

Douglas County School District
Lake Schools' Study Group Board Advisory Committee
Whittell High School
Tuesday, November 4, 2014
4:30 p.m.

Minutes
Approved
December 15, 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Facilitator:
Dr. McMillan

Committee Members:
Greg Felton
Cathy Johnson
Kathy Kixmiller
Stacy Noyes
Brian Rippet
Phil Sorensen
Konnie Susich

Committee Support:
Ross Chichester
Cindy Trigg
Nancy Cauley
Rommy Cronin
Crespin Esquivel

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. McMillan called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Susich moved to adopt the agenda, seconded by Mr. Sorensen.

Discussion was held about holding public comment during the work sessions. It was noted that informal public comments would be held after each topic discussion.

Dr. McMillan asked the members of the public to fill out and turn in the yellow sheets for public comment if they do not feel comfortable getting up and speaking.

Motion to adopt the agenda carried 7/0.

Individuals were able to make public comments throughout the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered.

WORK SESSION REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

The Committee wrote Pros and Cons on the charts for the MOU, IB, Why ZCES? and Why GWHS?. The Committee discussed the MOU and Why ZCES but the topics of IB Program and Why GWHS will be discussed at the next meeting.

The Committee will not take action on any of the topics discussed at this meeting. At the December 11 meeting, the Committee will make decisions on what to recommend to the Board. Today's charts will be saved for future meetings.

Memo Of Understanding (MOU) WITH LTUSD – PROS

<p>Choice for Families and Potential Growth in Enrollment [Dr McMillan, Ms Johnson]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a choice for LTUSD students who want a smaller environment. It would be a two way street between GWHS and STHS. GWHS has a lot to offer that STHS does not have.
<p>GWHS can offer additional courses at a low cost [Mr Sorensen]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GWHS can offer CTE courses at a relatively low cost and would create a greater sense of community with STHS. It would help mend fences.
<p>Creates a great sense of community with STHS [Mr Sorensen]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In government, there is a blurred state line to achieve environmental benefits, but education is separate. Need to keep pace with the long-term community vision. In 30-35 years the area could have a lake school system instead of two different states.
<p>Increase opportunities for GWHS students to take courses at STHS that are not offered at GWHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High expense, low volume classes/programs like woodshop and advanced drama would be available to GWHS students. Some of the vocational courses might keep potential drop outs in school. [Mr Rippet]

MOU WITH LTUSD – CONS, CONSTRAINTS, WORK AROUNDS

<p>Possible loss in enrollment [Dr McMillan, Mr Sorensen]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is possible loss of enrollment if a mass exodus to LTUSD occurs. However, if families wanted to be in LTUSD, they would already be there. GWHS sporting events are well attended showing pride/support.
<p>Transportation not provided, discriminatory [Dr McMillan, Ms Noyes]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation would not be provided by the District. It could be negotiated with the MOU and GWHS parents could talk with STHS parents. Transportation from Alpine to Douglas for the entire school day was negotiated as part of the MOU. Carpooling, Blue Go, & public transportation are possible work arounds Carpooling is a liability issue for parents
<p>1 STHS Class = 2 GWHS Classes [Dr McMillan, Mr Sorensen]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern about GWHS students going part-time to STHS because of difference in bell schedules. STHS has a 4x4 schedule and GWHS has 6 periods. 1st/2nd, 5th/6th periods correspond to 1st/last blocks of STHS day However, one course at STHS is a year-long curriculum for 2 credits which is the same as 2 periods at GWHS. Students could be at STHS for the beginning of the day or the end of the day and then be back to GWHS for sports and activities. GWHS students should not be credit deficient but it should have no effect on credit earning potential. The counselor could fit in all requirements instead of credit totals.
<p>Stress on resources currently at GWHS [Ms Johnson]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More of a stress on current resources and materials and aides and how it would affect the schools. If a full time student came over with an aide, that should be a part of the MOU and the student should be considered a GWHS student. “Exceptional” expenses paid by sending school [Dr McMillan, Mr Sorensen, Ms Johnson].
<p>Our small school is a huge advantage to our students [Ms Kixmiller]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GWHS, being a small school, is a huge advantage to students. If more students came to GWHS, would that affect the quality of education and increase class size?
<p>Differing school calendars and course timelines(WCSD or LTUSD?) [Mr Sorensen]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More uniformity is needed for Spring break, end of semester, and holidays. GWHS would better align with LTUSD, not WCSD. STUSD is open to discussion about aligning calendars. GWHS and STHS are in the same league for sports. The Alpine calendar aligns with DHS.

