

Trail board hears response to newspaper critique

by Pat Farnelli

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Lackawanna Trail curriculum director Tania Ross responded to a June Scranton Times-Tribune evaluation of area school districts during a school board work session Monday night.

In a pull-out section of the newspaper, 'Grading Our Schools,' the Lackawanna Trail Elementary Center had a performance score of 78.3, placing it as sixth out of the 49 elementary schools in the region. The highest scoring school was 83.4, and the lowest was 56.5.

The high school, on the other hand, placed 30th out of 33 intermediate and high schools in the region. Lackawanna Trail High School's school performance score was 62.3, compared to a high score of 94.8 and low score of 53.4.

Sarah Hofius Hall, the Scranton Times-Tribune's education reporter who compiled the report, was in attendance at the work session by invitation of superintendent Matt Rakauskas.

Ross went through the standardized test scores grade by grade, showing where students were meeting the standards for growth and where improvement was needed.

In the elementary center, 100 percent of the students made at least one year's worth of progress in math, for example. A problem area was in the math PSSA for fifth grade, where most did not perform better than average. Math was a problem area for eighth graders, as well. Average SAT scores for the high school were 502 for reading, 505 for math, and 479 for writing. Other standardized tests were discussed.

All of the charter and cyber charter schools educating students from the Lackawanna Trail school district had worse school performance schools, Ross pointed out.

After Ross outlined a plan to improve curriculum, teaching, comprehensive planning, and more effective remediation, the school building principals also responded with the initiatives they will be putting into action to improve school performance.

In other business, the school board will be voting at next Monday's school board meeting to approve a candidate for the Junior High Softball Coach position, at a stipend of \$3,350. The candidate is still to be determined.

The following substitutes will be voted on for approval: Sharon Bray of Factoryville, cafeteria, aide, maintenance; Sarah Wright of Factoryville, aide and maintenance; Jamie June of Factoryville, maintenance; and Kristen Beicher, Dalton, maintenance.

A family leave for Kenneth Yerkes and an unpaid leave for Susie Shaw are on the agenda for board approval.

Kelly Buck is on the agenda for board approval as a Volunteer Girls Jr. High Basketball Coach for 2016-17.

A ski club field trip to Smugglers Notch Resort in Jeffersonville, Vermont from Jan. 18-Jan. 20 is on the agenda for board approval. It was noted that this trip falls on a week with a teacher in-service day and that there will be no cost to the district. Last year, the club shared a charter bus with Tunkhannock's ski club, and they are planning to do the same this school year.