

**COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
March 20, 2006**

PRESENT:

Board of Education: Al Oertwig, Tom Conlon, John Brodrick, Elona Street-Stewart, Kazoua Kong-Thao, Tom Goldstein,

Absent: Anne Carroll

Staff: Mary Chorewycz, Pat Fernandez, Barb Stillwell, Willie Nesbit, , Lois Rockney, Joann Knuth, Deb Henton, Ruth Paisley, Ann Lovrien, Jackie Felt, Donald Sysyn, Kathy Brown, Wayne Arndt, Yusef Mgeni, Kathy Denman Wilke, Denise Quinlan, Su Yeager, Marilyn Polsfuss

Others: Jim Walsh, Ia Vang, Tawne Gaslin, Julia Hubday, Meg Hubday, Sherry Haaf, Larry Fettegra, Beth Hyser, Korin Henrickson, Jens Henrickson, Anne McNeill Gattman, Marge Porter, JKane Stier, Victoria LaBerge, Mouafu Mouanoutoua, Cher Pao Yang, Mee V Yang, Stacy Symons, Dutch Toenjes, Deborah Teal, Katie Culshan, Kathryn Holum, Hawa Guled, Ahmed Mohamed, Janice LaFloe, Lonna Stevens

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:40 p.m. by the Chair, Kazoua Kong-Thao.

II. AGENDA

Ms. Kong-Thao reviewed the subjects to be covered at the meeting:

- Early Childhood Programs
- School Calendar
- American Indian Education Programs

1. Early Childhood Programs

Donald Sysyn, Division Manager, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), gave a review of the early childhood programs offered by St. Paul Public Schools: ECFE, 4-Year Old Programs and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE).

ECFE funding comes from a variety of sources: state aid, levy, the SPPS referendum, LCTS grants and fees. He cited a list of the 17 sites which host the program along with additional satellite sites. The program served 4,426 parents and 4, 927 children in 2004-05. The program focuses on all families with children ages birth to five. Its distinguishing characteristics are:

- Parent and child together time where parents and children learn together with emphasis on developing language, reading and math skills
- Parent's time taught by licensed parent educators who lead discussions intended to increase child development knowledge and parenting skills and
- Children's time where licensed early childhood teachers engage children in activities that focus on physical, academic, social and emotional development.

Jackie Felt, Division Manager, School Readiness, discussed the 4-year old programming.

Individual school 4-year old programming has been offered in St. Paul Public Schools since the mid-1980s when the Montessori programs began. Today there are five programs serving 278 children. The programs were previously funded by transition revenue but are not funded through the general fund. The program is a collaborative through 3M. Its demographic focus gives preference at Eastside to 3M employees with Crossroads, J.J. Hill and Nokomis open to all St. Paul families. Its distinguishing characteristics include:

- The Montessori combines pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children in classes
- Discovery Club is available at all sites which offers before and after child care for 4 year olds
- Crossroads is a year-round school

School readiness (SR) is funded through state aid and SPPS referendum funds. The program is administered through family education and community education. The program prepares children for kindergarten and future school success. Legislation requires that children with the most need be served. Therefore the program gives priority to children with a language other than English, eligible for free or reduced lunch, those with developmental needs and those who have had no other pre-school experience. The program works very closely with special education offering "inclusion classes" in conjunction with ECSE, it has an early literacy focus and offers a multilingual parent education and family support team.

Community kindergarten (CK) is also administered by family education and community education and is funded from the general fund. Unlike the school readiness program, this program meets five one-half days per week. The same criteria is used for this program as for school readiness for priority admission, the parent education and family support teams provide services to this group as well. The curriculum is culturally sensitive, based on research and best practices and meets the MDE Early Childhood Standards.

Ann Lovrein, Assistant Director, Project Early K, discussed the newly implemented individual school 4-year old programs (5 schools) which are funded through the school budgets and/or parent fees to support the programs in the schools. The programs are administered by the principals. The programs are open to all St. Paul families.

