



# BOARD BRIEFS

Authored by the Davis School District Community Relations Department

## Board considers consolidation of school boundaries

### Enrollment continues to decline at Washington Elementary

The Board of Education of the Davis School District gave preliminary approval to the consolidation of boundaries for elementary schools in the south end of Davis County.

If approved during the final vote, the consolidation would mean the closure of Washington Elementary School. Students from that school would move to Woods Cross, Bountiful, Meadowbrook, Adelaide and Holbrook elementary schools for the 2019-20 school year and thereafter.

The preliminary vote follows a public hearing held on Jan. 15 where 15 members of the Washington Elementary community asked the Board to consider keeping the school open.

Dr. Helene VanNatter, school director over the elementary schools in that area, also met with members of the community council and parents of students during a series of meetings in November. Enrollment numbers at the school have consistently dropped during the last 10 years with only 267 currently enrolled and more than 100 students receiving variances to other schools.

If the school was staffed for the current enrollment there would be single classrooms in grades third through sixth. That makes it difficult for collaboration and classroom management, VanNatter said. For instance, if there is a request to move a student to another classroom, it cannot be accommodated because there is not another classroom within that grade.

Additionally, VanNatter said, the school is seventh on a list of schools in need of a rebuild. With the declining enrollment, it would not be fiscally responsible to rebuild the school.

During the public hearing, several people spoke of the loss of valuable programs that will occur with the consolidation. Washington Elementary is a Title I school and receives federal funding for extended-day kindergarten, before- and after-school programs, as well as summer school. Some of the schools identified for the students to attend are not Title I schools and would not have those same options.

“What drew me here and what keeps me here is what this school does to help children from a lower socioeconomic status,” said Donna Johnson, a teacher. “Why take the Title I funding from Washington Elementary as a whole. That’s 200 kids who will no longer be at a Title I school with this consolidation.”

Others said they fear the students from Washington Elementary will fall through the cracks at the bigger schools. At Washington, the diverse student population is accepted and at other schools they may not be, some said. They also spoke of the feeling of community and family that is present at Washington.

“Won’t you be my neighbor?” Mitch Davis, community council president asked the board. “This school is an important part of our community and it’s part of our neighborhood, it’s part of our identity. We have a great

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## District works through adding lacrosse to high school sports roster

Davis School District’s high school sports roster will soon add a new player.

High school director Dr. Dan Linford outlined the steps the district is taking to add lacrosse as a high school sport. The Utah High School Activities Association sanctioned girls and boys lacrosse beginning in the spring of 2020. Since that decision, the district formed a committee to explore the implementation. Linford said the

committee spoke with high school athletic directors, principals, parents, coaches, transportation coordinators, field maintenance supervisors and neighboring districts to gain as much information as possible before moving forward.

From that information, Linford said, three areas of focus were identified:

- Start-up costs — includes purchasing of equipment and other athletic gear;

- Field space/storage/facilities — Spring sports are particularly difficult, said Healthy Lifestyles Director Tim Best as already there are six sports juggling use of the fields.

- Transportation — the district is already stretched thin finding enough drivers for all of the bus routes.

To combat some of the issues, the district and schools are establishing start-up accounts so the costs can

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group of teachers who generally love and care about those children.”

In giving their preliminary vote for the consolidation, several board members spoke of how difficult it was to come to that conclusion. Board Vice President Liz Mumford emphasized that the decision to close the school is not because of failing students or staff, rather it is a fiduciary decision.

“It doesn’t seem sound educationally or financially equitable to keep a school open with impending infrastructure needs and serving a small number of students when we face overcrowding throughout the district,” she said.

Board member Brigit Gerrard said she listened to everything that was said and thought about delaying the decision. However, she said making the decision in a few years would be just as difficult.

New Board Member Marie Stevenson said she was a teacher at a Title I school, so it was a difficult decision for her to make. However, she said, students from Washington Elementary will find caring, loving teachers at their new school also.

Cheryl Phipps, also a new board member, said her affirmative vote was not for the consolidation, but was for moving the decision to a second reading. Her final decision, she said, will come out of doing what is best for each student.

Board President John Robison said the decision will not be over with a vote. The work is just beginning at that point. Parents, administrators, school and district staff will need to work to ensure that students are cared for and given every opportunity to be successful in their new school.

“It would be a shame if we vote and think that this is over, because it’s not over. The work continues. This has been difficult for all of us ... but the real difficulty is for the kids and parents.”

The board will consider a final vote on the consolidation during its regular meeting on Feb. 5.

In other business the board approved:

- Briskey Plumbing Specialists for the Kendell Building chiller replacement project with a bid of \$96,146.

- A bid of \$89,500 for a chiller replacement at Lincoln Elementary by Industrial Piping and Welding;

- Design West and FNI Architects for the rebuild design of South Clearfield Elementary.

- Changes to the Employee Discipline and Dismissal Policy which simplifies some of the process.

## District honors MLK winners



Two students gave their winning Martin Luther King, Jr. speeches during the board meeting.

Top photo: Rhea poses with her parents, Superintendent Reid Newey and Board Member Brigit Gerrard.



Bottom photo: Bode poses with his parents, Superintendent Reid Newey, Board Vice President Liz Mumford and Principal Julie Peters.

## LACROSSE, from Pg. 1

be spread over two years and looking at some low-cost storage solutions.

One of the biggest issues may be the impact that lacrosse has on the fields. On average, Best said, lacrosse lessens a field life by about two years. The district is looking at upgrading the fields with an artificial turf that allows worn out areas to be fixed annually. The district is also in discussion with city officials regarding future creation of multi-use fields.

With the transportation issue, a few possibilities being discussed are school-based drivers or offering training to parents so they can drive student athletes.

“With these challenges, several of the solutions we have are not certain,” said Superintendent Reid Newey. “These are going to take creative approaches. None of these solutions are without domino effect.”

The current plan is to begin offering girls and boys lacrosse in 2021. All the district’s high schools will participate to avoid transfer issues.

The board also:

- Heard a report on transportation and the process used in determining a hazardous route. Currently, the district pays for 69 hazardous bus runs, which equals about 197,000 miles that are not reimbursed from the state.

- Reviewed the State School Report Card. Dr. Logan Toone outlined the modifications made by legislation and state board rule. Letter grades for schools have been suspended for one year, he said. “The system is designed to value proficiency and it’s designed to value growth, but it’s designed to really value the growth of our kids who are behind,” he said.

- Weighed in on committee assignments for board members.