

**MEETING MINUTES
COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD (COB) MEETING
AUGUST 5, 2008**

PRESENT: Board of Education: Elona Street-Stewart, Anne Carroll, John Brodrick, Kazoua Kong-Thao, Tom Goldstein
Tom Conlon joined the meeting at 4:43 p.m.
Keith Hardy joined the meeting at 4:52 p.m.

Staff: Lois Rockney, Pat Quinn, Valeria Silva, Jill Casey, Joe Munnich, Bee Lee, Michelle Walker, Wayne Arndt, Teri Bopp, Teresa Rogers, Hitesh Haria, Mary Pat Mesler, Cecelia Dodge

Other: Allyson Perling, Andrea Watrud, Doug Belden, Pioneer Press

I. CALL TO ORDER

With a quorum being present at 4:38 p.m., the Chair called the meeting to order. The Chief Business Officer, Ms. Rockney, presided for administration in the absence of the Superintendent.

II. AGENDA

1. Special Education Parent Advisory (SEAC) Committee Report

The Chief Academic Officer offered an introduction to the report stating the report had been presented to the board annually since 1973. She noted the committee and its report were required by law.

The Director of Special Education introduced the SEAC co-chair, Andrea Watrud, who presented the committee's report. She stated the purpose of the committee is to provide information and assist the Board on issues related to Special Education. It also serves as a forum for parents and other individuals to express their concerns regarding special education issues.

During 2007-08, the Council addressed the following issues:

- Updating SEAC's mission, vision, beliefs and goals
- Brainstorming on how to increase and expand membership
- Improving communication with SPPS families, general educators and community stakeholders through training and website development

As a result of these activities, two critical issues were identified:

- Improving communication with parents regarding special education and students with disabilities, and
- Increasing parental involvement in SEAC and the IEP process.

Highlights of committee accomplishments for the year were reviewed. In developing the group's mission, vision and goals it was determined one of the goals would be to increase awareness of student differences in order for special education and general education teachers to plan and implement instructional strategies that support student success. The group also determined a key component of their responsibility was to provide information and training for parents regarding special education, its laws, rules and procedures in order to assist parents in understanding the system and encouraging more parental involvement.

New membership materials and procedures for mentoring new members and website revisions will be completed in 2008-09.

Based on the studies conducted by SEAC the following recommendations were made to the Board and SPPS administration:

- Identify specific ways to strengthen the communication between Special Education and General Education
- Identify specific ways to improve communication with parents and the community regarding special education
- Continue to develop and support the collaboration project, enhance the instructional; promising practices and curricular supports of all staff and maintain the special education continuum of services that both meet the students' educational and mental health needs
- Support the "least restrictive environment" for all students with disabilities as it impacts space, curriculum and training of teachers, and
- Address disproportionate representation of students with disabilities in suspensions and dismissals.

Following presentation of the report, the Chief Academic Officer indicated that simply putting a label to something doesn't solve the issue. As a District, responsibility and leadership has to be taken to redefine the position of special education students as belonging to "all of us" and great strides have been made toward achieving that goal through the on-going inclusiveness initiative. She further noted there will be an increasing number of special education children coming into the district so the challenge of meet these needs will continue. Administration then responded with the following responses to the report:

- **Increase awareness of student differences:**

The collaboration initiative in eight elementary schools and five secondary schools is the first step in changing school cultures and routines around instruction, instructional outcomes and belief structures of both general and special education staff and administration. Informal data indicate amazing changes in student acceptance of others who are different, achievement outcomes for students with disabilities and teacher support for inclusion activities. Additionally there is an increased emphasis on collaboration among district departments in planning for system changes to support collaboration and differentiation of instruction.

- **Improving communication and development of new materials for membership:**

The revised membership materials, improved website with parent friendly information and clear goals will alleviate any disconnect between what the council believes its purpose is and what the community, parents and staff believe it should be. All of these activities, including the provision of training for parents will certainly address the concern regarding limited parental involvement in the special education system.

- **Five SEAC recommendations to the Board and SPPS administration:**

Administration indicated it could support the recommendations. The District has mechanisms in place to address all of them through the Strategic Plan and the Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process. The Chief Academic Officer will meet with the Director of Special Education to determine ways to address the specific recommendations during 2008-2009. These recommendations will be shared with the Superintendent for her input. The Director of Special Education will report back to the SEAC.

