

ORANGE COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

Meeting Date: February 25, 2013

AGENDA ITEM No. 13-02-(2)-16

ACTION ITEM: (Y/N) N

SUBJECT: Collaboration Work Group Meeting Report

INFO. CONTACT: G. Patrick Rhodes, Superintendent PHONE: 919-732-8126

ATTACHMENTS: 1. County/Schools DRAFT Collaboration Work Group Minutes – February 14, 2013.
2. Meeting Plan for the County/Schools Collaboration Work Group.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Board of Education a report on the recent collaboration work group meeting.

BACKGROUND: The collaboration work group met on February 14, 2013. Chair Coffey, Vice Chair Halkiotis and Superintendent Rhodes attended the meeting. Meeting topics included: Pre-K philosophy, SAPFO, school safety and legislative issues. A meeting agenda is attached.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: None.

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends the Board of Education review and discuss the collaboration work group meeting report.

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County/Schools Collaboration Work Group Meeting

Thursday, February 14, 2013

John M. Link, Jr. Government Services Center, Hillsborough

Attendees: Work Group Members present: Jamezetta Bedford, Michelle Brownstein, Frank Clifton, Donna Coffey, Tom Forcella, Stephen Halkiotis, Barry Jacobs, Earl McKee, Patrick Rhodes. Staff present: Clarence Grier, Paul Laughton, Todd LoFrese, Michael Talbert, Andy Sachs (facilitator), Margaret Samuels (visitor).

Convene The group adopted the proposed agenda that had been distributed in advance.

Pre-K Philosophy

Margaret Samuels, Executive Director of the Orange County Partnership for Young Children, attended today's meeting as a resource on this agenda item. Ms. Coffey distributed the text of a draft "Pre-K Philosophy Resolution" that she created in October 2012 in collaboration with Commissioner Pelissier and Ms. Burroughs.

In response to a question from Ms. Bedford, Ms. Samuels said that a dedicated pre-K campus could be isolating for the teachers. They would not be in close proximity to elementary school peers, and so would lose access to those professional learning communities. She said that since public funding for pre-K services is unpredictable, there could be difficulties sustaining a dedicated pre-K campus over time. The preferred model is for pre-K classes to be held on elementary school campuses.

Mr. Clifton said that it is costly to up fit older schools to accommodate pre-K classrooms. Those costs are not driven by per pupil allocations. Pre-K classrooms could be converted into kindergarten classrooms if the need arose. Dr. Brownstein added that pre-K classrooms could be converted to self-contained special education classrooms if the need arose.

Mr. Clifton agreed with Ms. Samuels that state and federal funding for pre-K services is always in flux. The good news, he said, is that the burden of providing pre-K classrooms is shared between private sector providers and public school districts.

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Ms. Coffey said that OCS has many pre-K slots, although limited slots for exceptional pre-K students. Group members noted the losses of several exceptional pre-K slots throughout the county.

Dr. Halkiotis said that the Governor's new appointee to the position of Director of Child Development and Early Education sees no value in pre-K education. We might need a discussion soon about what we will do if the State fails to take responsibility for these services, he added. Commissioner Jacobs noted that recently it was announced that the appointee will not be taking that position after all.

Commissioner Jacobs asked how many pre-K classrooms would be needed if the draft resolution was implemented and how the resolution would affect current and long range elementary school capacity. Mr. LoFrese said that if kindergarten classrooms were converted into pre-K space then the need for new kindergarten classrooms would be accelerated. Dr. Brownstein said that it is not the intent of the draft resolution to convert kindergarten classrooms into pre-K classrooms. Ms. Bedford said that mobile units are perfectly acceptable spaces for pre-K classrooms, and reiterated that the school district is not interested in retrofitting kindergarten space into pre-K space. Ms. Coffey said that pre-K students currently are taking up 1-2 classrooms in OCS elementary schools, but those students are not included in the schools' membership numbers. For the classrooms inside our buildings (as opposed to the ones in mobile units) there's a false statement of school capacity and a false statement of school membership, she said. Mr. LoFrese reiterated that there is a real impact on school capacity when pre-K classes are held in the schools. Commissioner Jacobs said he would like to see a real analysis.

