

Douglas County School District
Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Board Workshop
February 22, 2005

**Minutes Approved On:
March 8, 2005**

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Mrs. Hales called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

Present were:

Trustees:

Sharla Hales, President
Connie Wennhold, Vice President
Loren Orr, Clerk (arrived at 8:41 a.m.)
John Louritt, Member
Keith Roman, Member (arrived at 10:05 a.m.)
Cynthia Trigg, Member
Teri Jamin, Member

Personnel:

John Soderman, Superintendent
Rick Kester, Director of Business Services
Rich Alexander, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
Roy Casey, Assistant Superintendent, Education Services
Nancy Bryant, Principal, Piñon Hills Elementary School

Others Present:

Rich Fischer, Superintendent, Mountain View/Los Altos Unified School District, Mountain View, California – Guest Speaker

- A. In the absence of the United States flag, a moment of silence was observed in lieu of the Pledge of Allegiance.
- B. Ms. Jamin requested that items 7, “Fundamentals of School Finance” be presented before item 6, “Collective Bargaining,” and made a motion to adopt the agenda with the changes she requested. Mrs. Wennhold seconded the motion.

Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 5/0.

2. Consent Items

Mrs. Wennhold made a motion to approve the following consent items, seconded by Mrs. Jamin.

- A. Minutes of the Special Strategic Planning Meeting of January 28, 2005
- B. Personnel Report No. 05.1-02 as follows:

CERTIFIED REQUEST FOR LEAVE (SHORT TERM):			
Name	Position/Location	Date(s)	Action
Sarah Flanagan	Teacher/ZCES	1/24/05	Unpaid Leave
Jennifer Norman	Teacher/CVMS	2/25/05, 5/6/05 & 5/9/05	Unpaid Leave
CERTIFIED RESIGNATIONS FOR 2005-2006:			
Name	Position/Location		
Curtis Bent	Teacher/DHS		
CERTIFIED HIRES FOR 2005-2006:			
Name	Position/Location		
Nancy Bryant	Assistant Superintendent, Ed Services/DW		
<p>After ensuring there was a rigorous recruitment and interviewing process, the Superintendent is recommending Nancy Bryant for the Assistant Superintendent for Education Services position beginning July 1, 2005. Mrs. Bryant's background is:</p> <p><u>Education</u> A Master's Degree in Educational Administration from the University of Nevada, Reno and a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from the same university. She possesses a K-12 Administrative Credential and a K-8 Nevada Teaching Certificate.</p> <p><u>Experience</u> 1996-present: principal of Pinon Hills Elementary School 1992-1996: vice principal of C.C. Meneley Elementary School 1979-1992: teacher at C.C. Meneley and Scarselli Elementary Schools</p>			

Mr. Soderman welcomed Mrs. Bryant to the administrative team, stating that he has had the opportunity to work with her for a number of years and the District is very fortunate to have her in the Assistant Superintendent of Education Services position.

Mrs. Hales called for a vote on the motion. Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 5/0.

The Board members present congratulated Mrs. Bryant and wished her luck in her new position. Mrs. Bryant thanked the Board for their support.

Mr. Orr arrived at 8:41 a.m.

3. Board/Superintendent Goals

Mr. Soderman introduced Mr. Rich Fischer, Superintendent of Mountain View – Los Altos Unified School District and briefly described his background in education and as a consultant.

Mr. Fischer engaged the Trustees and Administration in a discussion regarding the district's Strategic Plan. He recollected his presentation to the Board at their last workshop in June of 2003 and remembered that the Strategic Planning process at that time was quite involved. He asked the Trustees to explain the current Strategic Planning process and describe how it has evolved. The Trustees responded that the Strategic Plan is an evolving document that has been reviewed and revised annually since its creation in the early 1990s by a committee comprised of parents, community members, administrators, teachers, and Board members, and subsequently approved by the Board on February 28, 1994. Mr. Casey explained that the focus of the Strategic Plan is now on the Quality Indicators, and the Action Steps are reviewed to ensure they support the Indicators. Mr. Fischer congratulated the Board and Administration for their success in streamlining the process from what it was just two years ago.

