

BTA Newsletter

April 1967

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Fiasco Or Master Stroke?

by Lois Morella Laurel Park

Man, such as he is, tends to label everything only to then pigeonhole it into one of his neatly defined compartments. How have you tagged "Easter Monday?"

You, as members of the BTA, may well ask what was accomplished? Were our efforts spent in vain? Was it a fiasco, a countermarch or truly a master stroke for the BTA? Before such an important value judgement can be made, the resulting facts must be clarified and analyzed.

As David Martz, President of the Brentwood Teachers Association, stated at a special House of Delegates Meeting (March 30, 1967), the recent happenings have attested to the fact that, whenever called upon, teachers will do more than merely offer "lip service;" they will act and they did act. Any association is only as strong as its membership - I am certain that, as members, we never doubted the BTA's efficacy but now I am also assured that neither will anyone else!

Under the provisions of the agreement which was signed by Irving Keller, President of the Board of Education, and David Martz on March 25, 1967, the School Board has agreed to a written policy concerning hiring practices and also to resume discussions relating to the Professional Negotiation Agreement, an issue which had been met with much opposition. The Board of Education has also complied with the BTA's request to continue discussion on the school calendar for the coming year. It was agreed that the calendar would include specific tentative make-up days which will be listed as such. Finally, there is only one additional snow day that will have to be made-up. Wednesday, April 26, 1967 has been designated as the remaining make-up day, thereby selecting a more educationally sound day and also maintaining the extended Memorial Day Weekend.

Is it time for you to reshuffle the cards and pigeonhole "Easter Monday" into the "Master Stroke Compartment?"

Committee Presents An Educationally Sound Calendar

by Lois Morella

The Calendar Committee, headed by Bernie Heller, has drafted its 1967-1968 proposal. The proposed calendar has received favorable comment and was presented to the Board of Education on Friday, March 17, 1967.

In drafting its proposal, the Calendar Committee considered the needs and feelings of all who necessarily operate under any adopted school calendar, the students, the professional staff and school personnel, and the community.

Mr. Heller and his committee are to be commended for once again formulating an educationally sound calendar. The proposed calendar has set aside large blocks of time which provide for periods of uninterrupted instruction. Aside from this most obvious attribute, the calendar is well balanced, as the holidays are evenly distributed throughout the school year. Many recurring problems could also be eliminated as the calendar is consistent with surrounding districts. Finally, the proposed calendar facilitates vacation planning for the community and recognizes that an adequate recess will assure the most effective education possible for the children of Brentwood.

As this issue is of interest to all, in view of recent happenings, below is the Proposed 1967-1968 Calendar which was accepted by the House of Delegates:

- Sept.
4 Mon. - Labor Day
5 Tues. - Orientation Day
6 Wed. - All Schools Open
29 Fri. - First Attendance Period (18 days)
- Oct.
5 Thurs. - All Schools Closed (Rosh Hashonah)
6 Fri. - All Schools Closed (Rosh Hashonah)
12 Thurs. - Columbus Day
13 Fri. - Conference Day
27 Fri. - Second Attendance Period (16 days, 1 holiday 1 conference)
- Nov.
7 Tues. - Election Day
23 Thurs. - Thanksgiving Day
24 Fri. - All Schools Closed
24 Fri. - Third Attendance Period (17 days, 2 holidays)
- Dec.

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Members of the Executive Committee providing leadership through many hours of planning and discussion. Pictured left to right are: D. Martz, S. Seiden, S. Weitzman, L. Morella, J. Gerbino, R. Farina, N. Siciliano, M. Gray and J. Rivera.

What it Means To Be A Delegate

by Shirley Seiden
Southwest

To be a BTA Delegate:

1. You must first be elected to represent a segment of the people.
2. You must be willing to give of your time and energies.
3. You must be willing to realize that as Webster's defines: you have "been sent and empowered to act for another."
4. You must be willing to serve when your talents are needed and when you are called upon for assistance.
5. You must be willing to listen to, and analyze all of the issues.
6. You must be willing to pass judgement based on the information available.
7. You must be willing to make decisions in and for the best interests of those you represent.
8. You must be willing to act to uphold the decisions made by those who lead you.
9. You must be aware of the feelings and needs of those you represent.
10. And above all, you must have faith in yourself and your own capabilities and judgement.

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The Exchange Column - Ray Esack, Hemlock Park
The Curriculum Corner - Nancy Kidd, Village
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The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and are not necessarily those held by the Brentwood Teachers Association.

