

Meeting Minutes
COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING
January 26, 2010

PRESENT: Board of Education: John Brodrick, Elona Street-Stewart, Kazoua Kong-Thao, Vallay Varro
Keith Hardy joined the meeting at 4:39 p.m.
Ms. Kong-Thao left the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Absent: Anne Carroll, Jean O'Connell

Staff: Superintendent Silva, Suzanne Kelly, Michelle Walker, Christine Wroblewski, Steve Schellenberg, Denise Quinlan, Kate Wilcox-Harris, Michal Baumann, Hitesh Haria, Sharon Freeman, Sue Gutbrod, Luz Maria Serrano, Barbara DeMaster, Ashley Cannaday

Other: Daniel Keller, Doug Belden, Greg Patterson

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

II. AGENDA

A. Proposed 2010-2011 District Calendar

The Superintendent stated the School Calendar Task Force had developed a strong instructional calendar for the 2010-2011 school year. The task force was composed of district staff, union representatives, principals and parents. After receiving the committee's recommended calendar, administration held a "meet and confer" session with the Professional Issues Committee (PIC) of the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers at which time the calendar was discussed and modified to better accommodate the needs of staff and families.

The proposed calendar was developed in accordance with Board policy and the Saint Paul Public Schools Strategic Plan for Continued Excellence. The recommended calendar is based on a rollover from the 2009-2010 calendar with some notable revisions for 2010-2011. These revisions include:

- **Start Date:** *The start date will be the first Tuesday after Labor Day.* Labor Day falls later in September as it did in 2009. As such the first day of school will be later, Tuesday, September 7, 2010. At this time administration does not intend to seek an exception from the legislature to start school prior to Labor Day. Opening Week for teachers will begin on the Monday of the week previous to Labor Day weekend.
- **Winter Vacation:** *The PIC committee modified the task force proposal and recommended that there be a two-week break for students and staff.* The reason for this change from the 2009-2010 calendar is largely due to feedback from families and staff who indicated that the shorter break was not conducive to their family needs. In particular, members of the District's international community expressed hardships related to overseas travel coordination due to the shortened break. The argument in favor of the shortened break was that it would allow school to be out earlier in June. Ultimately, the PIC committee felt that there was little difference between June 13 or June 15 as a final day for teachers.
- **Spring Vacation:** *Spring break will be moved up so that it does not interfere with preparation for high stakes testing and semester exams.* Spring break will be held March 21-25, 2011. This will create a two-week window between the time that

students return from break and the beginning of MCA-II and GRAD testing. The rollover calendar would have allowed only one day between return and testing which was not productive for teachers or students.

- **Early Release Days:** *The calendar maintains the practice of four Early Release Days for professional development.* A survey was conducted prior to the preparation of the 2007-08 school calendar which asked respondents whether they preferred Late Start or Early Release Days. The survey results indicated strong support for Early Release Days instead of Late Start days. There is not an option to increase these professional days to full length professional development days as that would require a change in the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers (SPFT) contract. However, to better accommodate families, the early release days have been moved from Wednesdays to Fridays for the 2010-2011 calendar. In addition, one of the early release days has been moved to April to provide some accommodation for secondary teachers who do not have a 3rd quarter grading day.
- **Last day of School for Students and Staff:** *The task force recommended that June 14 is the last day for students and June 15 the last day for staff.*
- **Summer School 2011:** *The task force recommended that the summer session begin on Monday, June 27, 2011.* The condensed summer school model piloted in 2009 showed increases in attendance and outcomes and will be followed again in 2010. At this point, administration is assuming that same model will be implemented in 2011 barring any changes needed due to fiscal constraints.
- **Parent Teacher Conferences:** *The task force recommended September 7, 8 for Kindergarten students, November 12 and March 18 for Kindergarten and elementary students. Secondary conferences are site decisions.* The task force moved the November conference dates up two weeks to give parents an opportunity to meet with teachers earlier in the school year. The task force feels this will provide a positive impact on students who are experiencing difficulty in school, and will allow parents and teachers to agree on early interventions designed to get the students back on-track before too much academic progress is lost.
- **New Teacher Orientation:** *The task force recommended this orientation be held on August 27.* This continues the practice of conducting new teacher orientation on the Friday before Opening Week.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Why the placement of early release days particularly those in November? Response: Early release dates are among the last dates considered in the finalization of the calendar. They are scheduled as early in the year as possible to facilitate professional development and were rolled over from similar times to those scheduled in 2009.
- Concern was expressed that students will have three Fridays off in November. Response: Efforts are made to minimize the number of disrupted weeks or put disruptions within the shortest possible time period. On the 10-11 calendar the first six weeks of the school year are uninterrupted providing a good solid block of instructional time.
- Will Summer School utilize the same three-week model as in 2009? Was the 2009 model successful academically? Response: In 2009, there was almost 22% more attendance; there was the opportunity for three sessions where students could earn credits allowing some to earn up to six credits during the summer. Additional indications of success were over 23% of those who took the GRAD math passed the test and 32% passed the GRAD reading test. There was a slight decline in elementary participation due to closing of some schools for construction and some issues around transportation. Parents have indicated it was easier to plan for daycare before and after school instead of in the middle of the day and they found it easier to plan vacations around the three concentrated weeks. The 2009 schedule also allowed for three weeks of summer "camps" for students allowing for additional extended learning or enrichment time. Principals indicated they appreciated the concentrated period of time for summer school. Some long-term teachers who previously would not take on summer school instruction also participated because of the shortened schedule. Administration is

