

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meetings

September 12th, 2007

This was a Regular Board of Education meeting. Board member Kelly Keenan was absent.

Superintendent's Reports

Adequate Yearly Progress Update (AYP)

Mary Zarr, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum referred to information given to the Board that included AYP results for District 15 as a whole and individual schools. The district report shows that it is improving in all categories over last year and all 19 schools made AYP. Next month, Zarr will be putting together the annual student achievement report for the Board and will discuss the District's successes and challenges, its goals for the future and what it needs to continue to do. Zarr stated that in order to make AYP this year, each of the District's subgroups had to have 55% of the students meeting or exceeding state standards. Next year, that number goes up to 62.5%. It will go up 7.5% each year until it reaches 100%. Zarr commented that the District may get to a point where it is improving every year but might not be making AYP in one of those years, in one of those subgroup categories.

Reference: No Child Left Behind (NCLB) AYP – Frequently Asked Questions
www.isbe.state.il.us/ayp/faq.htm

Storms Event – August 23rd, 2007

Jim Garwood, Assistant Superintendent commented on the steps taken by the District to ensure student safety the afternoon of Thursday, August 23rd and its reasons for leaving five schools open the next day that were without electrical power.

Reference: District 15 Press Release
www.ccsd15.net/WhatsNew/NewsReleases/html/archive/CCSD1508_25_2007.html

Student Assignment/6th Day Enrollment Update

Garwood stated that the total enrollment for the District this year is 12,378 students compared to 12,582 last year – a drop of 204 students. The District experienced a similar drop in enrollment last year. The decline in enrollment for the past couple of years had been anticipated based on reports given to the District by their consultant, Joe Kiszka. Kiszka uses several calculations/formulas to predict student enrollment.

Board questions/comments -

Board member Nancy Lee Carlson – commented that Hispanic students typically do not come to school the first few days. Asked Garwood if he anticipated an increase in enrollment in those schools with a predominate Hispanic population.

Garwood – Replied, no not at this time. Usually by the 6th day of school, it is after Labor Day and enrollment has settled down.

Board member Sue Quinn – The District does have a declining enrollment. This is the fifth straight year of a gradual decline and it is a trend. Class sizes are smaller – due to additional staff and also the declining enrollment. Kindergarten numbers were lower this year than in the past.

Garwood – Kindergarten numbers were 20 less than last year. Grade level numbers across the district are decreasing – the 5th and 6th grades have about 1,200 students each. The incoming kindergarten number is 900. In a few years, once the primary grades move up, the District will see smaller numbers across the grade levels.

Transportation Update

George Lingel, Co-Interim Asst. Superintendent for Business outlined the challenges and priorities of the transportation department. Lingel stated that back in February, everyone knew the District was facing a big challenge in changing from four to two tiers. There were many unforeseen circumstances out in the field – traffic, construction and the timing of trains. Lingel said that if the Board looked at the computer time for the bus routes compared to what actually happens, some of these factors have not really been figured into the computer time that was sent out to students/parents. This has resulted in the District experiencing some concerns and problems the first couple of weeks of transportation. The department has tried to correct them by adding 10 additional buses and adding 16 to 20 new bus drivers.

Transportation's #1 priority/concern is student safety – the picking up and dropping off of students. This concern does sometimes add to the length of the bus routes.

Other priorities include service to the schools. Whether it is the instructional program or the breakfast program in some schools. Those are the concerns and issues the department continues to work with – we want to rely on the safest and most efficient system. Financial numbers are a concern to him – where the department is going to be financially but the other concern he has is student safety.

The department knows there are issues and that these are limited to two or three attendance centers. Also knows there are some periodic problems out there at many of our other attendance centers (schools).

A major concern is running an excellent service to everyone. They try to pick up students at the safest place possible and sometimes that adds time to the route.

Lingel questioned "where do we go from here?" Knows that changes and adjustments need to be made. It may be changing some of their sets which is the combining of first and second tier routes. A driver can't end up with a route in the afternoon on the west side of the district and then go back to a school to pick up students in the northeast section of the district. Those types of things need to be looked at. Transportation has looked very closely to see if routes are combined (into sets) in the most efficient manner.

Board questions/comments –

Board President, Tim Millar – Does Lingel still think there is room for improvement in the routes to make them more efficient? Said it seems to be getting better every day just from what he has been hearing in the field.

Lingel – Thinks they are making improvement but still has major concerns.

Board member Gerald Chapman – Wants people to know that the Board has been tremendously well informed of the transportation issues and some of the good things that have been occurring. Thinks the transportation department is working very diligently to try to improve things.

Don Skinner, Co-Interim Transportation Director – Commented on the different variables involved with the bus routes including construction, traffic, etc. Adjustments are being made to the different sets (combinations) of routes based on the knowledge of the team members who understand the routes. That's where the department is now with tweaking the routes. As discussed at the summer Board meeting, there have been challenges in terms of buses and hiring drivers. The driving staff has been excellent in

terms of attendance – there was perfect attendance for the first three days for the 140 bus drivers.

Carlson – Spoke regarding the process the Board took in making the decision to switch from a four tier to two tier system. On everyone’s forefront was the safety of the students. Tremendous changes were made in the transportation department’s hardware and software over the past year – tremendous amount of updating of data that was old, making sure data was correct, working with consultants, etc. It was a very difficult transition to make – it didn’t work exactly as everyone had hoped. Carlson commented that she has not been getting the same phone calls that she had received in the first few weeks of school. Says it is a slow process, adjustments may have to be made, maybe we need a three tier system, and maybe other changes have to be made. Said that everyone has been working together, knows it is difficult for parents who are worried about their children. Thinks everyone appreciates the fact that we are working together. The District has an exquisite safety record. Our transportation department does not leave students on the buses; we don’t have accidents involving children getting killed. Thinks everyone needs a little patience.

Quinn – Agrees with Carlson - believes that working together is the key to making this happen. It is a challenging problem but it is not an impossible problem. Quinn thinks that a data-driven solution can be found. The District needs to get some good data and is on the path to doing that. She spent a lot of time looking at the data given to the Board. None of these problems are the bus drivers fault. Quinn wanted to commend the drivers for doing what they do best which is driving the routes that they have been given. Now the District needs to make sure that the routes the drivers are given are the right ones and the best ones. Thinks they are working towards that. Hopes that the parents will participate in the transportation survey that is provided online on the District’s Web site now. Parents are well-tuned to their child’s situation and can help the District find the problems that are still lingering in the transportation system so they can be fixed. Quinn hopes to get some good data back from the survey. Everyone is closely working to solve this – it needs to be solved as quickly as practical.

Dr. Jean Sophie, Asst. Superintendent – Added that information on the transportation survey will be going home in the backpacks both in District 15 and the parochial schools to allow those parents to also give input. The Administration will be working on that in the District office tomorrow and try to get those surveys out.

Reference: District 15 Press Release regarding Transportation Survey with link to survey www.ccsd15.net/WhatsNew/NewsReleases/HTML/Archive/CCSD1509_12_2007.html

Lingel – His recommendation to the Board is to bring in an outside consultant to provide an independent view on what we are doing and give some assistance to the transportation department. They can see the things that are not working and evaluate the routes. Says that in many cases, the department is too close to the situation – sometimes we have the tendency to overlook some things. Lingel has found a consultant that has worked with other neighboring districts on their transportation. That group said they could sit down with District 15 very shortly. Think the District needs to make sure it is providing the very best service it can. Lingel said he could easily come to the Board and ask to purchase 15 more buses but that wouldn’t do any good unless there were 15 additional drivers. He did make some phone calls, found 15 buses that were available. Said that is not bad either to purchase buses because the District gets money back from the state for transportation. Said maybe that is where the District is at; but wants to have someone sit down independently to look at this issue.

Chapman – Asked if the consultant would be paid out of the transportation budget?

Lingel – Yes, it can be attributed to special education. Special education transportation gets 80% back from the state. Said that this year, the District is getting back about 60% of our transportation costs from the state.

Chapman – Asked if the Board would get a report of recommendations? Then the transportation department would look at those and follow up. Doesn't see a downside.

