



## STATE COLLEGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT MEDIA RELEASE

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### **SCASD Board of Directors Approves New Curriculums; Discusses Construction Projects**

On Monday, Aug. 8, the State College Area School District Board of Directors approved a K-12 English/Language Arts curriculum, a K-5 library curriculum, State High Project change orders, an increase to the substitute teacher and substitute nurse rates, and the appointment of board member Penni Fishbaine to the SCASD Education Foundation Board.

Both curriculums were first presented to the Board on July 25.

Additionally, the Board heard updates about the State High Project, the Professional Development School partnership with Penn State, the District-wide Facilities Master Plan - Elementary Update and the Memorial Field renovation project.

#### **K-12 English/Language Arts curriculum**

The Board unanimously approved a [K-12 ELA Curriculum](#) almost three years in the making that defines writing units around categories based on state standards.

Director of Curriculum 7-12 Jacque Martin and Director of Curriculum K-6 Deirdre Bauer appeared before the Board to answer questions.

Work on the curriculum began in the fall of 2013 when the ELA curriculum committee started mapping K-12 standards, then creating curriculum documents based on the K-12 PA Academic Standards.

Curriculum committee members had attended professional development seminars at the University of Virginia, where UVA faculty members and national education experts Dr. Carol Ann

Tomlinson and Dr. Jessica Hockett advised on unit mapping and curriculum writing. Hockett has been an ongoing consultant, offering support, suggestions and materials, and other curriculum experts at UVA, Penn State and Teachers College at Columbia University continue to serve as resources.

For K-6, the ELA writing units are framed around three types of writing identified in the K-12 PA Academic Standards — narrative, informational and opinion/argument. The units have the same names “to build a writing strand across grades.”

K-6 reading units were written in the same manner to provide “a spiraling approach to teaching and learning by including two literature and two nonfiction units” with opportunities for teachers to building on student learning from the first to second units within genres.

Final reading units include standards for literature and nonfiction to help students make connections across types of text. Both the reading and writing units start with a “launch unit” that establishes expectations for literacy learning.

To create the 7-12 ELA units, the curriculum committee identified focus standards at each grade level with the PA Core Standards, and organized them around themes aligned with developmentally appropriate texts. Each course includes a selection of texts, as well as student-chosen reading, writing and research projects.

Board members Laurel Zydney and Dan Duffy followed up on a concern of a parent, who spoke at the start of the meeting and asked that the curriculum policy explicitly stipulate that teachers should develop coursework within the curriculum that challenges advanced students.

Zydney and Duffy, as well as Board President Amber Concepcion, asked whether the curriculum afforded the opportunity for differentiated teaching.

Martin said there’s already a lot of room for flexibility, and the curriculum would maintain those opportunities.

“There’s a lot of student choice and variety that can take place within the existing choices,” she said, later adding that she sees the curriculum as “a great step in where we want to be in meeting the needs of all the students.”

Board member Penni Fishbaine said she hopes the curriculum offers plenty of chances for professional development for teachers. Martin said it will, and that teachers already have helped shaped the curriculum.

“They’ve been a part of writing and owning the curriculum,” she said. “It’s not something that was designed for them. They’ve been a part of the design process.”

Concepcion asked how the curriculum would be annually assessed for effectiveness. Bauer replied that “multiple data points” would be considered, including data from assessment tests, teacher feedback and professional development.

“The different data points are used for different reasons,” Martin said, later adding, “It’s a whole lot of using those different points for different reasons, not just one cohort of students but over a period of time.”

## **K-5 Library Curriculum**

The Board unanimously approved a [K-5 Library Curriculum](#) was started in the fall of 2015 as a “vision for the learning we want our students to demonstrate as library patrons.”

Mount Nittany Middle School Librarian and Library Department Co-Coordinator Dotty Delafield appeared before the Board to hear comments, joining Martin and Bauer.

After reviewing the ELA Academic Standards and standards identified in the PA Model Library Curriculum, the library curriculum committee created four units that build on each other from grade to grade and are taught simultaneously. Additional SCASD standards, based on specific library tools such as catalogs, and learning targets derived from current research were included to support the unit goals.

In creating the curriculum’s four units, the district library department reinforced its commitment to “embracing inquiry as a grounding principle” — most notably with the research unit “Inquiring for Knowledge.” The department is committed to collaborating with classroom teachers with a library curriculum that supports and extends the ELA curriculum.

“Inquiry as a guiding principle will support students’ development as critical thinkers as they use this process to research in the classroom and library,” stated [a curriculum summary](#). “The units were created with transfer in mind: teaching students essential skills and concepts they can use and apply in any library setting.”

Board Vice President Jim Leous and board member Laurel Zydney commended the curriculum’s units.