exploring a way to offer a similar format but in a somewhat different model; additional information will be provided to the Board in the near future.

- Winter break, it is now back to two weeks, why? Information received from staff and the Teachers Federation indicated the two days prior to the 2009 break, were “empty” days with students anticipating break rather than concentrating on learning. Additionally the 2010 calendar made it simpler to provide two weeks rather than lesser time.
- Previously there was a staff welcome back event, do you anticipate something similar this year? Response: The picnic was done for two years, last year it was not done due to the transition and the fact of the budget deficit. The event planned in the near future will be a Board sponsored staff and community welcoming reception for the new Superintendent.
- Before the start of school, many retailers post lists of supplies needed for the start of school. Is the District calendar provided directly to all District partners and pertinent community organizations such as libraries, Second Shift, etc? It would seem this would offer an opportunity to align calendars/events with them. Response: Administration can definitely do this, it is a good idea.
- A Board member counted 176 instructional days and asked if this was longer than previous or typical? Response: There should be 175 days. There have historically been a total 175 days for high school, 173 for elementary, 171 for kindergarten. Early release days count as a full day.
- Is, will there be a move toward having more days of seat time, perhaps by extending mornings and/or afternoons? Response: There is not enough time to teach everything the District wants to or students need. If there were the finances and staff, there is definitely a desire to move in that direction.
- What is the historical context around teacher conference days? Why are secondary conference days decided by the schools? Response: Previously the high schools had different schedules (semesters, trimesters, quarters, etc.) so they were allowed to decide what dates worked best under their system. Last year every high school was moved to quarters and all middle schools to trimesters. As was done in the past, these schools were allowed to continue to schedule their conference days; to some extent this is a site-based decision making issue as well.
- Why is the entire system not moved to same time schedule (quarters, semesters), it seem awkward with so many different schedules? Response: The change from quarters and semesters for secondary students and to trimester for middle grades was a difficult change; it was a big issue with many staff and some parents. Additionally there is a variation in periods at various schools (some at 5 and some at 7) this is also an issue in figuring out credit allocations for these changes and variations. It took IT. a full year to program to accommodate these calculations. The Board would need to provide administration direction on these issues.
- Do these differences between schools have implications in mobility of students as they move from building to building? Response: The high schools (9-12) are all in quarters; grades 7 and 8 are in trimesters so in that regard they are all the same. The difference falls in whether the school is running a five period day or a seven period day.
- Board Request for Information: From an efficiency and resource standpoint, is it efficient and resource cost effective to continue on this pathway given the budget situation? Clarification: the question was raised in the context of “is now the time to start looking at these type of issues as the conversations around school choice and resolution of the budget deficit begins?”
- Request for Information: Cost comparison for current calendar year plus cost of planned summer school versus the elimination of summer school and moving that time to extended time during the regular year or extend the regular year (timeframe of 2011-2012). Response: Summer school is fully funded out of Alternative Learning Dollars which are not the same dollars as regular education. Those funds are for students who are not performing at grade level along with some other qualifications. Not all students meet those qualifications. Additionally the State only allows 94.5 or 96.5 hours of extended time for learning. If a student goes to after school programs for 2 days a week for a number of weeks and does summer school they will meet the State hour limitation.

Contractually teachers work 187 total days during the year. If summer school days were added into the regular year, it would be a substantial budgetary issues. Summer school teachers are not paid at an hourly rate as they are during the regular school year but at a flat rate which has a specified maximum. Therefore there are limitations on how the alternative dollars can be used, how staff is paid for summer school as well as a teacher contract which was just been negotiated. It would be very difficult to accomplish the suggested changes in the 2011-12 school year, this would require reopening the contract.

