

**EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING  
June 1, 2021  
VIA Zoom  
7:00 P.M.  
Minutes**

- I. **The Chairperson**, Dr. Damary Bonilla, called the Education Programs & Resources Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Secretary Jessica Newberry called the roll.
- II. **Board Committee Members Present:** Dr. Damary Bonilla, Rebecca Bear, Jason Gullstrand, Debbie Kulick
- III. **School Personnel Present:** William Vitulli, Heather Piperato, Jessica Newberry, Erin Dreisbach, Steve Zall, Shahida Jones, Phil Kerzner, William Riker, Phillip Kerzner, Brian Baddick, Marialena Casciotta, Barry Krammes, Brian Borosh, Robert LaBar, David Krupski, Anthony Massa, Brian Mitchell, Joseph Martin, Diana Allison
- IV. **Community Members Present:** None
- V. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:**

Motion was made by Debbie Kulick to approve the agenda for June 1, 2021 and 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 Jason Gullstrand and carried unanimously, 4-0.

**RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:**

Motion was made by Rebecca Bear to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2021 meeting. Motion was seconded by Jason Gullstrand and carried unanimously, 4-0.

VI. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:**

**a. New Multicultural Perspectives Class**

Mrs. Piperato begins with the work that they've been doing on the new multicultural class. We're excited to talk about our multicultural perspectives class, as you know that has been in development. Mr. Tony Massa and Mr. David Krupski, High School North teachers, will help with the presentation. The curriculum we are presenting tonight we are asking that you take it forth to the full board for approval. We want to share the design process that we undertook to do this curriculum, given the directive that we had from our DEI Committee to form a class that really showcased the perspectives of multiple people groups in the United States, so that the students sitting in our class could feel as if they're represented when they talk about the history of the United States. We started by forming an advisory group with staff from both high schools. They came together in several capacities either advisory or writer capacities to discuss what this course would look like. We discussed what it would be called, what the focus would be and what the lens would be and we formed a committee to have these discussions and move this course forward. Mrs. Piperato states together we formed the objectives of the course and then came to an

agreement on a framework for the course. Mr. Krupski defines the objectives. When the committee got together, we decided that the outcomes of the course should mirror those in the social studies curriculum at large and the four that we decided to focus on first. As the course name suggests, is understanding that there are multiple perspectives of any historical event, as well as of US History as a whole that we felt were underrepresented and needed. Second, building empathy for your fellow humans and Americans. There's going to be a lot of assignments built into the course which would help to develop and strengthen a student's ability to see a set of facts and come up with their own decisions of what those facts represent and the way to make decisions based off of those. With the 10th unit facility action of creating not only their own unit and having something they want to study, but hopefully action plans to help strengthen unity amongst all people and the way that we thought best to do this was to use 10 events, 9 that are student chosen, that help highlight underrepresented people. Ms. Piperato states the committee agreed with a recommendation to use Dr. Takakis, A Different Mirror, as a textbook for the course. Mr. Massa continues that after the initial meetings the objectives, rationale, what the goals for the course would be and how the course would be structured. This is all part of the process in terms of taking this very new and exciting course and trying to make it as applicable as possible, not just to our students but to our district as well. Mrs. Piperato states what we're presenting to you is the totality of it, knowing that we are still continuing to streamline it so what you are getting is a very traditional document, this is curriculum, as it has been given to the Board in the past and what could be taught to our students, within the framework that was selected by our curriculum committee. Mrs. Piperato gave a mental image using an Amazon commercial that featured an employee that is employed with Amazon to look out for the best interest of employees with disabilities in their company. She wants to bring to our attention halfway through the commercial as he talks he also signs, she continues that she was struck by the last clip in which he says "I want to create a more inclusive and accessible world", what he really talks about is the fact that when you're creating something its two forces that are going against each other, it's hard work. We know DEI is hard work, when we talk about being inclusive and accessible what he is telling us through hand signals, is that we have to go deep and wide in our DEI work, if you look at the work we're doing, we are really picking up the mantle of work that has gone wide in DEI before but rarely gone deep. I wanted to leave you with that mental image as you look at this curriculum. This is our first but not last attempt in our district to really look at the work that we're doing with DEI and help our students, in this instance, go deep into the work of DEI. We are very happy to announce that we do have enrollment at both High School North and High School South to have sections for these classes at both high schools and we will begin these in the 2021-2022 school year. Ms. Kulick asks if this presentation will be repeated at the regular Board meeting? Mrs. Piperato replies that it is up to the Board and they would be happy to do it. Ms. Kulick says she thinks it would be a positive thing to do. Ms. Bear agrees. Dr. Bonilla states she agrees, the committee recommends doing that, we engage the public, because people have been waiting to hear what we're doing. I think that'll be a good opportunity. Are we able to advertise something about the course on our website and other ways that people can access the information? Mrs. Piperato states she will talk with Dr. Vitulli and see what tools we have to get the word out, the word has gone out to our students, but in terms of from the DEI lens to really publish the work that the committee is doing going forward. Ms. Bear states that having high school students, they are very excited about the course. I know some are upset that they didn't get into the course because it filled up so quickly. Mrs. Piperato states, in her opinion, that once this class really gets going enrollment will only go up as word of mouth goes around. Dr. Bonilla states that the time and effort that was put into it, it's important that the process is shared with the public at large because of the DEI work we're doing, but also because it was a thoughtful process, it wasn't just created as a reactionary step, but a thoughtful process about the needs of our students and the supports that we want to put in place. I love the youth voice with them to choose one event, which we've been talking about a lot through this committee's work. I think it's an exciting opportunity for our students and as Mr. Bear pointed out the interest is there; I think it could only get better from here. Mr. Gullstrand states he went over this information quite a bit. He continues that he has done some curriculum in the past, revising curriculum is one thing, creating something is completely different and to come up with this, it was very well thought out. I tell my students, if you do it right and

