

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meetings

September 10th, 2008

This was a Regular Board of Education meeting. Board Vice President Kelly Keenan was absent.

Superintendent's Reports

Student Assignment Plan Update – 6th Day Enrollment Report

Asst. Superintendent Jim Garwood – Explained the process of determining student assignment. Details can be found on the district's Web site at the link below:

(<http://www.ccsd15.net/AboutDistrict15/DistrictOffices/SuperintendentsOffice/HTML/AdminServices.html>)

This year the district has experienced a decline in enrollment of approximately 162 students. That was a predicted decline. Last year the district lost about 100 students, the year before about 200. This is something that the district demographer has been predicting for several years now as the housing developments level off. That is due to the fact that our incoming kindergarten class enrollment is significantly lower than our outgoing 8th grade class. For example, our kindergarten enrollment as of last week was 1,165 students. The outgoing 8th grade class was 1,458 students. So you can see the real difference in the amount (of students) in those grade levels. In regards to the class averages, we are on target district wide. Every year we do have a couple of situations where classes are higher than the average. That is something that the staff works very hard at to provide resources to be able to ensure that all of the children in those classrooms have opportunities and their instructional needs are met. Garwood asked the principal of Lake Louise to share some examples of what they have done to address high class sizes in the third grade.

Adam Palmer, Lake Louise principal – We have a situation at Lake Louise where we believe the resources are going to meet the needs of those higher sections. Would like to share with the Board what those are going to look like. They have allocated program assistant time to the third grade group. In addition to that, the third grade has been targeted for extended literacy instruction which will occur four days a week after school for an additional hour each day. On top of that, out-of-level math students have been identified and will be moved up to the fourth grade classroom, thus reducing the class size (during math time). Finally, the reading specialist will now take small groups for the literacy instruction part of the day, working with and targeting small groups for instruction during that literacy block. Palmer believes that these actions will meet the needs of the students at Lake Louise.

Board member Wendy Rowden – Appreciates the efforts used in using the Board's parameters and creating a system that for the most part works. She understands that there are always situations of either a larger or smaller class size. Rowden appreciates the site-based decision making and the autonomy that the individual schools have to decide how to allocate their resources as Palmer described. They have chosen to allocate their staff based on the needs of the kids and thinks that is what needs to be done. By using the special area teachers, the program assistants and other opportunities the district has to enrich the kids, supplement the curriculum – thinks that is great.

Board member Sue Quinn – Wanted to also ask Garwood if there are other situations around the district similar to Lake Louise? **Garwood** – We do have several other situations in different buildings, at different grade levels that have large class sizes. Some are similar in class size like Lake Louise. Those principals are engaged in the same process as to what other resources they can bring to those classes. They are doing many of the same things that Palmer described. It happens every year – somewhere there is always a situation where the class size is higher than others. It is not always the same grade level, it is not always the same building, and it is the nature of where numbers fall and where staff is available. Garwood wants to report that each building is allocated in the exact same way according to the same formula. There is no preference. We are using a system that is equal for all.

Superintendent's Report – Start of School

D15 Superintendent Daniel Lukich – We got off to a very good start this year with transportation. There are always a few issues, always a few long routes and there have been complaints about drivers being early. That's a good complaint. Sometimes they are early to the buildings where kids have to wait on the bus for awhile for supervisory staff to be there. An awful lot of work went into the transportation system and quite frankly by the fact that we have enough buses this year and more than enough drivers and the right kind of leadership - it is all going very well.

Wanted to mention that in the tours the administration had made (to the buildings) he was really pleased and impressed to see the progress of the district on the installation of new technology almost throughout each building. Lukich knows that the BOE, Garwood and technology department paid a lot of attention last year to ensure that. Technology gets old very quickly. It is good that kids in this district are seeing the newest and best technology that the district can afford, not the most expensive.

Our Cabinet did complete a visit of all 20 buildings without staff and students in them. They had a very good opportunity to take a look at facilities just for the facility itself from the standpoint of condition, rooms and roofs. It was interesting because one building that we went through has had some leaks in the past and there is a report for the Board tonight. When the administration toured that building in late July/early August, the fact was that everything had been worked on, patched and taken care of for the start of school. It didn't do as well as transportation because on the second day of school after a good rain, there was not just a leak but an absolute gully washer in one room of Pleasant Hill. We decided we wanted to make a presentation for the Board tonight on roof repair. Not just in that one room but the entire wing, because patching has taken place there and he thinks from the standpoint of the use of that building, use of that wing, there is not a lot of flexibility. There needs to be a tight roof sooner than later.

Update on Pleasant Hill Roofing Repair

Asst. Superintendent for Business, Rebecca Allard – There was a total roof failure in Room 108 (first grade) at Pleasant Hill last week. The administration is asking the Board for approval of a life safety amendment and authorization for the district's architects to move forward creating documents for a total roof replacement of that wing at PH. Historical information was given to the Board that outlines the dollars spent over the last several years. Water leakage in that wing of the building has become a norm and not an isolated incident. In June, approval of \$300K was given for a partial replacement but that work is not scheduled to be done until next summer. The roof needs to be taken care of before winter. The administration is asking the Board for approval to move forward and will come back in October with bid results and award the contract to the most responsible lowest bidder. The work will be done immediately thereafter.

The action being recommended is two-fold and will take place at the same time. The architects will develop documents under closed bid situations so they can use the life safety fund. There are funds available to support this. **Lukich** – The architectural firm developed the schedule of events given to the Board. The target is October 10th to award the contract and it may require a special Board meeting in order to review the bids. **Chapman** – Asked the Board if there should be a single item special meeting on the 10th to accelerate the consideration of these bids? (Agreed.)

Quinn – Asked about the children's situation now as there is still a length of time before the roof will be replaced. **Allard** – The teacher/students are utilizing the kindergarten classroom in the afternoon and the cafeteria in the morning. The kids are being very accommodating; the staff is doing whatever they need to do to make sure the kids' educational needs are being met. Measurements have been taken in that classroom for replacement of the carpet. That room is going to take some work because of the concern for air quality and the amount of damage that was done.

Quinn – Wants to make sure that the building has the resources they need to handle the situation. Is a trailer (mobile) needed or other accommodation so the students have a reasonable educational environment for the next month (until the roof is repaired)?

Matt Palcer, Pleasant Hill principal (was asked by Lukich to comment) – There are 3 classrooms and 2 resource rooms in that wing that would need to be moved if a full roof replacement is done. The architects advised that it could be done in 2 phases - First one side of the hallway where the first graders would be displaced for a maximum of 10 days. Those 3 rooms would be moved to the music room, art room and possibly the other half of a double-sized gifted room where the divider can be pulled in to make two classrooms where there is one now.

The cafeteria has been very successful for the first grade classroom teacher now. PH is fortunate that they have Smart Board technology which has made the room in the cafeteria surprisingly successful. If the roof replacement is done in two phases, only 3 classrooms at a time would be moved for a period of two weeks. Based on the success they had this past week (with moving the classroom), he is not concerned about providing those kids with a good environment where they can get some academic work done. **Allard** – Commented that the specification (for the work) will include an alternate for work to continue through the weekend. There is a cost benefit (to the district) to have work done on Saturday and Sunday to shorten the time period.

