



**EAST OTERO SCHOOL DISTRICT R-1**  
**301 RATON AVENUE**  
**LA JUNTA, COLORADO 81050**

**BOARD WRAP-UP**

**Board of Education Meeting**  
**November 11, 2024**

1. **ROLL CALL** – S. Ayala, Hines and Leyba. A. Ayala was absent.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **CELEBRATIONS**

The La Junta Junior High Leadership Class presented on Sources of Strength. A group of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade peer leaders explained the Sources of Strength program. The peer leaders spread the message of Hope, Help and Strength. It is a program that helps the students about how they can help themselves and others. Each student reviewed one of the focus points (Family Support, Positive Friends, Mentors, Generosity, Spirituality, Healthy Activities, Physical Health, and Mental Health) in the program. The Leadership Jarae Aragon, Gianna Ayala, Devini Becerra, Dezirae Gauna, LoriRose Leyba, Acelyn Sutherland, and Siara Vasquez.

4. **AUDIENCE**

Mr. Aaron Salas, parent, spoke to the Board regarding his daughter's suspension from volleyball.

Charles Rabenseifner, a band student, explained to the Board the band funding has been cut many times, which he feels doesn't allow the band to purchase/pay for needed things.

Heather Malec, parent, spoke on behalf of the band parents. She said they feel the band students don't get much respect. Ms. Malec shared with the Board competitions/events the band has missed out on. Ms. Malec informed the Board the band parents feel there needs to be a full-time band instructor hired.

Viviana Herrera, a band student, emotionally shared with the Board she doesn't feel she gets support from the school with having no band director in place.

5. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA – AGENDA APPROVED AS PRESENTED**

**7. NEW BUSINESS**

**D. ADDITION - Accept Letter of Resignation**

**E. ADDITION - Declare Board Vacancy**

6. **CONSENT AGENDA - APPROVED CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED**

**A. Personnel Approval**

- Marlene Vasquez - Resignation as a Paraprofessional at the Primary School effective November 7, 2024
- Francisco Viescas - Resignation as Industrial Arts Teacher at Tiger Trades Academy effective November 15, 2024
- Julia Barta - Resignation as Science Teacher at the Junior/Senior High School effective December 20, 2024
- Anna Angel - New Hire as a Paraprofessional at the Primary School for the 2024-2025 school year

**B. Approve an Additional Out-of-District Student for the 2024-2025 School Year**

7. **MINUTES -**

A. Minutes of October 28, 2024. **APPROVED AS PRINTED**

8. **PRESENTATIONS -**

**District Advisory Council Report – John Hannel**

John Hannel, District Advisory Council (DAC) Representative, was unable to attend the meeting tonight due to health issues.

**District Nurse Update - Emilee Weirich**

Emilee Weirich, District Nurse, shared some updates. She explained each building has a health aide on campus and they stay busy each day, seeing an average of 20-30 student daily. Ms. Weirich said she and her health aides are going to do emergency preparedness training with the La Junta Fire Department this Friday. It will give them some valuable hands on training and First Aid classes. This training will be at no cost to the district as it is part of the La Junta Fire Department's community outreach program. 93% of Kindergarten students are vaccinated in the district. The vaccination exemption rate is at 3% for the district, which is a high percentage and explained vaccination rates have decreased since Covid. Ms. Weirich shared that she meets with each health aide weekly. She is a member of the Colorado School Nurses Association and the National School Nurses Association. Mrs. Leyba asked if there will be a dedicated page from the Nurse's Office. Ms. Weirich said she would like that and would also like the health forms on the website page as well.

**Auditor's Report - Lisa Hemann, CPA**

Lisa Hemann, Certified Public Account with Redlands Accounting and Advisory, reviewed the highlights of the 2022-2023 audit with the Board. Superintendent Blincoe explained Ms. Hemann has been helping the district with their books and the audit. Ms. Hemann said she spent 20 years auditing local governments and schools, and said she was hired by the district to clean up 2023 and 2024 and help the district get through both the audits. Ms. Hemann took a moment to thank Heather Nelson, Business Manager, in getting her necessary information and answering questions related to transactions that happened in 2022 and 2023 for which she wasn't necessarily involved with or responsible for. Ms. Hemann said she has moved through 2023 and the financial statements and the audit report have been issued by Ronny Farmer along with a letter to the Board and the management letter. The letters he provided describe the auditor's responsibility for the audit and management's responsibility for the financial statements and the internal control weaknesses that were noted as part of the audit. Ms. Hemann explained any time you have an audit and it is late or there are numerous journal entries or difficulty reconciling balances, you will have internal control weaknesses reported by the auditor. The internal control weaknesses noted were a lack of reconciliation during the year, primarily related to the bank reconciliations, accounts receivable and accounts payable as well as some fixed assets reconciliations that also needed to be done. The auditor also noted the district should develop written internal control policies and procedures, which Ms. Hemann agrees with. She said the reason for policies and procedures would be in case of turnover, then there are policies and procedures that anyone can pick up and carry forward. These would also define what the procedures are on a monthly basis so everyone knows what they are supposed to be doing as well as providing a review process. Ms. Hemann said she would be happy to help develop these or provide resources for templates.

