

WICKENBURG UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 9
BOARD STUDY SESSION MINUTES
September 8, 2016

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Joe Maglio, President, Mr. Curtis Arnett, Member, Ms. Amy Brown, Member, Ms. Sandee Gill, Member, Mr. Daniel Scott, Member

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

OTHERS PRESENT

Dr. Howard Carlson, Erin Johnson, Lynn Greene, Derek Streeter, Julie Case, Sheri Canham, Rose Garcia, Carissa Hershkowitz, Patti Slattery, Jim Missel

The Study Session began at 5:37 PM

School Improvement Plans Presentations

Wickenburg High School, Mr. Derek Streeter, Principal

The School Improvement Plan for Wickenburg High School centered on Standard #2 – Curriculum / Academics of the Strategic Portfolio. The Plan includes Action Steps which outline the procedure of completing the Goals.

The Goals are as follows:

1. *With the goal of putting all students on a Four Year Plan by the end of Semester 1, all freshmen students and their parents will be invited to attend a meeting with counselors to determine a four year plan for their high school students. All remaining students and their parents will also create a modified Four Year Plan to adjust for the needs of the student based on academic performance and interests.*

He reminded the Board WHS has started using 4-Year Plan last year, commenting the plan is going well this year. Administration is able to track communications see how many people were contacted, etc. The 4-Year Plan is a great communication piece for parents.

2. *With the goal of all freshman successfully completing the Algebra I curriculum, the math department will add a 2 period - Algebra I with Math Lab Block class.*

Ms. Brown asked if a student who was taking 2 Algebra classes would fall behind in credits. Mr. Streeter told her they were changing the curriculum for freshmen students. By moving government to their senior year, history to their sophomore year and doing a block schedule for some classes, freshmen are able to take 3 electives. The first hour of Algebra is counted as a math credit, while the second hour is counted as an elective.

Ms. Gill asked if eighth grade students were going up to the high school to take Algebra I. Mr. Streeter told her yes, there were some attending and that the schedule had been designed for Power Hour to follow their Algebra class, allowing eighth grade students to attend for extra help. Ms. Gill asked why, if the majority of the Algebra I students were eighth grade students, this was not taught at Vulture Peak Middle School instead of the high school. Mr. Streeter told her that teacher certification was the reason, as high school teachers are certified in 9-12, not K-8. For the student

to receive credit for Algebra I and take the AzMERIT testing, they needed to come to the high school.

Ms. Johnson asked if there was a reason why the high school teacher was not sent to the middle school instead of all of the eighth grade students going to the high school. Mr. Streeter told her he would look into the possibility next year.

3. *With the goal of assisting all WHS students that are enrolled in Algebra I or Geometry to achieve success on the AzMERIT test and thus move on to Algebra II, WHS will shift to the use of an AzMERIT aligned curriculum for Algebra I and Geometry during the 2016-2017 school year.*
4. *With the goal of increasing our enrollment in Honors Courses, WHS will employ a multi-pronged approach to recruiting and retaining students in our honors classes.*

Mr. Scott asked why Mr. Streeter thought it was difficult to get kids to sign up for honors classes. Mr. Streeter told him many kids have been told they may fail and there was a perception that it would be better to take a community college class instead. Students do have to work harder at the high school and the AP test is more difficult. The school is working at being sure the community college is not an escape route because it is easier. Mr. Scott asked if an honors class contributes to a higher GPA. He was told yes, but the universities take a student's GPA and recalculates it. Mr. Streeter wants to encourage students to take the AP classes as the rigor will help the student entering into college be successful.

5. *With the goal of increasing our daily attendance rate, WHS will employ a multi-pronged approach to keeping students in class.*

Mr. Scott asked why there was such a large difference in the demographic information between 14/15 and 15/16, noting the increase in the number of Hispanic students and the decrease in the number of Caucasian students. Dr. Carlson told him the numbers are shifting dramatically in Wickenburg and the northern part of Nadaburg Unified School District.

Mr. Streeter spoke of professional development for teaching staff. He also told the Board teachers are required to post grades weekly. Those who do not will have this reflected in their annual evaluations.

Wickenburg Virtual Academy, Ms. Rose Garcia, Principal

The Wickenburg Virtual School Improvement Plan incorporates strategies that address the five standards from the Wickenburg Unified School District Strategic Portfolio. Action strategies were given to demonstrate how the goals would be accomplished.

Standard #1 – School Culture

Goal #1: The WVA Staff will develop a plan to reduce the drop-out rate by 10% in the 2016-17 School Year by improving student/parent connections with the school.

Ms. Garcia told the Board WVA staff is trying to make sure there is a personal connection in everything they do with online students. Online teachers are encouraged to keep in touch with their students, as contact with students and parents is very important. Teachers must email their students weekly.

Goal #2: The WVA Staff will improve our School Culture by offering regular WVA office hours during the school day, so online students can ask questions, receive tutoring, & know how to connect with their teachers. WVA Staff will keep a weekly log of students they reached out to during their WVA Prep Period each day.