Project Early K (PEK) is the newest early childhood program funded with a McKnight research grant to support 4-year old programming in alignment with the K-12 Project for Academic Excellence. Research is being conducted to try to demonstrate whether the alignment with kindergarten makes a significant difference in the academic achievement of the children with evaluation from kindergarten to third grade. Students and families are integrated in all school functions and staff in all professional development activities. Priority admission is given to children who are English language learners, eligible for free or reduced meals and early childhood special education eligible. The project is also working with child care centers and family child care homes in St. Paul to align them with the District's kindergarten program.

Ruth Paisley, Teacher, Early Childhood Special Education, reviewed the early childhood special education (ECSE) noting it has been a priority in St. Paul schools for a long time. The program receives funding through Federal funding, the SPPS general fund and the referendum. It is administered by special education and the principals of the 11 schools hosting the program. It serves 945 children, 380 4-year olds, 175 birth to 3-year olds with 1,000 children served by the end of the school year. The demographic focus is on children from birth to five years of age who have a disability and are eligible for special education services based on the State of Minnesota special education criteria. Its distinguishing characteristics are:

- A continuum of special education services provided, including itinerant services to children in community preschools, child care centers and Head Start programs
- Team taught classrooms with School Readiness classes and self-contained classrooms
- Services provided in natural environment (birth-2 years) or the least restrictive environment (3-5 years).

She then discussed the impact of the 4-year old programs noting that:

- Children are better prepared to move into Kindergarten
- Children are prepared (as assessed by Kindergarten teachers)
- Children do well on the SAT-10 in Grade 2

An analyses of work sampling assessments on over 1,500 children who attended SR and CK programs from 2000 to 2004 indicate:

- 95% of children were assessed by teachers to be proficient, or well on their way to demonstrating competence, in the 40 indicators (socialization, language and literacy, math and physical development)
- There was no difference in proficiency among racial groups.

Kindergarten teachers assessed children's classroom behavior in the fall of 2004-05 using work sampling assessment (data from MDE statewide study);

- Students who had attended SR and CK were rated just as proficient as those with unknown history but consistently had many more risk factors
- Students who had attended SR and CK were rated as more proficient than students with unknown history when both groups were matched for demographic variables.

The Grade 2 assessment, a preliminary analysis of SAT-10, showed:

- Students who attended at least five months of SR and CK had the same achievement level as all students in SPPS grade 2 (same proportion achieving stanines 4-9 in math and reading)
- Students who attended SR and CK had much higher representations of children eligible for free and reduced meals, spoke a second language at home and were children of color.

Ms. Lovrein then reviewed Superintendent Kanavati's charge to develop a framework that enable differing SPPS 4-year old programs to continue their models yet link together and present a united program or unit that is well understood by parents, SPPS and the greater community. He noted accomplishments to date include:

- Constructing a program planning framework for program consistency
- Adoption of a universal name: 4-Year-Old Program of SPPS
- A common application for 4-year-old programs through the Student Placement Center
- A program map was created
- Exploration of a common, Campus-based database to maintain data on the 4-year-olds and siblings
- Planning a "Principle of Learning" training for all SPPS early childhood teaching staff.

Additional development and planning is on-going. At this point various ECFE parents and teachers spoke of their support of the program and its value to them.

The Board offered thanks for staff and parents noting it was important to hear the story. They went on to discuss funding issues around early childhood education. Lois Rockney, Executive Director of Business and Financial Affairs, noted that prior to 2003 the District received state funding for the 4-year old programs. The State withdrew funding after 03-04 and the district continued fund the programs through various funding sources to maintain the programs. She stated the reality is as budgets tighten it will become more difficult to bring programs forward without a stable funding source. She indicated the Governor's

budget does provide permanent funding for the program which were in existence prior to 2003 but no funding for programs which came into existence subsequent to that time.

