

**COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 28, 2006 (Corrected 3/21/06)**

PRESENT: **BOARD OF EDUCATION:** Ms. Kong-Thao, Chair; Mr. Brodrick, Ms. Carroll, Mr. Conlon, Mr. Goldstein, Ms. Street-Stewart, Mr. Oertwig

STAFF: Louis Kanavati, Superintendent; Su Yeager, Patrick Quinn, Marie Lamb, Dorothy J. Levin, Harold Turnquist, Jeff Lalla

OTHERS: Linda Sparling, Gail Pattison, Doug Belden, Pioneer Press; Sarah Noonan, Jeff Koon, Kathleen Klumb, Tom Watkins, Tom Shaff, Gary Kwong, Brian Joyce, Frank Sineni, Jan Leppien, Karen Westberg, Paul Rohlfink, Roy Magnuson, Sarah Greenfield, Dee Dee Mitchell, Sonya Busch, Jeff Peason, Roy Wallace, Dan Stiles, Jane Stiles, Bruce Dischinger, Steve L, Randy Rogers, Dan Berg, David Peterson, Mark Vogel

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Mr. Brodrick, Acting Committee Chair.

II. AGENDA

Mr. Brodrick introduced the items on the agenda for the meeting, which were:

- **Gifted Services Advisory Committee (GSAC) Report**
- **Driving Up Standards Program**
- **Work Session – Definition of Issues to Address on:**
 - **School Climate**
 - **Environmental Audit**

1. Gifted Services Advisory Committee (GSAC) Report

Dorothy Levin, Director of Elementary Education, presented background information on the 2003-2004 Strategic Plan developed by the Gifted Services Department. She stated the report would focus on the action piece of one of the goals in the strategic plan which is an analysis of the identification process. This will be done with the assistance of national experts in the field of gifted education, Dr. Karen Westberg, Ph.D, Associate Professor, School of Education, University of St. Thomas and Jan Leppien, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Elementary Education, University of Great Falls who had made themselves available to present a summary of the study.

Drs. Westberg and Leppien provided a Power Point presentation to discuss a review of their findings. A question and answer period followed. Copies of their Power Point and Report on Gifted Education Identification Practices for Saint Paul Public Schools Supported by the Gifted Services Advisory Council, dated December 13, 2005, were distributed. The presentation focused on 1) a review of SPPS G/T documents and identification data, 2) additional data analyses conducted, 3) the literature on CLED learners was reviewed, 4) Capitol Hill Magnet School was visited, 5) G/T Directors in urban districts were interviewed and 5) discussion of the results. Drs. Westberg and Leppien presented nine (9) recommendations:

- Determine how District will provide services to all identified students

- Identify fewer students if services can not be provided to all those identified.
- Continue to screen kindergarten students to allow identified children to apply at Capitol Hill Magnet School (particularly culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse students)
- Identify fewer students through NNAT process and increase the number of students identified through the portfolio review process
- Continue to use the NNAT for the screening process unless future research does not support its use with culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse students
- Change some aspects of the portfolio review process
- Policy statements for the gifted services in SPPS should be rewritten to include some information about identification of students for services, then update all program materials
- Consider modeling on Young Scholars Program (Fairfax County, VA) to provide students with more opportunities to develop their talent and close the achievement gap
- Establish and maintain a database that documents the levels of services provided to all identified students

Tables on key data from Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) identification and a graph on "The Integrated Continuum of Special Services" were included in the presentation as well as the number and percentage of the total enrollment of SPPS elementary students identified Gifted/Talented by grade level as of fall 2005.

(Due to a time certain agenda item, Drs. Westberg and Leppien agreed to return and continue the question and answer period later in the evening).