Calendar

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- 22 Fri. - All Schools closed after sessions for Christmas vacation
29 Fri. - Fourth Attendance Period (20 days)
1968
- Jan.
1 Mon. - New Year's Day
2 Tues. - All schools reopen
24 Wed. - Regents exams
25 Thurs. - Regents exams
26 Fri. - Fifth attendance period (19 days, 1 holiday)
- Feb.
12 Mon. - Lincoln's birthday
19 - 21 Mon. - Wed. - All schools closed for winter recess
22 Thurs. - Washington's Birthday
23 Fri. - All schools closed
23 Fri. - Sixth Attendance period (14 days, 2 holidays)
26 Mon. - All Schools reopen
- Mar.
29 Fri. - Seventh attendance period (25 days)
- Apr.
10 Wed. - All schools closed after sessions for Spring vacation
11 Thurs. - Holy Thursday
12 Fri. - Good Friday
22 Mon. - All schools reopen
26 Fri. - Eighth attendance period (13 days)
- May
30 Thurs. - Memorial Day

House Holds Special Meeting

At a special meeting of the House of Delegates on Thursday, April 13, 1967, the following decisions were made by your Delegates:

1. The salary schedule proposed by the Board of Education as their last and final offer was rejected by the House by a 71 to 4 vote.
2. The Delegates mandated the Negotiating Team to notify the Board immediately of this rejection and to request the Board to resume negotiations which would include a procedure for mediation if necessary. (Unanimously)
3. In the event the Board of Education continues to act in an arbitrary and unilateral fashion, the House requested a General Meeting of the membership as soon as possible to decide on a course of action. Voted 72 to 3.

- 31 Fri. - All schools closed
31 Fri. Ninth attendance period (23 days, 1 holiday)
- June
14 Fri. - Regents Exams
17 Mon. - Regents Exams
18 Tues. - Regents Exams
19 Wed. - Regents Exams
20 Thurs. - Regents Exams
21 Fri. - Last day of school
28 Fri. - Tenth attendance period (15 days)
180 days, 1 conference day, 7 holidays.



THE QUESTION BOX

by Tony De Marco North Junior High

When will stability come to Brentwood? I wonder how many teachers feel this lack of stability in our curriculum? What I mean about a lack of stability is the confusion as to what should be taught in our schools. I am sure one could tour our schools and see little similarity in the academic disciplines. The problems seem magnified when one thinks how our system has actually been functioning without a Curriculum Coordinator for the last nine months.

An involved teacher

A strong effort is being made to bring stability to our district. The aim is to establish a permanent foundation at the elementary school level. After this is done work will begin to bring stability to our secondary schools.

Why do our two personal days have to come from our sick days? Many districts have two personal days which are not drawn from sick days.

Bernie Heller
High School

I am sure all of the teachers in the district share your feeling on this matter. Your local association has placed this in the salary proposal with hopes that the Board will accept it.

I am very concerned about the large turnover of teachers in our district. Do you know how many new teachers we hired this year?

Pat Beasey
South Junior High School

This year we hired 272 new teachers out of 885 total teachers hired. Well over 59% of this number of new teachers are also in their first year of teaching.

In reference to the letter that was sent out by the BTA Executive Board: I, and many other teachers, feel that the choice of "pseudo-professionalism" as a word to describe the teachers that decided not to boycott, was completely wrong and in very bad taste. In many cases, it took much courage to voice dissent when our colleagues were in complete agreement with the boycott.

An irate teacher

Pseudo-professionalism is a word we use by choice. We understand how you feel about this matter, but fail to see why you cannot comprehend the higher professional ethic. Namely the courage to counter the established and traditional behavior pattern of teacher-school board relations. Until we reach the point in professional growth where, we, as professionals, determine our own educational destiny, we require unity in these formative years.

I have not been officially notified as to whether or not I shall be returning to Brentwood next year. Shouldn't we have received a written agreement by now or does that depend on a salary settlement by the B.T.A.?

Richard Griffin

North Junior High School

Unfortunately, no written policy exists stating when a non-tenure teacher should be notified as to his position for the coming year. Your question has pointed out an area in which the B.T.A. could make strong recommendations; not only for a date by which teachers would be notified as to position, but also for notification of class and group assignments. This is sorely needed.

