

MINUTES
CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES
EDWARD A. GREER EDUCATION CENTER, BOARD ROOM
2832 E. FLAMINGO ROAD, LAS VEGAS, NV 89121

Thursday, August 13, 2009

2:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present
Terri Janison, President
Carolyn Edwards, Vice President
Sheila R. Moulton, Clerk
Chris Garvey, Member
Larry P. Mason, Member
Deanna L. Wright, Member
Dr. Linda E. Young, Member

Dr. Walt Rulffes, Superintendent of Schools

Also present were: Mark Wood, Board Counsel, District Attorney's Office; Bill Hoffman, General Counsel, Legal Department; Dr. Lauren Kohut-Rost, Deputy Superintendent, Instruction Unit; Jeffrey Weiler, Chief Financial Officer, Operations Support Unit; Dr. Gary Orfield, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) – Graduate School of Education and Information; Dr. William Trent, University of Illinois – Educational Policy Studies; Cindy Krohn, Executive Assistant, Board Office; Lisa Chrapcynski, Administrative Secretary II, Board Office; and Stephanie Gatlin, Transcriber/Recording Secretary, Board Office.

TELECONFERENCE CALL CONNECTED

Teleconference call with Trustee Moulton was connected at 2:00 p.m.

ADOPT AGENDA

Adopt agenda, except move Item 3.01 to follow Item 1.

Motion: Wright Second: Edwards Vote: Unanimous

Trustee Mason was not present for the vote.

BOARD MEMBER ARRIVED

Trustee Mason arrived at the Board meeting at 2:03 p.m.

APPROVE PRESENTATION OF REVIEW OF THE PRIME SIX PROGRAM

Approval regarding the independent review of trends in enrollment, patterns of choice, and test results for students enrolled in the Prime Six Program, as recommended in Reference 3.01.

APPROVE PRESENTATION OF REVIEW OF THE PRIME SIX PROGRAM (continued)

Dr. Rulfes stated the Prime Six Program is part of the District's desegregation program. He explained that the plan evolved in the early 1990s in an attempt to offer more choice and additional resources with the intent to target identified schools to make them no less than equal to that of other schools. He stated that with that focus in mind, a special funding formula was developed that would give those schools richer staffing, opportunities for smaller class sizes, and the implementation of certain programs. He stated other choices that have developed since the inception of the Prime Six schools are magnet schools, charter schools, and career and technical academies (CTAs).

Dr. Rulfes stated while the choice and funding have remained in place, the Quality Assurance Framework was developed three years ago, and some changes have occurred since the development of Prime Six that could impact the program, such as the demographics of the community, the development of the charter schools, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and empowerment schools. He said through the use of the Quality Assurance Framework, some issues concerning the Prime Six Program began to emerge, such as whether or not adequate measurable gains have come from the extra resources and the current number of vacant seats in the community that have occurred primarily because of the other choices available and population migrations.

Dr. Rulfes stated in looking at those issues, the District decided to seek an independent, outside review to assist the District and the Board in ascertaining the current position of the Prime Six Program. He stated the District enlisted the services of Dr. Orfield, Dr. Trent, and Dr. Robert Peterkin, Harvard University – Graduate School of Education, to conduct that review. He introduced Dr. Orfield and Dr. Trent, who were present at today's meeting to discuss their report.

Dr. Orfield gave an explanation of what his group was asked to investigate, such as the transformation of the schools concerning the demographics, what was happening to the achievement of the students who enrolled in the Prime Six area and in the other options provided, and how the choice mechanisms were working. He stated the group was not asked to conduct an in depth study of the community nor to provide a plan for the District moving forward. He talked about the effects of segregation across race, economics, and language; the need for segregation and equality in education; and the findings of their study.

