

**MINUTES OF BOARD RETREAT HELD
July 6, 2010**

The Board Retreat of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by Mr. Hemant Marathe at 5:40 p.m. in the media center at Grover Middle School. The following Board members were present:

Mr. John Farrell	Mr. Todd Hochman	Mr. Alapakkam Manikandan	Mr. Randall Tucker
Mr. Anthony Fleres	Mr. Richard Kaye	Mr. Hemant Marathe	Mrs. Ellen Walsh

Board Member Johnson was absent. Present also were: Dr. Victoria Kniewel, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Dr. David Aderhold, Assistant Superintendent Pupil Services and Planning, and Mr. Russell Lazovick, Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction.

CONVENE

In accordance with the State's Sunshine Law, adequate notice of this meeting was provided by mailing a notice of the time, date, location and, to the extent known, the agenda of this meeting to the PRINCETON PACKET, THE TIMES, THE HOME NEWS TRIBUNE, AND WEST WINDSOR and PLAINSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARIES. Copies of the notice have also been posted in the board office and filed with Plainsboro's and West Windsor's township clerks and in each of the district schools.

No members of the public were present.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Mr. Marathe welcomed everyone to the retreat and thanked them for participating during this busy time of the year.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Dr. Kniewel stated that the main purpose of the retreat is to brief the Board on where we are and where we are going so that we have clarity and alignment between the Board and the administrative staff about the direction for 2010-2011. The Board will provide feedback and help set the direction for this coming year. As an outcome of the retreat, Board Members will understand the new reality and its impact; and, the administration will have a clear direction and understanding of the Board's priorities.

DISCUSSION

"The mission of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District, valuing our tradition of excellence, is to develop all of our students as passionate, confident, lifelong learners who have competence and strength of character to realize their aspirations and thoughtfully contribute to a diverse and changing world." A brief discussion ensued on the direction of our mission statement including: all students continually recognize community issues, propose solutions and choose to carry out plans that contribute to their resolution; all students continually identify, develop, and execute plans to pursue their personal and educational aspirations; all students continually and willingly share with an audience the results of ongoing learning that is important to them; and, then, all of our students will be passionate, confident, life long learners who have competence and strength of character to realize their aspirations and thoughtfully contribute to a diverse and changing world.

Core Values were reviewed and discussed. As a district, we believe strongly that: continuous learning is essential for individual fulfillment and for the advancement of society; every individual has intrinsic worth; embracing diversity enriches and empowers our community; honesty, integrity, and trust are cornerstones for continuing excellence; people reach their highest potential when challenged to believe it is possible; and, openness to change is essential to progress and future viability.

Board members spoke of challenges and opportunities. Among the topics discussed were: increased politicalization of public education; impact of unions versus governor on district; concerns about growing cost of Special Education services; rallying the public on education issues, e.g. charters; linking community interests such as field lights to other areas such as Robotics, Math, and Science; and, to work on policy issues. Responding substantively to these and other challenges and opportunities will impact student learning. The whole child, every child, perspective will be brought to focus after a discussion of 2009-2010 highlights and 2010-2011 next steps.

HIGHLIGHTS AND NEXT STEPS

Central Office

Developing a new central office team was an important part of the 2009-2010 school year. With retirements and new appointments, developing a new district-wide leadership team will be a significant part of the 2010-2011 school year.

Business Operations

The superintendent's earlier noting of the myriad areas for action by the team and district, areas beyond the few that will be focused on tonight, was re-emphasized for the business area. Key accomplishments were noted for 2009-2010 and also a variety of actions for 2010-2011. A four-page list of necessary financial activities required by state and federal rules and regulations can be matched with similar lists in other functional areas of the district. However, tonight the focus in this section will be on two areas: buildings & grounds and solar.

While the work related to buildings & grounds goes back several years, 2009-2010 saw a heightening of activity focused on accountability and productivity. A consultant was engaged, an economy & efficiency study created, many hours of discussion with and about employees were held, an invitation for bid was done and an award of a contract was made. In 2010-2011, the transition to a contractor must be managed, a quality environment for learning must be sustained, and the envisioned budget savings must be realized.

Efforts for a solar rebate started in 2004, but the 2009-2010 school year saw a great deal of activity. The district received a final extension on its \$576,500 solar rebate to October 23, 2010. In November 2010, the Board awarded a contract at \$997,000. In addition, the district won a Clean Renewable Energy Bond (CREB) allocation from the IRS for seven projects; \$7,585,553 CREB bonds must be issued within the next three years or they will be rescinded. Timely action programs for solar and needed roof projects were discussed. State approvals would quickly be sought as would an April bond referendum. Board Members urged recruitment of community members into this effort; such involvement in district efforts was a repeated theme through the evening's discussions. In addition to the CREB dollars, roof work for about \$3.5 million would be needed; \$2.3 million is covered by round three Regular Operating District (ROD) grant applications; the state would provide 40 percent and the district 60 percent. In addition, roof warranty extension costs might total \$0.5 million and non-ROD project roof work for about \$0.4 million is envisioned. Local funds would come from the annual capital outlay budget and from capital reserve withdrawals. It was noted that most of the roof work would be needed whether or not the solar panels

were done. Under most scenarios, this solar effort would be cash positive in its first year of operation with principal and interest of the bonds being offset by federal tax credits, state debt service aid, savings from generated electricity, and sale of Solar Renewable Energy Certificates (SRECs). With environmental, energy, financial, and educational dimensions, the Board consensus was to move forward.

