

WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT
GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES: REGULAR MEETING

2014-2015

April 23, 2015

Administrative Center
Governing Board Room
4650 West Sweetwater Avenue
Glendale, AZ 85304-1505

I. REGULAR MEETING – GENERAL FUNCTION

A. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mrs. Lambert called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Governing Board members constituting a quorum were present: Mrs. Tee Lambert, Mr. Bill Adams, Ms. Clorinda Graziano, Mr. Larry Herrera, and Mr. Aaron Jahneke.

B. Moment of Silence and Meditation

Mrs. Lambert called for a moment of silence and meditation.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. Lambert led the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Adoption of the Regular Meeting Agenda

A motion was made by Mr. Adams that the Governing Board adopt the Regular Meeting Agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Graziano. The motion carried.

UNANIMOUS

E. Approval of the Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Jahneke that the Governing Board approve the Minutes of the April 9, 2015 Executive Session and Regular Meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Herrera. The motion carried.

UNANIMOUS

F. Current Events and Acknowledgments: Governing Board and Superintendent

Mr. Adams shared the following comments:

- Enjoyed visiting Tumbleweed Elementary School where the classrooms were inviting and the children were very attentive. He enjoyed visiting with teachers Megan Mukai, Maggie Linneer, and Peggy Pitts; and social worker Amanda Quine. He stated he was proud and appreciative of the staff's work and commitment.
- Enjoyed attending the Business Advisory Team meeting. He thanked Jill Hicks and her team for arranging the amazing event.

Mr. Jahneke shared that he enjoyed attending the Sunnyslope Kiwanis dinner where Dr. Cook was honored.

Ms. Graziano made the following comments:

- Enjoyed attending the Arizona School Public Relations Association (ASPRA) Superintendent's Luncheon where Dr. Cook was honored with the Award of Excellence. Dr. Cook was the only Arizona superintendent to receive an award this year.
- Thanked everyone involved in preparing for the AZ Merit testing. She expressed her appreciation to the District administrators who went to the schools to assist.

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- Enjoyed attending the Kiwanis dinner and thanked Jill Hicks for her part in honoring Dr. Cook.
- Enjoyed attending the Regional Choral Festival at Cholla Middle School. Moon Valley High School students also participated. She was impressed with Cholla Principal Phil Garitson for acknowledging, by name, the senior high school students who had attended Cholla Middle School. Ms. Graziano appreciated that this is a District-wide culture that the Principals know their students by name. She stated that the personal interaction was what kept the students engaged and in school.
- Enjoyed attending the Business Advisory Team meeting where the Stanton family was honored. She thanked Jill Hicks and her team for their efforts.

Mr. Herrera made the following comments:

- Enjoyed attending the ASPRA Superintendent's Luncheon where Dr. Cook was honored.
- Enjoyed attending the Kiwanis Dinner.
- Enjoyed attending the Business Advisory Team meeting.
- Enjoyed visiting Richard E. Miller Elementary School. He stated it was a phenomenal school with a phenomenal staff and wonderful students.

Mrs. Lambert made the following comments:

- Appreciated the invitations to attend all of the events previously mentioned by Board members.
- Enjoyed attending the Business Advisory Team (BAT) meeting where over 300 people attended and thanked Jill Hicks for her hard work. She thanked the Renaissance Phoenix Downtown for providing the venue since the BAT group was too large to hold the meeting in the Administrative Center. Mrs. Lambert stated that the BAT allows the surrounding business community, faith-based organizations, and neighborhood community groups to develop relationships to make the District stronger. The Stanton family was honored for their service to the District, the community, and public education. Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton was the keynote speaker. Mrs. Lambert said the celebration of the District's food drive was very touching.
- Advised that Dr. Jennifer Johnson, Deputy Superintendent of Programs and Policy, was leaving the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) to pursue new career opportunities. Mrs. Lambert stated she will be missed and encouraged people to write Dr. Johnson at the ADE and thank her for her efforts for education.

Dr. Cook acknowledged the donation of 180 port switches to the District from a local business, Logicalis, who would not assign a dollar value to them. Dr. Cook stated that the donation did not require Governing Board approval because the dollar value was not \$300.00 or more. However, the District will be able to make very good use of the port switches and Mrs. Lambert was asked to sign an acknowledgement letter to the company.

