

MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

CALLED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
BRADLEY LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM
MONDAY, JUNE 14, 2004, 7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

A called meeting of the Muscogee County Board of Education was held on Monday, June 14, 2004, 7:00 p.m. in the conference room at the Bradley Library.

The following Board Members were present: Mary Sue Polleys, Chairman, James Walker, Vice Chairman, Brenda Storey, Philip Schley, David Ebron, Fife M. Whiteside, John Wells, Naomi Buckner, and Owen Ditchfield.

Others present: John A. Phillips, Jr., Superintendent of Education, James E. Humes, II, Legal Counsel, Del Parker, Treasurer, Robin Pennock, Chief Academic Officer, Brenda Dozier, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Myles Caggins, Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs, Don Cooper.

Dr. Polleys asked that the Board proceed with discussion on the Pay for Performance Plan prior to taking action on the budget. Dr. Polleys called on Mr. Whiteside who asked for this item to be on the agenda.

Mr. Whiteside commented, "I had asked the law firm to express an opinion whether or not the Pay for Performance Plan for administrators could either be modified or terminated without Board action." Mr. Humes stated, "From what we can tell the Pay for Performance Plan dates back to a resolution that the Board adopted back in 1997. The implementation has been carried over year after year. It would be like any other item of Board business. You have adopted a plan through a resolution that was appropriately voted on back in 1997. The documentation indicates that it would be something that goes on from year to year. There's an evaluation process of some type and as a part of that process, it's very explicit in the document that things such as budgetary issues, performance issues, a lot of things have to be considered. I am comfortable in telling you that if you have any item of business that is passed on from a prior board of education and it's done so in terms that it would continue then, it would take further action to modify, to amend and to do anything else that the Board of Education would want to do with this particular program. That would be true for any item of Board business." Mr. Whiteside stated, "We adopted a Pay for Performance Plan back in 1997 which provides for Central Office people to get raises based on their performance in the position. What the budget this year proposes with two exceptions of two central office employees who seem to get substantially more than the 2% that seems to be built into the budget. What seems to be the case is that all central office employees will be given a flat 2% raise which is a departure from what we, the process that we set up back in 1997. I had asked the Law Firm to express the opinion that I thought would result that since the Board set up that method of compensating central office employees, it would require the Boards action to do it. I would like to see this voted on separately from the budget."

Dr. Phillips stated, "It is not my intent to abandon the Hay Study or the Performance Compensation. When I looked at the implementation of the Hay Study I saw that it was implemented in various ways over the last several years. I also noticed that last year there was no raise for anyone. The State didn't pass the raise on to the teachers therefore; I didn't recommend any raises under the Hay Study for administrators. I felt that it would be inappropriate for me to do when our teachers were receiving zero. This year the Legislature has a multi-faceted raise for various employees. For bus drivers a 2% raise, for school food service personnel a 2% raise. Those raises began immediately in September or in whatever month their work year starts. It also authorized a step increase for teachers under the old teacher and certified personnel salary schedule of a step if they would earn one and that is a 3% increment. They also passed on a 2% across the board to all certified personnel including principals that begin in January furthermore; all those who have 19+ years will get an additional 3% increase for longevity step. If you really look at the percent of raise that about 75-76% of teachers across the state actually will be getting a 5% increase. True some of it begins in January and for some it begins in September. I looked at giving our administrators a 2% raise like other personnel beginning in January. If you annualize that over a year, it is really a 1% increase. I felt this was a prudent step even though it was not implementing the Pay for Performance. If I had implemented the Pay for Performance last year when everybody else got zero increase, I think that people would not have looked favorable upon that. Likewise, I thought this year since most employees were getting anywhere from a 2% across the board raise to a 5% that an annualized 1% for those on the Hay Study was fair with even minimal expectations."

Mr. Whiteside stated, "We are severing from the process the requirement that every central office employee be evaluated and prove quality of service before they get a raise. I don't want to just vote on doing away with the Hay Study. It was a terribly difficult thing to do and it's paid big benefits over time and I don't understand why we can't continue to implement it. I will note that there were two central office employees who apparently are getting more than a 2% raise. There were raises given last year apparently without notice or advice to the School Board, I didn't know about it and that's troublesome to me. But, my biggest problem is with the concept of dissolving the Hay Study without at least talking through it and doing it by separate action."

Dr. Schley commented, "I don't see that this action recommended by Dr. Phillips will re-establish a tie between teachers pay raises and central office employees raises. At this point, I believe Dr. Phillips has evaluated these employees and I think that should continue."

Mr. Ebron commented, "I certainly don't want to take away the Pay for Performance Program. There was a lot of work that went into it. I also know that the range of percentage raises can vary from 1% to 6%. The difficulty would be with the evaluation that was done in that some would get 6% or more. I know that it's important to pay people based on their performance. It's an incentive and we want to do that. I'm going to support the decision to allow administrators to have the raise this year."

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Mr. Ebron the Board voted to suspend the Hay Study for one year only. The vote was (7) affirming and (2) opposing, (Mr. Whiteside, Dr. Polleys).

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Mrs. Storey, the Board unanimously voted to bring the tentative budget that was previously tabled back to the table for consideration.

Mr. Wells made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Storey, to approve the General Fund Tentative Budget for FY05.

Dr. Phillips commented, “At the direction of the Board the budget has been revised to reflect a Focused Reading Instruction Program not Reading Recovery. This is an opportunity to use those persons who have been trained in reading and who brings specific skills that can help children in our schools. We looked at the reading scores in the school district in first grade because that is where Reading Recovery has been traditionally offered. We looked at the State average and it is 92% of those students meeting or exceeding expectations on the CRCT. We looked at any school whether it was Title I or not and any school that had less than the State average, we would offer a program which we are entitling Focused Reading Instruction. Those schools where this program would serve are, Allen, Benning Hills, Cusseta Road, Davis, Dawson, Forrest Road, Fox, Key, Martin Luther King, and Muscogee. Basically, what we have designed is that a reading specialist would be with children in a pull-out model and they would serve 5 students a segment and we would expect them to teach six segments a day for a minimum of 40 minutes per segment. This has several benefits, it serves more children, it also becomes better funded through the State on an FTE count, and we believe that looking at this program that we can serve the needs of children where we have students that are scoring less than the State average.”

After a lengthy discussion by board members, Mr. Wells made the motion, seconded by Dr. Schley, to call the question and vote on the tentative budget. The vote was (7) affirming and (2) opposing.

Dr. Polleys called for a vote on the tentative budget. The vote was (6) affirming and (3) opposing, (Mr. Whiteside, Dr. Polleys, Ms. Buckner).

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Mr. Walker, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the called meeting.

James E. Humes, II
Legal Counsel