

MINUTES OF THE ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD
REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 26, 2007
REVISED

The Anchorage School Board met in Regular Session on Monday, March 26, 2007, at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room, at the Anchorage School District Administration Building. President, Jeff Friedman, presided.

A. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE, Jeff Friedman Presiding

Board Members Present: John Steiner, Macon Roberts, Crystal Kennedy, Jeff Friedman, Jake Metcalfe, Mary Marks, and Tim Steele

Others Present: Carol Comeau, Rhonda Gardner, Leslie Vandergaw, Mike Henry, Patricia McRae, Enid Silverstein, Jerry Sjolander, Eric Tollefsen, Michelle Egan, Robb Boyer, Janet Stokesbary, William Johnson, Ray Amsden, Pam Chenier, Marie Laule, Johanna Lee, the press, and other interested people.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

C. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Roberts extended his congratulations to the both the boys and girls basketball teams from Wasilla.

Mr. Steiner reported that he had attended the Council of the Great City Schools Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. last week. He indicated that there is high hope that there will be a reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. More importantly, it is hoped that a reauthorization will come with amendments which eliminate some of the more irrational provisions and make the law more supportive of good achievement and assist districts in improving school achievement rather than just identifying when they have not done so.

Mr. Steele reminded the public that next Tuesday is Election Day. There will also be testing throughout the district next week. He encouraged everyone to vote. He hoped for both a good election and good testing.

Ms. Marks reported that she had attended the Indian Education testimony at Airport Heights. There was a good turnout and the program was well

received. She encouraged students to get good rest, eat a good breakfast and come to school next week prepared for testing. She encouraged parents to make sure that their students are in school for testing.

D. AWARDS/RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Clark Middle School Socratic Program presentation

Ms. Comeau introduced Ms. MerriKae VanderPloeg, supervisor of the Gifted Program, and Ms. Cessilye Williams, principal at Clark Middle School.

Ms. VanderPloeg explained that the Clark seminar program was inspired by the desire to build a quality education for gifted and high achieving students at Clark Middle School. One of the efforts of the Gifted Program Six-Year Plan was to identify and sustained the academic needs of gifted students who come from diverse backgrounds and reside in economically challenging areas of the district. For the past four years Clark Middle School and the Gifted Program have worked tirelessly in building a strong academic program for high achieving and gifted students. One of the challenges that had to be faced was to encourage students to remain at Clark and take advantage of the strong curriculum, the excellent teacher dedication and school spirit while still trying to achieve annual yearly progress through No Child Left Behind. Many families of gifted students were satisfied with Clark in the past but they questioned whether or not their children were receiving a competition education that would prepare them for high school honors classes and possibly college. Last spring the board heard testimony from students that learning in a Socratic Seminar environment motivated them to reflect on literary content, world views, opinions and personal beliefs. Moreover, students believed that seminar motivated them to attend school, learn, and to be in charge of their education. Ms. Vanderploeg indicated that she was inspired by that testimony to approach the administration at Clark to explore the possibility of using the seminar approach there. Since that time twenty-two teachers from Clark have implemented Socratic Seminar. Not only have students seminared within Clark, they have also participated in seminar activities with students at Bartlett High School. Ms. Vanderploeg noted that high achieving and gifted students as well as ESL and Special Education students are reaping the learning rewards of seminar. She voiced her confidence that the program has challenged, inspired, and prepared the students to pursue a higher education.

Several current students shared their thoughts on the seminar program. Some of the benefits that the students identified were expanding their vocabulary, improving their social skills, empowering them to think outside the box, building their confidence to form and express their own opinions, and greatly enhancing their self-esteem. The students also explained the processes used in the Socratic seminar.

Mr. Bill Bajczyk invited board members to join them at Socratic seminar. He noted that what happens in the classroom is amazing. He thanked several people who he credited with the success of the program. Mr. Bajczyk explained that this program can often reach students who struggle with the more traditional class format.

