



Poudre School District Board of Education

2407 Laporte Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80521 • 970-490-3607

Meeting Minutes

Minutes from Special Business Meeting

September 19, 2017

SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING – 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT: President Cathy Kipp and Vice President David Trask; Directors Nate Donovan, Christophe Febvre, Susan Gutowsky, Carolyn Reed, and Rob Petterson; Superintendent Sandra Smyser; Executive Director Dave Montoya, Danielle Clark, Legal and Policy Counsel Tom Crabb; Assistant Superintendents Jinger Haberer, Scott Nielsen and Todd Lambert

ABSENT: None

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

President Kipp called the special meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

2.0 WORK TOPICS

2.1 Student Fee Schedule

Executive Director Dave Montoya presented information on the new student fee schedule.

The Board adopted the fee schedule on June 29, 2017.

The finance department compiled and gathered information from schools regarding their previous fee schedules, systems and processes. Using that information, the department developed the new schedule, including refining categories, processes, training, etc.

Director Montoya reviewed with the Board the foundational knowledge used to develop/revise this fee schedule and explained each category in the schedule. He also noted how law affects the district's fees and charges.

The Board had questions.

How does the district determine what to charge for extracurricular activities? There is a base participation fee for each sport. Cost differentiation depends on the sport. There are some items that are more personal and are not something that can be shared with another athlete (e.g. a swimsuit). Other sports require more expensive equipment.

The Board had a conversation on values and if a tiered fee structure based on a sport's cost is reasonable.

Are fees charged differently by school? Yes. Schools allocate their budgets differently, so a fee can be unique at every level program, class, school, etc.

Do extracurricular activity fees vary by school? Some schools pass on that cost, some do not, some have options. There is a spectrum of options in programs and for students.

The district has taken steps to define the line between fees charged for courses and extracurriculars. Choir is one example of a class that can also be an extracurricular activity. Some levels of choir are more extracurricular (outside of class) and there is a fee system structure in place for it. The district will continue to refine these unique situations to ensure accuracy in the fee schedule.

Fees do not prohibit students from participating in extracurriculars. If a student is enrolled in the federal government's free and reduced-price lunch meals program, they also qualify for fee waivers. Coaches cannot tell which students have waived fees. There is a uniform, consistent process across our schools that keeps this information confidential. There are issues with secondary school students who fail to fill out the form for a variety of reasons. However, they are strongly encouraged to do so by the district, as lunch and activity fees get higher for older students.

For those students who don't qualify for a waiver under the federal form, but have trouble paying the fees, are there other options? Staff should not make decisions on whether or not a student gets a waiver on fees. The student either qualifies on the federal form, or a lot of groups do fundraising to close the gap. Everyone who wants to participate can, they just need to fundraise more as a group.

Why do some sports get transportation to their event, while others do not? Some of the sports started as club sports and were absorbed into the district. It was just the way it was done before they were a school sport.

Why do some sports get more funding than others? Why are there discrepancies and differences between sports? Do we subsidize some sports or activities only to take something away from another? This is a conversation about values. The Board discussed at length academic/curriculum costs versus activity costs, versus field trips, versus sports, etc. and whether there is consistency districtwide.

Are opportunities fair and equitable to each student in the district? Some things appear to be more expensive at some schools versus others? Does fundraising balance the scales for student affordability, or are the same students still at a disadvantage? Is funding balanced gender-wise across sports/activities in the district? The first step was to compile the data; a next step might be to begin evaluating inequities in the schedule.

Athletic fees are assessed by coach fees, but the student fees, especially in some sports, do not come close to covering expenses. The district subsidizes a lot of costs for sports.

The Board again discussed changing the model for sports fee to a tiered system (for example, charge less for a low-cost sport like cross country, charge more for high-cost football).

There was discussion about the value of extracurricular activities; the irreplaceable value they bring to students and schools.

It was noted that there is an extreme lack of funding from both the federal government and the state. It has eroded through the years and significantly affects all fee conversations.

Superintendent Smyser noted that because the district now has a published fee schedule by school, the staff/administration at schools are taking notice of the different fees across schools and considering changes based on what they see at other schools.

Director Montoya noted that with the data compiled and this system (schedule) now in place, staff can work on analyzing the data. The system is dynamic and gives us a direction to move forward to continue refining the fee schedule.

The Board thanked the finance department for their work in putting together the fee schedule. The Board would like to see the next proposed fee schedule in April or May of 2018.