Could you supply any information about the Taylor Bill which replaces the Condon-Wadlin Law. Can this bill be applied to our situation with the Board? It is my understanding that they must now sign an official bargaining agreement and allow mediators.

Morton Schlossberg
North Junior High School

The bill you refer to, S 4639, guarantees public employees the right to representation through organizations. It requires public employers to negotiate written agreements on wages, hours, and other conditions of employment with the recognized organization.

Local school districts in agreement with the recognized employee organization may establish procedures for determining representative status and the resolution of impasses in the course of negotiations. Such procedures must be in compliance with the state law.

THE CURRICULUM CORNER *by Nancy Kidd, Village*

Innovation is the key theme in the social studies area. Current trends in this wide-open field were discussed with Mr. & Mrs. Vincent Presno. Mr. Presno is the Director of Social Studies K-12 in Brentwood. He and his wife are authors of the "People and their Actions" series. Recently, the Presnos presented the Brentwood Social Studies Project at a meeting of the National Council for Social Studies. The project was favorably received by Social Studies educators throughout the country. It was felt that a mutual exchange exists - Brentwood has influenced, and has itself been influenced by, national trends.

At the present time there are forty Social Studies projects in the United States. These are supported by private, local, and federal government organizations.

New curriculum materials are being produced, so that teachers will have choices to meet the particular needs of their students. Brentwood has long been a leader in the use of curriculum materials that are appropriate to the child's age and ability.

Current trends on the elementary level include more knowledge of the social sciences (i.e. Psychology, Economics, Anthropology, Human Geography and History). Curriculum materials, such

The Ethics Of Presentation

By Henry Salerno—Southeast

Given that democracy implies the vote and that the vote necessarily means choice and that choice should be the result of intelligent and dispassionate consideration of the facts and philosophies of various viewpoints, it may be claimed that the media by which the voter is informed should not only present fact and philosophy accurately, but also in a manner conducive to the quiet reflection out of which sound judgments are made. In short, it may be the moral responsibility of the communications media, from national television networks to the press releases of local parent and teacher groups, not solely to be truthful, but also to set the mood in which the truth may be pondered meaningfully.

The vehicles of communication should be ever conscious of their power to influence attitudes and events. A misapplication of that power by inaccurate presentations, or by presentations in a manner that intimidates members of the community and stimulates an atmosphere of anger and hatred cannot be within the pale of ethical presentation. Ethics, concerned with means and ends, cannot but condemn as a means, the willful presentation of inaccurate statements, for such statements purposefully misrepresent what is true.

as teacher guides and visual aids, are available to implement teaching of these disciplines.

In the teaching of social studies the emphasis is on the development of mental skills needed to solve problems and to develop a hypothesis for careful observation and description. The social studies are being conceptually organized and taught. Data is now used primarily for supportive purposes. The stress is on key ideas and generalizations.

On the secondary level there has been a renewed interest in the average and below-average student. A curriculum and variety of media are being developed which attack the special problems of these students.

As on the elementary level, new areas of study are being explored. The traditional disciplines are still used but more emphasis is being placed on the newer areas (i.e. anthropology). These special areas lend well to the "discovery" or "problem-solving" method. This inductive technique is widely used on the secondary level.

The challenge has been made! As usual Brentwood, pace-setters in many areas, has met this challenge with innovation in the field of social studies.

Toward A Sound Theory Of Innovation

The basic questions to be asked in making decisions on innovation are not different from the basic questions to be asked in making decisions on education. What is to be taught? How is it to be taught? How do we know that our goals have been accomplished?

The essence of innovation is planning. An innovation is a planned change in the way of doing things, and an essential part of the planning involves the question "why." Why change?

The first guideline, then, for testing the soundness of innovation is: There must be a valid reason for the innovation. But however, intensive the study before the innovation, one cannot predict results with absolute certainty.

The second guideline, then: Establish hypotheses. In establishing hypotheses, there will be opportunities to raise critical questions. Is the innovation in keeping with the educational philosophy of the school system? Does the change take into account the resources available? The ability of personnel to become committed to and involved in the change? One more important question: Can the change be evaluated?

In other words, the innovation must be tested before it is introduced. It must be carefully defined. It must have the commitment of administration and supporting personnel. It must be capable of evaluation.

Once the innovation is introduced, stresses and strains develop. They will occur despite detailed planning. The stresses and strains will influence the effectiveness of the innovation and can prejudice the results.