Sophie – Wanted to know how soon a consultant would be available.

Lingel – Was told today that it could be done within the next two to three weeks.

Rowden – Would the results be available at the October 10th Board meeting?

Lingel – Yes, can't put the community off any longer. Transportation will continue to look at some things and continue to improve them. Said that whatever the department does is probably what the consultant would recommend anyways.

Rowden – Supports Lingel's idea because she thinks a second set of eyes on this issue would be helpful. The transportation department is clearly working hard. Said it is important to recognize that transportation has been an ongoing issue for years – every year at this time, it is one thing or another. The District keeps trying to solve problems in order to improve the process. It seems that every time a step is taken to do that, other complications arise. Thinks it would be very helpful to receive data that the Board can count on so the problems can be solved. First and foremost is keeping the children safe. Rowden wants to make sure the instructional day is not impacted and that the children are not on the buses for an unreasonable amount of time.

Millar – Stated that this item to vote on a consultant was added to the agenda as an emergency item. It will be brought up again later in the agenda.

Citizens Address the Board

Ronda Bischoff – Hunting Ridge and CLA early childhood parent

Wanted to provide transportation examples of what has happened to the District's youngest students in order to highlight the urgency of correcting these issues. Her three-year-old daughter's bus has been late to school every day – between 15 and 25 minutes late. The accumulated time missed is 1 ½ days out of a total of 13 days of school. Understands that there are glitches in the system but some of these things appear to have been known in advance. For example: found information on routes that were supposed to be at two different places at the same time. Additional riders have been added to her daughter's bus – there are now 11 stops not including the school. The children wear safety vests so extra time is needed to put them on the bus. The bus route goes through four different neighborhoods and three different towns. It seems to her that that this route was destined to fail from the beginning. Wanted to note that she has tried to contact transportation and it has been very difficult to get through. There needs to be communication to the parents as to what is going to be done about this issue.

Millar – Transportation has identified CLA in particular with challenging routes. They are working on it and believes it is a top priority. **Quinn** – Said that issue is one of the District's top priorities. Those young children shouldn't be on the bus that long and being late to school is not acceptable. It is definitely being worked on.

Ellen Josten – Thomas Jefferson parent

Concerned about the amount of time her children are on the bus compared to last year – they were picked up 22 minutes before school started before and now are picked up 41 minutes before the start of school. Asked why this is happening? She lives 1.3 miles from

TJ. When the route is finished in her area, it crosses past TJ and goes to another neighborhood about 1.3 miles away from TJ to pick up six children. That neighborhood is geographically closer to other neighborhoods that are being bused to TJ. Doesn't know why that area was added to their route – it adds more time to the 40 children from her neighborhood. Another issue she has is that her area is the first to be picked up in the morning and the last to be dropped off in the afternoon. Children are on the bus longer. Josten has followed the bus occasionally and noticed that five buses had arrived at TJ before 7:35 a.m. this past Tuesday. The few times she has been there, she has seen buses full of children waiting. Said that there are other things children can be doing with their time.

Millar – Wanted to mention again about the District's Web site. Asked if parents could put information on specific routes in the survey so the information can be tabulated and concrete data can be obtained. That would be helpful to the District.

Teri Havansek – Sundling Jr. High parent

Wants to inform the Board of the results of its poor decision making last year to go from four to two tier starting times. It has brought about a 40 minutes bus ride for her neighborhood which is 6 minutes away from Sundling. After leaving her area, the bus goes further west away from Sundling to pick up just one child. It then passes back through her area to go back to the school. The bus time has doubled from last year. When she contacted the transportation dept., she was rudely told that because of the change to two tiers that some routes have doubled up – meaning what was two routes are now one. Her question to the Board is – Why wasn't this potentially lengthy bus routing brought to the attention of the parents last year during these discussions? She read every Daily Herald article and also read the PTA Web board notes. There was never any mention of lengthy bus routes that would add to our children's time on the bus. #2 – Would personally like to look at all of the routes and make sure that all schools are created equal and that there is not preferential treatment given to any schools. #3 – Would like to hear a report from the Virginia Lake parents because she can't believe a time was created for VL to leave school at the same time as Palatine HS. Doesn't trust the Board to make unbiased decisions. Thinks this is an example of rushed, uninformed decision making processes.

Millar – Regarding the issue with Palatine HS and Virginia Lake – VL's start time was adjusted to make it a safer environment. The District did identify that there was a problem with VL dismissing at the same time as Palatine HS. Believes it has been working out.

Diane Novasad – CLA afternoon preschool parent

Different problem for her child – he doesn't get to leave school until 40 minutes after dismissal because of late buses. Preschool special needs children are waiting in the hallway and sleeping. Concerned for her son and also the teachers. The program assistants leave at 3:20 p.m. and one teacher is watching three to 10 children. This is not helping the children's education or for their love of school. They don't understand what is going on. It is completely unacceptable for little children to be sleeping in the hall.

Sophie – Commented that the CLA principal has called her several times on the issue of supervision until the buses get there. The District has approved additional time for program assistants to stay and they have been staying.

Novasad – That is good to hear – her son's teacher calls her when the bus show up later than the normally late time. Stated that this is public school, this is what we pay taxes for – her son is sleeping in his teacher's arms in the hallway for 40 minutes.

Caroline Manus – Substitute bus driver

Agrees with the two tier system but thinks it went a bit too quick. In six months, going from a four tier to two tier system is very difficult. As a substitute bus driver, every day she

sees the challenges and the problems that the system was created. She was curious as to why it was implemented so quickly instead of waiting until August '08. There would have been time to train new drivers and have the equipment needed for the system to function more effectively.

Julie Pans – Thomas Jefferson parent

Speaking on behalf of many concerned parents at TJ. Our children are on the bus way too long especially the junior high students. The average is 40 minutes one way – an hour and a half every day. One route has 26 stops in the area. They feel that the children are at a disadvantage by being on the bus that long compared to other students who attend other junior highs. Their students currently attend Carl Sandburg Jr. High which is on the other end of the district. All of the other junior highs are closer to them so they don't understand why they have to go to the opposite end of the district. Some junior high students are told to be at the bus stop as early as 6:45 a.m. – well over an hour before school starts. Would like the Board to maybe look at redistricting and allowing our students to attend a junior high closer to their homes. Adults choose their commuting time when they work. Their children do not have a choice – they are told when they are picked up and when they get to school.

Lisa Traina – CLA parent

Her son gets out of school at 3:15 p.m. and gets home at 4:45 p.m. The buses get there about 3:30 p.m. but the problem is construction, traffic, etc. Knows that CLA is different because it covers the entire district. Transportation is doing its best but needs to do better. The District needs to communicate with the parents. Asked if the school, teacher, bus driver or transportation dept. should be communicating? Her bus driver has called many times to tell her what is going on. That needs to be set in stone and needs to be followed through on. A lot of parents do not know what to do. They are supposed to meet their child at the bus stop because they are special needs kids. Traina sometimes waits for ½ hour because she doesn't know when the bus will show up. She is not going to wait until the driver pulls up and honks her horn. Knows that some parents do that and standards/guidelines need to be set so those parents/guardians can't do that anymore because other children are still on that bus waiting. Mentioned commonsense – after following the bus one day, she was behind a Central Road bus that made stops every half block. There were three special needs buses behind it with children from across the district. Said that someone needs to drive the routes, someone needs to be out there using commonsense to see what is right, what is not right.

Millar – Wanted to thank everyone for the information. Said that it may seem like it is tough sitting here but it is great to get the information and get solutions. Board is here to get solutions – not looking for anything else. CLA is a known issue.

Board Discussion and Reports

Committee Reports

Finance Committee

Quinn – There have been two committee meetings since the last BOE meeting. Wanted to briefly cover what has been done in committee. PMA came in and presented a five-year forecasting model to help the District with its financial projections. PMA presented what the capabilities of their model are. There has been a lot of discussion in committee about financial planning philosophy. Two more meetings are scheduled. Will come back to present a final version of the Financial Report Card – still waiting for the final actual numbers for 2006-2007. Should also have a better articulation of the Financial Stability

Plan for the Board's consideration at the next Board meeting. Quinn has a RFP (request for proposal) for the design, printing and mailing of a Financial Report Card.

