

LAMOILLE UNION DISTRICT #18 BOARD
CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
GMTCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2009

Committee members present: W. Sander, P. Ingvaldstad, D. Osborn, K. Roberts, D. Baker. Others: B. Schaffer, D. Taylor.

The meeting started at 5:36.

P. Ingvaldstad said W. Sander had asked him to agenda a discussion of graduation rate, because he was concerned it might be dropping off. B. Schaffer said he had understood that W. Sander wanted a discussion on students dropping out, but he could talk about both things. He said NCLB requires that students graduate within 4 years to count towards our graduation rate. We got a memo from the VT DOE about our graduation rate in the fall, then in January we got a memo saying they had made an error, and the rate was actually 85%. There has been give and take between our registrar and Brad James at the state level, and we are waiting to hear back what our graduation rate for last year was, using the federal formula. B. Schaffer said he expects last year's final figure will show a decline in graduation rate.

B. Schaffer shared dropout rates for the past 5 years. This year, 5 students have dropped out so far. Last year, 29 dropped out. In 2006-07, 11 dropped out. In 2005-06, the number was 24, and in 2004-05 it was 15. The graduating class size this year is 140. Last year it was 145. In 2006-07, it was 150. In 2005-06, it was 153, and in 2004-05, it was 147.

Students who are in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program are considered dropouts if they have not completed the requirements after 2 years. Students in this program are considered LUHS students. Of the 29 dropouts last year, 17 were ABE students who didn't complete ABE requirements. Some of those have come back to school here. The year before, 5 of the 11 dropouts were ABE students who didn't complete requirements. The year before that, 18 of 24 dropouts were ABE students.

D. Osborn said one issue is the way graduation or dropout statistics are calculated. Another separate issue is how we are helping students graduate.

B. Schaffer said this year 31 kids are enrolled in the ABE program. Last year there were 34. In 2006-07 there were 61, in 2005-06 there were 64, and in 2004-05 there were 66. There was a big bump in dropout numbers when a large number of ABE students got to the end of their 2 years.

B. Schaffer said the ABE program allows kids to get a GED and also an LUHS diploma. Students in the program have to be employed at least 15 hours a week for 4 months. (*D. Taylor arrived at 5:52.*) They are also tested on personal qualities. K. Roberts said she knows of a kid who was in ABE and graduated at the end of 11th grade, and is now in college. She wondered if that kid counted toward the official graduation rate. D. Osborn said statistics don't help us decide if we're graduating as many kids as possible – that's what she cares about, not the official state number. K. Roberts asked what is going to happen to the kids who are in the ABE program now, or who have dropped out this year. B. Schaffer said LUHS is doing everything we can to attract and retain students. Are we doing what we can to help them graduate on time? Hopefully.

K. Roberts said we could keep track of the number of kids who actually graduate on an annual basis (as opposed to the state rate), but what figure would we use for the total class population to calculate graduation rate? P. Ingvaldstad said he thinks the reputation of the school is important. D. Osborn said she thinks reporting issues and problems have been discussed enough. She's for talking about it if it's going to bring about a change; otherwise, let's focus on something else. K. Roberts said we need to create a policy about how we publish our graduation rate. D. Taylor said she learned today that the plan is to change to allowing students 5 years to graduate when calculating graduation rate. She suggested that, given potentially changing legislation, rather than looking at a policy, we charge B. Schaffer with creating a school profile more descriptive of children's outcomes. We can show the graduation rate after 4 years, plus whatever other info we want to provide. K. Roberts said the new definition of graduation rate may still differ from how we count graduating kids. More important to her is whether kids are going on to secondary ed, and if not, why not?

D. Baker said we have done some things that should improve graduation rate in the future, such as bringing on the 9th grade counselor. She asked if most of the students who drop out do so when they turn 16. B. Schaffer said no, most dropouts are students in their senior year who haven't completed the ABE program. K. Roberts said research shows we actually lose most of them in 4th - 5th grade, but they are required to stay in school longer. D. Baker said curriculum coordination should also help. P. Ingvaldstad noted that our rules for how we publish graduation rates should be procedure, not policy, and K. Roberts agreed.

P. Ingvaldstad said he would like to know how many of the dropouts had formal mentorships formed. B. Schaffer said we could also ask how old they were when they entered 9th grade – had they been held back? Cases he knows about involve students who had a history of difficulties in school. K. Roberts asked, are we missing a pathway for that group? B. Schaffer said last year he and his administrative team added the Options online program. We have multiple pathways and different alternative settings, but he thinks we don't have enough. D. Osborn said the point she's trying to get across is that a much more effective approach is to look at every child on the list and ask ourselves, did we do everything we could for this child? What program would catch this type of child? What led this one to fail and when did it happen? There is not one formula to solve all problems. K. Roberts said we have to understand what data we want to collect. It is individualized data, but it is still data. How about talking to the elementary schools and identifying those 4th graders who are in trouble? D. Osborn said she doesn't want us to stop at gathering data. K. Roberts said we have to formulate from the data what we want B. Schaffer to do. She said we don't have enough data to help B. Schaffer and the elementary schools know what to look for. P. Ingvaldstad asked, what are the individual stories? There may be fixable issues like kids who are looking for mentors but can't find them. K. Roberts said we have very little data about kids who aren't in ABE. B. Schaffer said there are many factors, and no consistent pattern that he's seen.

D. Baker asked if B. Schaffer could refine his report for next time, and maybe make recommendations of programs. D. Taylor said to assist individual students who are struggling, there has to be a systems approach to supporting their needs, even though they're quite varied. D. Baker said maybe C. Hinds could give some insight. B. Schaffer said we take an individual approach. We have a wide variety of alternative programs, and he and staff are reviewing them.

The meeting ended at 6:26