

February Board Highlights

President Eddie Chez called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Education to order at 7:35 p.m. Following roll call, approval was given for the January 12, 2004 regular session minutes as amended. Closed session minutes for January 12 and 26, 2004 were also approved. An opportunity was provided for Public Comments and there were none at that time.



Principals highlighted WE CARE activities in their respective schools. Mrs. Wang reviewed South School activities for the month of February, which reinforced the theme: Cultural Awareness. The kindergarten Mystery Visitor was Mrs. Boury. She shared her background and some details of the Russian and French cultures. The first grade students will continue participating in a program with New Trier High School, Voices in Prevention. A team of high school students has presented puppet shows each month to tie with the WE CARE theme. In second grade the students will be visited by five individuals sharing traditional breads and sharing the cultural significance in their heritage.

Miss Allen indicated the PTA West County Fair was a kick-off event for the month. The theme for the fair was Around the World at West. Questions and facts about the seven continents were posted throughout the building in preparation of the event. Throughout the month of February seventeen versions of Cinderella will be read by the third and fourth grade students. Two classes will be paired to compare and contrast two versions of the story. Each version reflects a particular culture. At the end of the month Nick Hockings will present two programs for the West students. Mr. Hockings is a member of the Ojibwa tribe.

Mr. Mollet reviewed the presentation for fifth and sixth grade students by SuEllen Fried. Her discussion tied to her book: Bullies, Targets, and Witnesses. An after school session was also presented for staff members and an evening meeting was held for parents. The student presentations provided impetus for follow-up class meetings.

Catherine Schulte presented an overview of the community survey conducted in December 2003. She reported the survey parameters as offering a simple, inexpensive opportunity for community members to provide input to the Board of Education.

Surveys were mailed to 3,634 households with 143 responses received, approximately 3.9%. Of those surveys returned, 75.5% were mailed or faxed and 24.5% were sent electronically. The majority of respondents had children in

District #35 (76%). The following was a profile of those respondents with children in District #35:

- 44% had children in District #35 only
- 28% had children in District #35 & preschool
- 27% had children in District #35 & high school
- 1 % had children in District #35, preschool and high school

The following was a profile of respondents without Children in District #35 (24%):

- 20.6% No children in District #35
- 52.9% Children had graduated from District #35
- 5.9% Children were in preschool only
- 17.6% Children were in preschool and high school
- 2.9% Children were in high school only

Additional information reported from the survey included:

- An average grade of 3.2 on a 4 point scale
 - 88% of respondents indicated they were very or reasonably informed
- Information was obtained from multiple sources:

- The Board Bulletin
- Glencoe News
- Friends or Neighbors

Priorities identified by respondents fell into several pools of information.

Examples of comments in the area of Programs and Curriculum included:

- “Keep class sizes small”
- “Continue to foster a love of learning and preparing them for the future”

An example of the comments in the area of Personnel included:

- “Consistent administration”

To a lesser degree comments were also provided in the areas of Facilities and Communication.

When asked to identify what was especially good the majority of comments were made in two areas, Personnel and Programs and Curriculum. Examples of comments received in the area of personnel included:

“Dedicated and talented teachers who mix tradition and new ideas and really

engage the students in learning.”

“Teachers are wonderful and great resources.”

“We have terrific teachers with strong academic standards and high expectations for the children.”

Examples of comments received in the area of Programs and Curriculum included:

“The schools are highly responsive to children and helping them achieve success

academically and developmentally.”

“I see a concerted effort to improve curriculum.”

“Class size”

“Focus on community, treating people with respect – WE CARE concepts”

“The specials (art and music)”

A number of comments were also received regarding the areas of Facilities and Communication.

When asked to suggest areas of change a variety of comments were made regarding Programs and Curriculum.

“I would like to see teachers and administrators give as much attention to gifted

students’ needs as is paid to those of special needs.”

“Improve test scores.”

“U of C Math Program”

“To keep each student challenged”

“Full day kindergarten”

“Don’t teach to the ISAT”

“Need after school enrichment, such as literature, extra math, Spanish”

To a lesser degree comments were offered regarding Personnel, Day-to-Day operations, Communication, and Finances.

The Board members expressed a desire to again survey the community during the 2004-2005 school year.

Mr. Chilcote, Business Manager, provided a five-year comparison of operating cost per pupil. The districts included in the comparison were New Trier sender districts as well as neighboring school districts. He also provided a document identifying District #35 operating costs per pupil for the past 16 years. When compared with other school districts in the township, District #35 dropped to 4th of 6 in operating costs per pupil. In reviewing the historical comparisons District #35 cost per pupil increased an average of 2.11% over the past eleven years. Since the inception of tax caps, the District cost per pupil increased 2.15% per year while the tax cap CPI increased 2.72% per year. The identified operating cost per pupil for the 2002-2003 school year was \$11,564.81.

Mr. Chilcote reported there were outstanding student registration fees owed by 32 families in the amount of \$3,663.00.

The Board Referendum Committee members, Mrs. Price, Ms. Schulte, and Mr. Myefski indicated that in keeping with a schedule of planned activities for an April 2005 referendum, names would be collected for a Friends of District #35 committee. It was requested names be forwarded to one of the Board

Referendum Committee members. These individuals could assist in a variety of activities.