DISCUSSION:

- A question was posed on how a balance is reached between the needs of special education and regular classes with regard to disruptive behavior. It was indicated the IEP team determines the least restrictive environment a child can be successful in. Then, if data indicates this environment is not working then a review of the IEP and the environment is made to change the approach.
- It was noted how exciting it is to see how well inclusion is working in the pilot schools.

- A comment was made that the new SEAC focus on building support systems for kids and families using more of a “service model” to address current needs should prove to be very beneficial.
- It was noted that the recommendations brought forward from the committee matches interest areas defined by the Board and by other committees and align with strategic plan goals.
- With regard to SEAC and the changes being made, are the committee/sub-committee chairs/directors endowed with some decision-making authority to be able to respond to changes or make recommendations and take action on them. The Chief Academic Officer indicated this question was crucial as the job can not be done alone, at school level only, but with the community, with partnerships, with legislators, etc. Particularly in regard to the upcoming legislative session there will be a strong need to partner with other districts and state groups to move toward legislative action to support special education. Networking systems are being built and can now start to move toward a more active role in legislative advocacy.
- In looking at ways to provide the least restrictive environment and in providing training for parents what are some of the challenges for providing at home support? Specifically in encouraging dialogue around recognizing a student’s ability in a least restrictive environment so there is a continuum from school to home and what parents can do to adapt to meet those needs, what supports are provided? Efforts are made to provide parents with additional information so they understand what special education is (particularly relative to cultural perceptions of the issue), the special needs and implications of having a special education student and the services provided from the District to enhance the understanding of parents (especially families who do not have a clear understanding of English).
- It was noted special education services must be provided even if the student is not under special education. No matter how many different cultural issues are anticipated not all can be foreseen, so when discussing disability in different cultures the District is often at a loss at being really successful. There is a great range of disabilities and the complexity of the IEP process can be difficult to convey to families.
- The Board asked that in communications with families/community that it be as inclusive and responsive as possible.
- It was noted that in making changes and impacting attitudes, the Board will continue to support the efforts to make all children successful.
- A question was posed regarding the special education dropouts and graduation rates and funding from state. The Chief Academic Officer indicated funding is the umbrella of special education issues and it is a state and nation-wide issue. The dropout and graduation rates are address by recommendation #5. One of the six power items for 2008-09 is to establish a system-wide disciplinary/behavior management intervention to be used across the board. For students, but especially those who have disabilities at any level, there is a need for consistency and this should create it across the district. There will be work to find other ways to address behavior issues than suspension in order to keep them in school, which should, in turn, impact dropout rates. The District is also looking to the ALC to provide more opportunities for special education students where services can be provided to maximize dollars and resources in serving students. Transitions are being looked at and ways to maximize what is available for students.

MOTION: Mr. Brodrick moved, seconded by Ms. Carroll, that the Committee of the Board recommends that the Board of Education accept the report of the Special Education Advisory Council and administration’s response to that report.

Motion passed.

2. District Health Insurance Report

The Chief Business Officer indicated the report would provide the landscape around health insurance, information on the proposed rates to be approved at the August 19 Board meeting and the impact of the wellness program on costs and premiums.

The Executive Director of Human Resources stated the District is trying to be strategic in its approach to health care, not only as it exists today but looking forward to plans for the next years. The presentation covered:

- The national and local health care landscape
- SPPS health care experience and expense
- HealthPartners renewal for 08-09
- Wellness initiative results
- 2009 plan design changes

Steve Claussen, Deloitte Consulting LLC, presented the report indicating the growth rate in health care costs are cyclical. For SPPS, 2008 marks the fourth year the growth rate has been under 10% though the cumulative effect of rising costs has produced record highs for employers and employees. He noted the District can expect to see an 8-10% increase, on average, per year for the next several years and reviewed some of the factors leading to this.

He then went on to review health care experience for the school district. He indicated in the area of medical plan expense breakdown provider services represent the largest portion of overall claim costs (office visits, radiology/lab, etc.), followed by hospital in-patient, hospital out-patient, pharmacy and other miscellaneous items. In response to a question, he noted historically, for SPPS, there was little difference in the usage breakdown and SPPS experience is similar to other like organizations.

