

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meetings

January 10, 2007

This was a Regular meeting of the District 15 Board of Education.

Superintendent's Reports

2006 Annual Student Achievement Report

Presentation made by **Mary Zarr, Executive Director of Curriculum**. Handout was not available at the Board meeting but is now available on the District's Web site at:
http://www.ccsd15.net/CurriculumAndInstruction/StudentAchievement/PDFs/2007-01-10_StudentAchievement.pdf

Reading/Grade 3 – Increased exceeds from 36% in 2005 to 43% in 2006.
85% total for meets/exceeds this year.

Reading/Grade 5 – Gained 6% in the meets category.
Up to 85% overall in meets/exceeds.

Reading/Grade 8 – 89% meeting or exceeding

Reading test given for the first time last year in grades 4, 6 and 7

Provided comparative data to see how each group of children increased from the year before when they took the reading test.

Reading/Grade 4 – Increased from 83% (when they were 3rd graders) to 88%

Reading/Grade 6 – Increased from 79% (as 5th graders) to 87% as sixth graders

Reading/Grade 7 – Increased from 78% (as 5th graders) to 83% as seventh graders.

Math/Grade 3 – Chart showed still above District's 90% target

Math/Grade 5 – Just under 90% target but holding steady

Math/Grade 8 – Shows a sizeable jump.

Zarr mentioned that the 8th grade Math scores were physically adjusted based upon studies done by the State indicating that the cutoffs had been wrong in the past.

Science/4th grade – 93% meets or exceeds (30% exceeding)

Science/7th grade – Upward trend holding steady

Performance Target was met for no significant difference between student groups meeting and exceeding standards – for students who have been in district for at least one year. As reported last month, all 19 schools made AYP (adequate yearly progress).

For 2006, to make AYP 47.5% of the District's student subgroups had to meet/exceed

In 2007, 55% of subgroups must meet/exceed to meet AYP.

AYP Reading scores for all students this year were 82% to 86%

Student subgroup scores were: 89 – 91% White; 64 – 66% Black; 57 – 69% Hispanic; 91 – 93% Asian Pacific; new category: Multi-racial/Ethnic 90%; 58% LEP (learning disabilities) showed slight decline; and 68% Economically Disadvantaged.

AYP Math scores - Every subgroup showed an increase.

Individual student scores should be coming soon. Principals will have access to individual student sub scores and see what areas might be pulling some scores down. Board discussion revolved around 8th grade Math scores, meeting AYP next year with the LEP group, diversity of the schools and possible language difficulties with taking the tests for immigrant students.

Citizens Address the Board

Sue Quinn - Referred to pattern of secrecy of the School Board in regards to Special Board meetings held on short notice for bond restructuring, teachers' contract and the superintendent's contract. Mentioned the Conyers law that limits increases before retirement to 6% and if the District violated that cap with the superintendent's contract, the District will be billed by the Teachers Retirement System. Spoke of vote taken in April, 2005 after the election but before the new board members were seated, to increase the superintendent's salary after a failed referendum, years of deficit spending and after \$12m in budget cuts were announced. District 15 needs to operate with openness and transparency to gain the trust of the public.

Jane Van Holenberg – Brought up topic discussed among her neighbors and friends of how there are programs in place for special needs children and gifted children. There is nothing in place for children that are intelligent but not defined as gifted. There are no special teachers in the school to take them out of class to be challenged. Her kids have had teachers that have gone beyond the call of duty often to work with them individually. Asked if it was expected or fair for those teachers. She would like to see the Board address this issue. Just because it hasn't been done in the past, doesn't mean it cannot be done in the future. D15 can be the exceptional District we claim to be and take the first step of how we set up our schools.

Board member Kelly Keenan injected that the Board is addressing this issue with differentiation of instruction. Mentioned new MAP tests that will give teachers data of how students are doing.

Holenberg says this information needs to be put out to the public. Moms are talking, this is not known and people aren't happy.

Brian Neal – Shared opinion on two matters. Past Sunday Daily Herald editorial regarding recent superintendent contract changes. Daily Herald questioned Math skills of a Board member – he questioned ability to understand and comprehend contracts. Asked each Board member who voted to amend the superintendent's contract to make their vote public or send a letter to the editor to help us understand this matter. Different subject – referred to teacher contract vote taken at a Friday night meeting. Board is required to give the media 48 hours notice. Daily Herald employee was sent an email 62 minutes prior to the deadline. He spoke with that employee and an attorney. Board is in potential violation of the law. Asked that the individual or individuals who called that meeting make it known publicly.