Ms. Kong-Thao noted the Board looked forward to seeing the report which will be completed in June.

2. **SCHOOL CALENDAR**

Su Yeager, Chief of Staff, noted the Calendar Committee met in early February and the calendar at places is the one recommended for Board approval. The 2006-07 will not come back to the Board but the subsequent two years will. The committee was made up of representatives from various areas, including the Teachers Federation. Once the recommended calendar was developed it was sent to all site councils for their input.

Wayne Arndt, Employee Relations Manager, noted that under the teacher agreement the District is obligated to meet and confer with the Federation on the calendar. This was done and standards for accreditation (a minimum of 175 days) have been met. The calendar is a roll over of what has been done in the past with the exception that in the 06-07 calendar Good Friday and Spring Break fall on a professional day (flex day) which was moved to October 23. Attempts were made to maintain as many full weeks as possible. The other concern for 06-07 is the placement of the early release days so the committee is requesting they be allowed some flexibility in reassigning these days where they might come in conflict with testing dates.

The question of snow days was raised, specifically if one is used, where is the adjustment made. It was stated there is no longer any set number of days written into law, schools need to have 1,020 hours for high school before they collect monies for summer school on those students so any snow days which might impact this number need to be made up. SPPS has sufficient days on its calendar this should not be a consideration

Mr. Arndt noted some concern was expressed by site councils over the length of winter break and its impact on the last day of school, which impacts students' ability to find summer jobs. So interest was expressed in looking at a way to shorten winter break to achieve an earlier release time in June.

Mr. Arndt noted early release days were only placed in the 06-07 calendar, the Calendar Committee intends to study how well early release days are being utilized and what other changes might be needed with decision on whether to place them in subsequent years to be made at a later date.

The Board requested copies of the survey responses from site councils for their information. Ms. Yeager indicated the intent was to place this information on the website with reply to each response received so everyone would be aware of what had been done and why. The Board asked to be informed when the information was on the website.

MOTION: Mr. Goldstein moved that the Committee of the Board recommend the Board of Education ask the Calendar Committee to add to their study of early release days a review of winter break and the possibility of shortening it in future years. Motion was seconded by Ms. Street-Stewart.

Motion passed.

MOTION: Ms. Street-Stewart moved the Committee of the Board recommend the Board of Education adopt the 2006-2007, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 calendars allowing for administrative flexibility to accommodate changes in early release days. Mr. Conlon seconded the motion.

Motion passed.

3. AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM

Denise Quinlan, Area B Superintendent, gave a brief review of the history of the Indian education program with particular emphasis on how the funding had changed over time and the impact it had upon the program. She extended her thanks to all the staff members who had helped in gathering the information the history was built upon.

Ms. Rockney noted in 2001 the District put in place the per pupil funding formula; revenue was sent to schools based on the number of students in that school. The magnet base distribution was reviewed and monies were sent to the schools in the same manner as in the past. However, site councils at that time were making decisions about how magnet funds were spent and this is what changed. In the past there had been a staffing allocation now the allocation was dollars and the principal and site council made the decision on how to spend those funds and in the thinking on the FTEs.

Ms Quinlan stressed strongly how important it is to have a champion for the Indian Options Program in order to keep the program in line and moving ahead. A collaboration was initiated by the District among the principals and the teachers; this proved to be unsuccessful.

Ms. Quinlan then reviewed the actual offerings at Battle Creek and Harding High School.