do it perfectly nobody will notice the work you did and that's what you've got, I really appreciate that. Mr. Gullstrand thanks everyone who worked on this. Mrs. Piperato replies that credit goes to the committee and the great conversations that we had and we didn't always agree. There was really room for dialogue there and we came to some conclusions. We hope our students, if we enter the room, that this is the kind of dialogue that they are engaging in as we go through this course. The team of advisors and the curriculum writers are so thoughtful and reflective, so desirous of what's good for our students, it was a pleasure to be part of it. Dr. Vitulli adds the passions clearly come through in the documents and the work that was put into it. It's going to be a very successful class. Ms. Bear adds she's proud because we're a leader in the forefront with this, because most school districts in the Pocono area do not have a course like this and to say that we're stepping forward and doing something that we see as necessary is really important to me as a parent but also as a community member. Dr. Bonilla adds one of the things I'd like for us to address in the presentation at the general Board meeting would be to be prepared to respond to why we didn't go with an African American course, but with the multicultural course, because I'm sure that's something people are wondering and we've had great discussion with this committee and with the DEI committee, but we want to make sure the public understands. Thank you to the committee for the amazing work and Mr. Massa for your flexibility that you brought an idea to the committee, there was something you wanted to do and that you were flexible enough to meet the needs of the students and work with others to do that.

### **b. New Intermediate School Social Studies Textbooks**

This purchase will be a significant amount of money. Mrs. Piperato along with the two intermediate department chairs worked on this project. There was an in depth analysis of these books. They worked with five different vendors. Mrs. Piperato has a presentation outlining the process they underwent to get these resources. Many of our resources right now are digital, when they expire we don't have a resource. We will be left without a textbook and some of these things are catch up resources that didn't go through a whole curriculum cycle where we're actually writing curriculum the curriculum remains the same. This is a resource to make sure that our teachers have the textbooks and materials to teach in their classrooms. As a reminder, in sixth grade we teach ancient civilizations, in seventh grade we teach early United States history and in eighth grade we teach world geography. This past year we purchased a license from Edgenuity until we had the time to thoroughly look at resources. The process was started before COVID. This is a resource renewal not a curriculum review. We developed criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of a textbook. We looked at 6-8 resources, some were digital only and some were digital and text, we were looking for the resources that met the most criteria. Vendors would send us sample textbooks and we would disseminate them and based on feedback from teachers, the department chairs cut that down to a list of five resources. There was then a resource review with the teachers in the buildings, they were able to sample it as a student or as a teacher. Prior to COVID, fewer people may have used the digital resource but our teachers were engaged in that process. Mr. LaBar and Mr. Mitchell explained how the focus has really changed and how the digital components are now a huge factor in making this decision. Three vendors were asked to give presentations about their product. A high school and elementary representative was also invited to the presentations to get their feedback. The vendor presentations proved to be important for us, it allowed us to see things that a physical review of the text didn't give us. We got to that point number six, we selected it and said this is the one we want. We then got quotes from the highest of our selection and the next competitor, knowing that price is always a factor. Mrs. Piperato continues why this vendor was picked. We want to be purposeful about why we do things, we align these to our strategic objectives, the five circles we always talk about, and our supporting strands and physical safety. We chose a vendor that had both a physical and digital product. It was important to us because we see students struggle with the weight of the textbooks. Mr. LaBar gives the example of how textbooks used to be much smaller and not as heavy. Mrs. Piperato continues with what's impacting the families and how as a family can I help support my child. In this instance, our families can access the full program with student credentials and this particular resource also has a mobile APP that can be downloaded on