The first draft of the 2004-2005 personnel plan was reviewed. It was reported that a decrease of two teaching positions was anticipated. One was the result of a reduction in sections of fourth grade. Seven sections were anticipated for the coming school year. The second position eliminated was that of a writing support teacher at South School. This position was not filled following a resignation. The projected number of support staff was increased in anticipation of 1:1 teaching assistants. It was difficult to give an accurate number as each year special needs students have moved into the District. During the coming months annual reviews continue for current students receiving special education and supplemental services.

Mr. Chilcote reported the fee of 25 cents set in 1993 for a carton of milk continued to cover District costs. Given the federal milk program, which generates approximately 13 cents per carton, and indications from the supplier that no know price increases were expected, it was recommended the fee remain unchanged for 2004-2005. The Board approved the recommendation.

A comparison of student fees charged in neighboring school districts was provided for the Board's review. It was recommended the Board maintain the fee structure and level that has been in place for five years. Mr. Chilcote also recommended the registration form continue to include the cost of a PTA calendar and student directory. Additionally Mr. Chilcote recommended the collection of a \$25 late fee for uncollected fees and an increase of \$5 on the first day of every month beginning January 1. The Board discussed the philosophy of requesting a yearly fee for materials and asked Mr. Chilcote to bring information regarding items purchased with these funds. The student fees proposal will be listed for Board action in March.

Mr. Chilcote reviewed the athletic participation fees and identified the goal of fully funding the athletic programs, exclusive of transportation costs. To accomplish this goal the cost per participant in basketball would be \$363, volleyball \$216 per participant, and soccer \$199 per participant. The \$60 increase for soccer reflected a lower than anticipated participation rate in the current school year. The Board approved the athletic participation fees for 2004-2005.

The art/intramural fee was also discussed. An increase in participation has been realized during the current school year. It was recommended the current fees of \$150.00 per activity or \$225 for both activities be maintained. The Board also approved these fees.

Mr. Chilcote reported the End Fund Balance for January 2004 as \$6,367,103.02.

The Personnel Report for February 2004 was approved.

A resolution was passed directing the administration to prepare the budget for the upcoming school year. The final draft of the budget would be approved in September 2004.

Mr. Chilcote recommended the Board appoint Bark Associates as District auditors. The proposal reflected changes in audit procedures implemented the previous year. These changes were required for school districts wishing to continue Certificate of Excellence and Certificate of Achievement programs. The auditor's fee of \$9,650 was quoted reflecting no change from the prior year. The district has used Bark Associates to perform the annual audit for the past eight years. The Board approved appointment of Bark Associates as district auditors.

The Board also approved the 2004-2005 transportation fee. Mr. Chilcote reported the second year of a three-year contract with Alltown Bus Service provided for a 4% increase. The current total cost was identified as \$218,000. If ridership remained constant and each individual paid full fees, 85% of the total bus service would be collected. Approximately \$170,000 or 78% has typically been collected. To maintain the current collection and incorporate the increased costs, it was recommended that transportation fees be increased by 4%. The Board approved the recommended transportation fees.

As directed by the Board, Mr. Chilcote sought information from surrounding school districts and legal council regarding criteria for tax sheltered annuity vendors. He found that criteria other than a minimum number of participants were not provided by area school districts. Legal counsel also indicated that developing criteria for determining financial viability would enhance the District's potential for liability. Mr. Chilcote recommended and the Board approved a policy and administrative guidelines reflecting 403(b) sheltering opportunities.

The Board approved Pacific Life/Craven as a 403(b) provider for District employees subject to the following criteria:

- Signing 403(b) documentation utilized by other vendors
- A client base of no less than six employees.

Mr. Chilcote also recommended the Board proceed with the implementation of a 457 Plan, selecting Equitable Insurance as the vendor. After discussion the Board requested information regarding participation interest among district staff. It was also requested that the policy and procedures for a 457 Plan accompany future recommendations for approval. Mr. Chilcote will collect the information and report back to the Board.

The Board approved a Life Safety survey completed by GreenAssociates. Following approval the survey will be sent to the Regional Office of Education and then to the Illinois State Board of Education for approval. A time-line for

action and activities for completion of the Life Safety work was also reviewed by Mr. Chilcote.

An architectural contract proposal from GreenAssociates was presented for Board consideration. The proposal called for an 8.5% of the final estimated cost of construction. This also included the Life Safety 10-year resurvey work and follow-up required prior to beginning the projects. The Board approved the contract with GreenAssociates.

There were no public comments during the second opportunity in the Board meeting. Mrs. Stender had the following Committee reports:

The District Behavior Intervention Committee met and a review of the committee work will be included in next month's administrator reports.

NSSSED is reviewing and revising the Articles of Agreement. In particular the sections regarding a District withdrawal from the cooperative is being addressed. The Glencoe Junior High Project play, "Guys and Dolls" is scheduled to begin March 4.

The Board meeting was adjourned to closed session at 9:15 p.m. for the purpose of discussing matters related to personnel, negotiations and pending litigation.

The next regular monthly meeting of the Board is scheduled for Monday, March 8 at 7:30 p.m.