Citizens Address the Board

Mary Daumen – Lake Louise parent

Spoke on the issue of classroom size. She referred to a state-wide Tennessee study called "Project Star" that focused on the affects of class size on learning. www.heros-inc.org/star.htm
Daumen said that D15 is consistently missing its class size targets due to the way the averages are determined. The averages may be a place to start but they do not work in every situation. There needs to be another step in the process that is fair to all students and uses a little commonsense. School staff should not have to choose between having first grade classes of 29 or 3rd grade classes of over 30, which is what happened at Lake Louise. The average for grades 1 to 3 at Lake Louise is 23.72 (district target average for grades 1 to 3 is 24). As a parent, her job is to be an advocate for children. As a taxpayer, she expects her money to be used conscientiously. She doesn't expect the district to hire teachers whenever parents complain but does expect principals, administrators and BOE to recognize when a process isn't working and take steps to correct it. Daumen isn't saying that the school is doing nothing to help these oversized classrooms. Program assistants and reading specialists are giving assistance to the 3rd graders. Daumen has signed petitions from over 300 district parents asking the Board to review this process.

Beth Sayven – Lake Louise parent

She is concerned about class sizes being almost 30% over the target, not just 3 or 4 students over. When looking at the largest class sizes for every grade in the district, the only grade that has any class size that is 25% over the target is 3rd grade and that is 31 students (in Lake Louise). Said that if you look at the 7th grade, there is one class that has 32% less than the target. Thinks that it is great that the Board has a set target and the schools assign teachers in accordance. However if there are classes where every single class is 29% over the target or if there are classes that are 32% less, something is not working. We either need a cap – a minimum cap, a maximum cap – something. She has never approached the principal on an issue until this year and her daughter has had large class sizes every year but first grade (anywhere from 27 to 30 kids). Sayven believes that communication between the teachers and students is going to be affected; teachers are going to spend much more time on discipline. Wants to say that while the school is doing a great job with these large class sizes, she is not talking about high – she is talking about 30% over the target. That is the issue the Board needs to address.

Ref: **2008-2009 Regular Education Average Class Size by Grade**

www.fcwpta.org/pdf/2008_09_avg_class_size.pdf

Ref: **Regular Education 6-Day Enrollment (August 29, 2008)**

www.fcwpta.org/pdf/RegEd_6thDay_082908.pdf

CCSD15 6-Day Enrollment – Includes Regular, Bilingual and Special Education

www.fcwpta.org/pdf/6thDay_total_082908.pdf

Sally Smith – Lake Louise parent

She has come before the Board to request immediate assistance in the quest to find a fair and equitable solution to the overcrowded classrooms that are plaguing multiple schools throughout D15. Ensuring equal opportunity for success of our teachers and students is a critical part of achieving a world class community, improving district wide scores and maintaining a strong reputation. With 32 or more in one classroom, it is very difficult for children to receive the same quality education as their peers who are enjoying a much smaller classroom. She implores the Board to stamp out these inequalities among the grade levels, among the schools in our district and among the diverse D15 population. Stated that it is not right that every grade level at Lake Louise has been provided four sections except the third grade. Teachers teaching over 30 students do not have an equal opportunity to produce the same results as teachers who enjoy significantly smaller class sizes. To rectify this district wide situation, the Board must change the current guidelines for target class sizes so that no class is allowed to be 20% over the target class size at any grade level. Each classroom must be measured independently. It is time for the district to live up to its promises stated on its Web site. This year at Lake Louise that means adding another 3rd grade teacher or full time certified teaching assistant in each classroom. In other schools, the solution may be different.

Ref: **Chicago Tribune, 9/10/08** "Palatine school's 3rd grade classroom too packed, parents say"
www.fcwpta.org/pdf/Chicago_Tribune_09_10_08_class_sizes.pdf

Daily Herald, 9/11/08 "Class size an issue for third grade"
www.fcwpta.org/pdf/Daily_Herald_09_11_08_3rd_grade.pdf

Board Discussion and Reports

Internal Control Audit Response

Allard – Prior to her arrival July 1st, the district had a risk assessment of internal controls review by our independent auditors. This document came forward for review in June with some comments that it should come back once Allard came on Board in the district. She now has had an opportunity to look at the comments, do her investigation, review and some observations. The comments that required a written response from her or from the business office collectively are in "red" throughout the document (given to the Board). She believes that it was thought, or suggested in June that the district would need additional staff to implement some of these internal controls. She disagrees with that comment, does not believe additional staff is needed in the business office to implement any of these controls. She observed that the office could evaluate different duties among various staff members. Any work load can be absorbed by current staff.

She has a concern that there should be an integrated "check and balance" system between the HR department and the payroll department especially when it relates to payroll, general ledger and cost of salaries. The district's current financial software does not permit that. She discussed with both departments the possibility of making a recommendation to the Board that we should look at our financial software. Allard believes that there are information management systems out there that would allow us as a district to put systematic controls in that the BOE can have confidence in those checks and balances.

The audit that comes to the Board on a monthly basis is hand done now. There are systems that would allow that to be maintained and controlled internally through technology. Thinks that is something we should be investigating over the next year or two for replacing that system as well as updating our Student Management System that Garwood and the Administrative Services recommended a year ago.

Board member Nancy Lee Carlson – Said that the way Allard made the comments (in the document) was in a very precise manner and appreciates the fact that it was an easy to read document for the first time in many years. Carlson asked about the software proposal and implementation (that Allard mentioned) as to its value in terms of the cost and time saved.

Allard – In her previous district they implemented an HR/Finance system at a cost of \$80K. There are several systems out there that can be evaluated and are equally as efficient with the checks and balances. The issue (for D15) will be whether the budget can support this expenditure.

Carlson – Would we be able to cut down our staffing? **Allard** – Maybe over time, but she wouldn't guarantee it right away that you could reduce staff. When she has implemented new software packages in other districts, Allard found that staff end up doing different jobs and they get to more analyzing of data than just data entry. The jobs become more analysis versus just straight data entry. D15 does an awful lot of data entry right now, duplicate data entry.

Quinn – Allard mentioned the cost at around \$80K. What is the timeframe you would be looking at? **Allard** – There is a lot on the business office's "plate" right now. We are doing the Transportation Study that will come to the Board in November. The Facility Audit that the Board is going to start looking at is coming in October. She would think that in the spring they would be thinking about an implementation date of 18 to 24 months out from today.

Board member Tim Millar – Had a question on the current JD Edwards software package. Can it be upgraded or is it past that point? **Allard** – Has had conversations with the company, they will be sending a sales person to evaluate our systems as to what modifications could be made to the package. However, JD Edwards doesn't exist as it existed when the package was purchased almost 10 years ago. Oracle bought them out so they have trouble internally to support it. **Millar** – Asked if the software, whichever way the office went, would handle the cash to accrual problem? **Allard** – That would be one of the things she would be looking for. **Millar** – Commented that the auditors did a fabulous job as well as Allard on working through this document. It really answers a lot of questions.

New Business

Quinn – Would like to see something put on the agenda for next month. Considering we have heard our report and from the community about our class size policy. Thinks it is a reasonable question for this Board to consider whether the class size parameters we set as a Board and procedures that we have – whether those are working to achieve the educational outcome that we want for our students. We have an upcoming strategic and facilities planning process that we are starting and she thinks that it is important that we consider any research or any data that we can gather internally in the district as to whether these class size parameters are working. Whatever class size parameters we set, whether we keep them the same or we move them whichever way will directly impact our budget, probably substantially. And will directly impact whatever facility planning that we do because class size drives virtually all the planning that we do. We need to consider that as we start in on this process. Would like to see this topic put on the agenda for next month so we can have some discussion.

Carlson – Wants to make a comment on class sizes. To say that it will impact our budget is an understatement. It directly impacts our contracts with our teachers, it directly affects whether we have to go for a bond issue. Everyone on this Board recalls we had a failed bond issue (referendum). We are working on the same percentage as 20 years ago. Class size reductions are not the end all and be all. Class sizes in some countries are four times the size. It is a very complicated process in educating children. She would personally like to see our younger elementary children have lower class sizes. Thinks there is great indication that it does help. But everyone in this community also has to feel the way we do and feel the value of reduced class sizes. So hopefully the people that signed the petition will outreach to the community so that they understand the importance of education of the upcoming generation we have.

