

MINUTES
CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES
ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER, ROOM 466
5100 W. SAHARA AVE., LAS VEGAS, NV 89146

WORK SESSION

Wednesday, May 6, 2009

11:00 a.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: Bill Hoffman, General Counsel, Legal Department; Dr. Lauren Kohut-Rost, Deputy Superintendent, Instruction Unit; Jeffrey Weiler, Chief Financial Officer, Operations Support Unit; Kaweeda Adams, Director, Instruction and Facility Administration, Instruction Unit; Katrina Nicosia, Director, Northeast Region Team, Student Support Services Division; Sue Daellenbach, Academic Manager, Assessment and Accountability, Superintendent's Schools; Kimberly Bass-Davis, Principal, Brown Junior High School; Dr. Tammy Malich, Principal, Legacy High School; Karmen Miller, Dean of Students, Mojave High School; Charity Varnado, Principal, Mojave High School; Ron Montoya, Principal, Valley High School; Amy Stepinski, Dean of Students, Valley High School; Cindy Krohn, Executive Assistant, Board Office; and Francesca Haak, Transcriber/Recording Secretary, Board Office.

ADOPT AGENDA

Adopt agenda.

Motion: Edwards Second: Moulton Vote: Unanimous

Trustee Mason was not present for the vote.

PUBLIC HEARINGS/RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

EMPLOYEE LABOR RELATIONS AND CLOSED SESSION

Approval of closed session pursuant to NRS 288.

Motion: Edwards Second: Moulton Vote: Unanimous

Trustee Mason was not present for the vote.

RECESS: 11:01 a.m.

RECONVENE: 11:40 a.m.

BOARD MEMBER ARRIVES

Trustee Mason arrived at the Board meeting at 11:18 a.m.

BOARD MEMBER LEAVES

Trustee Garvey left the Board meeting at 11:40 a.m.

GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES UPDATE

Presentation and discussion regarding the CCSD graduation rate and dropout rate calculations, initiatives, and reporting, as well as progress of the District toward goals to increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates.

Dr. Kohut-Rost explained that the PowerPoint presentation would include CCSD's graduation rate and dropout rate calculations, methods of reporting, initiatives underway to target those areas, and outcomes being seen in those rates.

Ms. Daellenbach gave a PowerPoint presentation which included an explanation of how the state calculated graduation/dropout rates through the Leaver Rate, which comes from the National Center for Educational Statistics. She stated that, beginning in 2011, Governor Gibbons has agreed to utilizing the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate across the nation, which would mandate a request for transcript.

Dr. Kohut-Rost explained that currently the vast majority of dropouts were students who leave at the end of a school year and do not return at the beginning of the next school year.

Ms. Daellenbach continued with the PowerPoint presentation and explained the CCSD chart which illustrated 2003-2007 enrollment, dropout, and transfer calculations.

Trustee Moulton requested clarification of whether transfers would be considered dropouts in the new rating system, unless otherwise requested.

Ms. Daellenbach responded in the affirmative. She continued with the PowerPoint presentation, explaining the chart illustrating graduation rates by ethnicity since 2003.

Dr. Kohut-Rost continued the presentation by highlighting high graduation rates for Advanced Technologies Academy (ATA), and the top items that the principal felt increased graduation rates for the students included the utilization of the Nevada State Standards and Power Standards, Backwards Assessment Model, Item Analyses of Quarters 1 and 3 Interim Assessments, and a School Improvement Plan.

Trustee Edwards questioned whether all CCSD schools were performing interim assessments and what the district was doing to ensure that all CCSD schools were utilizing interim assessments and taking the results back to the students for improvement.

Dr. Kohut-Rost responded that oversight was left to region superintendents and assistant superintendents.

Trustee Mason noted that his data was different from the district's data, and his data was taken from 1992-2004, from the state of Nevada. He distributed a handout and discussed the dropout rate information by ethnicity contained therein. He believed there has not been consistency in addressing the dropouts across the district.

GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES UPDATE (continued)

Dr. Kohut-Rost stated that the data that would be discussed later in the presentation would be similar to Trustee Mason's data.

Regarding ATA's practices to achieve high graduation rates, Trustee Janison asked why it was not required in every school if the district knew it worked.

Dr. Kohut-Rost explained that ATA is a school of choice, and when students have choice, they will perform better. She continued with the presentation topic of School Highlights, discussing Virgin Valley High School, and the top items that the principal felt increased graduation rates for the students were the importance of graduation being the expectation, not the goal; relationships with students; and credit recovery opportunities. She also discussed Silverado High School, and the top items that the principal felt increased graduation rates for the students were expectations, preparation, and accountability. She outlined the multiple district/region initiatives.

