

Prepared Notes for Board Meeting

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Marc A. Schare

614 791-0067

marc9@aol.com

We have some committee updates today.

First, the Race to the Top Evaluation committee continued its work in March. The first discussion concerned the use of MAP data as a measure for student growth. The Board will recall that for those subjects where a value-add score is not available, since our district uses MAP as a tool, we are forced to use MAP as one measure for student growth. The discussion was partially centered around which scores to compare – Spring to Spring, Fall to Spring and so forth, given that students forget some of what they learned over the summer. If you go “Fall to Spring”, a teacher could conceivably benefit from that loss because the Fall score will be lower so the gain will be higher. If you go Spring to Spring, the teacher could unfairly get penalized for that loss. There was also a discussion of how to calculate a consolidated growth score from the individual growth scores from an entire classroom and how to make it fair no matter the demographic or academic makeup of the class. Other discussions centered on teacher professionalism and how this is measured. Some form of parent and/or student survey was talked about. Finally, a handbook or guidebook is being created. To sum up, this is every bit as complicated as what was presented at our last meeting and it shouldn't surprise anyone if it takes a year, perhaps longer, to shake out the bugs.

The second meeting of the district's technology committee was noteworthy for these two points. First, the Ohio Department of Education in conjunction with PARCC was good enough to provide a tool to allow local school districts to assess whether they will have sufficient technology to successfully implement the PARCC Common Core and End of Course assessments by the 2014-2015 school year. When Mr. Schlarb plugged our numbers into the tool, he found that we were literally hundreds of computers short, remembering that all of the assessments must take place within a 20 day window. From this, I make the following observation. If Worthington is short, many of Ohio's school districts have no chance and the state is going to have to rethink whether the PARCC assessments, in the form that they are currently contemplated, is implementable in the timeframe being discussed and if not, is there a plan “B”. In a blog post, Education Week states that Alabama has chosen to opt-out of both PARCC and the alternative consortia, Smarter Balance, who has also developed assessments aligned with Common Core. Florida is another state considering a Plan “B”. Fortunately, Worthington is proceeding cautiously and at least so far, is only making technology purchases that are needed for the instructional program and not necessarily for the assessments. Speaking of making purchases for the instructional program, the committee had a discussion about how exactly that should take place, given that teachers don't all use or want the same pieces of technology. Some teachers are wizzes with Smart Boards, other prefers document cameras while still others would be very happy if every kid in the room had a tablet. Do

we purchase technology at the district level for ease of maintenance and support? Do we purchase technology at the building level so teachers can help each other? Do we allow each teacher to get the technology they feel comfortable with for their classroom and if so, do we move the technology if and when we move the teacher and how can we maintain it all with the resources we have? The district will be surveying principals and teachers to see what the preferences are, however, it seems clear that with the influx of bandwidth and the reality of really cheap handheld Internet appliances, it is not a question of whether teachers adapt lesson plans to use technology, but when and what kind of technology makes the most sense.

I wanted to give a shout-out to Worthington Kilbourne Assistant Principal Kevin Johnson and team for organizing and arranging a truly unique and meaningful event for High School seniors. They got to witness a naturalization ceremony where the WKHS auditorium was temporarily turned into a federal courtroom for purpose of issuing the oath of citizenship to dozens of new residents. I blogged that it was “The civics lesson of a lifetime” and it really was because it demonstrated for the kids (and the adults for that matter) how meaningful and valuable it was to those immigrants to achieve something that most of the students received as a birthright – American citizenship. Kudos to Kevin Johnson, all of Worthington Kilbourne’s staff and Federal Judge Michael Watson for making it happen.

Next, I wanted to congratulate David Bressman and Emily Cantrell for their performance at the community Spelling Bee. Emily was forced to pinch hit as most of our board attended the OSBA celebration honoring both of our high schools. As this year’s performance in the spelling bee competition was the BOE team’s best in years, I believe we have finally found a winning spelling bee formula.

Finally, we had a Treasurer’s Advisory Committee meeting a week or so back with the discussion centering around the May five year forecast. There is a lot to say about the forecast, however, as it is still a work in progress, I will save those comments for another day.