

Special Board of Education
COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 94
April 12, 2004 – 7:00 p.m.

Community High School
326 Joliet Street
West Chicago, Illinois

1. Call to Order

Mrs. Maria Owens called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call – Present were:

Mr. Jensen, Mr. Nagel, Mrs. Owens, Mr. Reyes, Mrs. Stott, and Mrs. Westrom.

Members Absent: Mrs. Davidson

Others Present: Mr. John Highland - Principal; Mr. Norm Kane - Director of Bilingual; Mr. Julio Del Real - Director of the Welcome Center; Dr. Tom McCann - Assistant Principal for Curriculum and Instruction; and Dr. Lee Rieck - Superintendent.

3. Public Input on Call of Meeting (Discussion on Diversity):

There was no input from the public.

4. Discussion:

Discussion was based on four documents read in advance of the meeting and four questions related to them. They are:

Document 1 - DuPage Latino Outreach Advisory Council Report 2001

Document 2 - Tension in the Air

Document 3 - Educating Hispanic Students: Obstacles and Avenues to Improved Academic Achievement

Document 4 - Identified Program of Excellence

- A) What important new information did you learn from these documents?
- B) Which parts of this information relate directly to Community High School?
- C) Are there two ideas from the documents that merit consideration for use here at Community High School?
- D) What new steps, from or beyond the documents, should the District take now and into the future, if any?

Responses:

The articles were helpful in that they highlighted the discrepancies between parental college aspirations for their students and actual attendance; the parallels between the Beardstown article, West Chicago, and the American immigrant legacy; pointed out the need to focus on more than school-related factors; emphasized the most effective teaching methods for teaching students and spoke to the essential role of parental support.

With regard to parents, it was noted CHS could likely do better with parents by getting them more involved, emphasizing the positive aspects of our diversity, re-crafting our approach to 8th grade orientation and graduation, pointing out the distinct advantages of CHS, providing additional information in Spanish for non-English speakers, and affirming the critical aspects of holding high expectations for their students.

Statements in regard to students noted that many Hispanics have stories they need to tell; desire to be approached by a caring adult; respect passionate teachers who relate to them, treat them fairly, and believe they can achieve; prefer to be acculturated rather than assimilated; and would long for a fellow student who has successfully adapted to the culture to come alongside one who has yet to adapt.

Key messages to communicate would include that CHS values diversity, believes it to be a strength in the school, has historically been and continues to be kid-centered, recognizes the school is different and great because of its composition, works effectively behind the scenes to support its PR with acts of human kindness, acceptance and support and desires to get to know students and promote empathy.

In its desire to get to the next level, the District should consider ways to reduce the drop-out rate for all students, be concerned about how students and parents feel, investigate a buddy system to keep at-risk students in school, take its message to people on a one-to-one basis, get a significant adult aligned with needy students and be reminded that at-risk students are found throughout the student body regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Steps deemed possible for the District to take, include the following:

- Actively seek feedback on their needs from Hispanic students and parents.
- Assure that systems in place effectively enable the District to examine itself and its programs.
- Find ways to get Hispanics who have been here long-term to become more positive role models.
- Get parents more involved.
- Review approaches to large group gatherings (Orientation, Open House, Honors Night, Commencement, etc.).

- Continue to pursue strategies for closing the achievement gap.
- Work with staff to reinforce the importance of accentuating the positive features at CHS.
- Seek to reach the "non-bilingual" parent group.
- Provide continuing education to teachers about who their students are.

ADJOURNMENT

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Education meeting
be adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

MOTION: Mrs. Stott

SECOND: Mrs. Westrom

VOTE: Unanimous Approval on Voice Vote

Maria F. Owens, President

ATTEST:

Patricia K. Davidson, Secretary
[04-13-04]