Mr. Steiner asked how standards are incorporated into seminar. Ms. Vanderploeg noted that the number of categories in language arts and reading for AYP rose from two-out-of-ten to seven-out-of-ten after seminar was introduced at Clark Middle School. Ms. Williams attributed part of that success to seminar activities. She noted that students not only discuss literary pieces in seminar, they also write about them and edit their writing in very reflective ways.

Mr. Steele asked about future plans for possible expansion of the Socratic Seminar program to other middle schools across the district. Ms. Vandergaw noted that the seminar program has been used in other middle schools across the District, however not as intensively as it has been incorporated at Clark. There is a strong foundation of research support for what students can get out of a Socratic Seminar approach to learning. It has to be done well and requires a lot of training. Mr. Steele congratulated the staff and the students for their successes.

Mr. Friedman asked the students whether the lessons learned in seminar carry over to their other subject matters. The students indicated that many of the lessons do carry over such as breaking down material into more manageable pieces and having the confidence to speak up and ask questions. Seminar builds communication skills and helps students both in their other classes and in their lives outside of school.

Ms. Comeau extended her thanks to everyone who participated in this presentation.

ASD Memorandum #221 - Recognition of Spirit of Your Service to Peers Award for "Every 15 Minutes" program

The board viewed a brief video presentation on the "Every 15 Minutes" program. Officer Wendi Shackelford noted that the video was different than earlier presentations in that it covered the day after the crash.

Mr. Roberts read that with a powerful program like "Every 15 Minutes," student volunteers and program organizers hope their message gets through to teenagers. On March 10, "Every 15 Minutes" was awarded prime evidence that kids are getting the message. At the Spirit of Youth Awards banquet, "Every 15 Minutes" was presented with the Service to Peers Award, a special recognition because it comes from the students' peers, who reviewed 120 nominations before choosing the EFM program.

Two other individuals deserve special recognition, Michael Tolan and James Robbins, for working on the DVD with KCC Instructor Dan Sparkman. The visual impact of this program is one of its strongest assets, and the DVD documents that.

EFM and its many volunteers challenge high school students to think about the consequences of drinking, personal safety and responsibility. Research has shown that after participating in "Every 15 Minutes," students are less likely to drink and drive, and are less likely to ride with a driver who has been drinking.

The Anchorage School Board recognized the "Every 15 Minutes" program coordinators and student volunteers for their award-winning achievements.

Mr. Steiner noted that it was clear that the students involved took the program very seriously. He indicated his desire that the district does what it can to share this valuable resource. Officer Shackelford noted that she has been contacted by several different schools who are working on the program.

E. SPECIAL ADVISORY REPORTS

1. Student Advisory Board

Mr. Feriani was unable to attend the meeting.

2. Military Delegate

Lt. Col. Luu was unable to attend the meeting.

3. M.E.C.A.C.

Mr. William Johnson reported that the MECAC met on March 15, 2007. The meeting was used to continue to plan for the upcoming education forum. The subject of the first in a series of forums will center around the ASD dropout rate. It will take place from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 21st in the ASD Education Center's atrium and board room.

The next informational meeting of the MECAC is scheduled for April 4, 2007 at 4:30 p.m. in Conference Room 007 of the ASD Education Center. The next business meeting will be held on April 19, 2007 at 4:30 p.m. As always the public is welcome to attend.

Mr. Johnson encouraged everyone to vote on Tuesday, April 3rd.

F. PERSONS TO BE HEARD NON-AGENDA ITEMS

G. CONSENT AGENDA

Consent Agenda is attached. **All attachments referred to in memoranda Recommendations are on file in the Superintendent's office.**

1. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting - November 13, 2006
- b. Special Meeting - March 12, 2007

2. ASD Memorandum # 214 - Resolution in Support of the Week of the Young Child

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and authorize the Superintendent to award a contract to Arctic Office Products to furnish Miscellaneous School Supplies in the amount of \$132,524.

3. ASD Memorandum # 200 - Award of Contract: Lake Otis Elementary School Window and Façade Upgrades

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and authorize the Superintendent to award a contract for the Lake Otis Elementary School Window and Façade Upgrade Project, to the lowest bidder, CYS Management Services, Inc. for the Base Bid amount of \$659,742, Alternate No. 1 in the amount of \$184,544, Alternate No. 3A in the amount of \$9,440, Alternate No. 4A in the

deductive amount of \$13,884, and Alternate No. 4B in the deductive amount of \$4,707, for a total award price of \$835,135.

4. ASD Memorandum # 203 - Award of Contract: Nicholas Joseph Begich Middle School Closed Circuit Television System

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and authorize the Superintendent to award a contract to Arctic Office Products to furnish Miscellaneous School Supplies in the amount of \$132,524.

5. ASD Memorandum # 213 - Personnel Report

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve the attached Personnel Report.

Ms. Marks requested that ASD Memorandum #214, Resolution in Support of Week of the Young Child, be pulled for discussion.

Ms. Comeau requested that ASD Memorandum #207, External Review of the Student Information System Project Presentation, be pulled from the Superintendent's Report for a presentation.

ACTION:

Moved by: Jake Metcalfe
Seconded by: Mary Marks

To approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 13, 2006, and the Special Meeting of March 12, 2007 and Memoranda #200, #203 and #213.

VOTE:

Ayes: Steiner, Kennedy,
Roberts, Friedman,
Metcalf, Marks, Steele

Nays: None

MOTION PASSED

ASD Memorandum # 214 - Resolution in support of the Week of the Young Child

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and adopt the attached resolution in support of the Week of the Young Child, April 22-28, 2007.

ACTION:

Moved by: Mary Marks
Seconded by: Tim Steele

To approve the Administration's recommendation to approve and adopt the attached resolution in support of the Week of the Young Child, April 22-28, 2007.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children along with other local organizations is celebrating the Week of the Young Child, April 22-28, 2007. The District urges the School Board, administrators, teachers, and parents to support the needs of young children in our community by calling attention to the need of high quality early childhood and primary education for all children and families within the Anchorage School District.

The resolution was read into the record by members of the board.

WHEREAS, the Anchorage School District and other organizations, in conjunction with the National Association for the Education of Young Children, are celebrating the Week of the Young Child, April 22-28, 2007 and encourage School District administrators, teachers, and parents to support the needs of young children in the community; and

WHEREAS, by calling attention to the need for high-quality early childhood and primary education for all children and families within the Anchorage School District, these groups hope to improve the quality of early education; and

WHEREAS, the future of Anchorage depends on the quality of the early childhood and primary experiences provided to young children today; and

WHEREAS, early learning experiences, including kindergarten and the primary grades, hold the potential for starting children on a course of lifelong learning; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage School District and the National Association for the Education of Young Children believe that one standard of quality primary education is a developmentally appropriate program for children 0 through eight years of age; and

WHEREAS, high quality early childhood and primary education represents a strong commitment to our children's future; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage School District supports partnerships with parents and families in the education of their children, and has developed goals to increase their participation;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Anchorage School Board supports the needs of young children in our community and proclaim April 22-28, 2007 as the Week of the Young Child.

Mr. Steele noted that the House Finance committee voted today not to increase funding for Early Childhood Headstart program. Mr. Metcalfe encouraged the public to contact the governor and their legislators to let them know the importance of early childhood education. Cutting funding in this area does not make us a better state. This is a setback for education in Alaska. Many people, including the governor, campaigned on supporting education. Mr. Metcalfe did not believe that the action of the House Finance committee supports education.

Mr. Friedman noted that it is a simple message. We can spend a little bit now on early education or a lot when students get older. In his opinion, money invested in early education is money well invested.

Ms. Comeau explained that investing in young children and getting them ready to learn when they walk in the door of school forestalls increasing costs in special education and a whole range of other issues later down the road. Ms. Comeau believed that it is very sad that, despite all of the research, Alaska is one of very few states who do not have public pre-school education. Ms. Marks reiterated that the key word is investment. We need to start looking at our children as an investment.

