



Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central Schools *Board Highlights*

A summary of
Board of Education
meetings published
by Superintendent
of Schools Jim Schultz

Meeting of November 27, 2007

Fine Arts Department reviews their programs for School Board

Program Review

Fine Arts Department Head Michael Danis reviewed current offerings, enrollment, accomplishments and needs of BH-BL art and music programs. "We have a very strong and healthy fine arts program," he said. The arts are an integral part of the comprehensive education offered at BH-BL. He also stressed how important creativity and arts training will continue to be in creating superior and innovative 21st century workers as we compete with other nations worldwide. "In this era of high stakes testing, it may be easy to dismiss the arts as frivolous, yet study after study points to the benefits of a solid arts education in terms of student achievement, career preparation and general intellectual development."

All BH-BL pupils in grades 1-5 receive visual art and general music lessons each week. Additionally the arts are frequently an integral part of interdisciplinary instruction in other subject areas and can make culture, history, science and literature lessons come to life for our students. Fourth and fifth grade pupils also have the opportunity to start chorus, band, orchestra and instrumental music lessons.

In middle school our pupils really begin to mature as artists and musicians, Mr. Danis said. Scheduling all the state-required classes plus some electives becomes very challenging in middle school, but BH-BL students continue to receive art and music lessons in each grade for at least part of the year. Performing groups and instrumental lessons continue for all three grades. Extra curricular activities (including theater) and art and music competitions are also available for 7th and 8th graders.

Entering high school our pupils encounter a wide variety of art and music electives, and most classes are heavily enrolled. Despite increased graduation requirements, pupils continue to make time in their schedules for the arts. Visual arts enrollment has grown by 100 pupils in the last six years, and music enrollment is up overall as well.

Mr. Danis listed many extra-curricular activities, community performing groups, and high-level local, regional and state competitions in which BH-BL art and music pupils excel. Every year several seniors are accepted into college music education, music performance or music industry

programs. Twelve seniors in Class of '07 were accepted to art schools, seven of them with scholarships as well.

Despite these accomplishments and exciting career options for students, the department faces some challenges. For instance, although our elementary instrumental enrollment remains fairly firm, students are being pulled into more sports activities at an earlier age than they were, say, 15 years ago. The proliferation of sports clubs and after school activities for pupils of all ages puts more pressure on parents and kids to find time for everything.

Mr. Danis also sees funding and staffing challenges down the road. The high school has a state of the art graphic arts computer lab, yet these computers are almost 7 years old, and other pieces of high tech equipment are rapidly aging, such as the middle school lab of Yamaha keyboards. The department is researching available funding avenues to keep its technology up to date. Replacing aging musical instruments is a similar challenge. The department is not able to keep up with these needs even though it uses rental income and its annual budget to replace six or so large instruments like cellos and basses each year. The typical life expectancy of large wind and string instruments is about 25 years, but the district has many 40-year-old instruments.

Action items

Board of Education members accepted a grant of \$5,000 from the William Gundry Broughton Charitable Private Foundation to support the Middle School's assistive technology program for special education pupils.

Special athletic competitions were approved for the indoor track, varsity wrestling, ice hockey and girls cross country teams. Also approved were recommendations from the Committee on Special Education, and board member and Finance Committee chair NANCY DELLA PIA's attendance of a one-day NY School Boards Association workshop on school budgets.

Discussion Items

Assistant Superintendent JACQUELINE ST. ONGE outlined initial steps and planning for preparation of the 2008-09 school budget. Instructions have gone to the

district's budget managers, who must turn in their requests for the 2008-09 school year by December 14. Managers have been asked to keep all requests in the range of a 2% or lower increase. Any requests above this must include a written rationale. She expects the Board will receive several requests for additional safety and security measures this year.

Board members will get budget binders on December 6 at their first Finance Committee meeting at 7:00 pm in the high school library. Compiled budget requests will go to the Board on January 25.

Ms. St. Onge also presented a preliminary 2008-09 budget forecast and reviewed a number of state trends that may impact us. Indications are coming from Albany that the state deficit will be much larger than previously projected. It could be in excess of \$4 billion. The weak housing market and rising oil and natural gas prices will impact BH-BL and the state in many ways. Volatility on Wall Street can also impact what we will be required to contribute to the NY State Retirement and the NY Teachers Retirement systems. Health insurance costs for 2008-09 are projected to grow again, and our insurance plans are being analyzed to reduce costs to both the district and employees where possible. We will also continue to feel the impact of the cost of green cleaning products and ultra-low sulfur fuel for the buses.

Personnel Action

LEAVES of ABSENCE

KERRY AUSTIN	High School Guidance Counselor extended until 3/14/08
LAURIE BERNER	Middle School English Teacher effective 2/25 - 6/26/08
CARRIE BENNETT-SUNKES	District PACE Teacher extended until 6/26/08
CHRISTOPHER LOMBARDI	MS & HS Technology Teacher effective 12/3/07 - 1/7/08

RETIREMENT

ROBIN EDDY	Pashley Grade 5 Teacher effective 1/2/08
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APPOINTMENTS

TIMOTHY BATES	High School Cleaner effective 11/28/07
JAMES CRAIG	Long Term Suspension Hearing Officer as needed, effective 11/28/07
TAMARA DUVAL	High School Food Service Helper effective 11/28/07
PHYLLIS GAVIN	High School Cleaner effective 11/28/07
MONA LISA HADCOCK	Bus Monitor effective 11/28/07
FRANCENE KILICHOWSKI	School Bus Driver effective 11/28/07
MICHAEL SAUER	Middle School Cleaner effective 11/28/07