

## WORKSHOP MEETING – FEBRUARY 9, 2012

The School Board of Okaloosa County met in Workshop Session on February 9, 2012, in the School District Administration Building, 120 Lowery Place, SE, Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

PRESENT: Cathy Thigpen, Vice-Chairman  
Cindy Frakes  
Chuck Kelley  
Melissa Thrush

Alexis Tibbetts, Superintendent  
C. Jeffrey McInnis, Esq., Attorney to the Board

ABSENT: Rodney L. Walker, Chairman

The Vice-Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., the purpose of the meeting being to review Agenda items, thereby expediting the Regular Meeting. Items may be considered in random order to accommodate visitors and presenters. Routine items not discussed during the Workshop were reviewed prior to the meeting with no further questions or comments by the Board.

The Vice-Chairman made the following changes to the Agenda: Consent item #27-D was deleted.

Mrs. Guyla Hendricks explained the impact of implementation of the Algebra 1 end of course exam which is mandated by the State. For any State end of course exam administered in the district, a full credit cannot be awarded until the exam has been administered and the student has passed that exam. This will impact graduation, grades, extracurricular eligibility and honors designation. Multiple opportunities will be given to the student to pass the exam when it is re-administered in subsequent years. Parents of Algebra 1 students will be provided a letter with this information.

Mrs. Thigpen stated that the presentation regarding the STEMM Center would be taken first to accommodate the presenters.

A follow-up report to the information provided to the Board on December 12, 2011, regarding the proposed STEMM Center at the Valparaiso School site was presented through a PowerPoint presentation. Mrs. Tallman addressed concerns that the STEMM Academy would replace the STEMM programs that currently exist in the schools. She stated that the STEMM Academy and Teacher STEMM Training Center would enhance those programs by offering mentoring opportunities, professional development opportunities, and it would bring more focus and attention to STEMM in Okaloosa County. Additionally, the Engineers for America program would benefit from the Center.

Mrs. Tallman presented the various means of community interest, and the areas of support offered through partnership commitments. Ms. Tallman stated that since December, the Air Force Research Lab and the Air Armament Center have begun an educational partnership agreement with the District. Additionally, student and parent interest were expressed during the meetings that were held in the three areas of the district during the winter break.

An estimated operational budget worksheet for the STEMM program at the Valparaiso campus was provided based on an enrollment of 88 students. Mrs. Scallan, Chief Financial Officer, stated that she is comfortable with the budget as presented based on 88 students, and the capital outlay in regard to technology needs. She noted that she does not know what is required in regard to infrastructure, therefore could not speak to previous discussion on that matter.

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Current STEMM grant funding in the amount of \$126,500 from the NDEP grant has been received. To date, the Engineers For America program has received \$134,111, and an additional grant proposal in the amount of \$71,000 is in process. Mrs. Tallman stated that the STEMM Center will be a focus of national attention that draws funding, as seen with the Engineers For America program.

Mr. John Spolski, Principal of Bruner Middle School, and Mr. Jeff Palmer, Principal of Pryor Middle School, both spoke to the Board in support of the STEMM Academy, and their support of a student's choice to attend if it is in the best interest of the student. Both principals stated that the STEMM Academy would not limit their schools' programs and advanced courses that are offered to high level students.

In response to questions and comments regarding registration, Mrs. Tallman stated that registration to the STEMM Academy will begin at the meeting that is anticipated at the end of the month, with the program projected to start in August 2012.

Valparaiso City Commissioner, Neal Shermer, addressed the Board regarding his opposition to the Valparaiso School site solely accommodating the STEMM Academy and Teacher STEMM Training Center. Mr. Shermer requested that the Board consider the proposed Somerset Academies and the STEMM Academy operate together at the Valparaiso School Site.

Mrs. Frakes made reference to several points outlined in a letter from Major General Jeffrey R. Riemer, USAF (Ret), regarding the U.S. lagging in educational attainment in the areas of science and engineering degrees, and his support of the STEMM Center and the opportunities it will allow for students to be competitive in STEMM related disciplines. Mrs. Frakes requested that the letter from Mr. Riemer be added to the record.

Mrs. Frakes stated that the STEMM Academy is an opportunity for Okaloosa County to be an educational leader, and is in the best interest of the students. Mr. Kelley commented that there is a national academic crisis as referenced by Mrs. Frakes, and the STEMM Academy is something that the District can take the lead on locally to offer to its students, and with the Board's support it can be successful.