G. Celebrations of Successful Programs

Dr. Cook introduced Mr. Daniel Fisher, Administrator for New Beginnings Academy (NBA), who presented information on how the school is offering students a fresh start to improve their academics and behaviors. Mr. Fisher introduced Ulises Mendoza, 8th grade student at Desert Foothills Junior High School and a former NBA student, who has made positive changes in his life and is doing well behaviorally and academically. Mr. Fisher acknowledged Ulises' mother, NBA language arts teacher Gaye Sims, and NBA social studies teacher Brandon Price

who attended the meeting. Ulises was asked to go to the dais so that the Governing Board members could personally acknowledge his efforts. Mrs. Lambert thanked Mr. Fisher and his staff for their hard work and stated she was pleased with the success of the program.

H. Public Participation

There was public participation. Ms. Erica Jean Kenney was a spokesperson for her colleagues in opposition of the approval to hire the Director of Transportation on Agenda Item *II.B. – Personnel Items. Ms. Kenney spoke in support of hiring Tony Mlynek as the Director of Transportation. Mrs. Lambert acknowledged the receipt of Public Participation Speaker Comment forms from Amanda Carlson, Rita Goldstein, Angela Harris, Justin Munster, Stephanie Nichols, and Zachary Young who supported the comments made by Ms. Kenney regarding Tony Mlynek.

I. Approval of the Consent Agenda

Mr. Adams requested that Item *II.B. – Personnel Items be pulled from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration.

UNANIMOUS

A motion was made by Mr. Adams that the Governing Board approve the remaining Consent Agenda items. The motion was seconded by Ms. Graziano. The motion carried.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

***A. Approval/Ratification of Vouchers**

Approved and ratified the vouchers as presented.

UNANIMOUS

***B. Personnel Items**

A motion was made by Mr. Adams that the Governing Board approve Consent Agenda item *II.B. – Personnel Items as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Graziano. The motion carried.

UNANIMOUS

Dr. Cook introduced Mr. Chance Whiteman, the new Principal at Sunnyslope School. Dr. Cook acknowledged Sunnyslope staff members and Site Council members who were present to show their support of Mr. Whiteman. Dr. Cook recognized the legacy that Principal Lori Ritz will be leaving at Sunnyslope School. Mr. Whiteman stated he had attended Ocotillo and Palo Verde schools and thanked the Governing Board for the opportunity to work at Sunnyslope.

***C. Public Gifts and Donations (The Value of Donated Items is Determined by the Donor)**

Approved the public gifts and donations as presented.

UNANIMOUS

1. Bethel Lutheran Church donated a check in the amount of \$1,000.00 for the benefit of students at Washington Elementary School.
2. Richard E. Miller Parent/Teacher Organization donated checks totaling \$2,437.20 to purchase library books for the benefit of students at Richard E. Miller Elementary School.
3. Richard E. Miller Parent/Teacher Organization donated a check in the amount of \$2,324.81 for the purchase and installation of a SMART Board to benefit classroom students at Richard E. Miller Elementary School.

4. Walnut Canyon Press donated 4,130 copies of the book Arizona: Nations and Art (honoring Arizona Native American art and culture) with a value of \$17,552.50 for the benefit of all 4th grade students in the Washington Elementary School District.

***D. Addendum to the Food Program Permanent Service Agreement for the Summer Food Service Program** UNANIMOUS

***E. Renewal of Intergovernmental Agreement with Mesa Unified School District for the Mesa Distance Learning Program** UNANIMOUS

III. ACTION / DISCUSSION ITEM

A. To Consider and, if Deemed Advisable, to Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the Issuance and Sale of School Improvement Bonds for the School District UNANIMOUS

Dr. Cook advised the Governing Board that they were being asked to consider the issuance and sale of bonds through the Maricopa County Treasurer's office and introduced Ms. Cathy Thompson, Director of Business Services, to provide information.

Ms. Thompson stated that there was a need for a bond sale to enable the District to begin design work on projects scheduled for completion in 2016. Ms. Thompson introduced Ms. Erika Miller from Stifel, Nicolaus & Company to provide information. Ms. Thompson acknowledged that Mr. Jim Giel from Gust Rosenfeld, legal counsel for bond sales, was present to answer questions.

Ms. Miller advised the Board that the proposed bond sale of not to exceed \$5,000,000 in Class B bonds would be similar to last year's bond sale. She stated that the placement with the Maricopa County Treasurer's office was a win-win situation for the District and the Maricopa County Treasurer. She reported that the rates would be competitive and the closing would be on or around May 12, 2015.

Ms. Graziano asked what the interest rate would be for the bond sale. Ms. Miller responded that the current U.S. Treasury rate was approximately 1.5%.