Premium increases were reviewed historically. 2006 was the first full year of the wellness initiative consisting of HRA and the wellness program. As a result of the wellness initiative the District is seeing improvement in the overall health of the group, most notably no new diagnosis of diabetes within SPPS and an estimated year two savings of \$356,850. District premium and expense costs are running in tandem which should help in keeping premium increases to 8-10%/year. 2009 will reflect an 8.5% increase in rates. There was extensive discussion and clarification on various aspects of the wellness initiative.

Plan design changes effective in January 2009 will reflect increased incentives to utilize the wellness initiative. Design changes will affect those that do not utilize the wellness initiative with increased out-of-pocket maximums for all three plans, increased office visit co-pays by \$10 in tiers 1 and 2 and increased deductibles in \$1000 deductible and HAS plans. There was extensive discussion on the plan and rate changes.

Mr. Claussen noted a provider bid process is required in 2010. Possible alternative funding approaches and other market options will be explored in the process. At this point there was discussion on self-funding.

There was some discussion of future health care reform and trends being discussed in various forums.

The Board was reminded they would also be seeing the following other insurance benefits for their action in the August Consent Agenda:

- Active employee and early retiree health insurance with HealthPartners (new rates)
- Employee dental insurance annual renewal with Delta Dental (new rates, slight decrease)
- Employee life insurance with MN Life (no rate change)
- Employee short term disability with Assurant (no rate change)

- Long term disability with Hartford (new carrier).

MOTION: Ms. Carroll moved, seconded by Mr. Conlon, that the Committee of the Board recommend that the Board of Education accept the District Health Insurance Report.

Motion passed.

3. Timeline for School Year 2009-2010 Programmatic Changes

The Deputy Chief Academic Officer presented the "Timeline" the District will be operating under to address programmatic changes for 2009-10. The key date is November 1, 2008 when the school improvement plans are due at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). The timeline was presented to the Board so they could see the big picture of the process for 09-10; are informed of how the process will flow and are aware of key dates on which they will need to take an action relative to programmatic changes. The timeline also allows more time for families to make choice decisions. Administration indicated they were making only the minimum changes necessary to meet NCLB requirements for 2009-10. Schools falling within this segment are already aware of their status and work has already begun on addressing their issues. Additional key dates noted were:

- September 16 – Administration will report to the Board on MCA and actual enrollment data
- September 23 – COB meeting will include a discussion on specific school sites involved in program changes
- October 21 – BOE meeting where action will be taken
- October 24 – Information due for *School Selection Guide*
- November 1 – School improvement plans due to the Minnesota Department of Education
- December 1 – Deadline for announcing retirement intentions in order to receive all benefits
- February 27 – Secondary applications due
- March 6 – Elementary applications due
- June 16 – Year-end Summary to Board of Education
- July 1 – Launch of new programs

The timeline is a dynamic document broken down into six phases with action steps under each. The phases include:

- Pre-Planning Phase (6/30-8/29)
- Planning Phase (informing, engagement, communication to BOE, site leadership, principals, site councils) (8/4-9/15)
- Informing and Engagement Phase (community engagement, BOE action, selection guide information) (9/15-11/1)
- Implementation-Prelaunch Phase (program design, enrollment and marketing, HR) (11/3-4/21/09)
- Progress Report/Year End Summary Phase (6/1-6/30/09)
- Launch Phase – SY 2010-2011 (7/1/09)

Criteria used for program changes in the 2008-2009 school year will be used for the 2009-2010 school year. These are:

- Under NCLB law, the District must make changes at schools "in corrective action" or face sanctions.
- The District will be proactive with schools that may be in corrective action soon
- The District will consider expanding high demand, successful programs per community interest
- The District will use proven programs and practices to attract students and families in schools with steadily declining enrollment
- The District will address family and community requests for new, specialized programs due to the District's successful school choice program

- The District will, whenever possible, save taxpayer money and conserve its resources by ending leases for space and moving into space that the school district owns.

The programmatic change process for 2010-11 and beyond will reflect a system perspective based on data and feasibility studies now in process and those discussions would begin in the spring of 2009.