- In examining how compare these issues, it is not only a matter of taking summer school out and extending the school day. What might be asked is what are the factors and what would need to be done to roll out what is critical for next year. If the discussion is what needs to be done to make all schools comparable or year-round schools, which is a much bigger discussion and needs to be addressed in the context of what does the community desire? It would seem wise to move out the examination of these type issues of future purposes and build in what things need to be rearranged. This needs input from site councils, families. It seems to be something to be addressed under the umbrella of school choice.
- What was meant by “move out,” I do not want the conversation delayed. Response: To get a more comprehensive picture of all of the issues/obligations involved, to receive periodic presentations of the various aspects which build to an overall view of what is or is not feasible. Response: This seems to be an institutional response or not moving forward, I do not want the District to be tethered to the past.
- Does the summer school pay format affect how year-around teachers are paid? Response: There seems to be a misunderstanding about year-around school. Those schools run exactly the same number of days as other schools. The difference is that in year-round schools students go for 10-12 weeks and then get two weeks off. Teachers are paid exactly as other teachers, they work the same number of days.
- Other issues which affect running all schools year-around include District buildings being quite old and most do not have air conditioning which is a necessity for operating in summer months. Parents are divided about the amount of time students should be in school; there is a great variation in opinion. Schools not meeting AYP are looking at expanding their school day and trying to find how they can afford this, it requires more than just dollars. The Superintendent suggested the Board give administration a couple years to look at selected schools, to allow time to gather data. She clarified that seat time is not the issue but learning time is; both remedial instruction and enrichment time. Summer school provides opportunities for both to students in need of improvement. The Chief Business Officer provided the figure of approximately \$2 million for every additional day of instruction time during the regular school year.
- In summary administration should consider where these requests for information tie into the broader School Choice discussion; –where the information requested falls within the bigger picture.
- The Superintendent thanked the Board for providing an opportunity to pursue “out of the box” thinking on these matters.

MOTION: Ms. Street-Stewart moved the Committee of the Board recommend the Board of Education approved the 2010-2011 District Calendar. Motion seconded by Ms. Kong-Thao.

Motion passed.

B. Standing Item: School & Program Changes

1. Board Academic Awards Criteria

Administration reviewed the current criteria for the BOE Academic Award Criteria and provided a brief history of the awards. The awards recognize superior academic, artistic and performing in the areas of: visual and performing arts, world languages, social studies, mathematics, science & technology, writing & speaking, community service and

problem solving. Previously recognized competitions, contests and awards have been posted on the Gifted Services website and are disseminated to all sites in the fall.

The number of students recognized improved from 2008 to 2009 by 31.2% and the number of schools participating by 20%. This was accomplished by increased accountability from the Office of Academics, direct support of the Executive Director of Professional Development and support from District Gifted Services staff and building principals.

Current efforts to increase participation include such things as:

- Presentations from Dr. Donna Ford which provided staff, teachers and families information regarding underachievement of persons of color and the identification and services for these students.
- Recommendations that schools participate in a minimum of two academic and/or visual or performing art competitions and include at least two competitions in their annual SCIP.
- Encouraging schools to enlist support from families to run competitions.
- Revisiting the criteria annually to ensure all SPPS students are being honored
- Increasing communication between building principals and Gifted Services.

Targets for 2009-10 are an increase of 10% in students nominated for awards (73 additional students) and 20% increase in number of schools with award winning recipients (8 additional schools.)

Administration recommended, for secondary students, that the award presentations be held at secondary sites during the school day. Transportation and family conflicts directly affect attendance at the evening ceremony as it has been run historically and students have indicated a preference to be recognized in front of their peers. It was also recommended Gifted Services and Community Relations create a Connect Ed parent phone call inviting families to the BOE Awards.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Do secondary students care whether Board members recognize them or do they prefer to be recognized in eyes of their peers? Surveys indicate the most important part for student recognition is that of their peers and parents followed by school staff. If Board members cannot participate at on site high school recognitions, it is not so important to the secondary students.
- Are there additional incentives for the students which create more “buzz” around participation? Awards are for activities students do away from school instruction time and there are no additional incentives except the recognition event. The district would like to ensure the secondary students get recognition in front of their peers in a school assembly. It was noted the actual award event is broadcast over cable TV.
- It was noted the Board is looking for a balance or equity between academic and athletic recognitions.
- Are schools surveyed to ensure everyone is included and aware of the award opportunity? The Executive Directors provide information on the awards and get information on award recipients from the schools. There are many conflicts for award recognition attendees, particularly at the secondary level. Every school has a liaison who works with Gifted Services on the recognitions. Gifted Services looks at what schools are presenting awards and surveys schools which are not participating for additional information on why they are not participating or recognizing awards. In many cases, they would have participated but their people did not meet the criteria.
- In looking at increased participation, if the recognitions are hosted on site, how many sites would there be? Logistically what is being looked at? Response: At this point administration is interested in finding out if the Board is in agreement with

its recommendation to do secondary recognitions on site.. Staff would then go back to the schools to determine when the events might be held and to try to get some ideas of numbers. It is then anticipated Board members would sign up to participate in specific events. Again, this would only be for secondary students. Elementary recognitions would continue in the same format as has been used previously.

