

MINUTES

MURFREESBORO CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL CALLED BOARD MEETING--
POLICY WORK SESSION
Tuesday, August 9, 2011
6:30 p.m.—Central Administration Building

ATTENDANCE

Board: Chair Mary Wade, Susan Andrews, Ray Butrum, Butch Campbell, Nancy Duggin, Nancy Phillips, Dennis Rainier, and Council Liaison Ron Washington.

Staff: Director Linda Gilbert, Gary Anderson, Tammy Grizzard, Ralph Ringstaff, Caresa Brooks, and Karen Hawkins.

Others: City Staff Attorney Kelley Baker and MEA President Natalie Hopkins.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER BY BOARD CHAIR

Chair Mary Wade called the meeting to order at approximately 6:33 p.m.

II. BOARD POLICY REVIEW

New Policy:

SS 13—Service Animals in District Facilities and Vehicles

Mrs. Baker reviewed the American with Disabilities Act as it relates to Board Policy SS 13. She explained that in terms of this policy a service animal is any dog, or miniature horse if deemed appropriate, that must follow strict guidelines relative to the services provided to the student, training, hygiene, vaccinations, spaying/neutering, and must be housebroken. The service animal must be under the control of the handler at all times. MCS is not responsible for supervision, walking, or taking the animal out to relieve itself. Mrs. Baker reviewed section 14—Removal of a Service Animal noting the various reasons an animal could be removed from the school. Also, use of a service animal in a classroom setting will be disallowed due to another individual's conflicting disability only where the conflict cannot be eliminated by modification of policies, practices, or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services. Currently, MCS does not have a student requesting the need for a service animal.

On motion by Mr. Campbell and second by Mr. Rainier, Board Policy SS 13 was approved as presented by acclamation. The policy will be brought back to the Board for approval on first reading.

For Discussion (Proposed Revisions):

PER 20—Personal and Professional Leave for Licensed Personnel

On motion by Mr. Rainier and second by Mr. Campbell, PER 20 was approved as presented by acclamation. The policy will be brought back to the Board for approval on first reading.

PER 21—Assignment/Transfer or Reassignment of Licensed Personnel

On motion by Mrs. Phillips and second by Dr. Andrews, PER 21 was approved as presented by acclamation. The policy will be brought back to the Board for approval on first reading.

PER 25—Sick Leave for Licensed Personnel

Mr. Campbell voiced a concern that an employee is required to give only one hour notice that he/she will return to work, and the sub will no longer be needed. Mr. Rainier stated that it appears this has not been a problem in the past; if the administration hears that it has become an issue, the policy can be brought back before the Board.

On motion by Mr. Rainier and second by Mrs. Duggin, PER 25 was approved as presented by acclamation. The policy will be brought back to the Board for approval on first reading.

PER 26—Sick Leave for Full-Time Classified Personnel

On motion by Mrs. Phillips and second by Mr. Campbell, PER 26 was approved as presented by acclamation. The policy will be brought back to the Board for approval on first reading.

PER 38—FMLA and Tennessee Maternity Act

On motion by Mr. Rainier and second by Dr. Butrum, PER 38 was approved as presented by acclamation. The policy will be brought back to the Board for approval on first reading.

PER 40—Suspension/Dismissal of Non-Licensed Employees

Mrs. Baker provided the Board with a revision to PER 40 pursuant to T.C.A. §49-2-301(b)(1)(FF) which states that “all persons employed in a position for which no teaching license is required shall be hired at the will of the Director.” Mrs. Baker stated that employees can be disciplined and terminated with no specified reason, although she recommends that documentation be kept of instances that would warrant discipline/termination. It is important that the system be careful that it doesn’t create a due process situation or imply contractual rights. It should be made clear that employees

are hired at-will in the job description, letter offering employment, policy handbook, etc. Mrs. Baker recommended that the Board adopt a simple policy regarding at-will employment for non-licensed employees. The Director can develop through an administrative directive the procedure/steps that would be taken to discipline an employee. Misconduct should be documented and steps to follow for supervisors established. The process can impact whether an employee would be entitled to unemployment benefits.

Dr. Butrum asked if the Board should be notified of these situations; Mrs. Baker stated that it would be up to the Director. Dr. Gilbert stated that she confers with Mrs. Baker in these situations, following legal counsel. Mrs. Baker explained that an investigation on charges filed against an employee would be conducted with the possibility of an employee being placed either on administrative leave (with pay or without pay) depending on the severity of the charges until a determination is made by the Director. Mrs. Baker stated that although information can be shared with the Board now since an employee can no longer appeal to the Board, she cautioned that the Board should not ask about discipline at a Board meeting, and that the Board should protect the liberty interest for an employee's reputation avoiding a charge of slander. If an employee is placed on leave without pay, but then found to be innocent, the employee would be entitled to pay that has been withheld.

Mrs. Phillips asked that it be made clear to employees who will be notified that they are employed at will that they are valuable employees. Dr. Andrews stated that the Board should be careful about the information they request regarding employee situations; they must put their faith in the Director of Schools with no pressure from the Board to hire or fire an individual. Mr. Campbell asked if a timeline should be established for dealing with a disciplinary situation. Mrs. Baker stated that there should not be a timeline as each case is different with some cases easily resolved and others requiring a great deal of time to complete a thorough investigation. Dr. Butrum asked what would happen if a person is caught red-handed committing a crime. Dr. Gilbert stated that it would be dealt with appropriately. Mrs. Baker stated that a person who is arrested/charged cannot be fired until they have been proven guilty; a thorough investigation would take place. Mr. Washington noted that he has had such a case that took a year to resolve.