Need commitment from students in spring [Dr McMillan] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students would commit in the spring and the contract would be for that school year.
Funding structure different – have to calculate formula [Dr McMillan] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GWHS could receive the NV money for students and then give STHS pro-rated money for classes. Instead of losing a student to STHS completely, the student could take only one or 2 classes. STHS was willing to entertain a per-class rate of a certain amount. • Funding is different for California and Nevada and would have to be worked out.
Can start with pilot group [Ms Noyes] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, parents want to be assured the options will be there long term so MOU would have to include an initial expiry date of X years.

WHY ZCES?

Broad education/non-theme is good rather than forcing kids into areas of focus they may not be interested in or able to thrive in [Ms Noyes, Mr Sorensen] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 percent of the families like the non-themed schools, but there is value in having themes later at the high school level, but not in elementary.
Small size offers better recognition of individual child for who they are and better for identifying their individual needs [Ms Noyes, Mr Sorensen] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a study showing that smaller sized classes did not allow for the student who wanted to disrupt in the back of the room to do so nor the shy one who wanted to pull out was not allowed to; they were included in the group and inclusiveness brought better results. • The smaller school creates a bonding effect for students with their peers/teachers and when transitioning into the middle school.
Private feel at public school price [Ms Noyes, Mr Sorensen]
Great integration of all ethnicities (except Bijou) [Ms Noyes] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of all ethnicities. There is more diversity at ZCES and helps prepare students for the next level.
Place based learning [Ms Susich] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each grade level decides what they are going to cover, not about what happens elsewhere but where we live. Grade levels do units together. • The community comes into the classroom and talks with the students to help with programs. • ZCES did not want to be a themed school • Each grade level will pick a topic of discovery and align the topic with the NGSS. It is a level of hands on inquiry based learning. It teaches students that resources need to be preserved.
Mission Statement (Vision) [Ms Susich, Ms Noyes] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mission statement and vision statement choices are being selected by students, parents and staff. They speak to the education, problem solving, critical thinking, and perseverance of what students are studying. Big ideas should be announced in about two weeks.
7 th grade transition program WEB

WHY GWHS? [To be discussed December 2]

Not private but feels private [Ms. Noyes, Mr. Sorensen]
Four day [Ms. Noyes, Mr. Sorensen]
Kids of any ability can play any sport AND can be 2x and 3x sport athletes [Mr. Felton, Mr. Sorensen]
Familial relationship between students, teachers, administrators, janitors, parents, coaches, etc. [Mr. Felton, Mr. Sorensen]
Small enough that poor performance readily apparent and action taken [Mr. Felton]

Students develop comfort dealing fraternally with opposite sex and other ethnicities [Mr Felton]
Significant parental interest and involvement [Mr Felton]
Logistically easy (buses, other students and parents) [Mr Felton]
Tax advantages, beautiful place to live, safe [Mr Felton]
7 th grade transition program WEB
Mentorship program
ISP – Intensive study periods
Expeditionary learning
Curricular field trips for each grade level

IB – PROS [To be discussed December 2]

Global focus [Mr. Sorensen, Ms. Johnson]
Aligned with commission on skills of the American workforce [Mr. Sorensen]
College credit may be extended to IB graduates [Mr. Sorensen]
More “rounded” education [Mr. Sorensen]
Students are very successful in college after obtaining IB degree [Ms Kixmiller]

IB – CONS, CONSTRAINTS/NEEDS [To be discussed December 2]