Dr. Brownstein said that the next to last paragraph of the draft resolution – a proposal for Orange County to commit to funding new elementary schools that include space for at least one pre-K classroom that will not be counted in the official capacity – could be implemented straightforwardly. She added that data does need to be collected and considered for the final paragraph of the draft resolution, which proposes that older elementary schools be allowed to have at least one pre-K classroom not considered in the official capacity.

Commissioner McKee asked how many pre-K classrooms already operate in mobile units. Mr. Rhodes said that no pre-K classes were held in mobile units in OCS. Ms. Bedford said that "lots" were held in mobile units in CHCCS. For a couple of our newer buildings, she added, there is no place on the property for

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mobiles. And for some of our older buildings where there is room for mobiles there is not additional space for teachers to have support space.

Mr. Grier called the group's attention to information that had been presented by the staff during a September 13, 2012 work session. The facilities cost of the 573 pre-K students in the county is approximately \$1.8 million, he said. In other words, Mr. Clifton said, if you dedicate regular school space to pre-K students then the expected cost would be about \$1.8 million. But the costs would be covered by pre-K funders such as More at Four and the federal Title 1 preschool program. In response to a request from Commissioner Jacobs, Mr. Grier said that he will distribute that information to the work group members.

Ms. Coffey said that we don't need 500 pre-K spaces, we need to deal with the SAPFO capacity issues. We need information on how many pre-K seats and classrooms we have, and how many of those are inside our buildings vs. in mobile units. We should be able to generate that information quickly. We can then equate those numbers to the seats and classroom space we are losing to pre-K in our elementary schools.

Dr. Halkiotis reminded the group of Commissioner Hemminger's suggestion that new Commissioners be oriented on how funding for local public education works. This issue is a good example of why this is needed, he said. We all need to understand the staff's analysis. We also need to understand the situation from the perspective of the schools themselves: what they say they need and how they understand their own spaces are being used. The dynamics inside a school building shift continually. Homeless kids come and go, for example. I'm sure that no one is falsifying the figures but I'm also pretty sure there is plenty of confusion about those figures. We need a well-informed and detailed analysis, and we need to orient the Commissioners.

Commissioner Jacobs summarized that his sense was the work group is supportive of the draft resolution in principle, except that a date has to be agreed upon for the last paragraph. We need to put the information Mr. Grier was citing alongside the information Ms. Coffey was suggesting from the two school districts. All agreed that data collection and analysis by staff and consideration by the work group should be completed before the April 25, 2013 Joint Boards Meeting. The Superintendents agreed to generate a uniform data sheet so that the decision makers can make comparisons across the two districts more easily than if each district presented its data using its own format.

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SAPFO

Commissioner Jacobs said that he read an agreement in the minutes of the August 28, 2012 work group meeting that the County and school district attorneys would be asked to get together to clarify the situation with CAPS. "If that did not happen then I am sorry," he said. Dr. Brownstein thanked Commissioner Jacobs for his apology. Even if they did meet, she said, we need more time to clarify the situation before the Commissioners' February 25 public hearing. Thankfully CAPS will not come up as an issue because we have expanded our capacity with Northside Elementary School.

Dr. Halkiotis said that the meeting did not happen. He said that in light of the agreement that was reached within the work group he was surprised and bothered to have received a letter from the County informing OCS about the public hearing. I felt it as a slap, he said. It was disrespectful to our relationship that the County did not think we were even worth a discussion. It's extremely premature to go to a public hearing on this.

Mr. Clifton returned from making a phone call out of the room and reported that he had just checked with the County's attorney. "He has met with the town attorneys but not the school districts' attorneys," he said. "I apologize."