Mr. Fischer asked the Trustees and Administration to each write one opinion of what they feel is going well for the district. After all opinions were collected, the list contained the following:

- School Improvement Planning process
- Definition of critical content in core subjects and other areas
- Increased emphasis on quality instruction
- Philosophy of working with (not fighting) "No Child Left Behind," (NCLB) and improving site achievement for all
- "Teach for Success" and having administrators in classroom
- Competencies have become routine
- Focus on student achievement and raised bar on ALT beyond competencies
- Movement from tumultuous times to student achievement
- Things are in alignment on student achievement/instruction
- Data driven decision-making - culture
- Financial solvency and planning for the future

After discussion on the list of things that are going well, Mr. Fischer asked what the members think they can improve upon.

The Board's consensus was that they are very proud of the list and the accomplishments made, as well as the fact that the Board is able to work as a team to achieve the goals. Mr. Soderman said the Strategic Plan and working towards the vision made these accomplishments possible. Mr. Kester said that current legislation is a contributing factor, and a cooperative Board has enabled progress.

Mr. Fischer counseled that administration and Board must work together in order for anything to be accomplished, and praised the Board and Administration for their progress. He stated the list provided is mature, healthy, and focused on student achievement.

Mr. Fischer then asked participants to share one worry they might have about the future of the district. The list compiled from each Trustee and Administrator contained the following:

- Recruiting and retaining good teachers and administrators – succession of senior management - leadership
- Declining enrollment and school closures
- State's impact on local school district funding
- Teacher's buying into the Teach for Success model in upper grade levels
- Balancing needs of community w/needs of staff - burnout
- Consequences of No Child Left Behind
- Personnel – implementation of Teach for Success at classroom level
- Site level absenteeism
- All students not reaching their potential
- Sub populations not reaching their potential
- Pendulum swings and what's next. How to maintain focus
- Keeping focus on student achievement
- Classroom, site, senior, and Board leadership

After discussing the items on this list, Mr. Fischer advised the Board and Administration to recognize the efforts of their teachers and school administrators, but continue to persevere in the "Teach for Success" protocol and student achievement expectations.

Mr. Roman arrived at 10:05 a.m.

After a brief recess, Mr. Fischer continued the discussion on Board and administration worries. Mrs. Trigg began the discussion with her concerns about declining enrollment at Lake Tahoe and how she is attempting to communicate that change is not necessarily bad. Mrs. Hales added that the administration began addressing the issue well in advance of any action. Mr. Soderman offered that the enrollment had been steadily declining and school closures are probably inevitable in the future, so we as a district began to address the problem now.

Mr. Fischer warned Board members that they are perceived to be speaking on behalf of the Board when they talk to the community, even if they preface the conversation by stating that they are not speaking for the Board. He said that he felt it was appropriate to discuss the issue at the early stages of consideration.

Mr. Orr broached the subject of future leadership of the district and aging teaching staff. Mr. Fischer gave some advice on encouraging leadership from within the district

because hiring outside is very difficult due to various reasons, such as the cost of living in this area.

Mr. Fischer described how the Board and Administration is responsible for understanding what the community expects in public instruction. The “how” is developed by the staff, whereas the “what” is developed by the Board. He explained the governance clock, which depicted how the Board and district leadership work together towards the strategic plan and quality indicators. The superintendent has the absolute responsibility to ensure progress towards the goals of the District.

