

**Citizens Advisory Committee
Cumberland Regional School District
Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2009**

Present – Mr. Stonis, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. McGraw, Mrs. Pschorr, Mrs. Kuhar, Stephanie Hayes, Susan Malestein, Laurie McMahon, Kim Murphy, Carla Plummer, Claude Rucker, and Melissa Kiessling

Mr. Stonis began the meeting by welcoming back the members and thanking them for their service. We then revisited the **Critical Issues Appraisal** that had been created at the November 2008 meeting. This appraisal highlighted three main issues: K – 12, Curriculum, and Budget and Safety/Security. A special power point presentation was made to all staff and invited guests prior to the opening of the academic year in September. These three critical areas were discussed in detail as well as steps the district is taking to improve them. Specifically, the district developed Vertical Articulation Teams (VAT) to ensure that all courses of study align with state standards; revised new staff induction programs; implemented instructional programs to address academic and social needs of student groups; provided intervention and practice for increased proficiency of student performance in math, language arts, literacy, and science; refined and improved the guidance program; created connections between instruction, observation, evaluation, and professional development; provided steps to continue to monitor the Alternative School Program to assure student academic achievement and transition back to the general high school program; and refined instructional practices for a formalized multi-year initiative toward Researched Based Instructional Strategies consistent across high school.

Toward these goals, the district has added two supervisors of instruction: Eunice Pschorr, Math and Science; and Greg McGraw, Humanities. Mr. McGraw explained that student test scores were evaluated as well as the individual cluster areas of each test. These evaluations showed where students were deficient and helped staff develop ways to help them improve. For example, students who failed to score proficient in math were scheduled for a math class during the fall semester. The evaluation was also able to pinpoint specific areas of weakness within the broader subject area and teachers have been able to create student-specific lessons. The same approach applies to Language Arts. For students who were very close to passing the test, special SERA sessions offer help.

Mr. Stonis explained the Vertical Articulation Team includes a cooperative effort with the sending districts. Eventually this will create continuity across the curriculum for all schools within the district. The VAT is beginning with math instruction. A common calendar will also be developed. This would coordinate professional development days and add to the continuity of curriculum.

Mr. McGraw pointed out that the transition from grade 8 to grade 9 is very difficult. Steps are being taken to implement a **Freshman Seminar Course**, modeling the Lindenwold School District. This transitional program includes such things as games and activities that help incoming students get more comfortable with new surroundings and meet the staff and their new classmates. Senior-to-freshman peer mentoring provides a kind of “buddy system” that helps incoming ninth graders adjust as well. During CRHS freshman orientation, some of these sorts of activities were used. Mr. Stonis invited parents to join him and the team when they go to observe more of this seminar at other schools.

Additionally, the school is looking for alternative opportunities to help students achieve. These could include internships for credit and credit for out-of-school activities such as EMT work. These activities would not replace required class work.

The Active Intruder Exercise: The school has been working carefully with state police, county emergency management, and area rescue squads through various table top discussions for an

active intruder drill to be conducted at CRHS on November 4. This drill will not include an evacuation of the site. Information has been made available to parents. A presentation by school officials and security personnel as well as representatives from the state police is scheduled for October 26 at 7:30 PM in the PAC (following the CAC meeting). Assemblies are being held to inform the student body and prepare them for the realness of the drill. Cell phone usage is to be prohibited and parents are asked to stress this with their children. The main focus of the drill is that the intruder(s) is apprehended first with injured people attended to as soon as possible thereafter. The drill is a very serious matter. It will provide useful information about strengths and weaknesses in the district's preparedness for an emergency.

H1N1 Update: There has been no confirmed case of H1N1 flu at Cumberland Regional. Protocol is being followed such as no student readmitted after an illness unless fever free, for example. All classrooms have large containers of hand sanitizer and the building is cleaned well daily. Plans are being developed in case there is a widespread outbreak of flu, but the district's intent is to remain open. The county health department will be scheduling flu shots for the district soon. The call-out system will relay information to all families. Permission forms will be made available on-line and through regular mail. Bi-lingual forms are available.

A question was raised about number of absences and School Counts attendance requirements. Mr. Mitchell stated that individual schools can create guidelines, but that everyone is aware of the special circumstances this year because of the H1N1 virus.

A parent questioned the criteria for a student to qualify and use School Counts and NJ Stars. The criteria have changed slightly due to their success. For example, a higher GPA/class rank is now required for NJ Stars. It was suggested that better communication about the specific qualifications and any changes is needed. Also, it was recommended that class rank and/or GPA be included on report cards. For more information, parents and students are to contact Mr. Aiello.

Choosing a specific number for "too many" absences may be difficult this academic year due to the flu; however, chronic absenteeism will be addressed. Students are still required to make up work for credits.

The FFA had two teams that competed recently. Both teams medaled in their categories.

Before closing, Mr. Stonis asked for continued input from CAC. He shared a tri-fold brochure that highlights the CAC, Board of Education, and District Administration partnership including goals and beliefs as well as a directory. He will be providing a list of upcoming initiatives and wants the committee's input. He also encourages other parents to attend these meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Kiessling