your phone while on the go. We also asked if this contains a career college and career component, and it does, the units are aligned with certain careers that we can have tie in for students as we talk about social students we can weave in that college and career piece. For academic solutions, this is strong and we appreciated that the unit lessons were written in a scaffolded way. Students enter our classrooms at multiple entry points, sixth grade, in particular, is different because they are coming from six different sending schools and having a curriculum that allows us to see every student where they are at and help differentiate is really important and this product does that. Not just at the academic levels, but in our English Language Learners, they have a glossary which is impressive. The glossary can take a social students specific concept and say that in Spanish, that is not something google can easily do. In addition to that there is a Spanish translation button on each of the pages of the units that is digital. Most of the language Lexile levels are written so that Google chrome can easily translate it and then that glossary aids in those various social studies specific vocabulary words. In terms of learning experiences, the units are designed with three different learning paths. The texts that we chose have increasing Lexile levels, so the readability of it for students increases as it should. One thing that's important to us as historians, is that there's a large selection of primary sources. We want to teach our students, especially in the social media saturated world where it's difficult to distinguish between true and half true, how to go back to a primary source. We are increasingly looking from a digital perspective; our products are adaptive to our students. With artificial intelligence increasing in the educational space it's important that we take advantage of digital ways in which a computer, the algorithm, can help students. In the presentation we asked what is your company's commitment to DEI, it sounded like the work they are doing and the commitment is like the work we are doing. We also completed our DEI checklist. We're happy to report that we did ask for two quotes and this vendor was significantly less than the nearest competitor. There are also Professional development opportunities, the person who did our presentation will be conducting the training for the teachers. He was particularly good and that was a huge selling point for us because we know the teachers will buy into that. The quote we received comes with two 2-hour teacher trainings, but they also offer summer regional workshops that are for our teachers. Lastly, in terms of communication, making sure that this gets around to all of our Social Studies teachers. We plan to have joint grade level meetings during the school year beginning this year to be able to compare how the year is going and the resources being used to see how students are doing with it and to collaborate with peers. We also want to make sure that best practices are shared. That is one of the things that came out of COVID, the amount of collaboration digitally that our teachers can do now. Mr. Mitchell adds when we got these three books that we marked as finalists, McGraw Hill wasn't one of them. We met with them anyway and were blown away, they outperformed with their digital components and the person we worked with had the answer to every question. Mr. LaBar agrees and adds that with the number of Special Education students we work with at the middle school level, the scaffolding and increasing Lexile is a big bonus because it's difficult. We have a wide array of students at different comprehensive levels and the ability levels. This package gives us many different ways to approach students. Dr. Bonilla states she is grateful for the chart that gave us a comparison of what notes were put in. She asked about the National Education Equity cohort, is it a peer to peer group opportunity? Mrs. Piperato responds she thinks that's the company's efforts in really describing it to the committee. Dr. Bonilla adds that training and professional development are important as well as the partnership and not having an extra cost investing in programs. Ms. Bear adds it is a great idea for on the go for the students. The app is going to be helpful and having those extra resources for our kids is really important. Mr. Mitchell added that a huge component of this vendor is they will walk us through all of their elaborate programs so that teachers are actually trained on how to adjust levels and use ELL content. Mr. LaBar added they also have the current events component. They connect for us United States history from the past to current events. Dr. Bonilla asks where the funds are coming from for the new materials. Dr. Vitulli replies this is a budgeted Curriculum and Instruction item. Ms. Bear adds that we use McGraw Hill in the elementary buildings, she finds that the Lexile levels are very helpful. Mr. Gullstrand adds that it is obvious all the work that went into this presentation and it was wonderful. He also verifies there are no curriculum revisions that need to be done, the book is good as it is and also that the digital versions will be available for six years. Also, how soon would this book be available to the

teachers if approved? Dr. Vitulli responds we want to move them to the Board and get them ordered and into our classrooms for the start of the new year.