He asked the Board members to describe how they are holding the district accountable for ensuring progress towards the District’s goals. Mrs. Hales answered that the superintendent is evaluated twice annually. Mr. Fischer then asked how the Strategic Plan integrates into the process. In addition, each school reports to the Board at a regular Board meeting. These presentations used to be delivered on any topic of interest to the school, but now focus strictly on the school’s program towards meeting the goals of the School Improvement Plan. Mrs. Trigg presented an overview of how the District’s Strategic Plan is integrated with the School and District Improvement Plans.

Mr. Casey further explained this integration by explaining that every district must have a district improvement plan, and in order to develop the district plan, each school’s improvement plan must be reviewed. In addition, the district’s accountability data must be analyzed longitudinally, as well as Achievement Level Test results. This results in the Strategic Plan evolving into a more visionary document.

Mr. Soderman provided further insight into how he is held accountable to the Board for progress towards the District’s goals. He explained that the Board/Superintendent’s goals are discussed, and it is his job to make sure the goals in his MBOs are met. These goals are discussed during his evaluations. In July, more data is available to gauge success towards goals because assessments results will be available. He reports on the Quality Indicators and suggests areas that the district is performing well and areas of needed improvement. His goals result from these discussions. Mrs. Hales said that the Board has access to the Superintendent through lunches, e-mails, and various other methods. Mr. Soderman explained the “Big Rocks” that address which areas need the most focus, and that each site principal delivers reports monthly on the “Big Rocks.”

Mr. Fischer asked Mrs. Bryant to explain the school presentations to the Board from a school principal’s perspective. Mrs. Bryant explained that the presentation is data-driven and focused on School Improvement Plans, and the Board always has something positive to say to the principal after the presentation. Through the presentation, it is evident that the school’s goals are in alignment with the Superintendent’s goals. Mr. Louritt said that every school has its strengths and weaknesses. Having the principal come in and report how they are doing is very helpful and arms him with information when the community approaches him with questions.

Mr. Fischer offered that the reporting system of accountability for the Superintendent appears to be very solid. He explained the two-day process that his district has in place where the administration meets to analyze strengths and weaknesses for half of a day, then the Board joins in to discuss issues the second half of the day. The following day, the superintendent's goals are discussed with the Board, where both soft issues as well as dynamic and data driven issues are discussed. Mrs. Jamin asked about the 360-evaluation process, wherein staff and community also provides input regarding evaluation of the Superintendent. Mr. Fischer responded that he was in a pilot group that studied that method at one time. Although it was informative for him, his Board did not show much interest.

Mr. Fischer offered that things seemed to be moving in a positive direction for the Douglas County School District.

4. Board/Superintendent Communication

Accountability is good and getting better. Regarding communication between the Board and Superintendent, Mr. Fischer asked what forms of communication are utilized currently. Mr. Louritt said that red folders are in place for any last-minute pieces of information the Board may need prior to a Board meeting, and John has a monthly lunch date with any interested Board members. Also, Board members attend agenda review, school communications, and employee communication meetings. Mr. Soderman said that he e-mails Superintendent Updates at least once a month and he reports to the Board at every regular meeting on the various events and meetings that may be of interest to the Board members. Critical issues are communicated immediately. Mr. Fischer asked the Board to rate the communication on a scale of one to ten; one being "poor," ten being "too much." It was the consensus of the Board members that the communication rates a five – "just right." They offered that Mr. Soderman shares information about issues as soon as they arise so that there are no surprises.

Mrs. Jamin left the meeting at 11:30 p.m.

5. Curriculum and Instruction

Mr. Casey began his presentation by providing an overview of the Board's role in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and policy-making. He warned to judge innovative policies that may be suggested from the community very carefully.

He then engaged the Board and administration in various activities such as identifying policies that deal with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. He then asked them to define the role of administrative regulations as they pertain to policies. He divided the Board and Administration into groups and asked that they review a portion of the

Strategic Plan, the District Improvement Plan, and selected policies and report back to the group any revisions, deletions, or additions to their respective assignment. The groups reassembled and provided their thoughts related to their assigned policies or plan. Due to time constraints, the specific reviews were not discussed or decided.