BOARD MEMBER LEAVES

Trustee Moulton left the Board meeting at 12:03 p.m.

GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES UPDATE (continued)

Dr. Kohut-Rost noted that the budget crisis would need to be taken into consideration. She explained the information contained in her handouts entitled Nevada System of Higher Education Remedial/ Developmental Enrollments Report, Clark County School District Summary; and Clark County School District Graduates 2007. She clarified that the district was showing increased enrollments and reduction in remediation for the Nevada System of Higher Education.

Trustee Janison requested clarification of the two columns, Nongraduates Failing Proficiency Tests and Nongraduates Passing Proficiency Tests, of the CCSD Graduates 2007 chart. She stated that if students have not met the district's requirements, and they were not considered a dropout, the district had not given them what was needed, and she was unsure whether they should be considered.

Dr. Kohut-Rost stated her point was not to consider them a graduate. She also clarified that those students who come back to graduate were not included in the chart. She acknowledged that the district was not meeting all students' needs. She stated the data was not corrected with regard to the percentage of students who come back, pass the proficiency exam, and receive a diploma. She stated she would make that final data for the class of 2008 available when it was compiled.

Trustee Janison requested that additional data.

Trustee Edwards suggested that there should be a distinction between graduation and dropout rates. She also stated that a 65 percent graduation rate was not good enough, and that it should be made much higher and quickly. She suggested that the dropout rate should be a separate discussion to avoid confusion. She opined that the fact that children do come back and pass the proficiency exams should be counted as subsequently graduated.

Dr. Kohut-Rost concurred with Trustee Edwards' comments.

GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES UPDATE (continued)

Trustee Edwards questioned whether what she suggested regarding counting the students who come back could be done.

Ms. Daellenbach responded that calculation could be done, but it would take time to go back and match those students up.

Trustee Janison suggested performing that calculation moving forward and not to go back.

Trustee Young expressed the feeling that the numbers indicate a tragedy. She asked for clarification of the 65 percent graduation rate and where it was located in the charts.

Dr. Kohut-Rost responded that the information Trustee Young was requesting was located in a separate document for 2008 that was not currently available.

Trustee Young stated the documents were very convoluted, and the public would not have confidence in the district's reporting because they were not pulled together. She expressed the need for a plan to keep students in school and to reach out to them if they drop out.

Dr. Rulfes stated that the purpose of today's presentation was to explain what the district was doing to confront poor graduation rates by moving to models that work, such as the ATA, vocational, and magnet schools, although they take enormous investments and time. He urged recognition from the community during this time of the budget crisis.

Dr. Kohut-Rost asked what percentage of students drop out and do not return.

Ms. Daellenbach responded that percentage was 54 percent of students who were counted as dropouts who do not come back. She continued with the following topics in her presentation: Who is considered a dropout; District Dropout Rates 2002-2008; Dropout Rate – Ethnicity; and the Top 10 Reasons Given for Dropping Out.

Dr. Rulfes stated programs were changing to entice students to remain in school.

Trustee Mason asked if staff could determine how many students go into the gaming workforce, and were those businesses hiring students because they could offer them lower salaries.

Ms. Daellenbach responded that it would be difficult to track that information because of privacy issues.

Trustee Young questioned whether the district still utilized a program it once had to help pregnant students.

Dr. Kohut-Rost responded that a number of pregnant students were remaining in school, and another option was the alternative school. She continued with the presentation, highlighting Dropout Rates – School Highlights, citing that the dropout percentage rate for Cheyenne high School for the 2006-2007 school year was 5.3 percent, which preliminarily had dropped to 4.8 percent in the 2007-2008 school year, indicating a consistent decline. She continued by highlighting Liberty High School, Southeast Career and Technical Academy (CTA), and the Southeast CTA, and what they were doing to reduce dropout rates.

GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES UPDATE (continued)

She spoke of some District/Region Initiatives and gave a brief update on the Schools Targeting Alternative Reform Onsite (STARon) pilot program.

Trustee Edwards suggested that the discussion needed to include students not in high school who were dropping out, specifically 8th grade into 9th grade, determining the cause, and the need to be working on it.

Dr. Kohut-Rost agreed that regions have been focusing on students falling through as early as 6th and 7th grades. She stated that principals at middle schools have requested and implemented monitoring every student at the middle schools. She indicated that she did not have dropout data from middle schools available, although it was being monitored.