Ms. Graziano asked if the interest rate was comparable to previous bond sales. Ms. Thompson replied that the current interest rate was approximately the same as previous bond sales and was guaranteed not to exceed 3.0% per annum. Ms. Thompson stated that if the interest rate exceeded 3.0%, the Board would be asked to consider a new proposal.

A motion was made by Mr. Jahneke that the Governing Board adopt a Resolution authorizing the issuance and sale of School Improvement Bonds for the District in an amount not to exceed \$5,000,000.00. The motion was seconded by Mr. Herrera. The motion carried.

IV. INFORMATION / DISCUSSION ITEM

A. Special Education Update

Dr. Cook advised the Board that Ms. Graziano had requested a future agenda item regarding the special education programs, including costs. Dr. Cook introduced Dr. Craig Carter, Director of Special Services, who, in turn, introduced members of his staff who were in attendance: Dr. Christina Hanel, Lead Psychologist; Dr. Oscar

Meehling, former Psychologist; Dr. Deborah Meehling, Search to Serve Coordinator; and Dr. Monica Marin, Administrator. Dr. Carter stated he was fortunate to have a staff of dedicated, caring individuals who keep the students' best interests in mind. Dr. Carter provided information for the following:

- Special education census count
- WESD special education programs
- Students served in private schools
- Special education revenue and costs compared to general education students

Dr. Carter reported that when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted in 1975, Congress promised to fund 40% of the average national per pupil expenditure, however, the District received approximately 16% of actual full funding. Dr. Carter stated that there was a broken promise to fully fund IDEA which created a \$53 million funding gap. Thus, the system for funding special education is broken. Yet, the District is expected to provide appropriate services to meet each child's unique needs, provide quality instruction by a caring, dedicated staff with the right tools, and ensure some level of meaningful progress that can be measured.

Mr. Herrera asked how much of the State Medicaid was included in M&O and was there any State Medicaid funding besides Federal Medicaid funding. Dr. Carter responded that the Medicaid funds were part of the \$5.3 million Federal Funds shown on the chart on page 66. Ms. Thompson replied that there was no State Medicaid, only Federal Medicaid. Ms. Thompson reported that last year, the District received approximately \$4.7 million IDEA funding and approximately \$650,000-\$700,000 from Medicaid, but had previously received about \$2.8 million. Dr. Carter stated that the \$4.7 million IDEA funding was approximately 16% of the full Federal funding amount. He reported that the closest the District received to full funding was 33% with the addition of stimulus dollars. Dr. Carter asked the audience to think about what the District could do if the \$4.7 million were doubled to get to a 40% funding level and receive an additional \$4 million of fully funded IDEA.

Mr. Adams made the following comments:

- Thanked Dr. Carter for the informative presentation and asked about the migration of students after the 100 day count – what percent of students came from the private sector or charter schools? Dr. Carter reported that he did not have a definitive response, however, there were many “in and out” moves by students. Dr. Carter stated that there were 85 pending evaluations for preschool children. He said that a student could be screened, evaluated, have an IEP written, and then move away. Dr. Meehling stated that the incoming preschool children pending evaluations was a good predictor of future growth. Janet Sullivan noted that the information on page 52 indicated an increase of 214 special education students from the October 1 date. Ms. Sullivan reported that there was a large turnover of school age special education students and that the October 1 figures did not accurately reflect the total number of students served by the District. She stated that the October 1 student count was used for Federal funding and that the State used the 100th day count for funding.
- Very frustrating to go through the entire process and then the student moves away. Does the District have to accept all students, regardless of their needs? Dr. Carter replied that the Federal law is based on the concept of zero rejects. Dr. Carter reported that regardless of a child's severity of condition or need, the District is obligated to actively identify, evaluate, determine eligibility, and provide services based on the child's needs.

- Is there a benchmark where the District can reject a student due to the severity of their condition? Dr. Carter reported that all children are provided services, e.g., specialized services at Sweetwater School or Upward Foundation; or homebound instruction due to a serious medical condition.
- Stated that he had a family member with special needs and has had the opportunity to meet the special education teachers during school site visits. Mr. Adams stated that while all teachers are compassionate, there was something special and unique about the special education teachers, aides, transportation employees, and everyone who comes in contact with the students. He thanked everyone for everything they do for the students.

Mr. Jahneke expressed his gratitude to Dr. Carter and his staff. Mr. Jahneke mentioned that his sister was able to receive a Bachelor's degree in journalism because of the services she received from the District's Special Services Department.