Commissioner Jacobs said that a miscommunication had occurred, and that there was no ill intent from the Commissioners or the County staff. We've been trying to keep a low profile on this issue with regard to the legislature. One reporter has already conflated our CAPS with the impact fees that are under contention in Cabarrus County. We'd like to get CAPS off the radar screen while we consider the future and "get on the same page."

Dr. Brownstein said that a public hearing will draw attention to the issue. CHCCS will need to speak up in defense of CAPS and probably others will do so as well. Mr. Clifton said that the issue became more public when CHCCS announced that that it might have to deny CAPS. The towns heard it, and the public discussion about CHCCS's position was taking place at the same time the Cabarrus County case was taking place at the state Supreme Court. He distributed a copy of the state Supreme Court's decision in the Cabarrus County case, and said that it references the school districts' authority in Orange County to deny CAPS.

Commissioner McKee asked what our "Plan B" is, considering the possibilities of a legal challenge or action by the state legislature. Dr. Halkiotis said the best strategy would be to keep the matter of CAPS out of the public eye right now. I'm

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not averse to pulling it from the hearing, said Commissioner Jacobs. Commissioner Jacobs added that SAPFO has worked well as a planning tool even though a CAPS has never been denied; we've read the decision and we can behave ourselves.

Ms. Bedford said that the collaboration work group process allowed for the relationships and channels of communication to develop across the boards' leadership, so that when the school districts received the County's letter it was easy for Dr. Brownstein, Ms. Coffey, and Commissioner Jacobs to problem solve. She agreed with Commissioner McKee's suggestion that the Boards have a back-up plan. We don't know if SAPFO will work without CAPS, she said. I feel that it allows us to apply some pressure in a situation where the towns -- who do not pay for the schools -- can make decisions about growth which impact the County's budget and the school districts' plans. Considering the atmosphere in Raleigh, we need a fall back.

Dr. Brownstein suggested that the attorneys get together right away. Let's see their consensus legal opinion about the impact of the Cabarrus decision. If SAPFO will not have teeth, then we will need a way to get even better numbers for planning around growth and capacity. Ms. Coffey agreed with Dr. Brownstein, recalling how facilities planning was a "nightmare" before SAFO. SAPFO enables us to plan around when schools should come on line, she said.

Commissioners Jacobs and McKee agreed that the February 25 hearing should be removed from the BOCC's calendar. Commissioner Jacobs said he would talk with the full Board about this as well.

Dr. Brownstein asked if each of the board's attorneys had permission to communicate with all the other boards' attorneys. All work group members said yes.

Commissioner Jacobs said that future discussions should identify mechanisms other than CAPS that would serve as a prod for aligning growth management with schools facility planning. Mr. LoFrese suggested that the SAPFOTAC (technical advisory committee) be the forum for developing some ideas, and the work group agreed.

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School Safety

Ms. Coffey said that she had asked for this agenda item so that work group members would know what the school districts are doing to ensure safety, especially following the Newtown, CT tragedy.

Dr. Forcella said that CHCCS is conducting a thorough review of all relevant systems. It is already making changes to how the buzzer systems and exits/entrances at each school are operated. District officials met with police department representatives to discuss the school resource officer (SRO) program. The biggest concern for the district today are the campus-style school properties and portable classrooms. CHHS has met with school safety consultants, who suggested a survey of all facilities with an eye toward improvements both inside and outside of all buildings. Older buildings were not designed with armed school-invaders in mind. The district also is looking at the mental health aspects of school safety, including efforts to understand how to identify threats. The district is convening a Task Force with participation from local police departments and the Superintendent's office to develop recommendations on how to create the safest possible environments for the district's students and employees.

Dr. Forcella said that the police departments have been very, very cooperative. He and they agree that increasing SRO coverage is not a solution. One strategy under consideration is to share SROs across elementary and middle schools that are in close proximity. Mr. LoFrese added that the district has increased funding for school safety within its capital plan.