2. **Driving Up Standards Program**

Elona Street-Stewart, Board Chair, set the framework for discussion on driving up standards program. Ms. Street-Stewart stated the Committee had looked at issues on safety regarding the district's bus transportation services for over a year. On an annual basis the school board determines the process of having bids received from the bus company to provide transportation services for the district's students. Part of the routine work is ensuring transportation will be available for summer routes as well as during the regular school year. She remarked the Board's work on Governance over the last three years had addressed the issue of safety for students as one of its Ends. The Committee believes there is always an obligation as part of their role to oversee the safety of students attending Saint Paul Public Schools. The rides to and from school are part of the school day so the district's policies that address what happens during a school day also include concern and oversight for what happens during transportation to and from school

Ms. Street-Stewart stated the Board was made aware of a national campaign to address and raise standards for bus transportation services during public comment at an earlier Board meeting. The Board spent time reviewing these to gain an understanding of what was being proposed. The Board desires to improve its working relationship with the bus companies and to be sure, in its Governance practice, there are policies and procedures in place with administrative staff to implement best practices in the contract and to ensure receipt of information for Board review. The Board received a number of items it was asked to consider in an effort to continue to improve information the Board receives and to be sure of best choices are made for our students. In particular, there are potential amendments to the contract language applicable to contracts with those companies that provide transportation services. The items being considered would be brought to the next Board meeting for action. At this meeting the Board will consider these items, discuss improving the language, if necessary, determine if any changes should be made to the current contract and carry forward items on which action is taken to the next Board meeting.

To assist the Board legal counsel has provided advice for consideration on all items as has the administrative staff responsible for transportation services in the district. Ms. Street-Stewart asked board members for discussion on the following items for further Board action:

- Item # 1 - Minnesota Government Data Practices Act which already applies. Mr. Lalla provided language that added a new sentence. The following motion was made:

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Oertwig and seconded by Ms. Carroll, that the Committee of the Board recommend the Board of Education approve the adding of a new sentence as follows: *All data created, collected, received, stored, used, maintained or disseminated by the Contractor with respect to drivers transporting students under this Agreement shall be subject to the requirements of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and, with respect to all such data, the Contractor shall comply with the requirements of that Act as if it were a government entity. Contractor shall provide access to public data in accordance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.*

Motion Passed

Mr. Brodrick explained the process to be used in this discussion would be for Ms. Street-Stewart review a list of potential suggestions for changes in the contract bid specifications and as this is done Mr. Lalla will provide necessary clarification. After a particular item has been presented the Board will be asked for input and action. The audience was provided opportunity for feedback in terms of what was being discussed by committee members. Ms. Carroll commented a Task Force had been formed and met many times to work on the new language. The Task Force included Ms. Street-Stewart, Mr. Brodrick and former board member Mr. Finney. Ms. Street-Stewart continued the presentation.

- Items # 3 & 5 - Consideration in Award of Bid – description of recruitment and retention plan, plus attrition.
Ms. Street-Stewart stated the Board is asking for a more standardized process for recruitment and retention information. She remarked there were several proposed amendments addressing the issue of having a recruitment and retention plan, plus attrition. Previous Board action had addressed this issue and approved a reporting process for staff to give the Board an annual summary. The Board will receive the first report at the end of the school year. Ms. Street-Stewart remarked the data base will establish norms to build on because right now the Board, in its monitoring function, does not have that information. She remarked the Board is aware that data is available whenever the Board makes a request to receive it but it must be in a format that board members can use to monitor over time and know what norms might be needed.
- Item # 4 - Recruitment and Retention Plan - improved to use correct language.
Ms. Street-Stewart noted a particular item that addressed the issue of recruitment and retention plan for all bidders. She said amending the language in this particular instance would address it as “**all lowest responsible bidders**”
- Item # 2, 6 & 11 - Record Keeping, Reports and Reimbursements
Ms. Street-Stewart remarked the Task Force had determined there is mechanism in place for collecting information and will continue to look further for more effective measures through working with administrative procedures in the district to address needs. Mr. Goldstein expressed concern regarding the reporting issues and how the administration ensures that information is reported. Mr. Quinn and Harold Turnquist, Transportation Director, explained the reporting process thoroughly. Administration is assured that contractors are meeting district requirements and mission based on delivering buses on time, delivering students on time and delivering students safely.