She then reviewed her recommendations for the Indian Options Program for 2006-07 and the subsequent two years:

- Reinstate language teacher to teach one section of Ojibwe at Battle Creek and one section Ojibwe at Harding. Battle Creek covers .2 FTE and Harding cover .2 FTE. The remaining .6 FTE would be used for marketing and management of Indian Options Program (District). (Ms. Quinlan noted there was concern about the quality of language at Battle Creek and is the instructor highly qualified?)
- Identify funding to support marketing campaign (instructional materials, field trips, etc.)
- High school Indian Options curriculum to be reviewed by the Center for Academic Excellence using the secondary course approval process
- Work with Micheal Thompson, Director, Secondary Education, to determine the number of courses needed for a student to graduate with distinction
- Battle Creek and Harding High will identify Indian Options staff to participate in AVID and Disciplinary Literacy training
- The possibility of American Indian History being used as a history requirement will be investigated

Ms. Quinlan again stressed the need to identify a program champion to really get things well grounded. Accountability needs to be established on whom and/or where the onus comes for success of the program. It is critical to ensure accountability and not set the program up for failure. Bringing courses up to standards will help ensure this happens as will staff development opportunities.

Discussion was held on what could be done by the close of the school year or the start of the next fiscal year when funds become available (July 1, 2006):

- Get staff signed up for professional development – AVID and Disciplinary Literacy
- Get both schools to commit to a block for Ojibwe language
- Meet with guidance counselors to get them to advocate for the classes and provide an overview of what is possible/anticipated for the students
- Begin a recruitment strategy for individual to fill position
- Develop a brochure for the 3 programs for student recruitment
- Look at curriculum improvements

- Evaluation procedure for program (2.5 evaluators are provided by the Center for Academic Excellence to analyze program or testing and evaluation)
- Establish a system for individual hired to work within
- Work toward teaching American Indian Education from its culture, using the heart of the Ojibwe culture and teaching academics from that perspective

Mr. Mgeni, Director of Educational Equity, noted one of the conflicts evident is this is a District-wide program in conflict with site-based management. There have been no resolutions of non-concurrence since 1992; and now there have been two with the last 3 years because of this issue. Inconsistent support, cooperation, collaboration, marketing, promotion and staffing, etc have haunted the program. The questions needing to be answered are how to stabilize the program so it can be built up, how to implement strategies for the program that will have beneficial impact across three sites, how is what has been lost to be restored in terms of resources, staff and best practices. How can all three sites be aligned so that all are moving forward on the same basis. The program champion must have the authority or backing so that they can accomplish what is needed for the program.

Ms. Rockney indicated they already give schools a whole matrix of what the District will pay for and what schools have to provide. There should be decision matrix for decisions that are important to the District. She indicated the District portion of the Indian Ed funding would be taken off the magnet base before it is distributed to the schools and will have a very minimal impact on a per school basis. Those dollars would then be dedicated to the program.

Ms. LaFloe, Chair of Indian Education Parent Committee, stated there absolutely needs to be an administrative trail of who is responsible and the area superintendent needs to support the program and hold people accountable to their tasks to meet the expectations of the program.

MOTION: It is moved by Mr. Brodrick, seconded by Mr. Conlon, that the Committee of the Board recommend that the Board of Education make a 3 year commitment to the American Indian Option Program and instruct administration to reinstate a language teacher to teach one section of Ojibwe language at Battle Creek and one section of Ojibwe language at Harding High School. The remaining .6 FTE to be used for marketing and management of the Indian Options Programs (total = 1 FTE;.8 District, .2 Harding High School). Additionally, that both Battle Creek and Harding identify Indian Options staff to participate in AVID and Disciplinary Literacy training.

It is further moved that funding should be identified to support program management and implementation (\$20,000 [District] per year for a period of 3 years); that the high school Indian options curriculum be reviewed by the Center for Academic Excellence using the secondary course approval process; that the number of courses needed for a student to graduate with distinction be determined and that the possibility of American Indian history being used as a History requirement be investigated.

Motion passed.

It was requested that the Board be supplied with the list of formal administrative steps by which the motion will be accomplished as soon as they are available, preferably within the next month.

It was suggested the American Indian Education Parent Committee review this motion in light of their most current resolution and the administrative response in order to build it into the record for future reference.

III. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Marilyn Polsfuss, Assistant Clerk