Mrs. Lambert thanked Dr. Carter for the information. She stated that she had heard great things about the District's Special Services Department at the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and in the community; and was proud that the District delivers great service to the students. Mrs. Lambert appreciated the points made in the presentation regarding the cost to deliver these services to our students versus what the District had received in funding. She stated that the funding does not meet the needs for regular education students and there was a much larger gap for special education students. Mrs. Lambert asked Dr. Carter to advise his staff that she understands the challenges that they face and that she appreciates the work that they do. Dr. Carter, in turn, thanked the Governing Board for its support for the Department.

Ms. Graziano made the following comments:

- Thanked Dr. Carter for compiling the information.
- Referred to Table 1 on page 52 – are the WESD % and AZ % based on special education students and not the whole student population? Dr. Carter responded that the percentages were based on the number of special education students for a specific category, e.g., autism, developmental delayed, emotional disability.
- Referred to Table 1 on page 52 – Mild, Moderate, and Severe Intellectual Disability – are there certain categories that are more likely to be in a mainstreamed classroom as opposed to a self-contained classroom or does it vary depending on the disability? Dr. Carter stated that one of the challenges faced was that frequently attitude drives placement determinations. He said the department supports a traditional service delivery model meaning that they have a full continuum of services that are highlighted in terms of specialized classrooms with approximately 2/3 of our children who receive support through our resource pullout model. There are families who have children who are anywhere along the continuum of disability from mild, moderate to severe who believe in the premise that the more natural the environment is for the child, the better life outcomes there are for children in terms of what their future environment should look like. Therefore, while we do not philosophically embrace an inclusionary model in practice, individually determined, we support inclusive educational practices. Dr. Carter stated that if one was to visit our schools, out of the 224 children identified as autistic, they would probably only be serving about half of that population in specialized autism

classrooms. The other half would be at their home schools being fully supported with resource teachers with the help of an assistant.

- “I know there are 112 self-contained classrooms, but out of the 3,264 school age special education students, how many are full-time in the regular education, mainstreamed classrooms and how many are in the 112 self-contained classrooms?” Dr. Carter advised that if a child receives 60% of their instructional day by a special education teacher, they are called self-contained, which is about 1/3 of the special education population (approximately 1,000 students). The other 2/3 of the children are receiving services at their home school in a pullout model.
- Do the tuitioned out schools where students are sent accept the Arizona weighted out funding for payment or do they charge the full cost to educate those children? Dr. Carter advised that they do not accept the Arizona weighted funding for payment. He said there was always an excess cost which was the funding gap between the funding received and the additional cost. Ms. Graziano stated that she asked the question in order to point out that it does cost a great deal to educate those students and the District was responsible for the additional cost, whether in-District or elsewhere.
- Referred to Table 6 on page 60 – the count is 3,234 and the weighted count is 2,964 – does that mean we get funding for approximately 6,200 students? Dr. Carter confirmed that Ms. Graziano was correct.
- Referred to Revenue and Costs on page 60 – stated that it costs approximately twice as much to educate a special education student, on average, as it does for a regular education student, so the District should be receiving the same amount times two, but it is not. Therefore, the District is not receiving enough funding to educate the special education students.
- Reported that her niece had reading development issues and was provided special services assistance. Her niece recently graduated with a Master’s degree and had accommodations through special services throughout her educational years.
- Thanked Dr. Carter and his staff for everything they do because they do change lives. She appreciated the presentation to educate the public.

Dr. Carter thanked Cathy Thompson and her team for gathering the data for the presentation.

Dr. Cook acknowledged Dr. Carter not only for his tenure in the District, but also for the leadership role he takes across the state. She reported that there was not a meeting that he attends, e.g., at the Arizona Department of Education or any convention, where his leadership was not recognized in the field of special education. Dr. Cook stated that the District is fortunate to have Dr. Carter in its employ and hopes that he stays in the District for a long time.

Because this report was so well done, Ms. Graziano made a suggestion to have a few people in the Special Services Department put together a presentation (not just the PowerPoint) and make appointments with some of our State and Federal Legislators to educate them about the special education programs and funding challenges. Mrs. Lambert asked Dr. Cook to pursue the possibility of Ms. Graziano’s suggestion. Dr. Cook stated it was possible to have people who fully understood this report, because it was complicated, to share the information with our Legislators. Dr. Cook will work with Dr. Carter on the project.

V. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no future agenda items.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

UNANIMOUS

A motion was made by Mr. Adams to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jahneke. The motion carried.

SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

Documents were signed as tendered by the Governing Board Secretary

Joyce Shiota
BOARD SECRETARY

5/14/15
DATE

DW Adams
BOARD OFFICIAL

5/14/15
DATE