Superintendent Smyser distributed to the Board and Cabinet for their review the district's "Free and Reduced Lunch Ethnicities" data handout.

The Board recessed at 5:20 p.m.

The reconvened at 5:28 p.m.

2.2 Innovation/Flexibility in PSD Schools

The Board discussed the future of innovation and flexibility options in PSD.

There are trends in society right now regarding schools (perceived growing interest in charter schools), but are there smaller things leading these trends? Survey charter parents, why are they leaving? Is there a way to give charter schools a path to come back into the district? It's hard to sustain (being a charter) long-term. Could we give charter schools an option in the contract to get back into the district at some point if it seems like the right thing to do?

There seems to be distinct interest at the high school level for students to earn college credit while getting their graduation certificate. It's about parents and students saving money. This is something the district is working on (re: options) for high school students. The district is working on partnerships with community colleges.

During fall conferences, the PSD Board of Education should visit with other school boards. What is their vision/direction regarding charter schools? Is a philosophical change taking place? Assistant Superintendent Jinger Haberer spoke about her experiences regarding other districts and charter schools.

Superintendent Smyser noted changes and progress on blended learning opportunities throughout the district (i.e. split schedules, untraditional class times, online learning, etc.). The Superintendent noted the work being done with PEA (Poudre Education Association) on how these new blended learning opportunities affect teachers and staff in the district.

Assistant Superintendent Jinger Haberer will follow up with the Colorado Department of Education regarding potential solutions to “seat-time” requirements (to accommodate blended learning opportunities).

The district is encouraging staff to explore looking at a model of “why not” when considering new options.

The Board recessed at 6:10 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 6:13 p.m.

2.3 Board Self-Monitoring

The Board discussed the following:

- Self-monitoring training for new Board members would be helpful.
- It’s important to have honest conversations about how things are going with the group.
- Important to *respectfully* disagree on topics.
- Leave time during retreats or dinner sessions to do (on a regular basis) self-monitoring check-ins and if needed, take the time to resolve the issue.
- The language we use to frame discussions is important.
- In the past, self-monitoring conversations stagnate. Might be valuable to bring in outside review.
- Conversations/discussions should be vigorous.
- If we are looking at self-monitoring in terms of measuring student achievement, are we making progress?

Board members will each look at the Washington School Board Standards framework and share their thoughts to the group during the December (CASB) retreat.

The Board recessed at 6:36 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 6:38 p.m.

2.4 Superintendent's Vision and Strategy

Superintendent Smyser's vision is the District Ends. Success in meeting these goals is measured in the DE 1.0 report.

The Superintendent outlined in detail how the district is working to meet the District Ends in day to day operations; looking at each positions' responsibilities and implementing positive change into everyday routines (cited several examples – teaching more efficiently/effectively, textbook changes, software improvements, process efficiencies, etc.). Assistant Superintendent Jinger Haberer also gave examples of seeing this in practice throughout the district.

Superintendent Smyser noted another layer of work - mandates (local/PSD, state, federal); these have numerous impacts on the district. It's imperative that the district continue to stay educated on, in compliance with, and continuously working on doing these things better.

The Superintendent outlined other work the district is doing in elective improvements (i.e. Career Cruising rollout, new software, etc.) and system priorities (i.e. long-range planning, student connections, graduation rate improvement, student social/emotional learning/mental health, etc.) as they relate to the Ends.

The work being done in system priorities, elective improvements and mandates needs to be integrated into every level of day to day operations. The process is going well because staff believe in the District Ends. There is a lot of progress, but it is a slow process. It requires patience (time) to see if the systems are working and to successfully measure progress.

The Board would like to see earlier indications of success in the process.

The Superintendent noted that once the district achieves measurable success on the Ends, maintenance will be just as important.

The Board discussed hearing from staff about day to day successes. This is one way to measure progress. Is there a way to track what the system priorities were years ago and how they have changed?

The Board discussed improving the district's marketing and external relations. Some charters are advertising for themselves. Superintendent Smyser confirmed that starting this year, principals are allowed to advertise their school.

There was discussion about things that could impact district goals (departments with unmanageable workloads, change of BOE, etc.).

The Superintendent noted that she would like to bring the Board ideas on how to approach some meeting agenda topics and finetune this process for the future.

3.0 ADJOURNMENT

Meeting ended at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyla Davis
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Education