Chapman – Nobody knows that more than those that had to suffer through the impact of a failed referendum and what that does. Quinn is absolutely right. Nothing drives the budget more than our class sizes. It also has an impact in terms of facility needs. We will put this issue on as a discussion item at our next meeting.

Action Items

Committee Structure 2008-09

Chapman – It is his sense that the Board should visit this issue as it sees a need arising. If the Board collectively believes that there is a need for a committee, then let's put it on our agenda and visit it on an individual basis. Doesn't believe there is a need at this point because we are engaged in the comprehensive study of the facilities. That requires a special meeting with everyone's collective wisdom. If there is no objection, we will consider it (committees) as the need arises.

Proposed Series of Town Hall Meetings

Quinn – When we first put this on the agenda, she thought the Board would have its first look at the facilities study and that has been pushed out because there is a lot of data. She believes that it is important to get public input into our long range strategic and facilities planning. How we go about doing that is something she would like to see the Board talk about and get some recommendations from the superintendent about how to precede. Quinn would like to suggest having a town hall meeting which would be a great way to receive a lot of comments. She would like to hear things such as: "The most important thing to me is class sizes need to be lower. Or one of the most important things to me is we need a new science program or a new math program or new literacy goals." Just get that kind of feedback. It can be done through online surveys or other ways. She would like to get that process started because she thinks the community needs to weigh in on what their ideas are.

Chapman – Appreciates that and particularly supports the comment about getting a recommendation from the superintendent. The question he has is how soon do you want to visit that? Do you want to visit that prior to – and he knows he is jumping ahead but – we are talking about having a special meeting to look at that first "blush" of (facilities study) information? Do you want to visit it prior to that (meeting) or after that? **Quinn** – Thinks that the special meeting we are going to have on facilities is going to be the first of several meetings. Her thought is that the public input needs to come in on the frontend so we know where the community stands. And then fold that in as we precede with the facilities nuts and bolts as to where to go. It doesn't have to be exactly before that meeting but somewhere in the general vicinity of the next few months. She would like to see us gathering data from the community. **Chapman** – Asked Lukich for a recommendation on a format for those meetings. **Lukich** – Replied that it can be done at the October 18th meeting.

Millar – Has a suggestion for a town hall meeting to possibly go over the perceived or real inequities between the schools. He is not sure how to address that, if this would be a good format. Millar has gotten a lot of comments from different schools with perceptions that there is an inequity. Being on the Board, he has never seen it participate in any inequities. It is usually very different from what the reality is and wants to bring it up for discussion. It has always gone around the district and it would be nice to be able to address that. **Lukich** – Will take that into consideration and says that it falls nicely into the discussion for the special meeting on October 18th.

Financial Report Card

Chapman – Said that this was not a question as to whether to do it but the method of distribution. **Quinn** – She would recommend that we do what was done last time which was post it on the Web site with a full linked up version so people can get access if they really want to dive deep into the financials, academic test results, etc. Also send home a two-page summary in backpacks indicating that more information can be found on the webpage. We send information home in the backpacks all of the time so it is a minimal cost but a good way to bring it to the top of people's minds that it exists.

Motion made and seconded to ask the administration to prepare a Financial Report Card (FRC) for final approval by the Board at a later date because it is contingent on the audit. It should be prepared in the form of a Web site version and a two-page version that goes home in backpacks.

Additional discussion/comments –

Millar – One adjustment that could be made (to the FRC) is to make sure people know that it is a static document and subject to change and if we can update it. As we amend our budgets, the information is no longer accurate. Knows that last year we had some people looking at that and the

numbers changed quite dramatically. It was no longer the same. Asked if there could be a notice saying to please check back because this is not a static document.

Quinn – Thinks that is a great point but would actually like to see a history where we have the last two or three versions of that document so people can go back and see how things have evolved. Whenever we have an actual amended budget, it is a process and when it occurs we should have an automatic amend (change) of our FRC.