Ms. Street-Stewart indicated the Board will have its first report to review at the end of this school year. This would be the basis for discussion and that penalties and assessments would be included.

Ms. Street-Stewart stated there was extensive communication with parents and community members regarding drivers being on the job sick. What provisions are made at the bus company level to address those issues of sick drivers. She remarked, as board members, it is their obligation to look at quality of service and if drivers are working under conditions that affect their driving ability. The bus service is an extension of the school day and the oversight the Board has for providing a safe environment for students as well as being an issue around paid sick leave. She said the Board had been asked to review this particular issue and the Board should take a first step in addressing this – providing some provision in the contract language to look at paid sick leave. She remarked the Task Force asked for language that would be appropriate to address the issue and looking at ways for drivers to earn and accrue a certain number of hours for so many hours worked up to a cap under a contract period and have this same process applied for summer routes. The Board's first step would be to consider this one factor in maintaining a competent driver pool. The Task Force would recommend that contractor set provision that each driver may earn and accrue paid sick leave under the SPPS contract to include summer routes. She remarked ordinarily, provisions to utilize and determine verification are left up to the employer and this provision would be limited to drivers only when performing services under this contract with SPPS. The following motion was made:

MOTION: It was moved by Ms. Carroll, seconded by Mr. Goldstein, that the Committee of the Board recommend the Board of Education approve that each contractor shall provide that each driver, for each week in which they were employed for at least 20 hours as a driver transporting students under this Agreement, shall earn one hour of paid sick leave up to a maximum of 80 hours of sick leave during the term of this Agreement. Employees utilizing this sick leave benefit shall receive their regular rate of pay for sick leave time.

Ms. Street-Stewart stated the Task Force approached this at this level because it is similar to the type of sick leave arrangement that is made possible for district employees. Ms. Carroll commented this is essential because it has come from parents as being of great concern.

Mr. Quinn discussed the issue of cost to the school district to implement this. In terms of labor this would be a non-productive waiver and if there is a cost the district would have to cover it. Ms. Carroll requested staff speak with bidders and current vendors about this issue and return to the Committee to inform them of the results. Mr. Oertwig remarked that bidders could determine this cost during the competitive bidding process. Mr. Goldstein suggested contacting a national organization to obtain this type of information. Ms. Kong-Thao inquired when this change would be incorporated into the SPPS contracts. Mr. Quinn remarked this would take effect starting this fall.

Continuation of above stated motion:

The above stated motion passed.

Ms. Street-Stewart remarked the remainder of the suggested amendments were challenging (i.e., the asset acquisition and the penalties and prohibitions section). Ms. Carroll requested a recap of changes made. Mr. Brodrick thanked Ms. Street-Stewart for the excellent work she did on this project.

Mr. Brodrick opened the floor at this time for people in the audience to comment. The following individuals spoke:

- Sonya Busch – Student behavior on the bus
- Jeff Pierson – Complimented SPPS Transportation and sick leave plus cost
- Jane Stiles (Safeway) – Cost of sick pay and expressed concern that SPPS requirements are getting bigger and bigger and the district appears to be micromanaging the contractors
- Dee Dee Mitchell – Lack of sick leave and problems it creates personally, high turn over of drivers
- Sarah Greenfield – High driver turn over and consequently drivers don't know kids, sick leave, interested in what follow-up would be on discussion on reporting requirements, recruitment and retention plan. Ms. Greenfield gave Ms. Street-Stewart 500 petitions in support of Proposed Improvements in Transportation System
- Bruce Dischinger (Monarch Bus Services) – Concerned district is micromanaging and does not appreciate the hard work the contractors put in to make sure they are in compliance.