It was reiterated that the District is not looking at major changes for next year. The District will look at the comprehensive systems studies now underway; these will inform all changes occurring in 2010 and beyond,

DISCUSSION:

- The question was posed whether 2014 is part of the planning process and what will be seen in the process? Answer: yes
- Are changes being proposed for 2009-10 a top down process or is there collaboration with schools? The response indicated it depends on the need for the change. If it is a restructuring the State has specific guidelines which must be addressed; if it is an articulation, then it is more a collaborative effort but there will be some requirements within it. What the decision-making opportunities are will be made very clear up front in the process so everyone knows what is or is not open for collaboration. It was again noted that the District is going to do the bare minimum of what needs to be done for program changes and then really take a comprehensive look for 2010-11.
- Accountability will factor into the collaborative efforts and more measures will be in place to be sure best practices are implemented and that strategic thinking takes place with regard to what needs to be done to close the gaps and really address issues.
- It was reiterated the changes will be kept to a bare minimum but must meet all the requirements dictated by the NCLB for the individual schools affected, what that might be is not known at this point.
- How complete and public will the planning phase and the informing/engagement phase be so that the public is adequately informed. Administration indicated the *School Selection Guide* is not the key issue, November 1 is the most vital; when school improvement plans are required to be submitted to MDE as these are far more comprehensive and detailed in nature. Engagement with the school communities will begin in August as soon as the AYP results can be communicated and disseminated.
- School communities are, or should be, aware of their school's situation. Administration reiterated that discussions have already been started, the criteria has not changed and any school in corrective action or which may be in corrective action soon should be aware of their status and have begun addressing their situation.
- A Board member indicated it is absolutely critical that the timeline be brought to the attention of the public and that it be extended to the following year so the public is aware of how much earlier action will take place in subsequent years. Written information should also be made available defining all the drivers (when data comes out, etc.). This will forestall people claiming they never knew anything about this. People adjust to change if given time, information and explanation and it provides a potential rallying point for community action to provide help and support to the schools. It is also critical to define the roles, relationships and expectations of various stakeholder groups so each is addressed appropriately.
- Allow for community input contingencies whenever possible.
- It was noted that for program changes for 2010-11 there will be more data measures in place other than AYP so decisions will be even more data driven and justified in future
- AYP data are publicly available so the community should be aware of school's status. However, there must be public accountability with a process in place to ensure that a consistent stakeholder process is occurring. This might or will be different with each situation but it must be in place and used.

- Administration was instructed to look at the language for clarity and to define the timeline as a draft document.

Administration concluded by noting for 2010 and beyond there is an extensive study process occurring over the next year which will look at where the District is right now, what is coming with relation to the structural deficit and what District-wide changes must be implemented in order to meet the challenges facing the District.

It was stated that this presentation was a report/update and required no action by the Board at this meeting.

4. Processes for CBFAC (Citizens Budget and Finance Advisory Committee) CEAC (Capital Expenditure Advisory Committee) and Committees Advisory to the Board

Administration provided a brief overview of status of CBFAC and CEAC: the charge, the topic of study for 09-10; the current application in use and a vacancy existing on each committee and then the Board was asked to make recommendations.

CBFAC's charge is assigned each year. There are 17 members assigned for the committee. Current membership was reviewed; the need for additional members to fill out the full total for the committee was defined. Several of the current members have completed their terms and must be reassigned with one having served the full four year compliment allowed for service and is not eligible for reassignment.

CEAC's focus is on the capital bonding process. There are currently 10 members with a full compliment being 21. Next year's process will look at system data coupled with the facilities studies. The committee will also look at the capital bonding process: what has worked well, lessons learned and will provide a recommendation on how best to move the capital bonding process forward in future while still allowing for collaboration with school communities. The third piece is once the facilities condition and adequacy study report is finalized and tied with all the data, trends and background provided to the committee, CEAC will provide recommendations how best to move forward.

There will be a joint educational process for both committees. They will separate when CEAC begins to discuss the capital bonding process and CBFAC begins its work on demographics and what that means from a financial point for the District. They will both present their reports to the Board, one based more on facilities and the other the financial impact of demographics on the District.

The Chair indicated the process for Board discussion on these committees would be to:

- 1) Confirm the charges to the committees
- 2) Provide recommendations for revisions to the application forms and the process
- 3) Establish a timeline for the process

DISCUSSION:

- The question was raised if there would be enough time to integrate a budget study into CBFAC's charge. The response was the committee has indicated that if they are assigned a really substantive subject for their report they do not have enough time to do both their assigned subject and the budget review. The budget document is the limiting factor due to the time of its release and the timing of the Board meeting they are expected to report at, there just isn't enough time for the committee, especially those members not familiar with the budget format, to make a valid review. Given a charge that is really worthwhile and will have an impact on the future of the District, the budget piece is not something they feel can be addressed unless they are specifically instructed to address it. It was noted they can be made aware the Board would like them to look at it and the information can be provided to them but it will be difficult given their task for this year.