“I like how these speak to digital literacy as well, because I think that’s very important,” Leous said.

Zydney praised the curriculum for emphasizing that librarians are academic teachers “integral to our curriculum” and more than suppliers of books.

Board President Amber Concepcion said she appreciated how the standards for the library “really mesh” with the standards for the ELA curriculum.

### **State High Project change orders**

The Board unanimously approved [three recommended State High Project change orders](#), the largest of which is \$65,000 for enlarging the compressor in the air delivery system of the Career and Technical Center. The original bid turned out to be undersized.

Another change order is for \$39,000 to add a transformer, panel and switch for modular classrooms on the South Building site — an unexpected need that emerged recently as units were being set and power extended from the main building. The work is being requested as a change order so that it can be done in time for the school year.

Director of Physical Plant Ed Poprik said the SHP team will try to bring change orders to the Board at least twice a month to keep directors up to date.

### **Substitute teacher and nurse rates**

Without discussion, the Board unanimously approved the increase of the substitute teacher daily rate to \$95 and the substitute nurse hourly rate to \$95, starting in the 2016-2017 school year.

## **Penni Fishbaine to SCASD Education Foundation Board**

The Board unanimously approved board member Penni Fishbaine as the Board representative on the SCASD Education Foundation Board.

“I think Penni is the best and right choice for this,” board member Laurel Zydney said.

Board President Amber Concepcion thanked Fishbaine for volunteering for the position.

## **Policy 211-Student Accident Insurance**

Board members discussed a proposed [Policy 211-Student Accident Insurance](#), focusing on clarifying certain sections and deciding to make further revisions before a final Board decision.

As required by the Pennsylvania Public School Code, the proposed policy would require families to purchase accident insurance from a district-offered plan, or show proof of comparable coverage, in order for students to participate in “designated” extracurricular activities.

Board member Gretchen Brandt asked where parents could see a list of the designated activities. Business Administrator Randy Brown said school principals and appropriate administrators would have the information.

Brandt then asked whether the Affordable Care Act, which requires health insurance, renders the policy redundant. District Solicitor Scott Eters said he did not think the policy was inconsistent with the ACA. Board member Scott Fozard noted that parents could opt out of the ACA requirement by paying a penalty, and thus still be uninsured.

Additional discussion centered on whether the policy is unclear about football being an exception to the policy’s requirements. Board President Amber Concepcion suggested further editing for the paragraph in question for greater clarity.

“I think this will come back again with another draft,” Concepcion said.

At the direction of the Board, Brown said the policy would be rewritten so that exceptions would be noted first, with all other activities covered by the policy. Fozard said he would like to see a revised policy in place before the start of the school year.

## **Professional Development School partnership update**

The Board heard a presentation about the long-running [Professional Development School K-4 partnership with Penn State](#).

Giving the presentation were Ferguson Township Elementary teacher Jodi Kamin; Houserville/Lemont Elementary Instructional Support teacher April Rizzo; Penn State Assistant Professor of Education Rachel Wolkenhauer; and Penn State Assistant Professor of Education MJ Coon-Kitt, the PDS program coordinator.

Coon-Kitt said the PDS partnership stands out from many teaching internship programs.

“We have come to learn that is because the school district is so collaborative and willing to work with us,” she said.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the presentation noted, 54 interns will be teaching in kindergarten through fourth grade while taking pedagogy courses at Gray's Woods Elementary School. Presenters also mentioned that 47 current district teachers are PDS alumni. Coon-Kitt said that group includes a little more than a third of the district's elementary teachers.

"Which is just amazing to me," Coon-Kitt said.

Furthermore, 17 PDS alumni currently serve on district curriculum committees.

"We hope that the district is feeling those mutual benefits from being a partner in our Professional Development School," Coon-Kitt said.

Board members Scott Fozard said he "was very pleased to hear the enthusiasm that Penn State has for this partnership."

"I think this is just an example of what is a win-win relationship for the district and Penn State," he said, adding that he hopes the success of the model can be leveraged to benefit other areas of the district. "I think this a great model that we can learn from and hopefully apply to other areas."

Board President Amber Concepcion said the district's students have benefited from the program's intern mentoring, and that the district is "really privileged to have the relationship with the PDS program." Coon-Kitt said the feeling is mutual from the Penn State College of Education's perspective.

"I think we have a perfect match here," she said.

## **DWFMP-Elementary Update**

Business Administrator Randy Brown, Director of Physical Plant Ed Poprik and Supervisor of Elementary Education Vernon Bock presented an update on the District-wide Facilities Master Plan-Elementary Update.

The presentation outlined [a revised DWFMP calendar and timeline](#) that reflects the requirements of two state grants.