### **c. Review of Application Purchases & Renewals**

Dr. Vitulli thanks everyone for supporting the purchase of the new applications that we've used this past year with the pandemic. They have become very helpful and a part of everyone's daily teaching. We are making sure and asking that we renew these subscriptions for the coming years. They have been beneficial to both the teaching and learning of our students. I put together an analysis of what we're asking for in the future. The programs we are looking to renew are Ed Puzzle, Near Pod, Screencastify, and Brain Pop. I made the suggestion and got support from all of them. I have data to support our decisions. Also, the non-renewal of Study Island and Compass Learning. Given all these programs are eligible and highly recommended for use with ESSR Funds. Many of these companies are giving us special offers if we extend a couple of years, between a 4% and 10% discount overall. We are asking to extend each of these applications for 44 months so they all end at the same time, and more importantly take advantage of the deep discounts and the use of the ESSR funds which helps in our obligation of taking 20% of those funds and putting it towards items such as this. We also recognize that these applications have lives and they run their lives, for example, Study Island, we've had for quite a while. The cost was \$73,000 a year, this year of the 6700 students that we have in the district 1147 have used it at some point in time that's just single log on or more. Compass Learning is a program utilized by some elementary schools in a limited fashion, we have about 2000 children in our elementary schools. Out of those only 408 children have logged into that program at some point in time, so these programs do have lives and they do eventually phase out and are replaced by something else, or something different. I recognize also that we are moving from somewhat of a resource based application to service based applications, these are really helping our teachers make the best out of what they have to offer for our students. Mr. Martin said Mrs. Allison and my primary role is to work with secondary teachers as they integrate technology, specifically classroom technology, into their classroom content. We are also responsible for providing support to those secondary teachers as they continue their quest to master educational technology applications. We also work collaboratively with our elementary instructional coaches. Before we begin, I just want to give you an anecdotal story that Diana and I had last semester around late October early November which sort of is going to justify the purchase of why we are purchasing these additional tools. We met with a teacher who was teaching in the district, probably close to 20 years and that teacher was struggling with the whole how do I integrate technology, how do I keep my students engaged academically, how do I care about them emotionally while I'm doing this hybrid model. She said to us, I can't wait until we return to the old normal of next year and we told her that there's no going back to what we were pre-COVID. In the course of this year we've worked with that teacher very closely in integrating these specific five applications into her curriculum and she expressed to us a month or two ago that it sort of revitalized her instruction within the classroom. Mrs. Allison adds these apps are primarily beneficial for students academically and emotionally when students can't be with their teacher in class in person, especially on those asynchronous Wednesdays. These platforms are useful and they allow teachers to send out lessons to students independently, these lessons are basically geared towards addressing individual student needs, they can go in and look at the data that the applications put out and say okay Student A needs this lesson for today, Students B, C and D need this lesson for today and they could really drill it down, based on the data that they're getting back through the lessons that they're distributing to their students daily. Teachers are engaging students more with each of these resources. They're used for many different reasons, on many occasions to help students and we are seeing the usage. We've offered numerous hours of professional development, and we cater to individual needs of the teachers. Teachers can integrate any one of these resources into any model of learning. More importantly, teachers are able to collaborate with each other. These tools now have integrated with google suite seamlessly, they also have built in features. For example, in Near Pod teachers are able to share plans with their substitute teachers. Also, as our students return back to school next year they are used to

these apps and they've provided consistency for our teachers. Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Krammes agree that these programs are outstanding. Mr. Mitchell expressed that the pre-fabricated lessons are available anytime and they can be personalized. Also, current affairs are available immediately. It also creates participation games. Mr. Krammes adds he likes the real time data that Near Pod gives. It allows students to answer questions immediately and I am able to give feedback right away. Dr. Bonilla and Ms. Bear express the points they like about Near Pod. The virtual field trips, the drawing component, and the anonymous opportunity to further engage our students. The best testimonials are from those that are using it. Ms. Kulick states we should put a short video that can be accessed off our website so that parents and the general public can see and hear what we're doing. Dr. Bonilla agrees and adds to communicate this with the families and the community, often the disconnect happens when people don't know the amazing things we're doing and we've done a great job at communicating with our families and community during crisis, which I think has positioned our district as a leader, not just in the region or state, but across the board. The more we do that, we're able to connect with families so they understand what the students have access to. Mr. Gullstrand adds he is glad the resources are being utilized. Mrs. Piperato adds I want to go back to the original, when we first started, you know how we get good tools in the hands of teachers? As Board Members committed to a three-year journey with 40 teachers across the secondary, our DLC group, the credit belongs to those teachers. Dr. Bonilla states it is a leadership opportunity, so that people are not just doing great work on the front lines with our students but giving them the opportunity to engage in the decision making process around what resources we need. The partnership and collaboration opportunity at the various levels of the district is why we're standing out in so many different ways. Ms. Bear asks about the other apps we use, First in Math and Reading Eggs, are we keeping those also? Dr. Vitulli responds I believe they all come up annually for renewal and we're looking at each one of those and we'll look at their usage, more importantly, and make sure that not only are they being used, but they're being effective. Ms. Bear asks, are we looking at all the apps that are in the students' subscription sites? Dr. Vitulli replies, we are looking at all of them and you can expect at the next meeting to have more from the elementary side. We are looking deeply into this, we have reports that show us the usage of these items and we wanted to bring it forward because it's a large purchase for a long period of time. Most likely those elementary items will re-subscribe, one more time, because I do think most elementary tools are getting used.