Goal #3: The WVA Staff will increase positive contacts with parents/students to promote a more positive school climate. Teachers will turn in quarterly log books to document contacts.

Standard #2 – Curriculum/Academics

Goal #1: WVA Staff will review AzMERIT, Science AIMS, Galileo, Subject Benchmark Scores & ACT EOC scores in order to identify if there are academic gaps in our digital curriculum, or areas that need to be strengthened.

Goal #2: WVA Staff will make all curriculum resources and assignments accessible to WVA students online, with the exception of Final Exams. This will be evidenced by submission of course pacing guides to administrator, which show a curriculum link to all resources in guide.

Goal #3: Each WVA Student will have an Individual Learning Plan addressing academic needs. WVA Students will also be given 12 month Academic Four Year Plans since many times these students need to take classes throughout the year in order to meet their educational goals with more flexibility. An ILP Notebook for all WVA students, with notes compiled from teachers, will be kept in the WVA Office for reference.

Goal #4: Each WVA Course will have a course pacing guide, clear and concise objectives, a final exam review assignment, and a final exam aligned with all of these documents. Teachers will turn in these required course documents to the administrator for each course they instruct.

Standard #3 – Parent/Community Involvement

Goal #1: WVA Staff will establish a Parent Open House – one per semester- to help parents understand how online education works, so they can better support their students. Documentation will be Open House notices and attendance logs.

Goal #2: An informal morning coffee or afternoon tea will be made available once per month by the WVA Administrator along with the bi-lingual paraprofessional. This will be an opportunity for parents to come and just talk about any issue that concerns them. A log of meeting dates and attendance will be available.

Goal #3: WVA Teachers improve communication with their WVA students by emailing them at least once per week, briefly outlining work due that week, and informing the student if he/she is missing assignments. If the student has not previously responded to emails, and/or work is quickly falling behind, WVA teachers will email parents next. Teachers will submit email records to administrator every month.

Standard #4 – Professional development and Leadership Capacity Building

Goal #1: WVA Staff will have a minimum of two Digital PLC Meetings each month, which focus on Digital Best Practices in Online Learning. Documentation will be meeting agenda, and topic(s) covered as documentation.

Goal #2: WVA Staff will include Student Study Team meetings as part of our required Professional Development – reviewing student attendance and academic data every two weeks as evidenced by meeting agendas and attendance logs.

Goal #3: WVA Staff will learn about state and national policies that influence online learning and blended learning. Documentation will be Professional development logs showing topics covered in at least three PLC's during the school year that are dedicated to National and State policies and new online teaching strategies.

Standard #5 - Effective and Efficient School Operations

Goal #1: WVA Staff will create a new attendance procedures and collect weekly attendance data from 100% of enrolled students. The WVA Online attendance book along with the WVA Synergy upload to the state each month will be the documentation.

Ms. Gill was curious about attendance and how the teacher knew if a student should be in class at a particular time. Ms. Garcia told her students are able to log in and do work 24 hours a day. This can be difficult as the student sometimes feels there is no structure. Ms. Gill asked if a student can work from home. Ms. Garcia told her yes. Although students work from home, WVA is making it possible for students to come in during the day and is offering after school tutoring.

Mr. Arnett expressed his appreciation to both Ms. Garcia and Mr. Streeter for their presentations. He commented on the commonalities he saw in their presentations, which were outreach and successful attempts to contact students. He felt traveling to other schools and meeting parents is a great thing and was very encouraged in that.

He noticed that, in looking at the demographics presented by Mr. Streeter, Hispanic students seem to be walking away at a rate slightly higher than other students. He asked how many how many were walking away and if they were transferring to WVA or just walking away. He wondered if there may be a way to get a handle on that.

He commented on something said by the Governor during his visit to Wickenburg High School. The Governor had commented that essentially, as a business man, he had to be concerned about results. When he got into politics, people in the agencies they are dealing with are not concerned about the product but the process. When you are asking for support, the answer is not “How can I help you” but “Show me the results”. We seem to see more and more of that.

He told the Board he is very concerned with the testing processes being used in the District. He commented that it struck him that when it comes to schools learning there is a bell curve with approximately 68 percent of students understanding the material. 13 percent of students have a better understanding, 13 percent have less understanding, approximately 3 percent understand very well and 3 percent who don't understand at all.

Looking at the Spring AzMERIT scores, you will only see four categories; two above and two below. If scored above you made it, if scored below you did not. We are dividing the world into those who pass and those who fail, which is very unfair. If there is a group of competent students and teachers and a course that is well taught, it is not reasonable that half of the students fail. One of our goals is we want our students to do his/her best. At the same time in many cases our students are not failing in the system but the system is failing our students. One frustration is while wanting us to do our best, in many ways we are being set up and students are being set up as well. He commented that the plans presented for future are ambitious and forward thinking.

The Study Session ended at 7:00 PM.

ATTEST: _____

Mr. Joe Maglio, Board President