VOTE:

Ayes: Steiner, Kennedy,
Roberts, Friedman,
Metcalf, Marks, Steele

Nays: None

MOTION PASSED

The board went into recess at 7:35 p.m. and was called back into session at 7:45 p.m.

H. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. ASD Memorandum # 215 - Project Status Report

This is a report of activities and project status changes in Major Capital Projects during the period of March 1, 2007 through March 14, 2007.

2. ASD Memorandum # 204 - Facility Contract Modification Report and Completed Projects for the Month of February, 2007

The monthly Facility Contract Modification Report for the month of February 2007 is attached. There are no exceptions to report this month.

3. ASD Memorandum # 207 - External Review of the Student Information System Project Presentation

The District has contracted with Davidson Services, LLC, to perform an external review of the Student Information System (SIS) project. Davidson Services is an independent services company with expertise in structured K-12 software evaluation and selection projects, with experience implementing SIS software from a variety of vendors. Davidson Services has also performed previous work for the District in the areas of business recovery plans, strategic information technology plans and technology best practices.

Davidson Services has reviewed documentation relative to the SIS project; conducted interviews, reviewed the Technology Budget Review Team documentation and comments, and has performed research regarding SIS open source solutions. Davidson Services will present their findings and recommendations to the District.

Ms. Pam Chenier introduced Ms. Cynthia Curtis. Ms. Curtis is the co-president of Davidson Services, LLC, who conducted the external review for the district.

Ms. Cynthia Curtis explained that Davidson Services works nationally with K-12 school districts to help plan for, select, and implement technology solutions including student information systems. Everyone at Davidson has at least ten years experience working with K-12 solutions in technology. In light of that experience, Davidson is familiar with most of the K-12 software products that the district might be considering. They also are advocates of using open source software in appropriate ways where there is the right staffing and expertise in a

district. She noted that open source solutions have been considered as part of this study. Ms. Curtis provided a detailed overview of the SIS Project Review including the scope of work, the need for a new SIS, the benefits of a new SIS, consideration of internally developing an SIS, consideration of open source software, consideration of a commercial software product, the appropriateness of the implementation schedule and the budget, and additional recommendations for best practices for implementing this kind of system. Ms. Curtis also explained the relationship between an SIS and a Data Warehouse, noting that an SIS supports the daily operation of schools in the district while a data warehouse combines data from multiple systems including the SIS for reporting and analysis. These are two different but complimentary systems.

In comparing commercial products with possible open source products Ms. Curtis indicated that top commercial products will meet 80-90% of ASD's requirements, whereas the top two open source products will likely meet 40-60%. While that seems like a big difference, Ms. Curtis noted that the cost savings on licensing fees could potentially justify the additional development costs associated with utilizing one of the two open source options. In summary, the open source products offer about half of what the district is looking for. There would be some additional development required and there is risk associated with that. There is a risk/reward tradeoff. Davidson recommended further investigation of one or both open source software products particularly beginning with the area of the community surrounding them in parallel with the RFP fit/gap analysis that is planned.

Ms. Curtis indicated that the RFP issued by ASD is well structured and complete. It will result in the kind of information that is needed to differentiate among software product vendors and will provide adequate cost data to compare them and make a choice. She recognized the job done by the district in engaging users in creating the functional requirements checklist in the RFP.

Ms. Curtis noted that while documentation shows clear project staff planning consistent with best practices, nowhere in the documentation could she find a project schedule in the sense that they were looking for. This schedule should consist of a very detailed list of tasks with a start and an end date for each task. In addition the tasks should be set up in such a way as to show which tasks must be completed before other tasks can begin. This schedule should show the critical path for

the project and the assigned responsibilities for the steps. Ms. Curtis noted that such a timeline is a critical success factor for a project of this complexity. There were some descriptions of phases and general tasks within a phase but not a complete schedule.

