Curriculum Advisory Committee (Thursday, October 1, 2026)

Sign In Sheet

1. Meeting Opening

1.A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM. It was noted that, per Board Guideline 006.2, all public meetings of the Board of Directors, including committee meetings, are audio recorded.

The committee was also advised of one change to the usual agenda order: public comment would be held at the end of the meeting rather than at the beginning, so that attendees would have the opportunity to hear the evening's presentations before offering comments.

2. Approve Minutes

2.A. Approve Minutes from the September 3, 2026 meeting

The committee was asked if there was any discussion regarding the September 3, 2026 Curriculum Advisory Committee minutes. A brief clarifying question confirmed that the Chris Balme contract posted reflected the most recently updated proposal. No further comments or revisions were offered, and the minutes were approved.

3. Old Business

No old business was discussed.

5. New Business

5.A. Education Office Update

Dr. Benolken reported on three field trips that took place in September: 7th grade students visited the Penn Museum on September 25, seniors in chamber choir traveled to West Chester University on September 25, and 6th grade students visited Camp America on September 11.

5.B. BCIU Student Assistance, Behavioral Health, and School Climate Assessment Contract

Dr. Benolken presented a proposed service agreement with the Bucks County Intermediate Unit for a behavioral health and school climate assessment, which is newly required as part of the district's PCCD grant funding and is separate from the security assessment the district already conducts. The assessment, which will be conducted by BCIU staff certified to perform this work, is intended to evaluate the district's current mental health and student support programming and provide recommendations for improvement. The cost of the assessment is $5,000 and will be written into the PCCD grant application, which is due October 16. The agreement will go to the full Board for formal approval. In response to a question, Dr. Benolken explained that the assessment process involves BCIU staff meeting with a range of district stakeholders to review existing programming and supports, similar in format to the district's existing security assessment.

5.C. Navy Partnership Programs

Dr. Benolken introduced the district's STEAM team, including Mr. Marrone (K-5 STEAM), Mr. Gosser (middle school STEAM), and Mr. Pompei and Dr. Curtis (high school STEAM and technology education), to provide an update on the STEM+M and SME PRIME programs supported by the Navy partnership established last spring.

Mr. Marrone described the K-5 program as a foundation for exposing students to engineering, robotics, and computer science so they can make informed choices as they move into middle school. Mr. Gosser described the middle school program, which builds on that foundation across grades 6 through 8 with a mix of robotics, engineering, and STEM special and elective courses, including co-teaching with the high school program for 8th graders.

Mr. Pompei and Dr. Curtis reported on the high school program, which this year introduced industry-recognized certifications aligned to national (NC3) standards, supported by new equipment including a high-end 3D printer, a hybrid laser cutter capable of working in both wood and metal, and a precision measurement tool set, with robotic arms expected to arrive within the next several weeks. Staff completed certification training over the summer at sites in Alabama, Kansas, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The first certification offered, in precision measurement, saw a 97 percent first-attempt pass rate, with the remaining students passing on a second attempt; the certification is recognized industry-wide and remains valid for five years. Enrollment in the program has grown significantly, by their estimate roughly 150 percent year over year, to the point that several courses are now at capacity, with interested students unable to enroll due to space and equipment constraints; class sizes are capped at 18 for safety reasons.

In response to committee questions, staff described how programming is sequenced by grade (a robotics-focused special in 6th grade, an elective and special in 7th grade, and an elective co-taught with the high school program alongside a robotics special in 8th grade), and confirmed that high school enrollment demand currently exceeds available capacity. Staff indicated they expect to continue expanding the program as staffing and physical space allow. Committee members and Dr. Benolken expressed appreciation to the STEAM team and to Dr. Lentz for the partnership that made the program possible.

5.D. K-12 Educational Technology Programming

Dr. Benolken presented the results of the district's fall K-12 technology survey of parents, along with an overview of the broader framework the district uses to make decisions about technology. She noted that this presentation would focus specifically on screen time and devices, and that AI would be addressed in a dedicated future meeting. She reviewed changes made since COVID for a whole child approach.

The survey was open for roughly two weeks this fall, went out to approximately 1,400 parents and was opened by nearly 1,000 parents, and received 317 responses. Among the findings: 86 percent of respondents said their child's at-home device use for homework falls within or less than board guidelines; 66 percent said their child rarely or never uses the device at home for non-educational purposes; views were roughly evenly split on whether classroom technology use is well balanced and on whether device use enhances learning; most respondents did not feel they needed additional resources on monitoring home device use or more information on the district's technology approach, though a substantial minority, approximately 40 to 46 percent, indicated they would welcome more information. Dr. Benolken noted that a meaningful share of parents were unsure how much time their child spends on devices during the school day, which she identified as a clear communication gap for the district to address.

