

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

ARAPAHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER SIX

Littleton, Colorado BOARD OF EDUCATION Minutes of Regular Meeting

January 28, 2010

Call to Order

President Bob Colwell called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. in the Boardroom of the Education Services Center, 5776 South Crocker Street.

Present

Bob Colwell, President
Renée Howell, Vice President
Sue Chandler, Secretary
Mary Nichols, Assistant Secretary
Lucie Stanish, Treasurer

Others in Attendance

Connie Bouwman, Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services
Lucinda Hundley, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services
Kirk Madsen, Assistant Superintendent of Operations
Scott Murphy, Superintendent
Mike Owens, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Colwell asked if there were any corrections to the minutes of the January 14, 2010, regular Board meeting. Ms. Howell made several corrections. On page 6, near the bottom of the first full paragraph, the sentence should read: "Ms. Howell commented that changes to *Douglas County School District* bus routes have caused some parent concern in *Douglas County*. In the third paragraph on page six, the second sentence should read: "Mr. Murphy responded that about 1,000 students would generate approximately \$7 million in PPR *with no additional teachers or staff members*." On page 8, fourth paragraph under English Language Acquisition (ELA) Program Update, "*and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE)*" should be added to the end of the sentence. In the first paragraph under the Superintendent's Report, Mr. Owens clarified that the teacher exchange program that Brett Wamsley, Heritage science teacher is involved in is the Australia New Zealand Educator Exchange (ANZEE).

MOTION: Ms. Chandler moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the January 14, 2010, regular Board meeting as corrected. SECOND: Ms. Nichols. AYE: Chandler, Colwell, Howell, Nichols, Stanish. MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Murphy announced that Kari Baker, Arapahoe High School senior, received an appointment to the U.S. Air Force Academy. He said five Arapahoe teachers, Anne Smith, Kristen LeClaire, Jesse Craig, Brian Hatak, and Jeff Smith, will present at the annual International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Conference that will be held in Denver in June. Mr. Murphy congratulated the LPS business department for receiving the Meritorious Budget Award for the 2009–2010 budget.

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Mr. Murphy said the Broken Road Foundation provided an opportunity for 100 Goddard Middle School students to go shopping for new shoes at Dick's Sporting Goods. He said that Arapahoe language arts students will join students from other high schools to interact online with authors Daniel Pink and Cory Doctorow. He stated that Heritage High School received the Martin Luther King Jr. award from the Littleton City Council for their work in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Murphy said that January is School Board Appreciation month. He said the LPS board members are wonderful to work with and do whatever it takes to support the district. He thanked board members for their dedication and service to the community.

Board Reports/Requests

Ms. Stanish attended the Winter Pep Assembly at Heritage and a Special Services Advisory Committee meeting. She attended the South Metro Denver Economic Development Group breakfast meeting and both an executive board meeting and general meeting of the LPS Foundation. Ms. Stanish also attended the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) assembly at Euclid Middle School.

Ms. Howell attended the South Metro Denver Economic Group breakfast meeting, the PBS assembly at Euclid, and an Educational Technology Advisory Committee (ETAC) meeting held at Twain Elementary School. She attended a meeting of the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) legislative network, and listened to the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) presentation to the Joint Education Committee at the Capitol and commented that the presentation was very sobering.

Ms. Nichols also attended the CASB legislative network meeting and the JBC presentation at the Capitol. She also attended the South Metro Economic Summit breakfast meeting. Ms. Nichols attended the Winter Pep Assembly at Heritage, the PBS assembly at Euclid, and saw the elementary art exhibit at Bemis Library.

Ms. Chandler attended the South Metro Economic Group breakfast. She attended a Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning (RMSEL) board meeting and noted they are also facing budget issues. Ms. Chandler thanked the community for their input about the budget recommendations the Board has been discussing.

Mr. Colwell attended the District Accountability Committee (DAC) meeting. He urged the community to stay informed about the current legislative session and said the LPS web site contains regularly updated information.

Citizens' Requests to Speak to the Board

No citizens signed up to speak.

Action

Consent Agenda

Mr. Colwell asked if there were items that needed further discussion. Mr. Owens said that 21 teachers are completing their transition year and will retire at the end of the current school year. One administrator is also completing a transition year and will retire in June. Personnel items also include eleven teachers who will retire at the end of the school year without a transition year. He thanked these staff members for their many years of service.

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MOTION: Ms. Howell moved that the Board of Education approve the recommended consent agenda numbered 1.1 concerning Personnel Recommendations with the additions made this evening, and 1.2 Multiple Copy Literature List. SECOND: Ms. Stanish. AYE: Chandler, Colwell, Howell, Nichols, Stanish. MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.

Discussion

Strategic Budget Recommendations for the 2010-2011 School Year

Three citizens signed up to speak:

Dave Hanna, Twain Elementary School parent, said that reading is fundamental to success in all educational areas and asked the Board to keep the literacy specialists.

Courtney Cissell, seventh grade student at Euclid Middle School spoke in support of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program at Euclid, noting it helps students prepare for college.

Ryan Strickland, Littleton High School student and peer counselor spoke in support of the AVID program based on his experience tutoring other students.

Mr. Colwell explained that the Board has discussed the 2010–2011 budget recommendations twice since they were presented in December. He said the Board will not take formal action on any recommendations until June when the proposed budget is presented. However, the Board must give administration some direction on recommendations that affect staffing as the staffing process must begin. The recommendations cover an anticipated \$7.5 million deficit, but actions during the current legislative session could change the deficit. Ms. Howell emphasized that the \$7.5 million is probably the best number the district will see as there is no indication that the state's financial position will improve in the short term.

Mr. Murphy further explained that administration needs direction so schools can begin their staffing process, which includes discussions with the school community. He noted this is a very frustrating time and uncertainty is very difficult. Mr. Murphy said that administration has prepared additional information about the recommendation concerning instructional coaches and literacy specialists reductions.

Ms. Connie Bouwman, assistant superintendent of learning services, reviewed the details of the proposed reduction to instructional coaches and literacy specialists, noting that the recommendation calls for a 5.0 FTE reduction to instructional coaches and a 9.0 FTE reduction to literacy specialists.

Ms. Nichols asked if schools could use weighted staffing points to maintain support for literacy intervention. Ms. Bouwman responded that schools have flexibility in the use of weighted staff points, but with the proposed reduction to the weighted staffing formula, class sizes may increase if points are used elsewhere. Ms. Bouwman further explained that the Title I schools will receive additional literacy support, and all schools will still have a 0.5 FTE for literacy. Mr. Colwell commented that the FTEs allocated for instructional coaches will remain much the same at the elementary level, with most reductions coming at the secondary schools. He further remarked that the reduction in literacy support is very unfortunate. Ms. Howell stated that the reductions in this area are now necessary because many other areas have already been reduced, and it is not what the Board would choose to cut if there were other options.

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Ms. Chandler said that the Board is responsible for balancing the budget. She reiterated the guiding principles that the Board has utilized in making budget reductions, which include: 1) maintain safety; 2) keep staffing reductions to a minimum; 3) maintain support for those most at risk; 4) don't use one-time money for on-going costs; and 5) consider a mill levy election. Ms. Chandler also stated that the Board is trying to balance reductions across all areas.

Ms. Howell asked how schools will continue to support students' literacy needs. Ms. Bouwman responded that the Pyramid of Intervention is designed to reach most students with tier 1 instruction, and the district continues to work with classroom teachers to help them to better serve all students. This is an area of concentrated work in district schools. Ms. Bouwman said the school improvement visits the learning services team has made are very encouraging and staff members are working together to provide intervention for students as needed.

Ms. Nichols commented that the early literacy intervention model has been working and it is very unfortunate that reductions in this area are necessary. Ms. Stanish said that meeting the needs of all students is a high value for the Board and it is very difficult to discuss budget reductions that take away some of this support. She expressed the hope that early literacy support can be bolstered when economic conditions improve. Mr. Colwell commented that the district has spent years investing in support for early literacy intervention and it is painful to cut a program that has been working. He noted that the instructional coaches can help all teachers better meet students' needs.

Mr. Colwell asked the Board for their thoughts about the proposed reduction to International Baccalaureate (IB) funding at Field Elementary and Newton Middle schools.

Ms. Howell said that the IB programs at Field and Newton are choice programs that the district can no longer sustain over the long term, noting that these schools are getting something more than other schools. She commented that she has made many calls and done some research without any viable solutions. Ms. Howell stated that the IB training the teachers at these two schools have received will help students, even though the IB label will be gone.

Ms. Chandler stated that she sees no reasonable way to sustain the cost for these programs over time, and there is no guarantee that the costs will remain stable. It is a significant burden on the community to attempt to maintain support for the IB program. Ms. Chandler commented that another outcome the district had hoped to achieve by offering the IB program at Newton was increased enrollment, but that has not occurred so far. Ms. Howell also commented that the number of optionally enrolled students has not increased, and Field students are not choosing to attend Newton, so the continuous K-12 program idea has not materialized.

Ms. Stanish said she appreciates the value the IB program brings to the district and to the schools involved. She encouraged Field and Newton staff and community to maintain the IB culture that is a valued part of the program. Ms. Nichols also encouraged these school communities to maintain the important values of the program.

Mr. Colwell remarked that he has learned in talking to other districts that no additional staff support is provided to IB schools. He encouraged Field and Newton

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to research how IB is implemented in other districts and see what might be possible. Mr. Murphy said the district would welcome any further ideas or options either school might have to maintain the IB program. Ms. Howell and Ms. Nichols both said they do not support eliminating the activities late bus run at Newton to help support the IB program. Ms. Nichols also stated that she is not in favor of redirecting funding for student activities to support IB without the entire parent community agreeing to such a change.

Mr. Colwell asked Mr. Scott Myers, chief financial officer, to present information about the district's fund balance and reserves.

Mr. Myers reviewed the district's fund balances over the past six years, which peaked at a high of \$20.4 million in 2006–2007. The fund balance as of June 30, 2009, was \$13.1 million, which is the lowest balance as a percentage of the total budget the district has seen in the past six years. Mr. Myers explained that approximately \$10.3 million of reserves is designated for specific uses, with about \$3.6 million in Taxpayers' Bill of Rights (TABOR) reserves, nearly \$3.8 million in school and department carry forwards, and the remaining dollars designated for various district programs and projects. The undesignated portion of reserves is about \$2.8 million, with an additional \$1 million in a district emergency fund. Mr. Myers also noted that the use of TABOR reserves is very restrictive and funds must be paid back in 180 days. He also stated that the \$2.8 million undesignated fund balance equates to less than one week's expenses. Low fund balances are the reason why the district is utilizing the state's interest-free loan program to meet regular expenses.

Mr. Myers reviewed current and forecasted capital and insurance reserve fund balances, which are not part of the general fund budget. He reminded the Board that state law has changed and the district is no longer required to annually allocate dollars to these funds, but the district is choosing to maintain steady general fund support to the insurance reserve fund and minimize negative impacts to the capital reserve fund. Ms. Howell remarked that the district must maintain a risk management program, and the change to the law only offered a false illusion of more available dollars.

Mr. Myers explained that the athletic and activities June 30, 2009, fund balance of \$1,566,608 is primarily in carry forwards at the school level, and these dollars are intended for specific purposes, often for purchases that need to be made at the beginning of the new school year. He said that this level of support, which is 2.3 percent of the district's budget, is within a typical range when compared to other districts.

Mr. Myers reviewed the district's budgetary plan and philosophy, which includes the following: 1) balance on-going costs with on-going revenues; 2) balance the general fund budget in the long-term by incorporating on-going budget balancing strategies; and 3) using fund balances from the insurance or capital reserve funds is not a long-term solution to the budget deficit.

Ms. Stanish said she recalls that the Board wanted to ensure the funds from the successful 2004 mill levy election would help to support the district's general fund for at least four or five years and that time period has now elapsed. Ms. Howell remarked that if economic conditions had been stable, the Board may have opted to pursue a mill levy and/or a bond ballot measure but the economic crisis interrupted

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this planning. She also noted that there have been no funds allocated for curriculum revisions or textbooks, and dollars have not been added to the reserves for several years. She commented that the district curriculum may require revisions to align with new state content standards and new state assessments when they are in place.

Ms. Bouwman said the district does not anticipate major curriculum revisions, but grade level revisions may be needed, and science will also need new materials soon, and no funds have been set aside for these projects.

Ms. Nichols asked what carry forwards are typically used for, and Dr. Amy Oaks, director of secondary education, responded that they are primarily used for large purchases, such as computer labs and other technology equipment, athletic equipment, theatre improvements, desks and tables, or a major staff development project, that may take several years to accumulate the necessary funds. Mr. Myers commented that reduction in supply accounts and mid-year rescissions will reduce the carry forward amounts.

Ms. Howell asked if there will be another rescission during the 2009–2010 budget years, and Mr. Myers said a decision will likely be made after the March economic forecast. Mr. Murphy cautioned that there could be more cuts this year.

Mr. Colwell asked for the total amount of capital projects on the list of current needs, and Mr. Kirk Madsen, assistant superintendent of operations responded it is about \$35 million. Mr. Colwell also asked if there are projects that are required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Mr. Madsen said some of these projects are handled through capital reserve funds.

Mr. Murphy commented that fund balance and reserves are a complex area and it is essential to have insurance reserves to cover the costs of a high cost case.

Ms. Chandler asked what would constitute a district emergency that would require use of the emergency reserves. Mr. Murphy responded that it could be a catastrophic problem at a building that requires immediate attention and significant cash outlay, or it could be unexpectedly low property tax collections. Mr. Myers commented that overall fund balances are low and there is no extra cash available.

Ms. Howell stated that school district could again be in a cycle of mid-year rescissions, similar to the years between 1985 and 1995 when five rescissions occurred. Ms. Nichols said the district uses sound business practices, which helps the district to remain financially sound. Mr. Murphy emphasized the district value of not using one-time dollars for on-going costs. Ms. Stanish said it is a value to spend the current year's funds on students currently in school.

Mr. Colwell commented that specific ownership taxes are down and asked how the district would handle an unexpected decrease in property tax collections. Mr. Myers responded that administration might find it necessary to back fill such a deficit with an internal rescission. Mr. Colwell thanked Mr. Murphy and Mr. Myers for the information about district reserves.

Ms. Howell remarked that these budget discussions over the past few weeks have been even more difficult than the school closure discussions in 2008 due to the ambiguity about the state's financial picture. She noted that there are no better options than those currently recommended. Ms. Howell also stated that the 2011–2012 budgets could be as bad as or even worse than the 2010–2011 budget forecast.

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Ms. Howell said she supports the current recommendations and directing administration to move forward with staffing for next year.

Ms. Stanish said it is hard to let go of programs and practices that are highly valued and said it is very difficult to provide comprehensive and well-rounded programs without adequate funds. She emphasized that the district has made good financial decisions over the years and the current fiscal crisis is not a result of anything the district has done or has failed to do. Ms. Stanish said she sees no alternatives to the current budget reduction recommendations.

Ms. Chandler said she continues to be concerned about financial challenges during the next two years. She noted that budget reductions made in the 1980s and 1990s were difficult, but the district was able to rebuild, and hopefully economic conditions will improve. By making these cuts now, the district will be in a better financial position in the future. She asked Mr. Murphy to keep the Board informed as things change over the next few months.

Ms. Nichols stated that these budget reductions are the most difficult thing this Board has encountered. She said it is necessary to move forward with the recommendations presented by administration, and even though it is very difficult, the district will get through these challenges and students will receive a good education.

Mr. Colwell thanked the Board members for their remarks. He said it is heart-breaking to think about the loss of nearly 100 FTEs. Mr. Colwell said that the district has no control over state revenue and no one wants to tell LPS employees they don't have a job, but it is necessary to move forward with the proposed recommendations as presented, and the Board directs administration to begin the staffing process based on these recommendations.

Mr. Colwell expressed appreciation for the input from the community, and again encouraged Field and Newton to look for possible ways to maintain the IB programs.

Power-Up Writing Grant Report

Mr. Dan Maas, chief information officer, reviewed results of the "Powering Up the Writer's Workshop" grant funded through Title II-D, which supports improving academic achievement through the use of technology. Five LPS elementary schools and five schools in Englewood School District participated in the grant project. Mr. Maas commented that this project led to the Inspired Writing project currently in place at other LPS schools.

Mr. Maas elaborated on the vision and context of the project, reviewed the student achievement data gathered during the project, and explained the role of professional development as it linked to student achievement during the project. He introduced Mike Porter, assistant director, instruction technology; Mollie McDonald, director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and Dr. Lori Nebelsick-Gullet, NG Consulting Services who provided information and insights about the project.

Mr. Maas and Dr. Nebelsick-Gullet reviewed 2008 and 2009 CSAP writing data for the students at East, Field, Hopkins, Moody, and Whitman who participated in the project. Students received a netbook computer to use for writing lessons, and showed gains in their CSAP writing scores. Mr. Maas pointed out that this was a one-year project and is a single data point. He also noted that the data suggest the netbook helped close the

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gender gap. Ms. Howell asked if the achievement gains seen in this project are typical, and Dr. Nebelsick-Gullet responded that gains like these are uncommon and speaks well about the teachers involved and the training they received.

Ms. Chandler commented that it appears the project supported improved achievement for all students who participated. Mr. Colwell asked what kind of training the classroom teachers involved in the project received. Ms. McDonald responded that teachers received additional training in conjunction with the district's 2009 summer literacy institute. Teachers were taught to use technology as a tool for writing, and this focus was reinforced in ongoing classroom coaching throughout the year. Ms. McDonald added that this staff development model will be replicated in summer 2010 using grant funds. Ms. Howell stated that this project is a good example of teachers succeeding with the right kind of support. Mr. Porter added that trained cohorts of teachers helped mentor new staff members.

Ms. Chandler asked if the novelty of using a computer fades as students continue to use technology. Mr. Maas responded that the laptops introduced to students four years ago are still in use, and this model of instruction is exciting for students. He said the system is working and needs to continue.

Mr. Colwell asked if this group of students will be tracked so their sixth grade scores can be analyzed, and Mr. Maas responded that the district will continue to monitor writing in the context of the other Inspired Writing grant projects. Ms. Howell asked if these results put pressure on sixth grade teachers. Ms. Bouwman responded that these results have had a positive impact and sixth grade teachers wanted to visit the fifth grade classrooms. They are excited to receive training.

Ms. Bouwman remarked that this project was based on research-based best practices, and the district needs to continue this model in all areas of instruction because it works. Ms. Howell said she looks forward to seeing how the district will use what was learned through this project.

Mr. Colwell thanked Mr. Maas and all those involved in the project. He said the district will find a way to continue to move forward.

Future Agenda/Adjournment

Mr. Murphy distributed a draft agenda for the February 11, 2010, Board meeting. Action items include Quarterly Financial Report. Discussion items include Budget Update, and Student Achievement: District Accreditation Update.

MOTION: Ms. Stanish moved that the Board of Education meeting adjourn.

SECOND: Ms. Chandler. AYE: Chandler, Colwell, Howell, Nichols, Stanish.

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Colwell
President

Sue Chandler

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Secretary

ks (2/17/10)