

School Board News! Highlights from the June 8, 2011 Board Meeting

by June Monach, Board of Education Trustee

Summary:

- Congratulations to 4 New Members of the PUSD Administrative Team
- Deepest Appreciation & Thanks to 15 Retirees Who Have Contributed 388 Years of Service to PUSD
- Thanks to Student Board Representative, Eric Huppert

- Board Review & Discussion:
 - 2010-11 K-8 English Language Arts Review
 - District Committee on Teacher Evaluation

- The Board Voted:
 - 5-0 to appoint four candidates to the PUSD administrative team (in Closed Session)
 - 5-0 to approve the Lease-Lease Back Agreement between PUSD and Cahill Construction for the seismic strengthening of Beach Elementary School
 - 5-0 to approve the contract between PUSD and Metropolitan Van & Storage for moving services for completion of Wildwood and the next phase of construction for Beach

- The Board tabled "Discussion of Board Committee Assignments" to the next meeting due to the late hour.

Kudos & Congratulations to Four Administrative Appointments – Board President Roy Tolles proudly announced the Board's unanimous approval to appoint four highly qualified professionals to assume the roles of Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, PHS Principal, PHS Assistant Principal, and PMS Assistant Principal. According to Superintendent Constance Hubbard, all three internal candidates have extensive experience with the high school program, staff, students, and parent community, and will be able to "hit the ground running" to advance the goals of the school community and district. Next year PHS will be undergoing the high school accreditation process, so it will be important to have a seasoned administrator who is familiar with the school to oversee the review process and continue to advance PHS's goals over the next several years. We extended our congratulations to all four new members of the team.

Mr. Randall Booker joins the team with 8 years experience in Piedmont; six as Principal, two as Assistant Principal, and before that experience as an English and Journalism teacher and coach. He was lauded for his vision, inspirational communication skills, and collaborative leadership style.

Mr. Rich Kitchens has 32 years of experience in Piedmont; twenty eight as a Social Studies teacher, athletic coach and academic coach for the Mock Trial Team; and four as Assistant Principal at PHS in the Counseling Department. He was credited for his breadth and depth of experience at PHS as a teacher, coach, and counseling administrator -- responsibilities that will serve him well as he assumes the role of Principal where his teacher leadership and student support expertise will be needed to guide the school through important and exciting times.

Ms. Ting Tsu Engelman has worked as a Counselor for the past 7 years, and also assumed administrative responsibilities for portions of the Adult Education program. As Assistant Principal, she will be responsible for both the PHS Counseling Department and the District's Wellness Center. She was recognized for being student-centered in addressing the academic counseling and social support needs of the high school student body.

External candidate, Mr. Eric Mappes, has 15 years experience as a middle school teacher, mentor, and teacher leader in the areas of science and mathematics. He joins the PMS administrative team after participating in the external search process coordinated by the District's administration and a fourteen member interview panel. The Board and Superintendent

Hubbard welcomed Mr. Mappes to the team, and look forward to the value he will bring to our learning community given the breadth and depth of his teaching experience.

Recognizing that some were surprised by the decisiveness of the appointment process, Board President Tolles explained that, "The District had been planning for possible changes in personnel over the past year" based on our awareness of interests by some to pursue opportunities outside the District, and efforts by other districts to recruit highly qualified Piedmont candidates to join their school systems. Board Member Gadbois noted that we have a unique and dynamic culture in our school system, where professional growth and collaboration is practiced. He explained that, "If *we* don't promote highly talented people from within, someone else will." To hear the announcement and recognition, click on the June 8, 2011 School Board meeting, Agenda Item II. B - <http://www.ci.piedmont.ca.us/video/index.shtml>

Recognition of Eric Huppert, Student Representative to the Board – Board President Tolles thanked Mr. Huppert for his service on the Board this year: "He has done a great job giving overviews of what's going on in the high schools, and we really appreciate it." Mr. Huppert is actively engaged in the schools. He has participated as a peer mediator and facilitator for three years; a freshman class rep, sophomore class president, ASB VP and ASB historian. In sports he has served as the freshman and varsity football captains, and JV and Varsity soccer captains. As a member of the PHS Honor Society, he also has served in the Oakland community and participated in the Reading Buddy Program for three years.