Dr. Keiper, the district's K-12 Technology and Curriculum Specialist, summarized the framework shared with staff during opening professional development, which asks teachers to consider, for any given lesson, whether a screen is the right tool, whether its use represents active or passive engagement, and whether it is supporting or hindering student thinking.

Dr. Benolken outlined steps already taken in response to parent feedback: devices no longer go home for 2nd grade, and the K-1 program has moved to a cart-based model this fall; unstructured and recreational device use has been removed in some settings, such as during dismissal and recess; and, as of the prior week, student YouTube access has been disabled across all elementary users, regardless of location or network.

She identified several areas for continued work: improving communication and transparency with families about technology use and the reasoning behind district decisions; updating the K-12 technology scope and sequence, last revised in 2018, against current ISTE and ASCD standards; continuing to examine unstructured use of technology, including at the secondary level; and ongoing refinement of instructional practice in light of student data and the broader impact of AI. She asked the committee for feedback on how to prioritize these areas.

In discussion, committee members asked about classroom note-taking practices; staff described a mix of handwritten and digital methods depending on grade level and activity, informed by Penn Literacy Network training on the role of hand writing in learning. Committee member asked about the district's approach to evaluating return on investment and effectiveness for widely used instructional technology tools; staff responded that such tools are typically vetted through regional or county curriculum advisory recommendations, that vendor-provided data should be considered with appropriate caution, and that isolating the effect of any one tool is difficult without a control group, but offered to looking into the possibility of compiling information on major tools in current use. Several committee members agreed that improving transparency and communication with families should be an early priority. Discussion also touched on unstructured technology use at the secondary level, including a question about whether device use at lunch and during other unstructured time is substituting for student social interaction, particularly in middle school; staff noted that advisory periods and certain blocks are intentionally kept screen-free, and that this is an area the district will continue to examine.

4. Public Comment

As announced at the start of the meeting, public comment was held following the evening's presentations.

- A resident raised a series of questions, including a request for data on how many classes have taken local, lower-cost field trips, such as to the Historical Society, Washington Crossing, Valley Forge, or Philadelphia, as compared to higher-cost international trips, expressing concern about equity of access between families. He also asked the district to clarify grade-level expectations and assessment practices for foundational skills, including reading proficiency, math fact, handwriting and cursive instruction, and spelling, and asked whether the district requires a beginning-of-year handwriting assessment.
- A parent of three children in the district, described a technology-related petition she and other parents have circulated, citing research linking excessive screen time to vision problems, anxiety, depression, reduced attention span, and lower academic achievement. The petition asks the district to adopt a comprehensive technology policy addressing device distribution and screen time limits in grades K through 5, paper-and-pencil homework in grades K through 8, restrictions on recreational screen use during non-instructional time, meaningful family opt-out options, limits on generative AI use in younger grades paired with dedicated digital literacy instruction, and stronger vendor accountability and data privacy practices, including parental consent and activity reporting. She also asked for clarification on how the new YouTube restriction applies across school and home devices.
- A parent of three, echoed the petition's concerns and asked whether the committee could access more detailed survey data to look for patterns across grade levels and family circumstances. She questioned the need for her daughter to bring a device home when it is rarely required for homework, and suggested that some survey questions may not have been designed to capture the full range of parent perspectives.
- A parent of three, shared that her children have not brought devices home for several years and that this works well for her family. She suggested that some survey questions may have led respondents toward particular answers, and agreed that additional transparency and

communication would be welcome, particularly for families with children in 3rd through 5th grade.

- A parent new to the district, and a district alumna, shared that her first-grader's daily highlight is often YouTube, and that he expressed worry the district might take his computer access away. She raised a concern that very young children may be associating "fun" primarily with screen time rather than social play.
- A parent of a first grader and a fourth grader, also a district alumna, voiced support for the district's continued attention to this topic and asked for closer analysis of how specific apps and platforms, including YouTube, are actually used in classrooms, citing examples of YouTube videos used for brain breaks and transitions in kindergarten.

Dr. Benolken thanked the speakers for their comments, noting that many of the themes raised overlapped with points from the evening's presentation. She confirmed receipt of the written petition and said the district would review it closely. In response to questions about the new YouTube restriction, Mr. Radaszkiewicz confirmed that the block applies wherever a student logs in with their district account, on any device or network, and that guest login and incognito browsing are disabled on district Chromebooks. Dr. Benolken addressed Mr. Band and suggested speaking with the Reading and Math Teacher Leads on specific grade-level benchmarks for literacy, math facts, and handwriting, and to sharing information on upcoming field trips going forward. She noted that flyers summarizing technology use by grade level were available at Back to School Night and would continue to be shared, and thanked attendees for their continued engagement.

6. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned.