

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

ARAPAHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER SIX

Littleton, Colorado BOARD OF EDUCATION Minutes of Regular Meeting

October 23, 2008

Call to Order

President Bob Colwell called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Boardroom of the Education Services Center, 5776 South Crocker Street.

Present

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

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 October 9, 2008, regular Board meeting. On page 5, third paragraph, second sentence, add ...*“for training”* to the end of the sentence. On page 6, fourth paragraph, second sentence under Longitudinal Growth Model, change to read “...shared with various teachers *that* a student has *for* different classes.” On page 7, second paragraph under Board Policy JEB, change the first sentence to read: “*Ms. Stanish commented that currently students admitted early for kindergarten are identified as gifted and talented students, so by relaxing the admission date, these students wouldn’t necessarily be identified as gifted and talented.*” MOTION: Ms. Chandler moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the September 25, 2008, 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 Littleton High School International Business and Integrated Business Technology students are competing in the Global Virtual Classroom Website Building Contest. Websites developed by students around the world will be evaluated by a panel of international judges in the spring. Mr. Murphy said that Field Elementary School held its annual Harvest Run. The U.S. Air Force Academy baseball team visited Goddard Middle School as part of Red Ribbon Week activities. Newton Middle School continues to move through the process of becoming an authorized International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme site. The program, staff, and facilities were recently evaluated during a site visit, and formal notification of its authorized status will occur by August 2009. The Heritage High

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School marching band placed third in the Colorado Bandmasters Association 4A Metro Qualifying event, and the Arapahoe High School marching band recently placed first in 5A competition at the Colorado State University Marching Band Showcase.

Board Reports/Requests

Ms. Nichols attended the Gifted and Talented Advisory Council meeting, the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) Region 5 meeting, and parent-teacher conferences for her children.

Ms. Chandler attended the CASB Region 5 meeting, the Greater Littleton Youth Initiative meeting, and the Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning board meeting. She expressed appreciation to LPS schools for their efforts in celebrating Red Ribbon Week.

Ms. Howell attended the District Accountability Committee meeting, the CASB Region 5 meeting, and the Metro Denver Wired Initiative meeting. She was a chaperon for the Arapahoe High School medicine class field trip.

Ms. Stanish attended the Gifted and Talented Advisory Council meeting as a guest. She also attended the Special Services Advisory Committee meeting, the CASB Region 5 meeting, and several Littleton High School Homecoming events.

Mr. Colwell participated in a Highland Elementary School fun run and the combined Hopkins and Twain elementary schools fun run. He attended the Parents Presidents Council meeting and the CASB Region 5 meeting. He dropped in at the parent-teacher conferences held at Arapahoe High School, and said that Goddard Middle School National Junior Honor Society students were featured in a television commercial for the annual Dependable Cleaners Coats for Colorado.

Citizens' Requests to Speak to the Board

Matthew Shankle, an Ames and Field elementary schools parent, addressed the Board regarding redrawing school boundaries and suggested this as a topic for a future discussion.

Action

Consent Agenda

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, 1.2 Educational Technology Advisory Committee (ETAC) 2008–2009 Charge and Membership, 1.3 Special Services Advisory Committee (SSAC) 2008–2009 Charge and Membership, and 1.4 Board Policy JEB—Entrance Age Requirements. SECOND: Ms. Stanish. AYE: Chandler, Colwell, Howell, Nichols, Stanish. MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.

Quarterly Financial Report

Mr. Scott Myers, chief financial officer, presented the first quarter financial report for all district funds, specifically highlighting the general fund. He noted that total revenue for the first quarter of FY 2008–2009 is similar to the same period in FY 2007–2008 on a percentage basis. Mr. Myers pointed out that revenue from investment earnings is lower than the prior year because of lower interest rates.

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Mr. Myers said expenditure rates during the first quarter of the current year and the prior year are the same on a percentage basis. He also said the district will be closely monitoring property tax collections that will occur later in the school year.

Ms. Howell asked if the liquidity problems associated with the Colorado Surplus Asset Fund Trust (CSAFE) have been resolved. Mr. Myers responded that some assets are still frozen, but expects these problems to be cleared up in the next few weeks. He emphasized the district is carefully monitoring the situation.

Ms. Chandler asked if recent changes in gasoline prices have had an effect on the district budget. Mr. Myers responded that it is too early to tell. He said budget projections indicated a possible shortage of as much as \$100,000 for fuel, but if the current prices continue, the district could stay within budgeted allocations.

Ms. Chandler said she appreciated the work of the finance staff for their sound planning.

MOTION: Ms. Chandler moved that the Board of Education accept the Quarterly Financial Report as presented this evening. SECOND: Ms. Nichols. AYE: Chandler, Colwell, Howell, Nichols, Stanish. MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.

Discussion

Facility Use Task Force Final Report

Mr. Colwell recognized members of the Facility Use Task Force who were present and thanked the task force for its work. He noted that the district has not closed a building since 1987, and student enrollment has been declining for a number of years. Mr. Colwell said that during Board candidate forums in 2005, district enrollment was a concern. He said the LPS community has a passion for its schools and the Board recognizes that the task force recommendations will have an impact across the district. He stated that the district budget deficit is not the reason the task force was organized; budget issues are being addressed by the Financial Advisory Committee. The task force was charged to address building capacity issues. The group has held 17 meetings since its charge from the Board in December 2007. Mr. Colwell reviewed the timeline the Board has established to consider the recommendations of the task force. A Board workshop will be held on October 27, a special meeting is scheduled for November 6, and the Board is scheduled to take action on the recommendations on November 13.

Mr. Colwell said the Board has received many comments from the community and asked community members present to consolidate their comments when possible in the interest of time. He emphasized, however, that everyone signed up to speak will have an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Kirk Madsen, assistant superintendent of operations, said the Facilities Use Task Force began meeting in February 2008, and meetings were held every two to three weeks through October. He said the task force has met the timeline for the completion of the work and said the final report and public comments will be posted on the district web site following the Board meeting. He introduced task force co-chairs, Pat Wojahn and Tracie Rainey.

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Ms. Rainey said she appreciated the opportunity to serve on the task force. She said the task force focused on what is best for students and commented that the final report is designed to be a useful tool to the Board now and in the future. Ms. Rainey and Ms. Wojahn reviewed the Board's charge to the committee, noting it aligned with focus area six of the Strategic Plan. They gave an overview of the district's work in the area of facility use, reviewed the information and data the task force considered, and highlighted LPS enrollment history for the past 37 years, along with five-year enrollment projections.

Ms. Rainey and Ms. Wojahn presented building capacity statistics based on current enrollment data. The task force also looked at portable classroom usage across the district and determined that they represent a capacity of about 500 students district-wide. The co-chairs described the facility usage model that ranges from full efficiency of available building capacity to status quo. They noted that staffing adjustments due to lower enrollment will result in programming changes so the status quo does not mean everything will remain the same in 2009–2010 and beyond.

Ms. Rainey and Ms. Wojahn reviewed the list of facility utilization ideas generated by the task force, emphasized the district values that drove the work of the task force, and explained the criteria the group used to develop recommendations. They presented details about how the application of the criteria impacted schools in the district.

Ms. Rainey and Ms. Wojahn presented task force recommendations that range from a full efficiency model to status quo. In a full efficiency model of facility utilization, the district would consolidate to 12 elementary schools and three middle schools, with an impact on every elementary and middle school student. No change was recommended for district high schools. In a status quo model, there would be minimal change, but current budget deficits and ongoing enrollment declines compound the impact of maintaining the status quo.

District recommendations from the committee include the following ideas:

- Schools should not be closed permanently, but should be strategically reconfigured and reopened.
- Schools targeted for reconfiguration should be those farthest from meeting the criteria based on established values.
- Schools serve as community gathering places. At least one facility should be operational in each geographic area in the district.
- Implementation of ideas should not violate task force values and criteria.

Elementary school recommendations are as follows:

- Applicable to the eight elementary schools that meet the criteria, i.e., Ames, East, Highland, Hopkins, Moody, Peabody, Twain, Whitman.
- Expansion of early childhood education programs.
- Create “partner schools” between two or more elementary schools.
- Expansion of alternative education programs.
- Grade reconfigurations.

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While none of the district's middle schools meet both the enrollment and capacity criteria, Euclid, Goddard, and Newton middle schools meet the building capacity criteria. Ms. Rainey and Ms. Wojahn noted that solutions to the underutilization of space at middle schools are complex. The task force provided various scenarios for the Board's consideration that address the criteria for elementary and middle schools.

Concerning implementation of recommendations, the task force noted that change is difficult for everyone. The task force recommended that the Board make decisions quickly, create an implementation timeline, work with students, parents, staff and communities during transition, and utilize the community as ambassadors of the district. The task force further suggested that special education needs and transportation issues need to be evaluated, and the district values and task force criteria should be priorities as decisions are made.

In summary, Ms. Rainey and Ms. Wojahn urged the Board to focus on student achievement, address equity issues, grow educational opportunities, maintain fiscal responsibility, and engage the community during the transition.

Ms. Chandler asked how the minimum enrollment number was determined, and the response was it is based on an minimum of 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing for specials, which includes art, music, physical education, computer, media/library, and gifted and talented. Ms. Howell asked when the lowest enrollment at middle schools would occur, and Ms. Wojahn responded that it will probably be next year or the following year. Ms. Nichols asked if the receiving schools in elementary scenarios would be at capacity with the additional students. She also asked if enrollment is still declining. Ms. Rainey responded that students can be accommodated in the receiving schools, and said enrollment trends suggest a continued decline.

Mr. Colwell stated that a scenario that fills middle schools to capacity is not a good alternative at this time, and any changes to middle schools will create such a situation. He does not believe the Board will be looking at scenarios that affect middle schools in the immediate future. Ms. Howell said she is still gathering information with regard to changes at middle schools.

The following citizens addressed the Board.

Rob Cernich said he believes the process is going very fast and wants to know the benefits of one decision over another. He asked if the enrollment figures included the preschool population.

David Lewien said he appreciates the attempts of the task force to incorporate community feedback into the recommendations. He said there is no detailed cost-benefit analysis and additional analysis needs to be made prior to a decision.

Lisa Banks said the cost-benefit analysis needs to be made public.

Jim Keiffer said he is concerned about enrollment dropping and said students are already being pulled out of schools because of uncertainty.

Annawyn Shamas said evaluation of staff should be considered because staff is very important to a school. She also said it is important to keep neighborhoods together.

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Jim Shamas said in light of the economy it is a time for caution. He said there is no estimate in the report of cost savings when schools are combined.

Lisa Radford said this process is much more difficult for parents than it is for district officials. She asked the Board to make the decision quickly and if middle schools would be affected in the future to make a decision now rather than ask parents and students to go through this process again. She also noted that changes would affect transportation because students who now walk to school would need to be bused.

Barb Lee offered ten reasons why the district should not close Highland Elementary School.

Lori Hatanaka said the district needs to be fiscally responsible.

Matt Shankle said he agreed that making a decision quickly was the best approach. He said the district needs to consider equity issues when re-distributing items purchased with PTO funds.

Michele Craig said that lack of speakers about Hopkins Elementary School does not indicate apathy. She does not think closing Hopkins, which is a large school, would best meet the needs of the district and suggested repurposing a smaller school as an early childhood center.

Meg Romano said she is disappointed in the process and said the district should have notified parents much earlier, and there has not been a complete evaluation. She said if LPS does not meet needs, families will leave the district. She asked for a more transparent process with more parent involvement.

J. J. Festoso said he has not had enough time to understand the impact of the proposed changes. He does not believe a partnership between Ames and Lenski elementary schools is good for kids and would be detrimental to the culture of Lenski.

Shelley Reed opposes the Ames/Lenski partner school concept because of potential inconvenience for parents who may have students attending both schools.

Holly Malcolm said although her preschooler attends a private preschool, she has already been involved with activities at Lenski and she supports the school.

Sharon Zerwekh chose to live in a particular neighborhood because of Lenski. She opposes an Ames/Lenski partner school concept and will seek other alternatives if such a proposal is adopted.

Stephanie Ostrand chose Whitman Elementary School because of its special education program. She said the district needs to survey parents and to make sure nothing is being overlooked.

Heather Kelly said she trusts the district to make good financial decisions and not to prolong the decision making because it is important to have a healthy school district. She believes the early childhood center is a good idea and more details are needed for a partner school concept.

Kevin Andrus said he moved to Littleton because of the good schools. He said it sends the wrong message to close Highland Elementary School based on geography only and such a process does not recognize the involvement of parents in a school.

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Pam Cirbo described what it takes to have a quality K–8 school, based on a charter school perspective. She said enrollment has been declining for some time and the issue before the Board now has been coming for many years. The district has made budget cuts and sought mill levy increases to avoid closing a school. She noted that parents need to be on board with the new direction or they may look at other options.

Mr. Colwell thanked the speakers for their input. Ms. Wojahn said the task force has received some petitions and they will be forwarded to the Board. She said the task force recognized that capital investment may be needed for some recommendations.

Mr. Colwell requested information for Monday's workshop about grade level configurations, e.g., the number of students in classes at the current school and the school they would attend under the various scenarios, as well as special programs and how they would be affected. Ms. Rainey said preschool enrollment information will be made available as well. Ms. Stanish asked for more research about optimal school size based on student performance. In connection with Ms. Stanish's request, Ms. Howell asked that the research be identified by state. Ms. Howell also asked for additional details about how technology and other instructional materials and tools for both students and teachers will be distributed, and she asked for more information on the partner school concept.

Ms. Chandler said timing for decision making is always difficult and many factors have led to the need for this process. She remarked that she feels the passion LPS parents have for their schools and understands their issues. She said the Board does not take this decision lightly, and will continue to seek a plan that supports the best education possible for students. She asked for more information about schools that have had high capacity enrollment in the past and what will happen to staff at schools under consideration. Ms. Chandler said the 2006 demographic report was revealing for her and she knew then that out of district enrollment would not solve the problem and a change was needed. Ms. Wojahn noted that this report is on the district web site.

Mr. Colwell commented that Board members have strong attachments to the schools their children attended or are currently attending. He said the Board must make a decision that is best for the district. Ms. Howell said her goal is to leave the next Board of Education with a good school district. She said she understands the needs of parents and commented that for planning purposes, it is important to make a decision soon, noting she and the other Board members knew this was coming when they were elected to the Board. She asked for the help and support of the LPS community to make this process work.

Ms. Stanish said she has strong ties to Runyon Elementary School because she attended school there and her children attended Runyon. With regard to timing, she said if the discussion continues and a decision is delayed, it could result in a self-fulfilling prophesy with parents choosing to leave a school because of uncertainty. Ms. Stanish said the Board wants to do what is best for the district and what is best for students. She concurred with other comments that this decision point has been coming for many years and the Board takes this decision very seriously.

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Ms. Howell thanked Justin Silverstein of Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates, Inc. (APA) for his work with the task force. Mr. Colwell thanked Mr. Madsen and members of the task force for their work in preparing the final report. Further discussion of the recommendations will take place at the Board workshop on October 27 and at the November 6 special Board meeting where the task force recommendations is the only agenda item.

Grading Practices/Graduation Requirements: Board Values

Ms. Connie Bouwman, assistant superintendent of learning services, reviewed the Board's discussion about grading practices and graduation requirements at a Board workshop on September 25, to ensure administration's understanding is an accurate reflection of the Board's values. Board values include course recovery options, early graduation option, and acceleration options. The Board also discussed possible options for students to receive PE credit for participation in sports, marching band, etc. The Board reaffirmed its value for the district to offer a comprehensive high school education. With regard to graduation requirements, the Board stated that each high school could have some flexibility to tailor graduation requirements with the Board's approval of actual requirements.

Ms. Nichols asked if course recovery was available only for freshman, and Ms. Bouwman responded that while it is primarily intended for freshman, the option could be available to other students. Ms. Howell suggested some consideration for reviewing principals' decisions about grade recovery.

Ms. Chandler asked about the authority of a principal in determining a student's eligibility for early graduation. Ms. Bouwman responded that principals will consult with their school administrative team in making such decisions. Ms. Chandler said school administrators need to ensure students have met all graduation requirements when seeking early graduation. Ms. Stanish urged caution concerning decisions about early graduation to ensure there are not significant discrepancies among high schools. Ms. Stanish also believes students should be encouraged to explore a variety of programs and opportunities within the high schools. Mr. Colwell suggested changing the statement that states early graduation is the exception rather than the rule.

Mr. Colwell asked about next steps, and Ms. Bouwman responded that meetings with middle and high school administrators begin next week to work on policies related to these areas.

Report

Technology Update

Mr. Murphy commented that Mr. Dan Maas, chief information officer, provided an excellent summary of technology changes in the district, noting the 32 percent increase in student access to computers. Mr. Colwell asked about the change in Microsoft licensing fees, specifically the reduction in fees collected from schools to pay for software licenses. Mr. Maas explained that the contract for software licenses has been restructured, which resulted in this cost savings.

Ms. Chandler asked for an opportunity at a future date to discuss how computer labs are being used in the schools.

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Future Agenda/Adjournment

Mr. Murphy stated that the Board will hold a special meeting on November 6 with facility use recommendations as the sole agenda item. He distributed a draft agenda for the November 13, 2008, Board meeting. Action items include Auditors Report—Acceptance of CAFR, and Facility Use Task Force Recommendations. Discussion items include Student Assessment Results—Elementary.

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

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

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Colwell
President

Sue Chandler
Secretary

ks (11/14/08)