

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meeting

September 27th, 2006

Over 300 people were in attendance at the Board meeting, approximately 170 of whom were associated with the D15 Concerned Parents group. Silverman was absent.

MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) Presentation

Mary Zarr (Exec. Dir. Of Curriculum), Jim Garwood (Exec. Dir. Administrative Services) and Ed Nelson (principal, Sandburg Jr. High) presented to the Board the MAP program that the administration intends to implement district wide this year to provide more timely assessments of academic achievement. MAP was created by NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association, www.nwea.org) and measures progress and growth over time regardless of age or grade. MAP measures instructional level of subject material (D15 will be using the math, reading, and language portions of MAP). The MAP program is adaptive, so children with higher than grade level achievement can be assessed at their level, and untimed to relieve the pressure of timed testing. A class could potentially all go to the computer lab at the same time, take the MAP testing, and teachers could have reports back in 24 hours. The MAP program is aligned with the IL state standards and assessment framework, which D15 uses to set its Learning Standards, and so can be used for goal setting and will have results available for instructional decisions. The program can be used up to 4 times per year per child, so that testing could be performed at the beginning of the year, and at the end of the year to measure academic progress. Having the 4 tests available allows for situations where the test may need to be retaken (because the child did not perform as expected) or intermediate progress needs to be measured.

Nelson has used the MAP program at Sandburg, and just completed his initial testing for the 2006-07 year (Sept 11 – Sept 22). Teams of teachers review the results and evaluate which kids are struggling and need intervention, as well as which kids are exceeding grade level expectations. The MAP program provides detailed reports which allow teachers to set individual student goals. Nelson reported kids feeling more empowered and experiencing greater success with their individual goals set.

Garwood discussed the way MAP score the results, called the RIT score. The RIT score uses an equal interval scale, which is different than standardized assessments and is independent of age or grade level. Since it is aligned with D15 Learning Standards, the score can assess where exactly a student is achieving in terms of D15 Standards, showing which skills have been mastered and which ones they should be working on next (unlike standardized testing which may say the child is in the 99th percentile, but does not state what the level of achievement is). Garwood pointed out that standardized testing may report a 2nd grade child is performing at the 4th grade level in a subject, but that is misleading because it really means that the child is achieving at the same level that a 4th grader taking the 2nd grade test would. MAP provides an actual operational achievement level, so that the results show what the child is actually capable of doing.

The MAP reports have detailed individual achievement levels for individual students, but also helps teachers by pulling groups of kids together by achievement level. MAP provides individual student reports for parents as well. Garwood pointed out that MAP is also useful for placing students that are new to D15 mid-year.

Rowden commented that the MAP program sounded excellent and asked how it

can be used to help instruct kids who are already exceeding standards. Zarr said this was the greatest strength of the program, that the ISAT tests are often not helpful with exceeding students, because teachers often already know they are going to get 99% on the test. Since MAP is based on mastery shown, it shows their true instructional level.

Rowden asked how high MAP went in assessment, and could it help Jr. High kids who are already exceeding standards. Nelson said that it covers Grades 2-12 and helps not only exceeding students, but “bubble kids” who are very close to exceeding levels.

Keenan asked how MAP could be used to help underachievers, kids whose COGAT scores indicated that they have high potential, but that may actually be achieving at or below grade level, or below their potential. Zarr said that MAP would be used for assessments at the beginning and end of the school year, thus measuring progress. If a child is not making progress, that would be a red flag. Although MAP cannot be used to assess potential, it can be used to monitor progress, to make sure kids keep learning.

McKanna commented that the COGAT would still give teachers an idea about potential. He said that the district will be implementing this immediately (in Spring for 2nd grade, in early winter for grades 3-8) and that principals and teachers are already involved.

Carlson’s Speech on Contract Negotiations

BOE President Carlson read from a prepared statement, similar to the press release on the district website (www.ccsd15.net) regarding the ongoing contract negotiations. She commented that there was some momentum generated in the last negotiating session (9/26) and she hoped that momentum would continue in the next negotiating session (9/28). She said two additional bargaining sessions were scheduled for 10/5 and 10/13. There was a handout at the Board meeting detailing the current positions of the BOE and CTC (see www.phpta.org/DistrictInfo.htm for handout). Carlson emphasized that the Board wanted to negotiate a fair contract without interruption in the educational process. She also mentioned that, in the event of a strike, the Board has been compiling a [guide to alternative childcare resources](#), that is available on their webpage (www.ccsd15.net). She emphasized that the entire Board is committed to fair and productive negotiations and asked the community to support the Board and CTC in reaching a contract that was in the best interest of all stakeholders in District 15.

Citizens Address the Board

Carlson announced that there would be a 15 min public comment session, with 2 minutes per speaker.

Annette Cook – After receiving letter from D15 in the mail, decided to investigate teacher salaries in other districts. Found that D15 salaries were comparable to other districts, but that teachers in D15 produced higher test scores. D15 students were performing better than other districts and teachers should be compensated appropriately. The Board could be a trend setter for other districts.