Mr. Rainier moved to approve PER 40 as presented; Mrs. Duggin seconded the motion. The motion was approved by acclamation. The policy will be brought back to the Board for approval on first reading.

For Discussion (No Proposed Revisions):

STU 13— Student Records

Mrs. Farris explained that a new procedure for accepting records and sending records to another system has been established which would involve the principal being the custodian of the records received and sent. The principal will deliver records to the teacher at his/her school. A copy of records being sent to another school system is kept at each school.

On motion by Mrs. Phillips and second by Dr. Andrews, the Board approved no revisions to STU 13 by acclamation.

III. REVIEW OF DRAFT AUGUST 23, 2011 BOARD MEETING AGENDA

Mrs. Duggin pointed out that with the change in law, Item C under Consent Agenda will need to be removed.

With the change in law pertaining to tenure, it was asked that Mrs. Baker and Mr. Ringstaff review PER 16—Procedure for Granting Tenure and bring the policy before the Board sometime this fall.

Mr. Campbell asked about the status of the Board addressing Dr. Gilbert's contract. Mrs. Wade stated that she will be discussing this with Mrs. Baker following this board meeting. Mr. Rainier asked that Mrs. Baker report to the Board at the next policy session to bring them up to date on the contract and explain for example, an amended contract, a new contract, etc.

IV. REPORT ON MODEL SCHOOLS CONFERENCE—NANCY DUGGIN, NANCY PHILLIPS, RAY BUTRUM

Mrs. Duggin shared that the State Department has reported on rolling out the common core standards. A new assessment will be used in 2014 that would be scored by artificial intelligence. Teachers are going to need help with the depth of teaching as there are not as many standards but more depth required.

Dr. Butrum reported that he had attended a session facilitated by Dr. Daggett and Mr. Wong on ideas regarding assessment. He stated that studies show low class size does not affect student learning.

V. VISITOR MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE PROGRAMS

Mr. Anderson provided the Board with information on these programs and will also provide the same information to principals and gain input from them.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

Mrs. Wade asked about a program being offered to the school system by Comcast. Mrs. Baker stated that this was presented in Comcast's annual report. Mrs. Tonya Hobbs has been contacted by a Comcast representative. Essentially, low-cost internet and low-cost computers would be made available to students qualifying for free lunches.

Mr. Anderson provided the Board with an attendance report as of the second full day of attendance for students. The report reflected a total enrollment of 7,036 students which is approximately 50 students over what the projected/budgeted enrollment would be for this

school year. Pupil:teacher ratio in K-3 is 19.03 and in 4-6 is 20.84. Enrollment could change after Labor Day. Discovery lost one sixth grade class with students likely enrolling in Central Magnet. Overall, the system gained three sixth grade classes. This is the biggest kindergarten class the system has experienced. He is aware of areas, indicated in pink on the chart, to watch. Scales enrollment is 1,000+, and we may have to look at the CDC classes. The choice school letters have been sent to parents, and we are waiting to see what impact that will have on the enrollment at those schools.

Dr. Gilbert introduced Dr. Tammy Grizzard. Dr. Grizzard stated that she sees her role as the delivery of instruction. Teachers send requests for help ranging from classroom visits to review of lesson plans, etc. Caresa Brooks stated that offering PALS and LETRS training to teachers has had a positive impact on student achievement. The system will work to decrease the number of children in special ed through intervention. A Reading Clinic is planned for Mitchell-Neilson, and a grant has been applied for to help with this initiative. Dr. Gilbert explained that Leslie Eatherly has acquired twelve mentors for each school, and Greg Lyles is working with the Community Council for additional assistance. Mr. Rainier commented that the personnel moves that she made earlier seemed to have helped. Dr. Gilbert stated that great leaders make a huge difference.

Dr. Andrews commented that she has read studies that support small classroom sizes in that they do have an impact on student achievement. Dr. Gilbert added that class size does have an impact, and in addition, the diversity and special needs of children in the class also have a tremendous impact. Mr. Rainier stated that he is concerned about the growth taking place in the western part of the county, which has impacted enrollment at Scales, and asked if City Planning might be asked to report on growth to the Board. Mr. Anderson stated that he receives a monthly report from the Department of Planning. Matthew Blomely has reported to the Board in the past and would do so again if asked.

Dr. Gilbert shared a PowerPoint with the Board titled "Reflections & Future Directions" that had been shared at the systemwide inservice. She noted that Professional Learning Communities are in place with the objectives of a focus on standards, on student learning and on collaboration. Teachers have developed power standards in math, have worked to develop open communication, trust, and district unity. The system focus is on the whole child. Master schedules have been developed that prevent students from missing instructional time, the district intranet is in place, common planning times have been established, assessment teams have been created at each school, and PALS was implemented in all Title schools. An effective intervention program is in place and consistent progress monitoring is taking place.

She reported under AIMS Improvement a comparison of 2009-2010 to 2010-2011 improvement in the percent above target. The end result being that 715 more primary (grades K-2) students are on target, and in grades 3-6, 552 more students are proficient or advanced in math and 200 more in reading. Reading Intervention and PALS and LETRS training have had a very significant impact on student learning. The system does need to improve in science and social studies.

The system is strengthening momentum through Professional Learning Communities, weekly team meetings for all schools, common planning tools, common focus of meetings and working together with special education, ESL and ESP.

Psychologists are now located in the schools, ESL teachers have been assigned to schools in an effort to meet the greatest need in the most efficient manner, and an emphasis is being placed on connecting ESP with the school day and providing additional training for that program.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Wade adjourned the board meeting at approximately 8:40 p.m.

Director of Schools

MISSION STATEMENT

***To assure academic and personal success
for each child.***