Motion approved 6:0 (Keenan absent)

Disseminating of the Facility Audit Study – Recommended Additional Board of Education Special Meeting

There was a motion made for a Special board meeting for Saturday, October 18th at 8 a.m. to look at the dissemination of the facility audit study. The location will be the Board room at Sundling JH.

Approved 6:0 (Keenan absent)

Quinn – She would request that any materials in preparation for that meeting come in as far in advance as possible considering the Special meeting is coming right after a Regular Board meeting (October 15th). There is not a lot of time and we all will be preparing for the Regular Board meeting. Knows there will be a lot to go through. **Lukich** – Looked to the architects in the room and suggested that a week lead time would be pretty good.

Consent Calendar – Item J

Board Policy 7:100 – Students – Health, Eye and Dental Examinations and Exclusion of Students

Quinn – Appreciates getting the information about when the eye exam is done and that the district conducts its own screenings. Wondered if the district had done those (eye exam) screenings every year at every grade level before? Is this something new that we are only doing it at 2nd, 5th and 8th? **Garwood** – We had done it every year but it was never part of the policy. We now feel that was a little excessive to tie up our health staff. It takes up a large amount of time to test each child every year. Usually if you test them one year you are not going to see vision change that rapidly by the next year. We do have systems built in here that if teachers or parents request, we will do those screenings.

Motion approved 6:0 (Keenan absent)

Citizens Address the Board

A late request to address the Board was granted.

Julie Plants and Lori Austin – Thomas Jefferson parents

Advised that they are representing a large group of TJ parents who have a high level of interest in the current junior high boundaries. TJ students go to Carl Sandburg JH, which is on the opposite side of the district and some children are on the bus for over 40 minutes each way. Travel times will never decrease because of the distance. They sent out a survey regarding boundaries and the response indicated that distance is a concern. Parents do not understand why they pass another junior high (Plum Grove) to get to Sandburg (in Rolling Meadows). Another concern is for TJ gifted students who now attend Whiteley School from 3rd through 6th grade. TJ goes to Sandburg and Whiteley students go to Plum Grove. Asked if it would not benefit everyone to have Whiteley and TJ students attend the same junior high? Both schools are located in Hoffman Estates but are treated differently in regards to the junior high. They do not believe that the factors used in the decision to choose these current boundaries 20 years ago hold true today; want the boundaries to be fair for all JH students. This is a huge concern for TJ families and they would like to see changes quickly. Both Plants and Austin have 6th graders at TJ and would personally like to see changes made for the next school year.

Chapman (responding) – As was mentioned earlier, there will be a special board meeting (on Saturday, October 18th, 8 a.m. at Sundling JH). He said that the issue before the Board is not only for the current district facilities. They are aware of the fact – unfortunately, the population of the district moved westward and the buildings were static. One of the things that we asked the architects to take a look at is matching up our students along with our buildings. As (Board member) Quinn indicated earlier, that is one of the issues where we are trying to get public input. The reason Chapman is making this comment is that they want to give the same opportunity to other people that Plants and Austin have now in giving their comments (on this issue). He told them that it is clearly not just an issue with their school.

Executive Session

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 a.m. and the Board went into Executive Session shortly thereafter. It was announced that no Board action was expected to take place afterwards.

The next Regular Board of Education meeting has been changed to Wednesday, October 15th at 7 p.m. at Sundling Junior High due to a conflict for the superintendent.

Special Board of Education meetings are being planned for **Friday, October 10th** to review and award the contract for the roof replacement at Pleasant Hill and also for **Saturday, October 18th** at 8 a.m. (at Sundling Junior High) to discuss disseminating the information obtained from the Facility Audit Study.

For details on agenda items not covered in these notes, be sure to check the district's Web site at www.ccsd15.net A Summary of Board Actions can be found under the tab for the Board of Education.

Jennifer Mondy
fcwnews@comcast.net

Posted online: Friday, September 12, 2008