2010-11 Retirees Together Dedicate 388 Years of Service to PUSD – The Board and Superintendent Hubbard extended huge thanks and appreciation to the seven certificated and eight classified staff members who are retiring this year. Elementary and Secondary principals expressed kind words and thanks to Certificated staff: Marianne Gielow (22 yrs PMS Science Teacher), Suzanne Latham (30 yrs 1st, 2nd, 4th, Resource Specialist at Wildwood), Karen Streets (27 years PHS Counselor), Marcia Wilson (24 yrs Reading Resource/English Language Specialist at Beach), and Classified staff: Richard Finta (38 yrs Head and Asst Head Custodian at PMS; Wildwood Custodian), Christine Free (20 yrs Special Ed Paraeducator PHS, PMS, Paraeducator Wildwood, PMS), Hedi Gerken (23 yrs Special Ed Paraeducator at Beach), Ann Hall (30 yrs PMS Library Assistant), Karen Johnson (12 yrs Library Assistant PHS and Beach), Sheila Langmaid (18 yrs Wildwood Paraeducator), Lin Messinger (20 yrs Counseling Secretary, Attendance Secretary PHS), and Diana Sychr (27 yrs Attendance Secretary PHS, PMS; Paraeducator Wildwood). Association of Piedmont Teachers (APT) president, Harlan Mohagen, and CSEA Representative, Ras Medura, expressed their appreciation to all the retirees for their amazing dedication and said how much "we will miss you. Certificated staff who are retiring but were not present at the meeting include: Judy Broughton (28 yrs PE Teacher at Beach), Barbara Flores (19 yrs Havens Teacher Librarian), and Brooke Zimmerman (23 yrs Director Student Services, Assistant Principal PMS, Counselor PMS, Core 7 Teacher PMS). To view the recognitions, go to the link below and click on the June 8, 2011 School Board meeting, Agenda Item VI. B. <http://www.ci.piedmont.ca.us/video/index.shtml>

Report from PUSD Evaluation Committee – The Board and District's Administration extended thanks and appreciation to the Evaluation Committee for its hard work and major progress achieved this year. As part of negotiations this year, and guided by the "Shaping Our Future" long-range planning vision and District's goal to support professional growth and instructional effectiveness, eighteen educational leaders from all six schools, the District Office, and the local and California Teachers Association presented a pilot proposal to create a teacher evaluation program to "provide the best possible learning experience for all students" beginning next year.

Committee Members include: Carrie Gross & Marcia Wilson (Beach); Stephanie Konle & Tery Susman (Havens); Megan Pillsbury (Wildwood); Jeanne Donovan, Stella Kennedy, Andria Mullan, & Carolyn White (PMS); Ken Brown, Pam Brandau (MHS); Mercedes Foster, John Hayden, Elise Marks, Harlan Mohagen, & Karyn Shipp (PHS), and David Roth (District Office). APT has set a goal of 100 percent participation by certificated employees in some aspect of the collaboratively developed pilot.

Committee facilitator, Dr. Carol Boyd began by thanking the Board of Education and the Piedmont Educational Foundation for supporting the work. The charge of the committee includes: 1) Teacher-developed measures of student growth that can measure how students are progressing; 2) Standardized testing results that can measure student progress; 3) Feedback from Administrators; 4) Peer, parent, and student input; 5) Clear identification structure for delineating specific areas for improvement/growth; and 6) Develop evaluation systems that recognize different jobs and that apply differently and separately to professional assignments covered under the APT contract.

The committee researched relevant national and international evaluation systems and findings to inform its work. A comparison of the old evaluation system to the new system was reviewed. A major shift in focus will take place with the new system towards student learning, with a 360 degree model for evaluation that includes input from students, parents, administrator, peer and self reflection. In addition, common benchmark assessments across schools and the District will be used, and will inform on-going and differentiated professional development and growth. See PowerPoint Presentation at: http://www.piedmont.k12.ca.us/aboutpusd/agenda.minutes/060811eval_report.pdf

2010-11 (K-8) English Language Arts (ELA) Review – Assistant Superintendent David Roth thanked the staff for conducting an in depth review of the District’s ELA curriculum K-12 – one that he predicts will yield improved student outcomes, given the focus on professional development and instructional effectiveness. The information that was presented has been reviewed in more detail at Site Council and Curriculum Forum meetings this year. PHS and MHS will provide a report at the beginning of the school year next year.

Grades K-5: Tri-School Principals Carol Cramer, Tery Susman, and Julie Valdez presented a report to the Board on the review of the ELA curriculum that has been conducted over the past two years. The primary goal of the program is to offer a “balanced literacy” program that supports proficiencies in reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

The review was conducted during the District’s weekly common planning time, evaluating the current program in the following areas: 1) alignment with State Content Standards, 2) balance provided between concept and skills development, 3) use of available instructional resources, 4) assessments including standardized test data, 5) consistencies across the grade levels and all three elementary schools, and 6) articulation of the program as students progress through the grades.