Expensive; start up and annual costs [Mr Sorensen, Ms Kixmiller]
Not as Flexible as A.P. [Mr Sorensen]
Impacts students’ extracurricular and social activities (more than A.P.) [Mr Sorensen]
Increases students’ stress (more so than A.P.) [Mr Sorensen]
Off-site grading required [Mr Sorensen]
Growing faster than established infrastructure [Mr Sorensen]
Extensive teacher training and support [Mr Sorensen, Ms Johnson]
Possibly not curriculum for <u>ALL</u> students [Ms Kixmiller]
More staff required – IB coordinator, 3 diploma options [Ms Kixmiller, Ms Johnson, Mr Sorensen]
Monitored by another agency [Ms Kixmiller]
Not enough local students in each academic class – need plenty of imports [Mr Rippet]

IB – WORK AROUNDS [To be discussed December 2]

Adding NACS and NGSS will provide many skills offered through A.B. [Mr Sorensen]
Design and market unique pathways for ed @ GWHS vs marketing IB program [Mr Sorensen]
Grant writing [Ms Noyes]
MOU with STUSD [Mr Rippet]

Mr. Felton report [continued from Oct 21] about families who live in Douglas County but attend other schools.

Twenty-eight families consisting of 36 students were identified. Fourteen families, representing 22 students mostly from the elementary level, gave comments. Three parents were teachers.

Comments gathered from the 14 families included:

- Students have come back to GWHS
- 5+ families were considering returning to the GWHS after completing elementary school
- Regret was expressed for choosing another alternative, not because it was bad for their child, but because they felt they should be supporting the local school and the community. They felt there was a loss of community in general.
- 50/50 split on whether themes are a good thing
- Two families' decisions were faith-based decisions
- SLT has a wide range of academic programs
- GWHS and ZCES didn't market their schools very well and felt LTUSD welcomed them
- The principals at the other schools are strong and know what is going on.
- There was a perception of a disproportionate amount of time spent on discipline at ZCES. Parents said there is a nervous energy and children felt they were walking on eggshells. The perception may be due to class size.
- Unaware of the NIAA rules and did not know their children would not be able to compete in high school, even though they started at LTUSD in Kindergarten
- Poor social image of administration and teachers when they are not at school on duty
- No consensus on wanting their children to be pushed to advance academically or not
- ZCES large class sizes are a disadvantage because of varied learning and discipline levels
- The Kindergarten hard cap exemption is not in the best interest of the students
- Liked LTUSD programs and academic standards, such as art, dance and music were the right things for their children

With respect to discipline at the elementary, the district responded that discipline plans were reviewed by the Board at each school and found that improvements were not needed.

Mr. Felton gave a handout to the Committee on the need to make a better first impression. There is an opportunity to further educate families about the misinformation that they have about the schools. He stated this is a good opportunity to go back to people and let them know that we are working on concerns. They are happy to help and happy we are working on this.

Suggestions for the presentation to the Board :

The district stated the presentation to the Board should be effective with what is needed, i.e., more staff. The budget has played a big part in the decisions that have been made. There has been a clash with the Board but it does not have to stay that way. There has to be the honesty to say the Board has kept us back and see what the Board can do differently. Present to the Board what has a negative effect on the schools. Private school education is being given at a public school cost.

The empowerment status of GWHS:

- A program of "Empowerment Schools" concept was created in 2007 and allowed schools more flexibility and freedom with some of the state regulations and called for a percent of the school budget to be controlled by the school.
- GWHS started the application in January 2008 and it was completed by the school and approved by the DCSD Board in March 2008. The application cited the struggle to offer the integrated math program that was offered at DHS and opted for a waiver to offer Algebra 1, Geometry and Algebra 2. It was hard for transfer students to fit into the flow of the integrated math series.
- In July 2010, there was a change in administration at the District and the high school.
- SB196 removed the expiring date of June 2011 and removed the cap of 100 schools in Nevada
- In March 2013, SB311 allowed parents of any under-performing school to trigger the conversion to an empowerment or a charter school, but it that did not pass and would not have affected GWHS.
- No WCSD school ever became an empowerment school when funding was withdrawn.
- CCSD had empowerment schools, but when the funding was dropped, they were converted to enrichment schools. CCSD had a self-funding program.
- The Nevada Department of Education stated the Whittell Empowerment 2008 application is not on record. The concept of Empowerment is still alive but was put on the back burner by the state once the funding was withdrawn.
- GWHS's design team on the application is school based but needs to be district based. It needs to have one Board member, the Superintendent or designee, parents, teachers and administrators and a union representative, community people and other members as deemed necessary, which includes GWHS students. The Board must adopt policies and procedures for accountability for student achievement, a process for selection of the empowerment school, approval of plans, the process for renewal of the plan, the criteria for revoking the plan and the time period of the renewal of the plan. The Board needs to have a written policy on file.

Regarding the application from 2008, the waivers that were requested were to include students in the design team, accept students from SLT and charge them, increase the cap on dual credits to be earned from college and access distance learning, waive the district limit on field trips (which has since gone away), offer the traditional math sequence, and develop an independent study program at GWHS. The 4 day week was not included in the original application. It was an internal Board decision and has been approved every year by the state.

The Committee commented that The Tahoe Rotary Board is interested in helping to fund causes that do not have a source, but would not be a replacement for school funds.

ZCES and GWHS marketing points

There should be ownership at each school and start with a marketing brochure, campaign or committee to get started. Ms. Noyes will be the lead person to start a committee and to start writing a brochure for marketing ZCES. Ms. Susich will help on the committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

On the topic of the MOU with LTUSD, Ms. Peacock stated that Roberta Mason came up with LTCC in California and has been on the LTCC board on and off for 40 years and works with the community. They are working on trying to get the MOU back between California and Nevada.

On the topic of Place Based Learning, Stella Roper has met with Ms. Cauley to write press releases for every event. There is a standard format with quotes and key buzzwords of bringing it back to place based education. It is hoped the new program will attract families to enroll. Every piece of material promotes learning that makes it real to a student and makes them want to be a part of it. Help is needed to do press releases.

On the topic of why families are choosing other schools, Kelly Krolicki stated the first impression is not good at both schools. LTUSD has a good orientation and sells their schools, but once families get into the schools, they are forgotten. Families love GWHS and ZCES once they start. LTUSD people sell themselves with sports and the community.

Carol Chaplin stated the Committee was providing good information. Look at opportunities to talk to the families again to get them to look at the schools again. Perception is reality and there is no need to get defensive. The public and parents are willing to back up the Committee and help in any way we can.

On the topic of GWHS Empowerment status, Ms. Krolicki stated the 4 day week was not part of empowerment. It came up for sports to make sure the athletes were attending classes. Field trip concerns were fixed district wide. Among the benefits of empowerment is the concept that an over-sight committee would run the school, not just one administrator.

Planning for Next Meeting

The Committee discussed the following items for the next meeting:

- The Committee agreed that the classroom was a better venue and would like to continue meeting in the classroom. The Committee also agreed to start meeting at 3:30 p.m. instead of 4:30 p.m. because of the amount of information to cover.
- The Committee talked about the 6th grade transition that staff members have focused on. Press releases would be a pro for ZCES.
- Connections between ZCES and GWHS:
 - Mentorship
 - Intensive study periods
 - Expeditionary learning, K-12 project based learning, using the resources of the community, real world issues and connecting with the community about the findings and character component of citizenship; maybe visit the Tahoe Expeditionary School in Truckee
 - Connecting ZCES and GWHS mission statements and vision statements
 - Peer teaching projects
- Empowerment regulations, what is needed to know to make it happen

- Staffing needs/desires
- Plan of needs to present to the Board

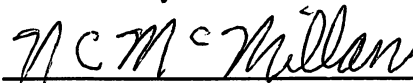
Dr. McMillan stated that the next meeting will occur at 3:30 p.m. on December 2, 2014.

Dr. McMillan called for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Sorensen moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Susich at 6:38 p.m.

Motion carried 7/0.

Submitted by:



Dr. Nancy McMillan, Facilitator
Lake Schools' Study Group