Keenan wanted to have Neal's question answered.

Board President, Nancy Lee Carlson stated this was the public comment section and would be happy to answer it at a later time.

Karen Schutz – Read letter she sent to the Daily Herald. She wants to raise awareness in the community. Referred to Daily Herald editorial on January 7th – said many others are also wondering the same question of why the District thinks it is saving money with the amended superintendent’s contract. Carlson was recently accused of hiring an outside attorney without Board approval. Believes taxpayers in D15 should hear about this issue. Voting pattern has been 4:3 recently on serious issues. This spring people should ask – “Are you looking for a more fiscally responsible voice that will still give us a quality education?” D15 needs some serious change. Has emailed the Board before and doesn’t receive answers from all Board members.

Mary Vanek – Referred to a statement in the superintendent’s contract that salary changes should be made at Board meetings and included in the minutes. Questioned legality of a 2005 superintendent salary increase not found in the minutes. Stated that two thirds of parents who spoke at a Fall Board meeting asked the Board to act in a fiscally responsible manner, protect community assets and use tax dollars wisely. Board then approved the teachers’ contract, lied about full amount of raise. Said Board holds secret meetings and ignores public. Hopes in April that the public’s will will be known in such a way that it cannot be ignored.

Action Items

Before the action items, **Superintendent Dr. Robert McKanna** asked **Jim Garwood, Executive Director of Administrative Services** to give a **short presentation on the MAP test**. Garwood highlighted the benefits. It is a computer generated test for reading, math and language given to 3rd through 8th grade students. It is a “smart” test meaning the complexity of the questions changes as to how well the student is doing. It gives a better idea of the child’s full potential. MAP test questions can go up to high school and early college level. Data is back within 24 hours of test completion. Tells the District what kids know and what they need. District will be conducting training session on the MAP test during Teacher Institute Day on January 22nd. First implementation of the tests begins January 29 through February 23rd.

Buildings are given the option to take only one of the three tests – math, reading or language – this year. Given flexibility because of upcoming ISATs and other standardized tests. Working on the issue of trying to provide additional technology infrastructure to test more children at a time. Working to create a second computer lab by using laptops in the buildings so that children can be tested in a more timely manner.

Questions were asked if the MAP test will replace other tests, if information will be shared with parents to show child’s growth and if it is available in other languages for 2nd language learners.

Action Items - continued

McKanna mentioned that an item from the Personnel Report would be discussed in Executive Session.

Personnel Report – unanimously approved

Review of Closed Session Minutes –

Motion to release the minutes from July 21st, August 23rd, August 25th and September 8th. Unanimously approved.

Consent Calendar –

Keenan had question on **Item J:** Resolution – Appointment of Alternates to Accept Nominating Petitions from Board of Education Election Candidates

Scott Boucher commented that it is there in case the Board Secretary was out sick. **Pat Campbell, Board Secretary** added that she may need help if two or three people come in at the same time.

Keenan asked for **Item G:** Second Reading – Board of Education Policies be removed
Consent Calendar with the exception of Item G – Unanimously approved

Discussion regarding Item G –

Keenan – Policy 2.150 – Board of Education Committees. Says it doesn't align completely with the teachers' contract. Asked why would the Board not align our policies with what is in the teachers' contract. Cited DACEE and PCEE. Board doesn't necessarily have to go but listed under the Board committees. From the teachers' contract, cited the insurance committee where a Board member does have to be present. Committees that the Board has to be present at are not in the policy and committees that the Board doesn't have to be on are in the policy. Wants to align the two – our contracts shouldn't state different things from policy.

Dr. Jean Sophie – Shared emails from attorney in package at the last BOE meeting of other districts' Board committees. Stated that Board committees are different from teachers committees. Understood that if the Board wanted to develop a committee they could. Gave an example of a neighboring district that developed a committee to look at boundaries. That district decided it would be board committee rather than a school district committee.

Boucher – The policy doesn't preclude us from sending a Board member to a committee.

McKanna – You can't set a policy that would violate the contracts. For example if it is in the contract about the insurance committee, you don't even have to make mention in policy because you can't change Board policy what was negotiated.

Carlson – Suggests taking a look at this – we can certainly put this off until next meeting.

Sophie – Wendy Rowden and Sophie are preparing for the first official meeting of the Policy committee. Will put this on the agenda. Board should share ideas and concerns with Rowden.

Keenan asked about **Policy 5.2000 – Professional Personnel**

Questioned why this policy was in the manual, pointed out items already in the contract. Asked where Board would find out what needs to be in Board policy.