Dr. Orfield briefly went over the following points in the report: trends in social transformation and growth in enrollment; key findings, including the demographics of the Prime Six community, poverty levels in the Prime Six area, and enrollment in assigned schools and choice schools; percentage of CCSD students enrolled in Prime Six schools, which show a decline; the extent to which the schools' populations are African American, which shows a shift from 2001 to 2007, but still shows a lack of diversity; the rise in English Language Learners (ELLs); and the decline of enrollment in Prime Six schools.

APPROVE PRESENTATION OF REVIEW OF THE PRIME SIX PROGRAM (continued)

Dr. Orfield stated their review of the Prime Six schools revealed the following: 1, the schools the students were enrolling in instead of their neighborhood schools had substantially higher achievement levels than the neighborhood schools; 2, those students who transferred performed better; and 3, those students who transferred to outside schools were exposed to greater racial diversity.

Dr. Orfield stated the question to ask, then, is if students who are given the choice to transfer do better, why are there so few. He said research across other parts of the country suggests that the reason is a result of the parents' lack of knowledge of the options available to them, which is in direct relation to their level of education and their socioeconomic status. He stated another reason would be that the parents have no relationship to anyone attending the schools outside of their neighborhood to reassure them. He continued that another issue the report shows is that there is a very serious academic achievement challenge present in the Prime Six schools. He guided the Board to page 6 of 56 of the report which outlines issues that the Board and District ought to consider as a result of the review of the statistical data.

Dr. Trent commended the Board and the District for asking for this report, stating the problem must first be identified before a solution can be found.

Trustee Young expressed her appreciation of the consultants' review and report of the Prime Six Program and enthusiasm in moving forward and finding concrete solutions.

PUBLIC HEARINGS ON AGENDA ITEMS/RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT

Trustee Janison read the public speaking guidance.

Presentation of Review of the Prime Six Program – Joe Neal, Dina Neal, Richard Boulware, Frank Hawkins, Marzette Lewis, Anyika Kamal, Andres Mendoza, Beatrice Turner, Sandra Owens, Wendell Williams

Mr. Neal asked what the purpose of the report was and what it was meant to accomplish, as it was an evaluation of the Prime Six Program and not a solution. He stated one of the problems these schools face is a lack of sufficient resources.

Ms. Neal stated although the choice schools are being pushed, the schools that are in the Prime Six area are not being fixed. She asked what the difference was regarding resources between the choice schools where students are succeeding and the Prime Six schools.

Mr. Boulware stated it is disturbing to him that there had not been a plan in place to address the issues shown in the report as of yet. He stated the District may be misplacing its resources but could not be sure without benchmarks. He challenged the Board to create targets to eliminate the disparities in the District beginning this school year.

PUBLIC HEARINGS ON AGENDA ITEMS/RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT (continued)

Mr. Hawkins stated the findings of the Prime Six study had been known by the CCSD, and there had been no action taken to remedy the situation. He spoke about the inequalities in the District. He stated lack of information and misinformation both hurt the efforts of the District.

Ms. Lewis stated the information presented in the Prime Six report had been presented in the past, but no solution is being presented. She talked about children being mistreated as they were taken to schools in outlying areas in the past.

Mr. Kamal disagreed with some comments made by Dr. Orfield that because African American families are choosing to remain in their area to attend school, they are being segregated; and that African American children are choosing not to attend magnet schools. He stated the reason the children are not attending the magnet schools is because, through the District's process, they are being denied.

Mr. Mendoza stated the Latinos are affected by the Prime Six Program issues as well. He accused the District of not caring about educating minority children, particularly ELL students.

Ms. Turner expressed her dissatisfaction with the CCSD and stated that she was preparing to stage a boycott and file a civil rights lawsuit against the District if her grandson was not allowed to attend Mabel Hoggard Elementary School, which is a magnet school in her neighborhood.

Dr. Owens stated some interventions, some outcomes, and some timelines are needed to address the issues presented in the report. She stated she was disappointed with the report because it did not include recommendations.