Many of the problems the district experienced for 2023 and 2024 appear to be due to a change in auditor and turnover in key positions in the district. The risk of having the auditor come in and help with a lot of the reconciliation at the end of the year is that if the auditor leaves, they take all of that knowledge with them. The reconciliations they were doing would have to be picked up by someone at the district who might not be familiar with how that worked at the end of year. Ms. Hemann said she thinks that is probably the position the district was in when the last auditor retired.

The district taking control of all those reconciliations and financial statements also gives a better audit and makes sure the auditor is as independent as they can be so they are not auditing the information they have put together and the adjustments they have done.

The 2023 financial statements are pretty dated by now. The district has moved on and is working in the fiscal year 2025 statements and looking forward to getting the 2024 audit done. The statements for the district are about 61 pages long and Ms. Hemann explained financial statements for school districts are always lengthy. What she recommends if the financial statements are going to be read, is to start with the management's discussion analysis which provides some context and comparison to prior years and the budget, as well as the footnotes. She said the footnotes describe the policies and procedures of the district and also ties back to those financial statements. It describes in more detail what are the capital assets, what are the long term liabilities, and what are cash and investments made up of. Ms. Hemann said about half of the footnotes these days are the pension information and is a lot of description about how they come up with the PERA liability and the healthcare trust fund liability. Ms. Hemann said what she generally tells school boards and management is what should be paid attention to with the PERA liability, which is not a liability the district is going to have to write a check for. She said to look for how funded that liability is because it could affect how much the district and its employees will have to contribute in the future. It will also describe what the state is doing to fill in the gaps on that liability and help districts out so they are fully funded. The first statements and the financial statements are the statement of net position and the statement of activities. These statements include all of the long term activity for the district, which are capital assets the district owns at the end of year, the bonds payable, as well as the PERA and healthcare trust fund liability. The second set of statements in the

financial statements which began on page six are the fund financial statements. Those statements are on more of a budget basis and are the near term activity. They show anything that has been spent for capital outlay or new debt. It shows cash for new debt and shows any money going out for capital assets purchased during the year. The statements that are often most useful for boards and other readers of the financial statements are the budget to actual statements. Those are in the back of the financial statement and begin on page 52. Ms. Hemann said these show the original and final budgets, the fund financial statements individually and how they compared to budget. When looking at these financial statements, they should mirror the information the Board received during the year to help make decisions.

There was one fund that had budget over expenditures, which was the student activity fund. Another important reason for reconciling on a regular basis is so you can identify where you are going to have budget over expenditures before the end of the year so supplemental appropriations can be done for those.

Ms. Hemann suggested the Board pay attention to in the financial statements is there were a number of prior period adjustments in the 2023 financial statements, as described on page 43 of the footnotes. She said this footnote can be a little confusing. She said prior period adjustments mean at the end of 2022 there were some errors found in the 2022 financial statements that were corrected in 2023. The adjustments were made to that beginning fund balance. The fund balance is basically everything that is leftover at the end of the year which is cash and receivables net of any liabilities that you have to be able to spend going forward. If there were errors in the prior year financial statements, they get adjusted to the beginning fund balance. Those adjustments were primarily to recognize revenue and expenditures in the proper periods and it was largely related to the BEST grant. There were large expenditures that were recognized in 2023 but should have been recognized in 2022 to match when the revenue was recognized. There were some adjustments to capital assets as well related to the HVAC system that was funded with the BEST grant.

Superintendent Blincoe asked if the district has a health fund balance in her opinion. Ms. Hemann said yes, there is around three months sitting in fund balance which she feels is pretty reasonable. Ms. Hemann recommended the grant funds are monitored carefully. She said she is still working on reconciling the 2024 accounting records and is hoping to have those reconciled in December so the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) reconciliation can be completed, and the auditor can finish the audit quickly once they can get started. The 2023 auditor did not complete the audit of the federal awards, so Ms. Hemann believes the new auditor will complete this along with the 2024 audit. The audit of the federal awards generally happens with the audit of the financial statements and is required for all local governments that expend \$750,000 or more in federal grants. Generally, it affects most of the school districts in the state and are required to have a single audit. Ms. Hemann said that threshold is going up a little bit and will go up to \$1,000,000 for the 2025 or 2026 audit.

Director Leyba asked how long it will take to write the policies and procedures. Ms. Hemann said she should be able to get templates to the district next week. Superintendent Blincoe said he feels the policies could be ready for the January meeting for adoption. Director Leyba asked if an extension will need to be filed for this year's audit and Ms. Nelson said yes.

**9. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT -**

Superintendent Blincoe shared the Board will be sending out some goodies to the buildings to commemorate American Education Week.