Reference: PMA Financial Network www.pmanetwork.com

Communications Committee

Quinn – Wanted to have a meeting at the end of September/early October but the bus issue has taken priority and she is working with that first. Wants to take the Financial Report Card to a Communications committee meeting and try to get some feedback and input from various stakeholders that might attend the meeting. Would like to see if this is something they would find to be a value-add.

Action Items

Personnel Report - Unanimously approved.

2007-2008 Budget Adoption

Board discussion before vote –

Millar – Concerned that the process was pushed off, wanted to wait for actual hard numbers. Thinks the District overshot our comfort zone this year. We must be very prudent in going forward in managing our funds. A lot of hard work was done before but this one is not as good as the previous one was for him. Does appreciate the work done by the business department.

Quinn – Has done some calculations on the budget recently. Thinks there are some accounting issues. Cook County chose to pay the District in a timely manner this year so it is more of a bookkeeping issue and not so much of a reflection of what our true financial status is. Hopes that will all be resolved. The District does need to keep an eye on its staffing because as she mentioned before, we now have great class sizes. Wants to make sure that the District doesn't go too far the other way and staff up beyond what it can afford. Quinn said that hopefully some of these projection models will help the District get a better idea on that as well.

Motion to approve the 2007-2008 budget – Unanimously approved

Selection of Superintendent Search Firm

Board member James Ekeberg made a motion to hire Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates (HYA) to conduct the search for a new superintendent for District 15. He thought this firm was the best choice based on its success with large districts, experience of the consultants, longevity of the firm and demonstrated experience of the firm and consultants with nationwide searches. Carlson seconded the motion.

Board discussion/comments –

Millar – Wanted to mention that the Board brought in four firms – HYA, BWP, School ExecConnect and the IASB to give presentations. Stated that the first three are the major players in the market of superintendent searches.

Quinn – Agrees with the criteria Ekeberg mentioned in the motion. Also thinks that it is important to work with consultants that will understand the Board's objectives in hiring a superintendent and will take the Board's criteria and make the best search possible for District 15. The rapport the consultants showed during their 45 minute presentations was an important criteria for her to judge whether the Board could work with them. All of the firms have comparable networks to draw upon. Recruiting is going to be a key part of this and there were some interesting ideas presented on how to include the community in this process. Says that is an important part and Quinn likes the ideas of BWP and Associates in

particular. It is important for this to be a community process and important for all on the Board to be comfortable with the firm that is chosen.

Board member Wendy Rowden – Based on the interview process, the presenters and their objectives were all excellent. Three stood out and the top two were BWP and HYA. Rowden prefers BWP – she liked the way the presenter articulated the involvement of the community in the process which is important to her.

Millar – This is a tough decision. Has reservations with BWP – its experience level and recent conversations he had with them. Thinks both BWP and HYA are strong firms.

Chapman – Wanted to comment that the three hours the Board spent interviewing the firms was well spent. All firms presented themselves well. Whoever the Board hires will be right. **Rowden** – Has a suggestion to perhaps invite the top two firms back for a second interview so Board member concerns could be expressed – since this is the most important job the Board does (hiring a superintendent).

Carlson – Stated that she was quick to second Ekeberg’s motion because of her experience in the search process. Said that HYA is the granddaddy of all firms, where all other firms sprung from. It has the most contacts throughout the United States, it is a national search firm. District 15 is a large district, it is not just looking for a Midwest candidate, there could be someone in CA, CT, NY or Florida. HYA is the oldest firm of its kind, most partners, can expand its base on a much larger basis. Personally, Carlson likes both firms but says that District 15 is a nationally recognized district and needs a national search firm – not just someone who has most of their people in the Midwest. Likes the young lady at BWP, but that’s not Carlson’s criteria – her criteria is the finding of the absolute best. Thinks that there is someone out there with a diverse background, wants someone that will bring the school district forward. Carlson’s concern about BWP is that they are not a national firm and they do not tap the strength of so many individuals.