Sophie – Brought this up at last meeting concerning doctorate reimbursement change. Still have to develop what this will look like. It is a general policy that all school districts have in their manual. It is a Board issue about Doctorate stipends. When this policy is somewhat outlined, will bring back for Board input.

Wendy Rowden asked other Board members to go through the policy manual and highlight where they have questions. Explain their questions to Rowden so she can bring to the Policy committee meeting.

Motion to approve Item G, minus Policy 2.150

Sophie – Said that there will be further discussion on the Web site policy at the January Committee of the Whole meeting
Unanimously approved.

Vote on Item G: Second Reading – Board of Education Policies – Unanimously approved.

Other

Keenan – Wanted to discuss **how Special meetings were called**. Who calls it and why. Now, the Board President, Superintendent or two Board members can call a Special meeting. Thinks it should be made known at the beginning of each Special meeting of who called the meeting and why.

Carlson – Says the reason is stated in the Special meeting notice.

Tim Millar – Thinks it is good information to have.

Keenan – also wanted to discuss **how the Board handles the attorneys** specifically the hiring of non-general counsel without Board approval. Keenan was told that it is not an Executive session item. Has had trouble getting answers to this question.

Carlson – Will put on the agenda as a discussion item at the next Board meeting. Has to bring in the general counsel – wants him there during discussion. This will take place at the first Board meeting in February – February 14th.

Rowden – Wants to **talk about school funding**, educate the public through small town hall meetings. Board needs to talk to the community about implications of proposed legislation on our District. People should understand tax swaps, education funding. Asked how Board could have a give and take session without formal Board meeting. Wants the Board to start the conversation. Asked fellow Board members for ideas on how to do this.

Paula Mikula – The Board worked with the PTA Legislation chair in the past. Board gave presentation and had discussion after a PTA meeting.

Rowden – Asked if Rowden came up with dates/times for a meeting and gave them to Dr. McKanna, if Board members could respond if they are interested. If only two were interested, is it okay with the rest?

Boucher – Stated that there is no reason why a couple of Board members can't start working on this and bring to a Committee of the Whole meeting for discussion. Roll it out later. Said State politics is a problem. Proposals from Springfield last time were not good for our District. This led to disillusionment of Board and ISBE. Our District was going to lose a lot of money.

Audience member, **Jerry Crist** injected – Said that years ago he was one of the members of the finance committee that reviewed District 15 finances. Found \$20m that the District was spending and not being reimbursed by the State. Said that if you get \$7m to fund a program, the program is designed for \$7m not more than that. Crist said that every July 1st, the District starts \$20million in the hole.

Carlson – thinks the Board needs to look at this issue further.

McKanna wanted to discuss a **proposed orientation workshop for Board of Education candidates**. McKanna wants to make it an open meeting - not just for potential Board candidates. Give candidates chance to ask questions. After some Board discussion, it was decided that this would take place on February 21st at 7 p.m. at Sundling. Board candidates will be notified once they have filed.

Freedom of Information Act Requests (FOIA)

Seven requests were received from 12/1/06 through 12/31/06

11/27/06 - Rachael Jerimahs, Board Secretary of InterRural Company of Montgomery, NY for contract for various supplies.

Undated request, postmarked **11/30** - Mary Vanek, Palatine for any and all written administrative policies related to 8.20 of the policy manual regarding the use of school facilities. She was advised that there were no written administrative procedures for this policy.

A second undated request, postmarked **11/30** - Mary Vanek for information regarding what was referred to as the Belzer email on October 24th. A response to Mrs. Vanek was sent on 12/14/06.

12/15/06 - Jennifer Mondy, Inverness for copies of the superintendent's contract prior to December 13th as well as the amendment from that date.

12/20/06 - Jennifer Mondy for a copy of the December 18th amendment to the superintendent's contract. Mrs. Mondy's request was fulfilled on January 3rd.

12/20/06 - Tara Malone, Daily Herald staff writer for information regarding homeless students in the school district. The information was provided on January 4th.

12/27/06 - Mary Vanek for a copy of the superintendent's contract and amendments which she picked up on January 2nd.

Executive Session

Board went into Executive Session at approximately 9:15 p.m.

Upon reconvening to open meeting after Executive session, the Board voted on the following items:

Personnel Report Item regarding the appointment of Mrs. Yvette Davidson as Principal of Walter R. Sundling School effective July 1st, 2007 - Unanimously approved.

A Disciplinary Action - Authorized

Source of post-Executive Session information:

Mrs. Pat Campbell, Board Secretary - January 12th, 2007