- The Board's focus is not on the ceremony but in providing the opportunity to recognize students for their awards (academic and the rest of the categories) to recognize them for their accomplishments. The Board wants the academic recognitions to rise to the same level as the recognitions made for athletic accomplishments. The Board would like to continue to monitor this as it is helpful to see if numbers/participation increases and that more students and parents are being engaged. The diversity of the students and their efforts enriches the district. Administration was asked to continue to work with the schools to encourage participation and to find other ways to bring more students in for recognition.
- It was noted by a Board member that SPPS is an under-performing district, it should be grabbing every opportunity to recognize students' achievement particularly academic achievement. As the Board considers moving secondary recognition to sites, it should also consider the idea of recognizing students for their achievements at the regular board meetings. Recognitions should occur at the monthly board meetings on an on-going basis in conjunction with other recognitions the Board makes. The Board needs to look at the big picture and how to make these student accomplishments big news for the District.
- Athletic recognitions are done at the middle and high school level. Can academics be categorized similarly and if recognitions are scheduled at the regular Board meeting what are the time implications? Response: A great deal of work goes into pulling the Academic Awards together and organizing the event. It would almost be easier to do the recognitions monthly, it might be more manageable. Plans would need to be developed for Board night recognitions but it might bring greater participation because it would be televised.
- It was recommended that the Board try monthly recognition of academic awards for the remainder of the 09-10 school year. Input from principals could be encouraged so they provide the names for recognition.
- The Superintendent noted most academic awards happen in the spring. Currently there are two sessions (elementary and secondary) of 1-1/2 hour each. This would indicate there could potentially be a very high volume at the April, May and June Board meetings.
- Have students been asked how they prefer to be recognized? Yes, students have been talked with, they indicate they have too much on their plates in spring so they have to make choices. Transportation can be an issue and can other activities such as tests, athletics and employment. The schools do have assemblies which are well attended so students are in favor of recognition at the schools.
- It was noted athletic recognitions are different from academic. They involve the entire school while academic awards tend to be more personal.
- Administration was encouraged to take the academic success of students and bring it to a different level, to create a culture where academic achievement is "cool."

At this point Administration requested further direction on what the Board desires for this year.

MOTION: Mr. Hardy moved, seconded by Ms. Street-Stewart, that the Committee of the Board recommends the Board of Education continue with the Elementary Academic Award Ceremony as it has been done in the past for the 09-10 school year. That recognitions for secondary students be done at their school sites with Board participation wherever possible and that a new category of Recognition of Student Achievement be added to the Board Agenda for the remaining Board of Education meetings through June so that Academic Achievement recognition can be made for individual students during the meetings. (This would be limited to secondary students for this year.)

Motion passed.

Administration was encouraged to consider ways to highlight these students' achievements on the District website as examples to their peers. Additionally administration was encouraged to find a way to make the Board meeting student recognitions happen in the most positive way possible. Further discussion on 2010-11 will be considered later in the year once experience is gained from the new formats.

- C. Standing Item: Policy Update
There was no report in this area.

D. Work Session

1. **Board Representation on External Committees and District Council Representation**

Board members provided an overview of each outside committee they participate on. They assigned committees to members present with follow-up to be done by the Chair for those with vacancies remaining or with tentative assignments.

The list of District Councils was reviewed and assignments made for Board liaisons for each one of the 17.

The Assistant Clerk was instructed to provide a more in-depth description of each committee to Board members with assignments made.

2. **Board Budget Considerations for 2010-11**

The Chief Business Officer provide Board members with a spreadsheet of the Year End results for the 08-09 Board budget and a summary of balances for the current 09-10 budget.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- What constitutes Dues and Memberships? CGCS, Metro ECSU, MSBA, NSBA and AMSD.
- Why is only \$70,0000 budgeted when the 08-09 exceeded that amount by almost \$12,000? Response: That was the amount carried forward historically; in future expenses will be projected to a more accurate figure.
- A Board member asked the Board if it could find ways to reduce its budget for 10-11 budget year
- It was noted the City has now moved to Instant Run Off Voting (IRV) for its elections. How will this affect District primaries/elections in future?
- A request was made that a breakdown under the budget categories 6305 – Fees for Services/Consultants and 6366 – Travel/Mileage be sent out to Board members.
- It was noted the Board had previously directed administration to research sources of additional funding for Board professional development. Staff was asked to look at other resources which might be available. Response: The Superintendent stated that as part of the contract with Broad professional development opportunities could be provided at no cost.
- It was noted the contract with Teamworks is coming to an end so that expense will not be reflected in the Board budget in a few months.