Trustee Edwards expressed the need to address the issue of those students who were in school on a daily basis but were not receiving credit because they had missed 18 days or more, and that the legislature needed to be made aware of that.

Mr. Montoya spoke of the STARon pilot at his school. He stated that his school receives students coming in after they could receive credit, they enroll them in advance academics, which is a credit retrieval program, and they do catch up. He also stated that they try to give every student hope, which is the key to their success and reduces dropout rates.

Mrs. Adams continued with the PowerPoint presentation briefly highlighting the topics which would focus on the STARon program: Staff development, instructional delivery of the program, the counseling component, and credit retrieval.

Ms. Nicosia explained how staff development was incorporated in the STARon program. She stated that schools incorporating the STARon program utilize counselors daily who address behavioral issues with students so they do not repeat the same infractions; they provide a full day of training to teachers on the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) program; and they provide a full day of training to teachers on using a book entitled "The Prepare Curriculum."

Ms. Bass-Davis spoke of the STARon program in her school, highlighting consistency in class schedule, continuity of instruction, and continuity of grading.

Dr. Malich echoed Ms. Bass-Davis's comments in addition to stating that the special education students' Individual Education Plan (IEP) remains on her campus under the guidance of the special education facilitators. She explained how STARon works with the integration of Student Support Services and elective classes in the STARon program. She also stated there was more connection with staff and students at her school, especially counselor staff, through this program.

Trustee Janison requested clarification on the topic of class schedule and whether students who get in trouble keep the same teachers for core classes if they were involved in the STARon program.

Dr. Malich responded that students stay on the same schedule, but another teacher would be sent in to deliver the work and provide one-on-one instruction.

Ms. Miller stated the critical aspects of the STARon program at her school are the counseling components.

GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES UPDATE (continued)

Ms. Varnado stated she felt students were not connected with school, but that the STARon program allows students to connect and allows staff to determine why students disconnect.

Mr. Montoya noted that students can get caught up in lack of credits, but what they do at his school is they run a credit retrieval program, which fosters hope and opportunity, which puts them back on track toward graduation. He also noted that if a seat was not available, the student may also access the program at home.

Ms. Stepinski concurred with Mr. Montoya on the importance of curriculum offerings to allow students to earn credit and put them back on track toward graduation. She stated students have expressed the feeling that this program allowed them a second chance.

Mr. Montoya clarified that when this program started, and currently, with regard to advanced academics in terms of credit retrieval opportunities, he had Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) funding and funding from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Upward Bound Math/Science Center, that supported it.

Mrs. Adams extended an invitation from the Superintendent to tour any of the STARon programs.

Trustee Edwards thanked Mr. Montoya and Ms. Stepinski for accommodating her short-term request to visit one of the STARon schools. She concurred that it was the kind of program that keeps students at school connected and allows them to move back to where they left off. She realized that, unfortunately, the program costs money at a time when the district was limited with funds. She opined that if STARon continued to be implemented, over time the district would realize savings.

Trustee Janison asked whether the district was able to calculate the costs for this program to determine whether to add more schools into the program.

Dr. Kohut-Rost explained the reasons Dr. Rulfes had for starting this program. She stated that a thorough per-pupil cost analysis at these four sites would be performed over the next year, and if the analysis indicated the program was working, the district would need to examine the allocation of every district dollar and to reallocate funds to where it would be better served at a comprehensive site running a program such as STARon.

Trustee Janison clarified that it was at the Board's request to have the Superintendent look into starting this program, and she expressed appreciation to staff's response to their request.

Trustee Young thanked staff for their perseverance with the students. She recommended that the intervention process for behavioral issues should start at the elementary level. She also recommended going back to the community and parents to seek support in this area. She expressed the need to be very strategic in order to be successful in this area.

Dr. Kohut-Rost thanked those principals and assistant principals who were present representing the STARon program and for providing leadership and support to teachers.

The Board of Trustees also expressed thanks to those principals and assistant principals.

GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES UPDATE (continued)

Dr. Kohut-Rost concluded by stating that through the different types of region and district initiatives, the district was beginning to assess students in kindergarten through the Integrated Data Management System (IDMS). She expressed appreciation to all the staff involved in this program.

Trustee Edwards suggested the need to ensure that data was being utilized.

Trustee Janison concurred with Dr. Kohut-Rost in expressing appreciation to staff. She requested that the Board be kept updated regarding obtaining funding for STARon.

ADJOURN: 1:15 p.m.

*Motion: Edwards Second: Young Vote: Unanimous
Trustee Moulton and Trustee Garvey were not present for the vote.*