Mr. Brodrick stated the district has had a good relationship with the bus contractors over the years and the Task Force took the opportunity to update some of the specifications in the bus contracts with no intention of offending anyone. Ms. Carroll expressed appreciation to staff for doing a lot of hard work on this and the Task Force for moving this forward in some very important ways. She said this is about children and their safety and the importance of taking these steps. Mr. Quinn inquired about a recap request made by Ms. Carroll and Ms. Street-Stewart said a summary would be prepared on the action taken.

1. Gifted Services Advisory Committee (GSAC) Report (Continued)

Committee members and staff discussed the following specific areas of concern:

- Ms. Carroll - The Young Scholars Program and how that relates to professional development training for staff and recognizing potential in students (identification models and procedures) in particular, screening students at a early age, ESL students and the challenge of providing a continuum of services for older students who are not identified as gifted/talented.
- Ms. Street Stewart – Cultural and Gifted/Talented issues, the difference in children's attitudes toward academics starting in early years, usually by the third grade, how can educators and community intervene and support these students.
- Superintendent Kanavati – Studies on academically misplaced students, development of a comprehensive system to reach all students according to their achievement level
- Mr. Oertwig – Reaching out to under-achieving/gifted students (students that are identified but not served, i.e., clustering, SCIP plan).
- Mr. Goldstein – How gifted and talented aligns with Project Excellence and the rigor of the standards in place. What does it mean to be gifted? How does this align with the overall curriculum in general and students not identified as gifted but want more than what curriculum has to offer, will they get gifted services? What do extracurricular services mean in terms of demonstrated achievement? Who gets identified as gifted and what gets designated as gifted? The disparity between Caucasian students identified as gifted/talented and students of color and the possibility of a subtle message being sent.
- Ms. Kong-Thao – clarification regarding identifying fewer students if services can not be provided to all identified and addressing culture in gifted/talented identification.

Mr. Brodrick opened the discussion to audience members who provided their comments on the report.

Mr. Brodrick thanked staff, Dr. Westburg and Dr. Leppien for their presentation.

3. **Work Session – Definition of Issues to Address**

- School Climate.

Superintendent Kanavati suggested the report be presented on the district-wide plan on School Climate. Ms. Carroll directed staff prepare an outline of the report and place in the weekly board packet mailing. Board members could provide feed-back to the report at that time. Mr. Street-Stewart remarked the new Wellness Policy includes recognizing staff as models. She said the board approached this work by addressing how to continue to improve in the area of wellness by how we model behavior, values and by implementing policy. The board wants to look at these things in a positive, rather than negative manner.

Ms. Carroll suggested a survey be conducted to ask families, children, etc. how they perceive the educational experience being provided to them. Discussion followed, it was the consensus of the Committee to receive an outline of the task force report on School Climate.

- Environmental Audit

Mr. Goldstein stated, given

1. The cost of energy
2. The fact the state has been dragging its heels on exploring renewable energy sources and the development of alternative energy
3. SPPS as a district needs to look at what it can do to move ahead

What is the feasibility of reducing energy, what is the district doing about retrofitting buildings, what is the cost, is renewable energy under consideration, etc. He asked that this be looked at, that the cost of engaging an outside firm to do this be evaluated and then presented to board members for further action.

Mr. Quinn presented an outline of the information requested on energy, conservation and the environment:

1. Historical energy consumption
2. Historical energy expenditures
 - Bonding and other sources of funding
 - Energy rebates
 - Energy loans
 - Energy grants
3. Historical energy conservation measures
4. Current results of **Schools for Energy Education** (SEE) program
5. Projections of energy consumption and expenditures
6. Future energy conservation initiatives

Mr. Brodrick directed Mr. Quinn to prepare a presentation for a future Committee of the Board meeting. Ms. Street-Stewart will meet with staff to discuss when this topic would be placed on the Committee of the Board meeting schedule within the next month.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m. by Mr. Brodrick, Acting Committee Chair.

Respectfully submitted by
Diana J. Sanders
Recorder
Saint Paul Board of Education