#### **d. ESACA-Edgenuity Renewal**

Dr. Vitulli explains the renewal of Edgenuity. The funds will come from ESSR's III since we are eligible for that again. For grades 6-12, there is no increase over last year amounts, with the exception of the new My Path K-5, which is an adaptable resource for students for math and reading. They will give us that free for 1 year as long as we can give them our feedback. In addition, we are purchasing a couple hundred E-Dynamic elective courses. For K-5, the quote is a little more than what it was per student, during COVID, because we had such a large number of students, we are back to the pre-COVID pricing on the K-5. We currently have about 113 students registered for ESACA K-5, the quote is for 120, it generally runs to be about \$1,000 per kid per year. Ms. Bear asks if Edgenuity will be available for elective courses at the High Schools? Dr. Vitulli confirms that the elective courses will be available to those students.

#### **e. Health and Wellness Update**

Ms. Shae Jones, Coordinator of Social Services for Elementary begins, currently, all teachers that were available to attend the 2-day training with Dr. Sadan have completed trauma informed training. We recently sent out a survey, that to date, 203 professional staff have completed. We are looking forward to getting those results. We want to use that information to help drive our decision making with how we will continue to bring that trauma-informed school piece to our district. Ms. Erin Dreisbach, Coordinator of Social Services for Secondary, begins, as many of you know, May is mental health awareness month. In an effort to raise awareness, East Stroudsburg did participate in the green light campaign throughout the

month of May. Green is the color which represents mental health awareness and at each building green lighting was placed at the main entrance. The importance of participating in the green light campaign was to raise awareness about mental health and to really spark conversations to fight stigma surrounding mental health. In addition, we also did a 31-day wellness calendar for administrators, staff and students. Dr. Bonilla states she was glad to see the various schools have the information posted on their bulletin boards and talking about mental health. Awareness begins with people seeing it and hearing and normalizing what has traditionally been “taboo” conversations. I think we are walking the walk of all the talk we’re doing around DEI and the social and emotional needs of our students and in our community by doing that. Ms. Kulick asks could you give us some ideas in writing of how we can better serve our children and what we could do to expand our programs beyond the trauma informed and the DEI? There are some other things that have been pointed out and they would think that it might be nice to hear your opinion. Dr. Bonilla adds that she has met with Mr. Baddick and his team to ensure that they come to this meeting every month and give updates on the committee. We will give them clear direction on some of the areas that we’d like to hear and build that into our monthly updates.

That concludes the agenda items.

## **VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – LIMITED TO ITEMS OF DISCUSSION**

None

## **VIII. PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED TO FINANCE COMMITTEE**

None

## **IX. ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

### **a. New Multicultural Perspectives Class**

#### **RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:**

Motion was made by Ms. Bear to move the Multicultural Perspectives High School elective class forward. Motion was seconded by Mr. Gullstrand and carried unanimously 4-0.

### **b. New Intermediate School Social Studies Textbooks**

#### **RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:**

Motion was made by Ms. Kulick to move the New Intermediate School Social Studies Textbooks forward. Motion was seconded by Mr. Gullstrand and carried unanimously 4-0.

### **c. Application Purchases and Renewals**

#### **RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:**

Motion was made by Ms. Bear to move the Application for Purchases and Renewals. Motion was seconded by Ms. Kulick and carried unanimously 4-0.

**d. Edgenuity Renewal 2021/2022**

**RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:**

Motion was made by Ms. Kulick to move the Renewal of Edgenuity for ESACA. Motion was seconded by Mr. Gullstrand and carried unanimously 4-0.

X. **NEXT MEETING** - Wednesday, July 14th at 7:00 p.m.- Via Zoom

**RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:**

Motion was made by Ms. Kulick to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Mr. Gullstrand carried unanimously, 4-0.

XI. **ADJOURNMENT: 8:36 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica Newberry