

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meetings

February 25th, 2009

Spotlight on the Board is a synopsis of notes and recordings taken at the District 15 School Board meetings by Frank C. Whiteley PTA's school board liaison, Jennifer Mondy. They are meant to help parents and staff who are unable to attend the Board meetings on a regular basis to keep informed about the issues and plans affecting the district. These Notes are not endorsed by District 15 or the Board of Education. Below are the highlights from the February 15th Committee of the Whole Board of Education Meeting.

Beginning Conversations about Expanding Educational Opportunities

Curriculum administrators presented research and specific district data on all-day kindergarten, second language offerings at the elementary schools and two types of Spanish maintenance language programs. Research shows that children do benefit from all-day kindergarten regardless of their background and half of the public schools surrounding District 15 offer it. Data on foreign language instruction indicates that the most effective programs meet at least 30 minutes three to five days a week. Transitional bilingual programs are mandated in Illinois with the goal of English language development. The goals of maintenance programs are to have the student become bilingual and obtain literacy in both languages.

Review 5-Year Financial Projections

Debate ensued over whether the projections accurately reflected incoming revenues from new construction and expenditures for teacher compensation and capital improvements over the next few years. Discussion also included distribution scenarios for the Palatine TIF revenue expected in 2010, potential special education federal stimulus money and projected deficits in both the operating and education funds. Revisions will be made to the forecast and brought back at the March 11th Board meeting.

Impact of Class Size Reduction (K-8)

The administration's calculations show that if class size averages were reduced by one student in grades 1 through 6, ten additional sections would be needed district wide costing \$500K. Most members felt that the timing wasn't right and cited financial projections showing the district's deficit spending, the uncertainty of teacher contract negotiations and that class sizes would have to dramatically reduce in order to make a significant impact in student achievement.

Board Member Access to Information/Authority

It was revealed that a legal opinion from the Illinois State Attorney's office had been received addressing this Board's lack of access to readily available district documents. Without the majority of the Board's knowledge, an attorney was present to respond to the issue of individual Board member authority which contradicted the legal opinion. Charges were made that employees were directed to deny access to documents and information is being provided to one member and not the entire Board. The audio (17 minutes) for this portion of the meeting can be found at www.fcwpta.org/board_notes.htm

Board of Education Candidate Forum – March 18th

All eight candidates have been invited to participate in a Northwest Suburban Council PTA/PTSA sponsored forum on Wednesday, March 18th at Sundling Junior High at 7 p.m. Questions at this forum will focus on education. Campaign Web sites and news concerning the April 7th Board of Education election can be found at www.fcwpta.org/election.htm

Full detailed notes for this meeting can be found at www.fcwpta.org/pdf/d15_feb_25_2009.pdf
An archive of notes dating back to May 2005 can be found at www.fcwpta.org/spotlight_archive.htm

Subscribe to the *Spotlight on the Board* notes at www.fcwpta.org/board_notes.htm and receive notification when Board meeting notes are posted online. The next Regular Board of Education meeting will be held **Wednesday, March 11th, 7 p.m.** at Sundling Junior High on Smith Street in Palatine. A Committee of the Whole meeting will be held **Wednesday, April 1st, 7 p.m.** at the same location.