The third guideline, then: Prepare for the syndromes that accompany innovation - the publicity, work-pattern, precision, psychological, and balance syndromes.

Publicity may be helpful in building up support in the form of funds and favorable attitudes. One skilled in public relations should be given the responsibility of gauging the values and the problems created by publicity.

The work-pattern syndrome involves the total time taken for the innovation - and more. What demand is the innovation making on the energy of the participants? How much are regular responsibilities neglected? Does the time that the innovation requires justify the results?

The precision syndrome involves the increased attention given during an innovation to accuracy, to detail, to content. This built-in opportunity for precision extends through each phase of the innovation: the planning, the execution, and the evaluation.

Not everyone is emotionally equipped to engage in innovation. Some teachers cannot bear to see their established methods under attack. If this psychological syndrome is not provided for, the people who are trying the innovation - not the innovation - will be evaluated. Both will be evaluated in any case, but it is essential that the two be separated as much as possible.

The balance syndrome involves the pressure that is built up by giving support to an innovation. In other words, both administrator and faculty must have a clear idea of the purpose, the scope, and the commitment.

Five more guidelines for final evaluation are:

Evaluate the content of the innovation by comparing current content with previous content.

Evaluate the morale of the faculty members involved in the innovation. Studies show that higher morale means higher production.

Evaluate students' morale. If students are not involved in the innovation, it is not likely to be effective in changing their thoughts, actions and feelings.

Evaluate comparative data, preferably with a pre-test and a post-test, to determine comprehension and the rate of learning in relation to resources expended.

Finally, evaluate acceptance of the innovation by the enlightened public.

There is a lesson to be learned from the present emphasis on innovation. The school administrator has the responsibility of working with his staff to decide whether an innovation should be kept or discarded. Yet this is only part of the lesson.

The main part of the lesson is that the theory that is used to evaluate innovation should be used to evaluate everything that goes on in the school system. Whether a practice or a policy is old or new, the questions still remain: Is it worth keeping? Can we put anything better in its place? Are we making education as effective as we can for all children?

The Non-Conformer-An Innovator?

Children learn by innovating. In fact, innovation is an essential ingredient in learning for the school-age child, if learning is to be a creative experience and not just a series of teacher-directed acts. Recognizing and even tolerating innovative behavior are often very difficult. The non-conformer must be recognized as a creative individual rather than as an active disrupter of the calm atmosphere of the classroom situation, or as a quiet, non-cooperator in group enterprises, or even as a challenger of our own thinking. Each of these kinds of behavior gives us clues to recognizing those individuals who are innovators, those who introduce something new, those who bring about changes.

What about the disrupter of the classroom routine? Is this the innovator? Perhaps he is, but to determine if he is, one must take time to discover the reason for the disruption. It may be that this child's disruptive activity is a bid for the attention of which he is deprived in other facets of his life. Or it may be that this child has envisioned a different way of doing something, a way which he has not been given a chance to communicate and which he finds so compelling that he must try it, here and now. The teacher who merely stops this behavior by using his authority and going no further may be missing an opportunity to discover and nurture the inventiveness, the unique potential of the child.

It often is necessary to insist, for the well-being of the total group, that a disrupter modify his actions. But this should be followed by a time when teacher and child explore together the reason for the behavior, and initiate the needed action. If this is not accomplished, the innovator learns that his ideas have little place in the classroom and must be pursued outside the school situation or perhaps not at all.

It may be difficult to recognize the innovative child, particularly if he is the quiet, non-cooperator in a group enterprise. Skillful questions will help to reveal whether the child is somewhat morbidly withdrawn or whether he is turning over in his mind new ideas and changes.

The questioner may be the easiest innovator to spot. This is the child who is so stimulated by events, thoughts, objects, that he evolves inventive ideas which raise the questions in his mind which he then puts to others - adults and peers alike. The questions giving clues to the innovator are not likely to be the "What is it?" questions. They are the "if you do this, will that happen?" the "I don't think that's a good idea," and the "why couldn't it be this way?" questions.

We must recognize all children as innovators, and we must provide conditions within the structure of the school which nurture this ability. This is essential as we expect all children to live in an environment surrounded by natural phenomena and to attempt the interpretation of those phenomena. Children need to have the tools of investigation available to them as quickly as they can be mastered. This means that a child must be freed for creative action. He is due assistance with techniques of observation, use of instruments, graphic representations, experimentation, stating hypotheses, and drawing inferences on the basis of evidence.

From the
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