrews for attending the talk she did on Instagram about civic engagement, specifically with the DEI lens. I appreciate it because it's not what we do just in the committee but what we do for the community and society broadly. Mr. Andrews said he is learning a lot coming from a totally different background.

Dr. Riker thanked Dr. Bonilla, the committee and the board as we go through this I think it is going to be exciting and we all are excited to embrace this moving forward as a district and I look forward to working with the committee and the board as we navigate and engage our community.

Dr. Bonilla stated this is one of those areas where we have to do it together. She also shared that the board is also engaging in DEI training with PSBA when they have our Board retreat next month.

Dr. Bonilla next opened the discussion for public participation.

Jeffrey Reichl, HS North Counselor shared that his son is part of the STEAM program through Resica and is having a blast. He stated, my wife and I also enjoy the mid-day break for offline activities and really enjoy having our son be a part of this program. As a parent and educator, with regard to the electives and also tying in the DEI, I've noticed that kids involved in sports, band, chorus tend to be more involved and more engaged and the whole diversity thing of getting kids out into different situations that they may not be familiar or comfortable with. When I coached basketball I had my team get involved with community service by adopting a road to clean. When I asked the kids to participate, one of them told me, "Coach, I am not on probation". So that is the perception and mentality and I said, "Well great, neither am I, but it is good to give back to the community". I really think I would like to see a requirement for graduation of so many hours of community service. It is a positive thing because when the kids actually did it, they felt good about themselves, they felt part of the community and I think that is what we have to do is to make them feel a part of the bigger whole, where we all work together to make our community a better place. It would be interesting to see this graduation requirement implemented moving forward.

Ms. Kulick stated she couldn't agree with you more there are many high school across the country that have a requirement of a number of hours of community service prior to graduation. It is detrimental for our students and would make them better in the future. Ms. Bear added it also looks good on a college application. Mr. Reichl stated the kids complained at first but once they actually do, it was a whole enlightenment. For instance, we cleaned up garbage on the road and the kids were like, "Can you believe what these people throw out". In their heads they are thinking I'm never doing that, because we all drive by and see the McDonald's and the Wendy's and all the fast food wrappers. Mr. Reichl added, even way back we had the haunted trail at Echo Lake Park and they had organizations volunteer and my team did that and worked games with the younger kids. The younger kids looked up to them like having a mentoring program or a big brother/big sister kind of thing. These things keep kids engaged and motivate them to want to come to school and be part of the community. As far as the mental health part of it, I know that as counselors, we go into classrooms and make ourselves available in different disciplines. One of the nice partnerships is we go in the health classrooms and talk about different mental illnesses and talk about suicide. It is a nice screening tool because kids may not always open up, but we can judge their reactions to certain topics. Diversity can be part of it as well and based on how a student reacts I can make a mental note to call down so and so to touch base with him/her individually to see how they are doing and assess from there. Those tools help with the emotional and well-being of the students.



Dr. Bonilla thanked Mr. Reichl for the partnership and for how genuine he is when he joins the committee and shares. She stated, I too learned a lot from participating in community service in high school and learned a lot for it, so I think it is important to further discuss a community service graduation requirement with the committee and board at large. I want to note you reminded me DEI is not just about race and ethnicity, right now we are seeing race and ethnicity across the country but also about sector of work, police vs. people etc., but it is the status of mental and emotional well-being, it is about abilities, thought processes and family dynamics. That is why it is such an expansive area for us to cover. One of the items that Dr. Riker covered in a previous discussion is that we want to make sure this is woven throughout the different areas so it is not just one course, one discussion or one event, but it is embedded throughout everything that we do and that is important to note.

Mrs. Piperato added, I'm glad we are talking about this and you have heard me talk about our strategic objectives and those five things that are the pillars of what we want to do. Then in our last session we talked about designing that ecosystem that is interrelated so that there are strands that we have to keep going because they hit everything we talked about. Communications is one strand, technology is a strand and DEI is in my opinion, and all of ours, a crucial part that will go through all five pillars. The goal we want in that design is to include in those committees the public, community and stakeholders so they have ownership. So that it Heather Piperato goes away, those things don't go away ever. They are built into the fabric of who we are as Eastburg. I am excited about this work because I think it is integral to that ecosystem that we build and pick up the mantel again. This is who we are and what we need. It is pervasive in all our strategic objectives, attacked from a number of different perspectives, culture of organization and curriculum in terms of what we are helping our students understand all in all to build community. You can't live in a community without respecting each other and understanding other people's world view, and how to interact for a healthy community. I believe a lot of our action is talking. Dialogue about understanding other people's perspective. Until we put ourselves into some uncomfortable positions, we won't truly get it. I'm looking forward to learning from each other and am grateful that we are in a district that is making this happen.

Dr. Bonilla stated being uncomfortable is part of growth.

Ms. Bear asked how many classes does the average HS teacher teach per day. Mrs. Piperato answered three blocks per semester, which equates to six classes at the middle school where they teach six periods out of eight. Every year that changes a little based on student enrollment. A teacher may have six classes for five years in a row and may be one year only five classes, but the teacher then assists with study hall or other duty in the building.

Dr. Bonilla announced there are no recommendations at this time. Thank you, to you and the team for the overview and last couple of months taking us through all the information for us as a committee to make more informed decisions and be more engaged partners in this discussion. I am excited about continuing work of this committee now that we have the foundation, knowledge and a better understanding of what is available, spaces to make changes or some of the needs we've identified thru the comprehensive planning process thru these committee discussions and situations playing out across society. We hope that all of those that are engaging thru zoom will continue to engage. Even when we start meeting in person, we will make zoom available so that the community members are able to

participate. We know that is something that has been asked before and we have been able to figure it out because we like the participation in all of our board meetings. We don't want it to diminish. We want to increase that more with teachers, parents, guardians and business owners and continue to inform the community as we go ahead.

Mr. Moran echoed the team, thanking committee members. In the beginning, this was established as a temporary committee. I look forward to it being a permanent committee to move us forward as a district with focus on our students and ensuring that we are listening to their voice and what they need and that we are able to provide meaningful and engaging learning opportunities for our students.

Dr. Riker added, as a curriculum guy for 13 years of my career, this is my favorite committee in terms of content and topics of discussion. As Mr. Moran said, it is really what drives our school and our opportunities to make a difference for students and I know you will hear me say this a thousand times. It is an opportunity to make education something we do FOR our students and not TO our students. I'm thrilled to take that journey as well and think we are going to be able to do great things for our students, community and our families.

Ms. Bear announced that she received a text from a teacher stating that he was not aware this was a Zoom meeting. Ms. Piperato stated she received a phone message earlier in the day and had emailed the teacher that it would be a Zoom meeting rather than in-person meeting. Ms. Bear stated the teacher did not check his email until after and had showed up at the Admin building. He was politely told he could not enter as the meeting was not open to the public.

Dr. Bonilla apologized that the meeting was originally going to be an in-person meeting and we did change to Zoom because the public could not come in at this time due to social distancing. I will follow up offline and ask that he send email with the information he wishes to share with the committee. This email will be added to the minutes for discussion at our next meeting. Ms. Bear shared that teacher, Anthony Mazza, was interested in proposing an African-American history class. He has been asking for a couple of years now and thought it would be a great time especially that it plays well into DEI.

Dr. Bonilla called for a motion to adjourn. She added the committee will meet again by Zoom next month and in-person September. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 5 at 7pm She encouraged the public to also join the July 8<sup>th</sup> Special Board Meeting on return to school at 7pm. Ms. Kulick made the motion, Ms. Bear seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

End time: 8:28pm