The Board thanked Mr. Casey for his engaging presentation.

The meeting recessed at 12:45 p.m. for lunch.

The meeting reconvened at 1:20 p.m.

7. Fundamentals of School Finance

(Item presented before item 6, "Collective Bargaining" at the request of Mrs. Jamin)

Mr. Kester provided an overview of how the district receives funding. Legislature sets a target based on district expenditures, then subtracts local revenues. He explained that property taxes total to about a quarter of funding for school budgets statewide, but that those taxes are equalized throughout the state and do not go directly to Douglas County or any county that collects them. He explained the budgetary process using a flowchart that illustrated how money is allocated from the legislature to the State, and how the district ultimately gets its funding after a distribution formula determines the 17 unique basic support amounts for each district in the state of Nevada.

Mr. Kester explained how redevelopment hurts our local revenues by holding down property taxes, which in turn hurts the state's ability to fund education because the state has had trouble making up losses in property taxes with other state resources.

Mrs. Jamin returned at 1:50 p.m.

Mr. Kester described the different modules used to create the unique budget formula for each district, and explained how large school districts affect these modules.

In response to questions from the Board regarding property taxes, Mr. Kester explained that there are currently 14 methods under consideration by which the State can give property tax relief – six of which have currently been ruled out by the legislators. This issue is very complex, and made more complex by constitutional language. Changes in property tax income affect the State's ability to fund school districts.

He warned that it is unlikely the district can expect any extra funding over this next biennium, and it is anticipated that any extra money the state receives will go to schools in "Needs of Improvement" as designated by the "No Child Left Behind" Act. Because of this fact, it is not anticipated that any new programs can be initiated unless funds are reallocated from other programs currently in place. He advised the Board that current programs are reviewed for effectiveness, and ineffective programs' funding be

reallocated to more useful and effective programs that more directly effect student achievement outcomes.

After further discussion, the Board thanked Mr. Kester for shedding light on the complex issue of school district funding in Nevada.

6. Collective Bargaining

Mr. Alexander described the various legalities of collective bargaining and negotiations between a school district and employee organizations. He listed the subjects of mandatory bargaining that must be addressed under NRS 288.150(2). He also explained "Management Rights," which are matters reserved for the employer and not subject to mandatory bargaining.

He provided an overview of the negotiations process that explained how the process begins with a series of meetings where ground rules are established, information is shared, and both the district and the organization introduce proposals. He then explained the arbitration process in the event of an impasse between the parties.

Public Comment

At 4:00 p.m., Mrs. Hales called for public comment. There was none.

6. Collective Bargaining (continued)

Mr. Alexander continued his presentation by explaining the differences between interest-based bargaining and traditional bargaining and provided pros and cons to both methods. Mrs. Jamin expressed an interest in Interest Based Bargaining, and Mr. Alexander agreed to explore that possibility with the bargaining units, but it would not be able to be in place for this bargaining session. He warned the Board about the pitfalls of Board members engaging in conversations with employees regarding matters dealing with negotiations.

After further discussion, the Board thanked Mr. Alexander for his enlightening presentation.

8. Future Agenda Items

Mr. Roman expressed an interest in pursuing Mr. Kester's suggestion of evaluating current programs to determine if reallocation of funds should be considered as a future agenda item. Mrs. Wennhold and Mr. Orr supported his suggestion.

9. Other Issues

There were no other issues presented.

10. Adjournment

Mrs. Wennhold made a motion to adjourn at 4.35 p.m., seconded by Mr. Orr.

Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 7/0.

Submitted by:

Rebecca C. Winter
Secretary to the Superintendent and Board
of Trustees

Approved:

Clerk of the Board

Note: Upon approval by the Board of Trustees in a public meeting, these minutes become the official minutes of the meeting held on the above date. Board minutes are kept on a permanent basis and are available for public review in the office of the Superintendent.