The CASB convention is coming up and Superintendent Blincoe reminded the Board to download the CASB app prior to attending the convention.

**10. DISCUSSION -**

**Staff Bonus Checks**

Superintendent Blincoe stated he has been looking at trying to give a staff bonus. He said he thought there may be some extra funds, however, in looking at the budget, there was not. Some reports were run to compare what was budgeted for and what the costs are actually. He said when the budget is reconciled in January, there may be some funds available. He would like to give staff bonuses and is working hard in trying to be able to do that. Director Leyba asked Ms. Nelson when the books become her responsibility. Ms. Nelson said 2023-2024 to current is under her. Director Leyba asked where the search for new accounting software is at. Superintendent Blincoe said a firm, Abacus, has been hired. They are experts with our current accounting software and have been working on cleaning things up. Ms. Nelson said Abacus will go through everything with the business office. She said she is excited for the help and additional training. Superintendent Blincoe said Abacus is looking at payroll and tax deductions in our current accounting software and he is excited about that.

**Discussion of Building Roofs**

Superintendent Blincoe said he recently had a phone call with the Colorado Department of Education regarding applying for a BEST grant for the roofing project. He did fill out the preliminary form to allow the district to apply for the BEST grant this year. CDE suggested an owner's representative be obtained by the district. Superintendent Blincoe said he has contacted two owner's reps and has heard back from one of them (Robert Cave, Cave Consulting Group). The application deadline for the BEST grant is February 4, 2025 and the district would find out in April if the grant was awarded. The gentleman that attended last meeting suggested he could be a consultant for the district in obtaining a BEST grant. Superintendent Blincoe said he is with a roofing company and could not be a consultant for the BEST grant. Director Hines asked what the fee will be for the owner's rep. Superintendent Blincoe doesn't have the number yet, but feels it would be around 15%. Director S. Ayala asked if the roofs will be fixed or if this is a Band-Aid project. Superintendent Blincoe said they would be replaced and Mr. Cave would like to look at the roof at CDS to re-evaluate it. Director S. Ayala asked if the interior damage would be included and Superintendent Blincoe said the interior damage would be the district's responsibility and not the roofers.

**Policy CBA/CBC**

Policy CBA/CBC, Qualification/Powers and Responsibilities of Superintendent – Job Description is on the agenda for approval of first reading. Superintendent Blincoe explained this policy was revised due to not being up-to-date with CASB's policy. Director Leyba said she would like to wait until there is a full Board to pass this revised policy. This will be placed on the January agenda.

**SuperEval**

The district purchased a program called SuperEval. This is an online evaluation tool for the superintendent, as well as the Board self-evaluation. A contract was signed and the district purchased the superintendent evaluation tool as well as the board evaluation tool. Superintendent Blincoe said a Zoom meeting will need to be scheduled for training. This will be waited on as well.

**11. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Certify Total FTE for October Count for 2024-2025 (Blincoe) **CERTIFIED AT 1280.5 AS PRESENTED**
- b. Approve Revised Policy CBA/CBC on First/Revised Reading (Blincoe) **TABLED UNTIL THE JANUARY MEETING**
- c. Approve Audit Services Proposal (Blincoe) **APPROVED IN THE AMOUNT OF \$43,000.00 AS PRESENTED**
- d. Accept Letter of Resignation from Darlene Derbigny **ACCEPTED AS PRESENTED**
- e. Declare a Board Vacancy **APPROVED AS PRESENTED**

**12. BOARD COMMENTS**

- ✓ Director Leyba said she would like to dive deeper into band funding. She said she understands it is frustrating when there is school pride and it is not recognized. She understands the district has had issues in obtaining band teachers and the Board may need to have a work session to review that. Director Leyba said she wished she could have attended the Veteran's Ceremonies today. She said she likes the idea that the Junior/Senior High School's celebration is an in-house event. She likes students being able to honoring veterans in a respectful way and the ideas for the ceremony coming from the students. Director Leyba is excited about the Sources of Strength program and is glad the students presented tonight.
- ✓ Director Hines said she is enjoying the celebrations portion of the agenda.
- ✓ Superintendent Blincoe said he discussed the music/band program with his administrative council. The band position will be posted and Superintendent Blincoe feels a lot of the problems are from not having a dedicated band director. He said the district will continue to try to obtain a band director.
- ✓ Director Leyba asked if the teachers are being included in the celebrations. She would like to celebrate their achievements as well.
- ✓ Director S. Ayala said she was in band and really thinks it is super important. She said the elementary choirs used to perform at Otero College for the holidays and she would like to bring that back as well. Superintendent Blincoe said if a dedicated band director could be obtained, that would free up the music teacher.

**13. ADJOURNMENT – MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:11 p.m.**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**DEE LEYBA, President**

**ANGELA AYALA, Vice President**

**STACEY AYALA, Director**

**SARA HINES, Director**