



Trail to open school year with ROAR

Jeff Horvath

Lackawanna Trail Elementary Center principal Brian Kelly kicked off a school-wide positive behavior support initiative Monday, accompanied by a crowd of enthusiastic teachers and staff members who filled the entire visitor seating area in the school board meeting room.

Kelly said that the entire school community will be involved in this model to support good behavior with incentives and encouragement. Large laminated banners have already been created with the slogan "ROAR," which is an acronym for "Respectful, Organized, Accepting and Responsible" student behavior. These will be posted on the pillars of the elementary school and throughout the building on the opening day of school, Aug. 31.

Kelly was proud of his faculty and staff members who attended the PBIS 2015 conference, which inspired the program.

"It's incredible to see this many teachers at an August meeting," he said. "They will be defining, teaching and modeling these behaviors, and it will be contagious."

He said that the students will take proud ownership of these behaviors as a result, boosting school spirit.

"If we can get students to buy into this, just think what instructional time we will gain. More time teaching, and less time addressing behaviors," he said.

Kelly added that other schools implementing these strategies have reported a 20 to 60 percent reduction in office discipline referrals and improved faculty and staff job satisfaction.

Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas recognized school psychologist Kelly Carey, who was in attendance, for his participation in the program, his four years of service to the district, and for his recent election as Vice President of the ARC board.

There was some discussion of Policy 115, about career and technology education.

Rakauskas said, "A few months ago, this was brought to the board, with the aim of trying to get the most serious Vo Tech students to attend the available career and technology schools."

He noted that other students were welcome to take technology programs available at the high school.

The idea was, setting the bar higher for these students," he said. "I spoke to Angela Evans, and she said that this approach might be too exclusive, and might not be legally defensible."

The policy might not be going into effect for this school year, although the third and final reading is coming up at the next school board meeting.

Another policy, 819, about suicide awareness prevention and response was recommended for adoption.

Several tabled field trips were removed from the table and recommended for approval, all at no cost to the district: The fourth grade trip to the Whitaker Center and Capitol Building on April 29; the fifth grade trip to the National Center/Independence Hall and walking tour of Philadelphia on May 13; the sixth grade trip to Dorney Park in Allentown on May 25, Kevin Dikeman's request to take approximately 90 students to Lehigh University for a band adjudication on May 13, and Denise Collin's request to take 12 students to the Student Council State Conference in Harrisburg on Nov. 14-16.

The student council conference will require a substitute teacher to be paid at \$93 per day, at an estimate of \$200.

Some discussion ensued over a recommendation to set an hourly rate for the school year for subcontracted photographers at \$15 per hour with a cap of \$20 per hour of supplies related to the contracted event, documented with receipts. All additional supply cost would require pre-approval from the district administration and business office. These subcontracted photographers would be hired as needed, since the position of public relations director has been eliminated. Other photography will be used as it is made available by faculty, staff, students and the public.

Debra Ellsworth's resignation as an elementary paraprofessional was recommended for acceptance with regret.

It was recommended that bus contractors be paid at the state formula for the 2015-16 school year, although the state formula has not been released yet. It will be available when the state budget is approved.

It was also recommended that the car/van driver rate be set at \$1.41 as per state formula.

A list of bus contractors and drivers was submitted for approval for the 2015-16 school year, as well as a list of substitute drivers and private vehicle contractors.

A list of approved tests were also recommended for the 2015-16 school year.

The elementary and high school curriculum guides were recommended for approval for the 2015-16 school year.

Board member Joe Strauch asked for future curriculum guides to be published electronically rather than on paper.

Courtney Wood was recommended to be approved as a volunteer field hockey coach. Yvonne Kwiatkowski was recommended to be approved as a volunteer girls volleyball coach.

Executive sessions were held prior to and after the work session.

During the regular school board meeting on Monday, Aug. 10, there will be a standardized test presentation.