Administration

The district has supported fundraising efforts for field lights by the West Windsor-Plainsboro Booster Club. Due to the aggressive/successful fundraising efforts, a meeting will be established between Booster Club founders and representatives of the district to discuss a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Dave Carroll of Parker McCay also will attend on behalf of the district. It is important that we protect the interests of the district in how we craft the MOA so that we protect the district's financial interests. While there are clear advantages for our student athletes, families, and teams with the implementation of field lights, there are numerous hurdles to clear. We have successfully crafted a Commercial Advertising Policy and now must turn to develop both the MOA and a Field Usage Policy. In the meantime, fundraising efforts continue with a Hall of Fame Dinner, which has been tentatively set for October 15, 2010.

The district has contracted Strauss Esmay to perform a full policy review and the district has provided Strauss Esmay a list of existing materials. Next, Strauss Esmay will conduct a series of interviews within the district on July 27, 2010. Following a period of data gathering, Strauss Esmay will begin to produce a draft manual for review. The Administration and Facilities Committee will maintain the lead in the review and recommendations of the policy and regulation manuals.

This year, the district will review our crisis manual in order to ensure compliance with the Attorney General Law Enforcement Directive No. 2007-1, approved Safety-Fire Drills legislation adopted 1/1/2010, and recommendations drafted by the NJ DOE Office of Education Support Services School Security Unit in October 2007. While our current crisis plan has many of the required and recommended components, there are numerous recommendations that we will need to study. During the fall, we will engage in a series of meetings in an effort to address any potential deficiencies in our plan. While the district signs a Memorandum of Agreement with both the West Windsor and Plainsboro Township Police Departments, the requirement for a school safety and security plan are completely separate documents. Within our assessment of the recommendations will be a full review of the five model school security policies recommended by the School Security Unit.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district has continued to expand the use of Infinite Campus as a means of communicating with the community. The rate of parents using the system has tripled over the past two years. This increase in use has been due to the district's efforts to teach parents how to use the system and to make important information available through the Parent and Student Portals. During the coming year, the district will continue to make additional information available through the portals, including report cards for all grade levels, to provide parents even more reasons to use the system. The district has continued to capitalize on its investment in Infinite Campus, increasing the professional use of the system by the faculty and staff to work more efficiently. Special Education, Medical Databases, and Athletic Planning no longer are in costly, separate systems; they now are connected to Infinite Campus saving time and money. Additionally, increased communication has been made possible through Infinite Campus, including non-public institutions and law enforcement agencies.

The district has adapted its curriculum format to meet updated state requirements, and continues to move all district curricula into this format. The new format includes required common assessments, and the data

from these internal assessments will be warehoused in Performance Matters. The system has been purchased as a means of aggregating and analyzing student performance data to improve professional practice. The program review process continues to move forward, with Language Arts and Special Services reviews continuing into the next year, to be joined with reviews of Technology and Fine and Performing Arts.

This year, the district completed the first year of a new three-year New Teacher Induction Program. The program used the new evaluation framework, based on the work of Charlotte Danielson, which will become the framework for all observations of teachers in the coming year. The district implemented a new system for evaluating administrators, which has been refined and will continue in the coming year. Both systems require the creation and use of data, including data measuring student performance, to foster professional growth.

“The Whole Child; Every Child”

Based on the findings of the district’s Professional Development committee based on building-specific and district-wide needs assessments and continuous review of current best practice, the district will be focusing all professional development activities toward one goal: “The Whole Child; Every Child.” The Whole Child refers to the district’s goal of preparing all students for success in the 21st Century. This will mean moving beyond a content-centric, content-only approach to an approach that exposes students to authentic challenges based on content. To guide this approach, the district has developed six 21st Century Competencies, in line with state and national standards. The competencies (Innovative & Practical Problem Solver; Effective Communicator; Collaborative Team Member; Flexible & Self-Directed Learner; Globally Aware, Active, & Responsible Student/Citizen; Information Literate Researcher) will guide instruction and assessment K-12, fostering collaboration of all faculty and staff as we create students prepared to compete in a global economy and participate in an increasingly interconnected world. Every Child refers to the district’s work in creating a culture of informed decision making. The commitment to the idea that every child will become a successful, lifelong learner requires that we find new ways to generate and use data at all levels and in all areas to ensure that each student reaches his or her full potential. “Whole Child; Every Child” will guide all of our instructional endeavors foster collaboration between all faculty and staff toward the same goal.

Vision Exchange

Discussion turned to what excites or concerns Board members as the district moved forward. Areas discussed included: more resources are needed or the load may be crushing; caution to not overdo the drive for data at the cost of interpersonal relationships; that as we discuss with the public, see that student learning is always front and center; revising policy; student competencies has exciting implications; importance of gaining data since a paucity of data is the norm; general appreciation and respect for the four administrators was expressed; the evaluation effort with the domains dimension excited; as was a general excitement that the district was pushing forward in many areas, showing a willingness to take risks.

The Mr. Marathe thanked everyone for their efforts. He noted the district’s success at constantly moving in the right direction.

It also was noted that the charter school was trying to come before the Plainsboro Township Zoning Board this week and attendance was encouraged. The PIAC did not comply with the Municipal Land Use Law requirements and should not be allowed to present at this July 7th meeting. True safety issues, especially with regard to parent drivers and in particular, kindergarten children, exist.

The superintendent and Mr. Marathe thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Mr Tucker, seconded by Mr. Kaye, and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary

Prepared by:

Kathleen M. Bertram