Ms. Curtis reviewed the recommended project timeline which she noted was appropriate but did not have nearly the detail that would ultimately be required. She indicated that in order to be able to go live with the new system in the 2008-2009 school year the district needs to be able to start scheduling in the new system in early 2008. In order to get to secondary scheduling in January, 2008 the district needs to have hardware purchased, the software installed and begin core team training by no later than August, 2007.

Ms. Curtis reviewed the budget estimate that she built based on her experience. Her total estimated two-year project cost was \$8.37 million. She noted that the budget does not include a data warehouse system. She had noted earlier that a data warehouse is not part of a student information system and should be a separate, and preferably later, project. In addition, the system does not include a student ID card system.

Ms. Curtis reviewed the best practices for implementing a system such as this. She indicated that, first and foremost, the district needs to view the SIS as an instructional project, not technology project. She noted that she does not see that to be a problem based on her review. Another critical success factor is having trained support in the schools for the users of the system. She encouraged bringing in representatives from the schools in order to facilitate the standardization of processes. This could be a thorny issue in that individual schools have been working around the current system and have developed a variety of methods and processes to get things done.

Additional best practices include minimizing changes and customizations to the core software, expecting a lot of development of reports, being careful not to build stopping points in the development plans by focusing on fit rather than gaps during the fit/gap analysis and skipping "pilots", and making a complete transition from the old to the new system at the start of a school year so as to eliminate the need for any interfacing of the systems. It is important to enable the project team to focus on successfully implementing the new SIS.

Mr. Steve Rasmussen explained that he had served on the budget review team that reviewed the SIS project. He noted that the team had recommended that the SIS project be halted and that the project manager be relieved of her duties until better and more complete planning could be done. He noted that he had met with some of the board members, as well as with one of the assemblymen, to discuss some of his concerns. Based on the report by Ms. Curtis he noted his belief that the district moved too quickly to dismiss an open source solution. He also remained concerned with several issues including the lack of an implementation schedule, the planned contractual relationship with a vendor, the level of expertise of the project manager and team, and the cost estimates for the project. In his opinion, Mr. Rasmussen does not believe that the district is in a position to proceed with the procurement and implementation of a new student information system.

Mr. Steiner asked Mr. Rasmussen for his sense of the quality of the report that was received and the recommendations it included. Mr. Rasmussen noted that this is an extremely complex software project that has been in the planning stages for five years. He noted that Davidson appears to have done a fine job.

Ms. Comeau reported that the powerpoint presentation and the summary sheet that Ms. Curtis presented is on the district website.

Mr. Steiner noted that one of the recommendations was that the district continue to investigate open source possibilities. Given that the district has an RFP in process, he asked Ms. Curtis how she perceived that the district could undertake continued exploration of open source solutions and a fit/gap analysis in parallel. Ms. Curtis felt that the district needs to be the judge of what can reasonably be done without affecting the procurement that is in process. She indicated that the district could certainly look into the information regarding the community surrounding the open source options discussed. Ms. Chenier explained that the district plans to first finalize the selection and then entering into a fit/gap with one proposer rather than looking at two. She felt that the district would be put at risk by doing a fit/gap in conjunction with reviewing open source. If the district goes full faith into a contract, which will be in place at the time of the fit/gap analysis, then that vendor has an expectation of being able to complete the process. If we are going to look at an open source we will want to do that before continuing on to the fit/gap analysis and finalization. Mr. Steiner raised concern regarding the lack of a critical path timeline

for implementation. He also felt that the fit/gap is something that should be reviewed before deciding whether to award the contract in the first place. With respect for the process of the selection and for the timing of implementation, he wondered whether we have the capacity to put a timeline in place now that we already have proposals in response to the RFP in hand. Ms. Chenier noted that the award of contract would be a conditional award based on a successful fit/gap analysis. Ms. Curtis added that an implementation timeline is normally a part of the negotiations. In an RFP vendors are asked to propose their timeline. Ms. Chenier noted that a description of phases was provided to vendors.

