

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meeting

October 11th, 2005

The Board of Ed meetings were videotaped for the first time by Jr. High students for Broadcast on local public television.

2005 Annual Student Achievement Report

Karen Hindman, Exec. Dir. For Curriculum presented the Student Achievement report which showed the student performance in our district in reading and math, from 2nd to 8th grade, broken down by student subgroups.

Some points of interest:

- Low income and Minority students are an increasing percentage of D15 students over the past decade

- **Reading** – percentage Meets/Exceeds Reading standards

Grade	2005	2004	Avg past 6 yrs
3 rd	83%	89%	84%
5 th	79%	78%	79%
8 th	86%	81%	84%

- **Math** – percentage Meets/Exceeds Reading standards

Grade	2005	2004	Avg past 6 yrs
3 rd	93%	95%	93%
5 th	92%	90%	87%
8 th	79%	79%	77%

- Hindman noted the district goal was to reduce gaps amongst subgroups, especially the performance of the Black subgroup in Math (which showed a decrease from the previous year). No Child Left Behind requires that 47.5% of children in each subgroup meet or exceed standards for reading and math in 3rd grade. District 15 meets these standards for all subgroups at that level.

- **ISAT scores**, 2004-2005, All combined

Grade	Reading	Math
3 rd	83%	93%
5 th	79%	92%
8 th	86%	79%

- Board member asked why there was such a large drop in Math in 8th grade. The Administration thinks that the test may be faulty, and wants to look at the results from the Explorer test (given as going into High School).

10-year Life/Safety Study

The Gilfillan Callahan Architect consultants presented their 10-year life/safety survey results and consider District 15 buildings to be in “very good” shape compared to other Districts. The expect 10-year costs to be \$33M, with \$5M Urgent (next 2 years), \$13.2M Required (over next 5 years), and \$6.5M Recommended (to meet today’s standards). Approximately \$2M will be required at Pleasant Hill Elementary.

Special Education Legislation

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) will affect D15, and possible impacts on the District were presented by Deborah Zech, Director of Student Services.

- Increased Emphasis on Early Intervention models, rather than Discrepancy models, which will require a change in the way the district refers, identifies and serves at-risk students.
- Special Ed teachers must be “highly qualified” which means they will need to take and pass the elementary/middle school state test, which they will need to do by the end of the school year

- District is no longer under obligation to provide services if a parent refuses consent, and parents have up to 2 years to complain to the district about violations in identification, evaluation and educational placement of their child.
- District is responsible to provide services to students attending private schools in the District, even if the student does not reside in the District (funding for services is provided by the state, so there are no expected budget increases required).

Clubs/Activities

Board was given a list of clubs and activities, and Keenan indicated she wanted to send a copy to all the PTA Boards at D15 schools. All schools (except one) have Video Production to some extent, with a varying number of days per week at each school. Rowden asked about working with parents to have parents run Video Production in situations where teachers were unavailable or uninterested in running it. McKanna indicated he asked the CTC (Classroom Teacher's Council) and said that they were unwilling to make changes now to the teacher's contract to allow parents to run Video Production, but that that could be brought to the negotiation table for next year's contract. Carlson noted she wanted all clubs available to all kids in all schools, but McKanna was concerned about forcing clubs on people that don't want them. He didn't think we wanted or needed consistency, but thought club selection should be based on the needs of the students or talents of the staff. Carlson wanted a core program (media and student council) available to all kids. Rowden indicated the greater issue was that teachers were pressed for time, that we need to think outside the box and use PTA help, but are prohibited by the teacher's contract from doing so. Keenan and Boucher wanted media club to be a District wide club (paid for by the District, rather than out of individual school funds), but Rowden was concerned about forcing teachers to do Video production. McKanna said the teacher's union has committed to helping to provide training, but most teachers are limited by time, not money or training. McKanna will look into making Video Production a district wide funded club.

Citizens Address the Board

Jane Ellis – Jane Addams. Concerned about performance trips for band and chorus, which are canceled. Parents willing to sponsor so no cost to schools. Very important to students to perform outside their local venue.

Bob Moffitt – 14 yr teacher, Winston Campus. Teachers willing to put in a lot of extra time beyond contractual agreements. Want to be able to have trips outside school day.

Robin Zuckerman –Nutrition Services. Morale is low because did not get a pay raise. Food service made a profit, but does not understand why can't get a 2% raise. Why use \$12k for video production and not give raises to food service?

Janeen Romeno – Illinois School Libraries – Should have better staffed libraries, they have a direct impact on student achievement. Libraries are not frills, they are essential, they need staffing and funding. Kids should be able to do independent research in 5th and 6th grade – other districts do. Libraries serve every child.

Lisa Traina – Conyers Learning Academy – Transportation much better! Autism is a very individualized disorder and needs better funding.

Karen Schutz – Pleasant Hill Mom, student in 2nd grade. There are 34 kids in 2nd grade, with many kids at or below grade level. Kids are struggling/suffering. Very much need another teacher, even if it means going into the red for the district financially.

Energy Conservation

Tim Millar looked at a 1998-1999 District Plan to reduce energy costs that had not been fully implemented, and found several ways to reduce energy costs (especially with natural gas prices expected to rise 30-50% this winter):

computers going to energy saving mode, removing personal refrigerators/coffee pots, lowering air temperature, reducing temperature at water fountains. Energy costs are \$2M and could save 15-20% with these measures. Microwaves for educational purposes and community staff refrigerators are expected to stay.

District Website

Millar wants the District to be more open and have more documents available on the website. He made an FOIA request, paying \$100 in copying costs, to get a copy of the District's 5 year Budget Plan, which he thinks should be on the website. Rowden agreed, saying everyone needs to know how the money is spent so we can work together to reduce the impact of cuts. Mikula was concerned the information would be taken and used for people's own ends. Carlson said FOIA was intended to see if documents were to be used for "proper" purposes, but that a list of documents available could be put on the web page. Keenan noted it saves manpower to have documents available on webpage, so administration does not have to spend time filling FOIA requests. Boucher said it was o.k. to list documents and put up a FOIA form, but was afraid to make documents available to anyone, not just District 15's constituency. Millar said that made it difficult to get the information. Boucher didn't want to put out contracts without some kind of control. Keenan said FOIA was not in place to restrict information. McKanna said they could put a list of documents on the website, but that people could also come look at documents in the office, if they did not want to pay copying costs. Carlson noted it costs money to put things on the web, but Millar offered to do it for free. Boucher said it cost money to store data, was afraid of who was going to download these documents. Mikula was concerned about massive downloading. McKanna offered to make the FOIA process more user friendly.