According to the Department of Community and Economic Development grants awarded July 1, the proposed Radio Park and Houserville elementary school renovation or new construction projects would have to be completed substantially by June 2019.

If selected, a potential Corl Street Elementary School project, however, would not be subject to that requirement. As a result, the district administration is proposing an optional staggered project timeline in the event the Board approves three projects but does not want to start all of them together.

Brown said the staggered timeline would apply only if three projects are selected. The Board still need to decide about a Corl Street project at the same time as Houserville and Radio Park, he said.

The potential staggered design and construction timeline scenario:

### **Radio Park and Houserville**

- Start design — November 2016
- Bid — fall of 2017
- Duration — 20 months constuction

- Completion — June 2019

### **Corl Street**

- Start design — February 2017
- Bid — February 2018
- Duration — 18 months construction
- Completion — August 2019

On July 25, the DWFMP team of district administrators and architects presented an extended the timeline toward final Board decisions on projects. **A previously scheduled Aug. 15 community forum on the master planning has been canceled, but an Oct. 17 forum (time and place to be determined) has been added.**

The DWFMP timeline is as follows:

- Aug. 22 — Board meeting (Financial and demographic update)
- Sept. 7 — Facilities & Grounds Committee
- Sept. 8 — Citizens Advisory Committee for Facilities
- Sept. 12 — Board meeting
- **Sept. 19 — Community forum, 7 p.m. Mount Nittany Middle School (Financial and demographic update)**
- Sept. 26 — Board meeting
- Oct. 5 — Facilities & Grounds Committee
- **Oct. 10 — Board meeting (present final project options)**
- Oct. 13 — CAC for Facilities
- **Oct. 17 — Community forum (discuss final project selection)**
- **Oct. 24 — Board meeting (discuss final project selection)**
- Nov. 3 — Facilities & Grounds Committee
- Nov. 10 — CAC for Facilities
- **Nov. 14 — Board meeting (select project options)**

As part of the update, Brown explained about the ongoing demographic analysis of the district's attendance areas and projected student enrollment. The report should be finished later this month.

Specifically, the district administration and demographer will study district enrollment over the last several years compared to the Centre Region's population growth, concentrating on the relationship between population projections and student enrollment, especially in light of any new housing developments within the district. From 2010 to 2014, the region's total population grew by .9 percent while the number of residents under 17 increased by 2 percent. Meanwhile, district enrollment decreased by about 5 percent as expected.

"There are a lot of factors to take into consideration," Brown said. "We're working with (the demographer) to understand them."

Also on Monday, the presenters introduced [two draft matrices](#) intended to assist the Board with project decisions, and asked board members to refine and evaluate the various

criteria. The intent is to pursue a similar process to the one followed in the high school master planning. The first matrix addresses the size and number of building projects, while the second focuses on project design and features.

Both were reviewed by the Facilities and Grounds and Communications committees.

Board discussion on the matrices focused on whether their weighted criteria would adequately help board members decide on optimal building sizes for the school projects being considered. Brown said the proposed matrices will provide board members with an opportunity to address the district school size issue and to refine priorities for weighting criteria.

“These are buckets of information the Board needs to know to make a decision,” Board President Amber Concepcion said about the matrices criteria, though she noted further discussion will be necessary about how the criteria should be weighted.

### **Memorial Field renovation**

The Board heard a presentation about [Memorial Field's future seating capacity](#).

As it proceeds with the renovation project, the Weber Murphy Fox architectural firm's design team is looking to confirm the target capacity for the stadium and any options for future expansion in order to facilitate the schematic design process.

The project's initial Request for Proposal indicated the capacity should return to the 2010 size of about 4,000 seats, with the potential to expand to 5,359, based on the 2011-2012 Memorial Field master plan.

In 2010, the capacity was 4,061 before it shrunk in the next few years from sinkhole repairs and bleacher reconfigurations. The current capacity is 2,502 — 1,573 on the home side, 929 on the visitors' side.

The district administration is recommending that the renovation project maintain the original capacity of 4,000. One option, however, is to choose a 3,000-4,000 capacity. However, more seats increases the number of required restrooms and increases costs. For example, expanding from 3,000 seats to 4,000 could cost an estimated \$415,000 — \$115,000 for additional restrooms and \$300,000 for the seats — though the actual expense would depend on the project's final design.

Board member Penni Fishbaine said a solution might be to build areas where students can circulate to visit their friends. In that case, she said, the stadium might not need as many as 4,000 seats.

She said the Board could decide seating capacity better with more information from Weber Murphy Fox and the district about potential designs.

A Weber Murphy Fox architect said the design team is looking for direction on capacity because the design can include more amenities with fewer seats.