Roger Fraser – Submitted a letter to the editor to the newspaper and read from that letter. He singled out Millar and Keenan for negative comments. Carlson interrupted Frazier, asking him to refrain from making personal attacks on individual board members. Frazier continued to do so. Carlson interrupted Frazier two more times, asking him to refrain from personal attacks before finally asking him to submit his comments in writing.

Carlson said she would clear the room if personal attacks on teachers, board members or superintendents were made by citizens addressing the board.

Brita Higgins – Speaking representing the D15 Concerned Parents group. Higgins expressed support for the board and teachers. Said D15 Concerned Parents encouraged BOE and CTC to work together to avoid a strike. D15 is a community that values education – quality is not just about salaries, benefits. We live in a community where salaries are frozen, many have job loss, layoffs – no guaranteed jobs. Teachers have not experienced same economy. Teachers contract needs to reflect the community. Believe the CTC requests for 23% raise over 3 years is out of sync with reality and would result in deficit spending. Deficit spending resulted in cuts, which resulted in large class sizes.

At this point, Carlson cut off Higgins saying that her 2 minutes had expired. Later, another speaker continued to read from the D15 Concerned Parents statement...

Lisa Moran – I would like to finish reading the D15 Concerned Parents statement. Budget cuts, the result of deficit spending, resulted in large class sizes. Those budget cuts and layoffs caused pain for teachers, parents and most importantly children. We finally have a balanced budget. We ask the Board to stand firm and not accept a contract that is financially unsound. We urge the CTC and BOE to keep negotiating, but ask the CTC to look at the real world economy. We are grateful to the board for making public information available. The strike the union is planning is in no ones best interest. The public has a right to know how they justify such a drastic step. If the CTC does walk off their jobs, we will advocate for them to return to the classroom and negotiations. We ask both parties to remain calm and continue to work towards a contract that supports the Boards' mission to provide quality education and a financially sound future.

The D15 Concerned Parents distributed a position statement flyer at the Board meeting.

Dierdre Koehler– I volunteer a lot. My teachers were creative, fun and caring. I admire that you are sticking to your plan in keeping the district financially responsible, but you are making the teachers positions look unrealistic. Why are you negotiating in public? I realize this is part of the negotiating process. The Board should continue to negotiate to get a 3 year contract, so the teachers can feel appreciated. Teachers are the foundation of our schools.

Keenan commented that after every negotiating session the BOE and CTC jointly agree whether to release information. The BOE is not under any gag order.

Rod Nieberding – Understand the negotiating process is difficult and exhausting. Implore both sides to bring to rapid conclusion. Greatest concern is damage that will be done to two sides and their relationship. Real work needs to be done after negotiations are done. Please do what is in your power – this has not happened yet. Board – make substantial proposals, CTC – make reasonable proposals.

Frank Skorski – I moved in 2 years ago of the education in D15, and paid a premium to be here – real estate has a premium in districts with good education. Concerned that the will be a strike – pray that will not happen. I believe semantics are involved. Does the 23% include lane changes?

Keenan offered to go over the salary schedule with Skorsky.

Skorsky continued that strikes are like divorces. The only ones really hurt in divorce are the children. He doesn't want to see that happen.

Judy Benka – I speak from the heart, not a prepared statement. I am a parent and community member. There is too much divisiveness and the lack of communication concerns me. We are here as a joint effort. Families are the foundation of our children's future. We need to come together as a team. Teachers need to be realistic relative to the public sector. Need to not have personal attacks. Families stand along with teachers, not behind them.

Ann Soltykiewicz – Not against reasonable benefits. Our teachers are well compensated. Teachers are saying by giving better salary, we will get better education. The teachers are not the only ones doing teaching. Kids come in prepared. Parental involvement is high. Demographically, we do well. Under the present contract, only required to work 5.5 hours per day. Teachers are not a special group of people that get more dollars and benefits. Accountability counts and is not in our district. Pay for performance for individual teachers should be in the contract. Large salary does not bring a better education. CTC demand is absurd. BOE responsibility to represent the community interests. Do not let the CTC intimidate you.

Manjula Sriram – I am an educator at home to my own children. What I am today is because of my teachers. Whether the CTC or BOE loses, the kids will be losers. Best school district in IL. Best education. My masters and MBA is from my teachers, not my own doing. Should be a win-win, not a lose-lose.

Elizabeth Bratkiv, Northwest Suburban Council PTA President – (listen to Mrs. Bratkiv's speech at www.phpta.org/DistrictInfo.htm)
Download Mrs. Bratkiv's speech at www.phpta.org/DistrictInfo.htm

Jane VanWolvelear– I hope there is a representative of the CTC here. I studied both websites. I am a firm supporter of teachers. I'm getting information from D15 – lots of statistical data. I go to the CTC website and I get nothing. On 9/15 the comment was "the way they calculate it, they are only being offered ½%". I emailed the CTC but received no information back. How can I support them – I would like the facts. They say they don't want to negotiate in public. I have more trust in the guy on the street stating his case, not the guy sneaking around. Asking the CTC for facts.

The Board adjourned for closed session.