- Confirmation was given that the capital expenditure request process was suspended for one year while the CEAC group reviewed the process and procedures. They will bring to the Board recommendations on how the process should be revised in future. At that point, the charge to the committee will need to be revised.
- A comment was made that a great deal of time and effort is devoted to these committees and the questions was posed of their true value, how the process could be improved and how it can be assured the committees are representative and made up of the best available people while making it a really rich process.
- The committees represent a grassroots public engagement opportunity for the Board.
- The comment was made the committees are really “study groups” and their legitimacy is determined by their composition. The subject of what the Board is attempting to accomplish with these committees needs to be put on a future agenda and defined as to purpose, appointments, structure, expertise, etc. How will the composition improve the quality of the Board's decision-making.
- The charge of CBFAC addresses “value” in doing specially assigned projects

The Board then moved to reviewing the charge and application forms specifically. Instructions for change included:

- Even with the moratorium on capital expenditure requests, there will still be projects done which are identified as critical by administration and CEAC (approximately \$7 million) for 2009-10. Bonds will be sold in November of 2008 for these projects with what is not utilized being carried over for the following year.
- Change to the third paragraph to the charge for CEAC
- Change to the first paragraph of CEAC general guidelines
- Change to the sixth paragraph under CEAC meetings
- The eighth paragraph (under meetings) in the CEAC charge be utilized in the CBFAC information as well.
- Student participation should be added to CBFAC as well.
- Revisions were also suggested to the forms with the addition “parent/guardian”, removal of redundancies, making it more functional as a screening tool with background and experience relative to the charge as well as other noted changes.
- There was extensive discussion about the inclusion of students on the committees.
- Discussion moved to the timelines for the committee processes, term limits and who the applications would be supplied to.

MOTION: Mr. Conlon moved, seconded by Ms. Carroll, the Committee of the Board recommend that the Board of Education define the terms for both CBFAC and CEAC as follows: The term of service for both CBFAC and CEAC will be one year with a maximum of three consecutive one year terms. Upon completing three consecutive one-year terms, a person must have an absence of one year before they can reapply. This is to be effective with this year's application cycle.

Motion passed with six in favor and Mr. Brodrick voting No.

MOTION: Ms. Carroll moved, seconded by Mr. Hardy, that the Committee of the Board recommend that the Board of Education define the timeline for both CEAC and CBFAC as: The assignment of the CBFAC topic will be in March of a given year; the recruitment period for both committees will run from March through May of that year with appointment of committee members at the June Board of Education meeting. Committee work will begin no later than early October.

Motion passed.

MOTION: Mr. Hardy moved, seconded by Ms. Carroll, that the Committee of the Board recommend that the Board of Education instruct staff to incorporate all revisions as discussed into the application and charge forms and utilize them for the current year's application process. A copy of applications and charge forms for both committees are to be provided to Board members for their use in recruiting applicants.

Motion passed.

5. Board Work Session

- **Annual BOE Planning Calendar Update**

The Board Chair and Vice Chair described the planning calendar, indicated topics raised by Board members are being incorporated into the calendar and provided a brief review of the document and its use in the planning process for Board meetings.

It was stressed that in reports at the Board meetings note should be made of the discussion on topics held at COB meetings so the public is aware of the extensive discussion and back grounding the Board receives prior to its decisions on various subjects.

- **Electronic Board Book**

The Board Chair spoke to interest in having the Board move to an electronic system for preparing and disseminating Board materials. The Assistant Clerk provided materials on three vendors for such systems. The Assistant Clerk was instructed to explore further such things as having representatives make a presentation to the Board; technology requirements, specific costs, timelines for implementation, etc.

A Board member stated the Board Development Plan should take precedence over Board technology innovations.

Concern was expressed about the comfort level for various board members as well as cost and technical issues involved in moving to such a system.

III. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Hardy moved the meeting adjourn, motion seconded by Mr. Goldstein.

Motion Passed

The meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Polsfuss
Assistant Clerk