Mr. Williams stated he previously worked in the Prime Six office, and he asked what happened after 1994 when the Prime Six office was closed. He noted that by closing that office, some of the services facilitated by that office could no longer take place. He stated at this point, everyone needs to come together to find resolutions.

Dr. Orfield stated that in seeking a solution, the Board would need to be willing to listen to the community members. He said this report was generated to be used as a tool for taking a first step. He stated he is not suggesting the children be placed on buses and be forced to go to schools outside of their neighborhoods, but that the parents should be informed of their choices. He explained that this report did not include recommendations because it was thought to be irresponsible to make recommendations without talking to the members of the community and the school staff. He stated in order to find solutions the Board would have to be willing to engage in discussions with the community, find out what their needs and wants are, and make some hard decisions.

PUBLIC HEARINGS ON AGENDA ITEMS/RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT (continued)

Dr. Trent reiterated that the facts before them are real, and they cannot be ignored. He stated the facts give the District cause to investigate and explore what needs to be done to find solutions. He talked about the need to engage in a productive dialogue in order to begin to reach solutions. He encouraged the Board to begin the process of having meaningful discussions with the parents and community members. He said it is very important to understand how an individual's ideas and thoughts are presented to be able to have those productive discussions and for everyone to be heard.

Dr. Trent stated the most important resource a school has is the teacher, and the teacher should have a solid, high quality curriculum to teach. He said parents should be fully informed about every choice or option available to them in deciding which option is best for their family. He stated it was important to know whether there are policies and practices in place that are preventing the Board's aspirations for students from being realized, and that without regular and ongoing examination, the Board cannot know if individuals are faithfully doing what they have been charged to do, which is also extremely important. He added that the Board must make an effort to ensure that the community members' aspirations and interests are understood and attended to.

Trustee Janison expressed appreciation for the information provided today. She stated this was a first step, and that the discussions with community members, families, teachers, and administrators need to begin expeditiously. She stated the current surveys used by the District need to be reviewed to ensure they are effective in asking the correct questions.

Trustee Edwards stated she was very discouraged by the report, and she acknowledged West Las Vegas community's feeling of being discounted. She stated the Board and District would be moving forward with this issue, and that it needs to happen quickly. She expressed regret that these issues had not been sufficiently addressed up to this point.

Trustee Young stated everyone needs to work together to ensure that the children are successful. She expressed appreciation for the passion displayed by the parents and community members of West Las Vegas.

Trustee Mason thanked Dr. Trent and Dr. Orfield for their presentation. He stated the children in these Prime Six schools should be given the same opportunities as the children in all other Clark County schools.

Trustee Wright stated she was disheartened to know that there are children in the Clark County School District who are placed in this situation where they are not given the opportunity to succeed academically.

PUBLIC HEARINGS ON AGENDA ITEMS/RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT (continued)

Trustee Moulton thanked Dr. Rulfes for bringing this information forward. She stated the Board and District has opportunities, including data, choices, slower growth, accountability, and efficient staff to move in the right direction. She acknowledged the perpetual challenge of the lack of resources. She expressed gratitude for today's discussion.

Trustee Garvey expressed that despite the differences and the mistrust, everyone can come together, build trust, and work to achieve common goals for the success of the students.

Dr. Rulfes stated the study exposed many questions, and that he viewed this as the start of a process as opposed to a means to supply answers. He recommended developing a theory of an action plan for the Board and enlisting the help of outside expertise to work with the Board and the District with the use of available grant money.

Trustee Edwards expressed an urgency to move forward. She stated pursuing grant funding and taking an excessive amount of time to proceed is unacceptable.

Trustee Young recommended putting together a District team that would include Dr. Orfield, Dr. Trent, Dr. Owens, and herself to facilitate discussions with community members and parents.

PUBLIC HEARINGS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS/RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURN: 4:11 p.m.

Motion: Edwards Second: Wright Vote: Unanimous