In the elementary schools, the “Lucy Caulkins Writers’ Workshop” serves as the anchor program for teaching young students how to write. Exposure to a wide variety of literature is addressed in classrooms and also in the school libraries. The Reading Resource and Response to Intervention Programs are available for those who need added support. The Lucy Caulkins Readers’ Workshop is being considered for use by all three elementary schools.

A key strategy that will be used to ensure continuous improvement in the program is through ongoing investments in professional development for teachers, and dedicating collaboration time to discuss and share best practices. Differentiated instruction is an integral and growing part of the program in our District. A combination of assessment measures is being used to give every student multiple opportunities to demonstrate how they are doing, and help teachers guide where to go with each student.

Tri-School efforts next year will focus on: 1) Introducing common professional texts to support peer conversations; 2) continuing to build consistencies in the program through common assessments; 3) building upon use of common benchmark data to monitor student progress, 4) fine-tuning instructional practices in grammar and spelling; 5) providing additional leveled reading opportunities in the library; 6) communicating differentiated instruction plans being used in the classroom for all students, 7) enhancing communications efforts with parents about the program, and 8) conducting ongoing review during weekly common planning time next year.

Grades 6-8: Principal Jeanne Donovan thanked the PMS staff for their hard work over the past two years in conducting the ELA evaluation, and noted that at PMS, “Reading and writing are important skills built on earlier foundations that improve with study, practice, and maturity.” She thanked the elementary staff for sending well prepared 5th grade graduates to further develop their analytical and critical thinking skills as 6th graders. Over the past two years, curriculum guides were developed/modified outlining core concepts being taught as they relate to the State content standards; professional development on differentiated instruction, assessment, and the writing process (from consultants Anne Benninghoff and Brenda Wallace) and performance criteria have been developed to determine how to refine the middle school teaching staff’s practices in order to raise overall student performance.

Sixth grade PMS teacher Ms. Joci Kelleher spoke on behalf of the seven Core 6 teachers in the department. In continuing to examine standardized test data, the team identified a need to focus on reading comprehension. The department will continue to use the “6-traits of Writing” program, and refine the common writing assessments (or rubrics) developed during the evaluation process. Given what the team learned this year, plans for next year include: 1) Continue to administer the common assessments twice a year; 2) Examine the results looking for growth, patterns, and trends; 3) Confirm the effectiveness of the assessment/rubric; 4) Boost exposure and training for staff to use Data Director to collect and analyze assessment data.

PMS teacher Ms. Deborah Sorenson spoke on behalf of the 7th and 8th grade teachers. Based on preliminary findings, the Core 7 faculty focused on ‘Literary Response and Analysis’ and ‘Writing Conventions.’ The team refined the common assessments after students read “Beowulf” and “Dragonwings.” Next year, 7th grade teachers will refine these assessments and discuss what is working and what is not. For 8th grade, the faculty learned from the high school team how to better prepare students for the high school curriculum. Theme identification and supporting use of quotes was identified by teachers as a focus area. With professional development support, 8th grade teachers structured the process by front-loading certain activities to help students address this particular challenge. Writing assessments/rubrics have now been aligned across the grades. Next year the 8th grade faculty plan to focus staff development on ‘Word Analysis,’ and will continue to review trends and patterns they are seeing in the student assessment results.

Overview of the Current ELA Curriculum: <http://www.piedmont.k12.ca.us/curriculum/english-language-arts>

Beach Elementary School Lease/Lease-Back Agreement with Cahill Construction, Co. – The Board unanimously approved the agreement between PUSD and Cahill for the Beach project, in the amount of \$7,258,865. Board Vice President Rick Raushenbush explained that the reason why the Gross Maximum Price (GMP) was higher than expected was because additional financing/borrowing costs were built into the lease payment schedule and the total GMP. \$6.5 million of the GMP is for construction, and is the amount we expected as part of the budget for this last seismic safety project. The project management team including Vila Construction and Assistant Superintendent Michael Brady were thanked for negotiating the construction portion of the GMP down to \$6.5 million by addressing phasing and value engineering of specific aspects of the construction project. The remainder of the GMP covers financing over six years, which serves as a contingency plan in the event the District does not receive funding which we expect to receive from the State.

Other Business: The Board listened to individuals who expressed concern over possible changes to the elementary instrumental music program, an item not posted on the agenda. Board President Tolles explained that this topic was discussed at Site Council, Parents’ Club, and CHIME meetings, and was scheduled for the June 22nd Board meeting. The primary driver for the possible change was to improve and enhance the program. The Board approved a \$56,867.50 contract with Metropolitan Van & Storage for moving services to complete the Wildwood construction and begin the Beach project. We accepted a total of \$1,500 in donations to the PHS Wellness Center Program from the San Francisco Foundation and John and Edna Cooper.