Mr. Rhodes said that OCD has a long standing partnership with the Orange County Sheriff's Department. A federal grant received three years ago allowed OCS to develop a schools safety plan. Immediately after the Newtown tragedy the district evaluated each school's safety plan and asked about infrastructure needs such as fencing and locks. On Monday, February 11 the OCS Board approved changes to the district's capital plan.

Beyond physical improvements, OCS also is giving attention to the human aspects of school safety, he said. OCS has SROs in all middle and high schools. Immediately after the Newtown shootings, police presence was increased on all campuses, and the feedback from staff and parents was very positive. Mr. Rhodes offered a personal perspective (as distinct from the district's position): just as we have security at the meetings of our locally elected boards, at banks, and in many office buildings, we should have security at our schools. This is not "reactionary" when we do it in other venues – or when we have dogs in our homes who'll bark

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when people come to the door -- and would make just as much sense for our schools.

Commissioner McKee asked how many schools in the county have the kind of open campus or building designs, such as Grady Brown and Hillsborough elementary schools, that would require extensive changes for better security. Dr. Halkiotis recalled an incident from 2001 when a bail bondsman with his gun drawn chased a fugitive across the Efland-Cheeks Elementary School playground. Grady Brown needs extensive renovation, he said, but the rest can be handled inexpensively by securing the front door and installing buzzers.

Some parents do not support increasing security measures, Dr. Halkiotis added. Dr. Brownstein said that it is important for school and county leaders to help the public understand the costs involved in these security investments. It's a very hot item for the public right now. Mr. Rhodes reiterated the importance of school security. I don't want to arm school personnel, he said, but the cost of a few full time SROs or part time deputies like we have at the courthouse is worth it. Safety is going to come from a combination of human resources, infrastructure improvements, intelligence and interagency cooperation. Mr. Rhodes said. Dr. Forcella said that he is hearing different positions from the public on the question of increasing SRO presence in the schools. We need to listen and weigh what the public needs.

Ms. Samuels said that she is concerned about cuts to mental health services that are on the horizon, and noted that adequate levels of mental health services can address potential perpetrators as well as actual victims.

Commissioner Jacobs said that school and county leaders should remain thoughtful about how they explain school safety problems and solutions. Once you propose any specific solutions it will be very hard for the Commissioners to say no, because of the public's concern about safety. He urged the school districts to coordinate their deliberations and requests so that even if the districts take different approaches the public and BOCC will understand how each is being responsive and effective. It will help us in responding to your requests in a calm and thoughtful manner. Mr. Rhodes said that OCS is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of its staff and students. Commissioner McKee noted that as the school districts present their funding requests for security improvements, the Board will be thinking about the 48.1% funding target for education. That target will be on the table, he said.

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Legislative Issues

Commissioner Jacobs encouraged the school districts to develop and communicate “sooner rather than later” to the BOCC their positions on any legislative issues. The BOCC has supported several goals of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, including making funding for elementary school security a federal priority. BOCC will me meeting with US Representative Howard Coble on Monday, February 18. The Board also will have a public hearing on February 19 to solicit perspectives on its legislative agenda. It will then meet with the state legislative delegation in early March. Commissioner Jacobs acknowledged that the other boards also will be meeting with their legislative delegations, but added that if the BOCC also brings up the issues that are important to the other boards then it might make more of an impression.

Ms. Coffey distributed OCS’s resolution in opposition to school property transfer from local school boards to county commissioners.

Ms. Bedford said that issues of importance to the CHCCS included discretionary cuts, reduced school funding, the lottery, and the calendar bill. Orange County is the number one county in the state for making up state deficits in public education, and even you can’t sustain it, she said. She added that CHCCS passed a similar resolution to the one distributed by Ms. Coffey. Do not join the NCACC in its support of the school property transfer legislation, she said.

