

# **Spotlight on the Board**

## **Notes from the District 15 School Board Meeting**

### **April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

This Board of Ed Meeting was a “Committee of the Whole” meeting, but included some voting as well.

#### **Start Times**

The last time start times were changed was 2000-2001, so that some schools are going on 6 years at the same start time. Board members received lots of email from different schools on this issue. Kevin Nohelty presented a letter to the Board regarding the start times (see letter at [www.phpta.org](http://www.phpta.org)), recommending that the start time change be delayed a year to give the administration time to fully consider all the options and study the efficiency of the bus route system. Rowden said that she supported changing the bus route because the Board had previously voted twice to not change because of cost issues. Now that cost was not considered a factor, Rowden believed the Board should follow through on their prior commitment to the parents with the late start times. Boucher agreed to the fairness of adjusting bus routes, but was concerned it was too late for the change, especially since CARE had already gone through registration. Boucher was in favor of waiting for a year to develop a “3 tier” system. The three tiers refer to the early tier for parochial schools, an 8:30 am tier for ALL D15 elementary schools, and a tier for the Jr. High schools. Keenan argued that the district did not have to delay changing the start time in order to study the 3 tier system. Millar noted that even if the 3 tier system cost money, it will be money well spent. McKanna said he did not know how much it will cost, that it will take time to find out. Rowden noted that in previous years, the decision to switch was made in April so that historically this is the time to change – and if the changes were made, 10% more students overall would start at the earlier time. Silverman noted she did not think parents wanted to change 2 years in a row.

The Board took comments from 14 Citizens Addressing the Board on this topic, including parents from Thomas Jefferson, Willow Bend, Whiteley, Central Road, Pleasant Hill, Lincoln, and Sanborn.

Arguments for changing the start times included:

- some school have been stuck at late start for 6 years, due to costs
- credibility of Board due to discrepancy on costs
- fairness and equity
- neighborhood children walking home in the dark

Arguments against changing the start times included:

- not wanting to rush without considering all the options
- some bus routes do not have sidewalks or lighting and have heavy traffic
- some kids are dropped in apartment complexes after dark
- some special needs kids need the later start time to be able to get enough sleep
- free/reduced lunch kids will have to wait to eat their breakfast with the late start time
- want to have Jr. High and elementary students be able to walk together
- wait a year to make sure this is the best decision and give advanced notice
- special needs kids need the earlier start time because exhausted at the end of the day, need energy for after-school therapies

One parent said District 54 has 27 schools that all start at 8:30am – why can't D15 hire the additional 20-30 buses needed to have all start times the same? Several parents said they did not want the schools to keep switching – wanted the schedule to remain the same so could depend upon it, and plan ahead.

The Board voted 5:2 to not change start times (Rowden, Keenan voting “yes” to change start times). Carlson directed Nohelty to look into busing for 2007-2008. Nohelty said he would come back with a proposal in Jan 2007.

### **Audit Services**

Keenan made a motion for the audit to include in depth purchasing and payments and financial controls. Wanted to re-evaluate administration procedures – more detailed audit will cost \$6-7k. Millar noted that purchasing is an important thing and the audit could save the district a lot of money. Mikula said the auditor should already be doing financial controls. Keenan said she asked the auditor, and she is not looking at financial controls. Carlson said district financial controls are in accordance with procedures for school districts. Millar noted that the auditor prepared a list to give a more in-depth financial control analysis for the extra \$6-7k. McKanna noted that the district should see what additional information they are getting for the additional money (current cost of audit is \$16k). Board voted 5:2 to do the more detailed audit for an additional cost of \$6-7k (Mikula, Carlson voted “no”).

### **2006-2011 Technology Plan and Budget**

Karen Hindman and several people from her staff and around the district presented the districts 5 year technology plan and budget. The district has been developing this plan for 2 years, with Board members Millar and Boucher involved in the committee. The handout for the Technology Plan and Budget can be found at [www.phpta.org](http://www.phpta.org). The 5 year plan includes planned “refreshes” of technology equipment and software across the district, as well as increased capabilities such as providing technology enrichment labs at every Jr. High school. Assistive technology for special ed will also be enhanced. In 2006-2007 the equipment budget will increase 75% and will include upgrades in video production, assistive technology, technology enrichment labs (Sundling and Sandburg only), computers, servers, and XP operating system on all computers that can support it, among other things (see handout at [www.phpta.org](http://www.phpta.org)). The five year plan includes the following:

<u>Years</u>	<u>Technology</u>	<u>Budget</u>
2001-02		\$4.6M
2003-04		\$2.2M
2004-05		\$2.0M
2005-06	Admin software upgrades assistive tech, some XP (see handout <a href="http://www.phpta.org">www.phpta.org</a> )	\$2.2M
2006-2007	hardware and software upgrades (see handout <a href="http://www.phpta.org">www.phpta.org</a> )	\$2.8M
2007-2008	Incr. bandwidth in Jr. High Tech enrichment labs in all Jr. Highs laptops in carts, assistive tech flat panel monitors, staff computers art/music computers	\$3.6M
2008-2009	Office Suite upgrade Wireless, Network Upgrade part 1 Student info application system upgrade	\$3.3M
2009-2010	Classroom computers Network Upgrade part 2	\$2.8M
2010-2011	CRT replacements, ESC backbone servers refresh Bandwidth increase ESC/Transportation/Food computer refresh Facility/School servers refresh	\$2.8M

### **School Board Committees**

McKanna suggested that the committees that the School Board participates in should have a year end review or report of what the committees have accomplished and clear direction of their purpose. Carlson suggested that Board members should use the “Committee of the Whole” as much as possible to discuss issues all together, rather than attending specific committees (such as the

Facilities committee). Keenan objected that the Board members would not learn as much about the District if they did not attend committee meetings and that the "Committee of the Whole" would be extremely long if all the committee work had to be done in the "Committee of the Whole". Keenan agreed that committee reports should be made to the whole Board so that everyone would know what was going on in the committees. McKanna asked if there were any errors on the list of committees and Board members he had provided. Rowden said she had been attending the Facilities committee but was not on the list. Carlson did not want Rowden on the Facilities committee list (which Carlson is on), because then there would be three Board members, which would require a "posting" of the committee meeting as an open-to-the-public Board meeting (as required by the Open Meetings Act). Rowden replied that she had been attending the Facilities committee meetings and did not see Carlson at any of the meetings she attended. Mikula commented that in the past, Board members did not attend as many committees and were there mostly as observers. Boucher agreed that a lot more committees had been added in the last year. Carlson wanted to go through the committees for the next meeting. McKanna wanted a timeline for the committee's objectives and some kind of working document for the committees.

### **Social Workers**

Three administrators made presentations to the Board regarding the need for more social workers. They said there currently are social workers serving 3 buildings (previously serving 2), with some schools having only 1 day/week of social service. They emphasized that social workers reduce case-studies and special ed referrals, and that principals and asst. principals have had to fill in for missing social workers. Social workers are only able to handle crises now, because they are stretched thin, and have had to volunteer their time to meet legal requirements for reporting. They emphasize the need for a Bilingual social worker to help with growing bilingual population.