MOTION: Ms. Street-Stewart moved, seconded by Mr. Hardy, that the Committee of the Board recommend the Board of Education accepts the report on the Board budget.

Motion passed.

3. **BFAC/CEAC – Process**

The Board Chair provided background on the committees noting that up until about three years ago the committee appointments were very specifically Board appointed positions. Board members recruited and then appointed individuals to the committees. When it was recognized that more information was needed about the individuals serving on the committees; an application form was developed and put on-line. The process then moved to that of an at-large, self-initiated application process. The Board appointment process was never officially terminated but merged with the new process.

The Board Chair indicated there were several areas she wished to review relative to the committees:

- The composition of the committees – the profile of the committee relative to inclusion and diversity.
- The timing aspects of committee appointments – rather than applicants being reviewed in terms of the whole, they are now being treated individually as they come in
- Redefining the process and addressing issues of application management and timeframes around applications
- Considerations around diversity of experience and ethnicity
- The current compliment of the committees
- Are there vacancies and, if so, the urgency of filling those
- How are the committees currently functioning with their current compliment of members

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- The committees are now mid-year, how are the committees functioning?
Response: CEAC currently has eight members with the make up of the committee having a majority of Caucasians and a minority of women. The committee is working on the feedback mechanism for the new capital process and what will happen in this year's capital bonding process. The committee is working well with its current members with all members engaged in the process so there is no need for additional members at this time. The benefit of the current group is they been extensively trained and are familiar with all aspects of the new capital allocation process and related studies. It was stated that bringing a new member on at this time would be disruptive both in time and in working knowledge.
Response: BFAC representation is a majority Caucasian and women. The committee is making good progress on its charge to examine and provide recommendations on capturing information on students coming in to and leaving the district and the reasons for this. Specifically they are addressing enrollment as it relates to finances. The committee is progressing well and have received detailed information reports. They have developed a concept plan around a data collection methodology that will be effective for the District. This leverages technology to capture the information and share it through a database methodology. The initial hope was for a larger more diverse group but they are doing the work of more than six people. It would be helpful to have more people on the committee in that they are currently in the design phase of a data collection process and it would be helpful to have three or four more people to help shape the end product.
- The disparity of representation on the committees is to some degree a result of the Board recruitment process. It will be more difficult to recruit minority representatives for the committees as these groups feel their voice is a minority and will continue to be a minority voice for a while so they hesitate to participate, even the most expert individuals. The Board needs to be conscious of balance on the committees, that they reflect the expertise the communities provide.
- If there is no urgency to provide additional members for these committees, it might be better to have a robust pool to draw from. Perhaps retain the names in the pool for two years in order to fill the committees in subsequent years.

- It was proposed, that since CEAC is set and does not need additional people, that the Board set a deadline so that by the February Board meeting Board members will have recruited at least three more people for BFAC.

Ms. Kong-Thao departed the meeting.

- Since the process has moved beyond the direct appointment process, it was suggested the process move toward one with a specific window of time to receive applications. At the closing of that window, the Board would then consider all applications for the year and act upon those which have been submitted at one time. It would also be beneficial if one person handled all of the applications.
- The Superintendent noted that a significant percentage of people who are or have been employees are on or have applied for the committees; this might be another area for consideration.
- It was suggested that an action be taken for this year's committees and then a process be developed for future applications.
- It was suggested it would be beneficial if future applicants could be asked to make a commitment for three years service on the committees.

MOTION: Mr. Hardy moved, seconded by Ms. Street-Stewart, that the Committee of the Board recommends the Board of Education accept no new applications for CEAC so the committee remains as it currently stands with eight members and that the Board recruit up to three more members for BFAC with applications submitted no later than February 11. No additional applications would be accepted after the February 11 date for this year's BFAC committee.

Motion passed with 3 in favor, 1 opposed (Brodrick).

MOTION: Ms. Street-Stewart moved that the recommendations discussed be incorporated into a process for application to the advisory committees for the 2010-2011 school year. Motion seconded by Ms. Varro.

Motion passed.

III.. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Hardy moved the meeting adjourn, seconded by Ms. Street-Stewart.

Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Polsfuss
Assistant Clerk