Mr. Steiner asked whether Ms. Curtis came to an opinion as to the expertise and quality of the staff that is running this to be able to handle the project. Ms. Curtis noted that her main concern regarding the expertise of the team is that there isn't anybody within ASD, including the current project manager, who has experience implementing a K-12 student information system. There is considerable experience developing pieces of such a system and considerable functional expertise but no one who has done a big project such as this. She did not see that as so much of a risk during the implementation because the project manager from the vendor will have the expertise needed. The greater risk is in the current phase of the project.

Mr. Steele noted his concern with the timeframe. The district does not have good information on the source of funds and the exact costs. The unknown aspects of the budget make it difficult to prepare too detailed a timeline. He asked whether Ms. Curtis felt that the district is trying to rush the process too much by trying to start the project this summer. Ms. Curtis indicated that she believed that the timeline she presented is certainly achievable. The risk associated with it is tied to the decision whether to purchase a commercial product or to stop and further consider open source. That is the reason she suggested looking into the communities surrounding the two open source options discussed earlier. That information may easily determine whether the products are viable. In response to an additional question regarding community, Ms. Curtis indicated that she was not aware of any like-sized districts putting in an open source system. Her suspicion is that the communities surrounding the open source options are fairly robust in terms of the number of users but that they are all very small districts.

Ms. Kennedy requested an overview on how the district plans to proceed based on the information provided by this project review. Mr. Wood indicated that based on the information received from Davidson there are three major points to address. The first is to pursue the open source argument and look at the communities supporting those products. The other thing that needs to be looked at is the scheduling. It has been difficult to lay out a firm schedule without knowing who we are going to be working with. The last item is the budgeting process and how it can be refined to best reflect the project. He noted that all of the information in this report is being taken very seriously. He believed that it will provide us with a very good next step. Ms. Comeau noted her appreciation for the product presented by Ms. Curtis, particularly the detailed breakdown of estimated costs associated with the project. She noted that this project really is about better communication with parents, better access to data for teachers and staff, and improved data accuracy. She believed that this review will be extremely helpful in moving forward to develop a very detailed implementation plan.

Ms. Kennedy asked whether there will be a need to keep the old system around after the new system is implemented. Mr. Wood explained that the intent is to not have any interface between the old and the new systems. The goal is to convert the information from the old system into the new system. Ms. Curtis indicated that the district may need to keep the old system around for some time for historical archives. The district would not necessarily convert all of the history on all students. For example, transcript data for previous graduates will either need to be on paper or will be in the old system.

4. ASD Memorandum # 210 - Operating Budget Transfers - February Monthly Report FY 2006-2007

The attached report of budget transfers for the time period of February 2007 that were processed in the Integrated Financial Accounting System (IFAS) includes the following:

Attachment A: Report of Budget Transfers Over \$5,000—
Report for individual transfers of more than \$5,000,
which includes summarized justifications.

The schedule of monthly budget transfers processed for the month of February 2007 and related information are available in the Budget

Department office for review by the School Board and members of the public.

5. ASD Memorandum # 211 - Treasurer's Report/Financial Recap:
February 28, 2007

The attached report consists of two parts: the Treasurer's Report and the Financial Recap. The Treasurer's Report and the Financial Recap are presented on a monthly basis. The Treasurer's report and Financial Recap are year-to-date information as of February 28, 2007.

I. PERSONS TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

J. COMMUNICATIONS & SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Comeau reported that the budget will go to the assembly tomorrow evening. In addition, the district's CIP is on the assembly's consent agenda.

K. EXECUTIVE SESSION - PERSONNEL/FINANCE/NEGOTIATIONS
LITIGATION

L. ADJOURNMENT

The Regular Meeting of March 26, 2007, was adjourned by unanimous consent at 9:45 p.m.

Jeff Friedman, President

Mary Marks, Clerk

Johanna Lee, Recording Secretary

Date Minutes Approved