Quinn – BWP is actually a national firm as well. Quinn doesn’t want to overstate the importance of a rapport but for District 15 to get the superintendent that we collectively explore and want to have, the Board needs to make sure that its ideas about that are communicated effectively to the consultants. The consultants need to hear what we want for our superintendent. Quinn definitely felt that there was more of a connection with BWP & Associates. HYA seems to have more striking views about what they thought was appropriate to look for. HYA was receptive to the Board’s ideas but there was a different tone. Quinn thinks that BWP and HYA both have outstanding nationwide networks. She spoke with one of the partners at BWP and feels confident. As that consultant said and Quinn agrees – this is going to be a high profile search. District 15 is a strong district; it is going to attract quality candidates. There are some attractive characteristics in our district. Said it will be okay with either search firm but has a personal preference for BWP. Quinn would like to see a consensus from the Board on this issue but doesn’t think it will get there.

Millar – Wanted to put something out on the table and stated that Board member Chapman is a member of HYA. Millar wants to make sure that the Board chooses the best firm to do this job – it is such an important task.

Quinn – Said that Chapman is going to be a great asset in this superintendent search because he has been through the process so many times. But says that there is an appearance of impropriety that she is concerned about. That is not the deciding factor for her – she prefers BWP anyway. But said that is something the Board doesn’t want hanging over them – the search process is part of the public process. The Board is recruiting the next superintendent that hopefully will lead the district for a long time. Quinn wants that to

be a collaborative process for the District to find its leadership – wants that process to be as clean and forthright as it can possibly be.

Carlson – Timing is of the essence, doesn't want this pushed off. Thinks the Board is in an opportune position to get started. Wants to "call the question".

Millar – Wishes he had more time to make a few more phone calls to the firms to answer some of his questions. Wants to make sure the Board makes the best decision.

Carlson – Said that she "called the question", so a vote has to be taken on the motion.

Reference: Robert's Rules of Order – Frequently Asked Questions

#11 – Must debate on a motion stop immediately as soon as any member calls the question?
www.robertsrules.com/faq.html#11

Roll call to approve the motion to hire Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates, Ltd.

Approved 3:2

(Yes: Millar, Carlson, Ekeberg; No: Quinn, Rowden; Abstain: Chapman; Absent: Keenan)

Reference: Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates, Ltd. (HYA)

www.hyasupersearches.com

Consent Calendar – Unanimously approved

Approval of Authorization for Asst. Superintendent, George Lingel to retain a transportation consultant on the basis of a bona fide emergency

Board discussion before vote -

Chapman – Asked who will be making the decision on which consultant to hire. Is the Board going to authorize it now to hire a specific consultant? Asks that in order to make a motion, is the Board making a motion on a specific consultant or is it making a motion to authorize to find a consultant? Will there be a specific dollar amount not to exceed?

Sophie – Asked Lingel to share why the District feels this is a bona fide emergency.

Lingel - Stated that it is an emergency because as the Board can see tonight, the District has issues out there that need to be solved. Feels an independent person is needed to take a very close look at what some of our options are. He does have a name but would not commit to a contract until he had a price and a consensus of the Board to move forward on that price. The consultant recommended to him by his colleagues is Kyle Martin of TransPar Group.

Carlson – Questioned that this is a bona fide emergency because of the safety and welfare of the children in the school district? **Lingel** – Replied yes.

Sophie – Added also for the fact that some of the district's students are missing instruction.

Millar – Asked Lingel for a ballpark dollar amount

Lingel – Estimates between \$20K and \$25K

Motion amended to authorize Lingel to hire a transportation consultant not to exceed \$25K on the basis of a bona fide emergency

Unanimously approved

Reference: TransPar Group www.transpar.com

www.transpar.com/solutions.php?consulting

Correspondence

Freedom of Information Act Requests – FOIA

A request from Mr. Benjamin Cortez from the Service Employees International Union looking for information pertaining to our school district's food services facilities and maintenance operations. He was provided with that information on August 16th.

Executive Session

The Regular meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:45 p.m. The Board went into executive session after a short break. It was announced that voting was not expected to take place after the executive session.

Written: Jennifer Mondy
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Posted: Friday, September 14th, 2007