Mr. Clifton suggested that OCS review the CHCCS resolution on school property transfer, and consider including certain aspects in that resolution that are not included in the OCS resolution, especially regarding loans.

Commissioner Jacobs said that he would want the County to own charter school properties if the state mandates the County to pay for charter school construction. But the current legislative proposals do not address this, he said. Dr. Halkiotis said that the Wake County Board has a strong interest in the property transfer bill, because of the value of those properties. Mr. Clifton said that if any bill passes it is likely to pertain only to Wake County.

Dr. Halkiotis said he is worried about losses to local revenues that might follow from the income and sales tax reform proposals the Republicans are developing. Mr. Clifton said that he’s learned from a briefing by Senator Russo last week that there is likely to be a shift to lower income and increased sales tax. If the sales tax base expands, he said, the County could see increased revenue as a potential side effect. Mr. Clifton said that there are about 45 former county commissioners now

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serving in the NC legislature. I don't think it is in their current thinking to reduce the sales tax rate to offset the wider base. They have said that they want to hold the local governments harmless in the tax reforms they pass.

Mr. Rhodes said that virtual charter schools is a legislative issue to watch. Some home schooling interests will like virtual charters, but it will take funds away from public education. Also, vouchers. Federal sequestration would cost OCS \$850,000. Finally, it will be important to watch a new legislative study group that will be developing educational allotment reform proposals modeled on some things they did in Colorado.

Mr. Clifton said that Representative Coble now represents the Congressional district that contains OCS. He suggested that OCS enhance that relationship.

Wrap Up

The facilitator will canvass the Work Group for a next meeting date to be held before the April 25, 2013 Joint Boards Meeting.

Agenda items for the next meeting to include a check-in on the school safety planning, SAPFO, target funding (looking at data over 10-20 years), and pre-K.

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January 29, 2013

Draft Meeting Plan for the County/Schools Collaboration Work Group

Thursday, February 14, 2013

10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

John Link Government Services Building, Hillsborough.

Expected Attendees (17): Work Group Members (9): Jamezetta Bedford, Michelle Brownstein, Frank Clifton, Donna Coffey, Thomas Forcella, Barry Jacobs, Stephen Halkiotis, Earl McKee, Patrick Rhodes. Staff (7): Clarence Grier, Paul Laughton, Todd LoFrese, George McFarley, Jr., Michael Talbert, Greg Wilder, Andy Sachs (facilitator). Invited resource person (1): Margaret Samuels.

Proposed Agenda

10:00 Convene

- Introductions, as needed.
- Review proposed Desired Outcomes and Agenda for today's meeting.

10:10 Pre-K Philosophy

Discussion of resolution drafted by Commissioner Pelissier, Ms. Coffey, and Ms. Burroughs in October 2012. Margaret Samuels, Executive Director of the Orange County Partnership for Young Children, has accepted the group's invitation to attend as a resource on this agenda item

10:45 SAPFO

CHCCS will clarify its concerns about the generation rates for some development categories and get feedback from the group.

11:10 School Safety

Ms. Coffey asked that the group open a discussion on this topic.

11:30 Legislative Issues

Commissioner Jacobs asked for this agenda item in preparation for the BOCC's meeting in early March with the legislative delegation.

11:45 Wrap Up

Agenda items and timeframe for any next Work Group meeting.

12:00 Adjourn

<u>Work Group Ground Rules (adopted 1/27/04, amended 4/9/07)</u>	
•	One speaker at a time.
•	Stick to task and topic.
•	Listen attentively to the speaker.
•	Share the floor.
•	It is OK to disagree...please do so respectfully.
•	Raise and discuss new ideas, doubts and differences with the group before going public.
•	Decisions will be made within this group by unanimous consent among group members (although not necessarily with equal levels of enthusiasm).
•	Items will appear on Work Group final meeting agenda only by group decision. Each Work Group meeting will begin with a review by the group of the meeting's proposed agenda.