Mrs. Thigpen thanked the staff for their time spent with each Board member, answering questions and explaining all the information provided.

Mr. Jay McInnis, Director of Transportation, explained the process of TransPar Group's efficiency evaluation of the District's bus routes. Staff is pleased with the recommendations from TransPar Goup which are to delete a few routes, along with a change in bell time at one of the schools in the north end.

In response to Ms. Thrush's questions regarding the public online auction of surplus lawn equipment, Mr. Steve Bolton stated that all items are functioning, and have been stored in the warehouse due to the District's contract for lawn services. He commented that the equipment will begin to deteriorate after approximately two years of non-use, and the sale of functioning equipment is an opportunity for the District to obtain better prices than for non-functioning items. Proceeds from the auction will go into the general fund.

Dr. Bill Smith explained that the advertisement of a Request for Proposal for an energy conservation and management program is an opportunity for the district to advertise and receive proposals for the development of a behavior modification program to reduce the energy consumption of the district. After review of the proposals, a selected vendor will be recommended to the Board, along with the details of the behavior modification program, at which time the Board would decide whether to approve the program.

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In response to Ms. Thrush's question regarding the effective date of revised School Board Policy 11-20 Tobacco Products on School Board Property, Mr. Rodney Nobles stated that the revision would take effect July 1, 2012, which will allow staff to work on other programs that will align with the policy.

Ms. Thrush asked if a cost analysis that replicates ECCI South would be provided to companies submitting proposals to use as a cost comparison for a dropout prevention school in the south county area. Mr. Nobles responded that RFP includes the cost of the program from 2009-2010 that vendors can reference, which was the cost to the District at that time.

With reference to the Applications for Florida Public Charter School Grant Program, Mrs. McKinley addressed questions from Ms. Thrush, stating that the charter school applications from Academica, Inc. for Somerset Academies were not location specific. Mrs. McKinley explained that the applications will be forwarded to the Charter School Association of the State of Florida for review upon Board approval. She clarified that the grant applications are for computers, consultants, and program designing. Mrs. McKinley responded that the School Board does not have the authority to modify the grant applications that are forwarded to the Florida Department of Education; however, she would inquire if School Board is allowed to send information to the authorized review committee. She stated that it would be prudent for the School Board to move the grant applications forward, and the next level would be responsible for determining if they are viable grant applications.

Mr. Kelley left the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Mr. Nobles responded to Ms. Thrush's questions regarding the process of establishing an athletic director performance appraisal which will be used to evaluate high school athletic directors. He explained that the development of a specific appraisal to the athletic director duties was initiated at the request of high school principals. After review of the appraisal by the principals and athletic directors, their input was included in the final draft of the appraisal.

Mr. Bolton explained that the need for a boiler replacement at Bluewater Elementary School was due to the system no longer functioning at full capacity; therefore, there was an emergency bid for boiler replacement through the Purchasing Department. He stated that the project is near completion, and funding came from the district-wide HVAC project.

Mrs. Karen Peek, OCEA President, commented to the Board that the Union does support public education; however, there is concern regarding the hidden costs associated with the STEMM Academy. She stated that OCEA is concerned about the entry requirements that exclude students from the program who do not score level 5 on the FCAT math section, and prefers that the STEMM program be open to all students regardless of their FCAT math level. Additionally, the Union is concerned that the District is willing to privatize its lowest performing students because of the cost, yet it is not willing to allow the top performance schools to be privatized. Public Education should be for the whole spectrum, not just the top performing students.

Dr. Bill Smith updated the Board regarding the final settlement from the insurance company for the 2004-2005 storm season in the amount of \$1,657,222. He thanked staff and Jacobs-Titan for their diligence in the settlement process.

Dr. Tibbetts commented that the District has been cited as having the lowest dropout rate in the State. She also informed the Board that Okaloosa County is one of five districts that had 30% or more of their graduating class earn a level 3 or higher on the Advanced Placement exams.

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Due to prior commitments of several Board members, it was requested that Mr. Eric Mitchell present information regarding the addition of laptops to the SEAT Management contract at the meeting Monday evening.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Jan Crawford, Recorder

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ALEXIS TIBBETTS, Ed.D.  
SUPERINTENDENT AND  
CORPORATE SECRETARY

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CATHERINE S. THIGPEN  
VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD