

MINUTES
Murfreesboro City School Board
6 p.m., Tuesday, March 22, 2016
Council Chambers

ATTENDANCE

Chair Butch Campbell, Jared Barrett, Andy Brown, Phil King, Nancy Phillips, Nancy Rainier, and Collier Smith.

Staff: Dr. Linda Gilbert, Gary Anderson, Ralph Ringstaff, Lee Wilkerson, Roseann Barton, Sheri Arnette, Carena Dodson, Lisa Trail, Joe Marlin, Beth Prater, Kim Frank, Greg Lyles, Tonya Hobbs, Shavon Davis-Louis, Heather Anderson, Amy Wyatt, Kelly Blanchard, Lakeisha Carter, and Latoya Beard.

Staff Attorney Kelley Baker and Council Liaison Ron Washington.

I. CALL TO ORDER BY BOARD CHAIR

Chair Campbell called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Cason Lane sixth grader Brodie McPherson and was followed by a Moment of Silence.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Rainier moved to approve the agenda, and Mr. Barrett seconded the motion. All approved by saying aye.

III. 2014-2015 ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT (Matlock Clements, C.P.A.)

Mr. Anderson introduced Andy Matlock of Matlock Clements, C.P.A. to review the audit report. Mr. Matlock said there were two reports before the Board: Internal School Funds Audit and the Annual Financial Report. Regarding the first report, Mr. Matlock said the findings were unmodified meaning no material weaknesses or non-compliance issues were found. He said they met with bookkeepers to help them strengthen internal controls. He said Matlock Clements tries to be a building block and not a stumbling block. Regarding the second report, Mr. Matlock said it, too, was unmodified, and that both audits were good news for the district.

Mr. Barrett had a question about Bellwood money. Mr. Matlock said page 20 shows disbursement. He said the money followed the prek children.

Ms. Phillips said she is proud of the system for presenting the findings on TV when they don't have to. Well done.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Trail presented the following communications:

- ✚ Congratulations to Reeves-Rogers teacher Julie Parrish who has been selected as the Mid-Cumberland Teacher of the Year for grades preK-4. Now Julie moves on to the Grand Division Competition.
- ✚ Congratulations to Northfield Elementary teacher Heather Knox whose manuscript entitled “Using Writing Strategies in Math to Increase Metacognitive Skills for the Gifted Learner” has been accepted for publication in the journal *Gifted Child Today*.
- ✚ Congratulations to Hobgood Elementary for being one of four middle Tennessee schools chosen for the Cheekwood Exploration Program. On this educational adventure, third grade students will examine the exhibitions within the Museum of Art, discover the natural wonders of the botanical garden, and participate in a hands-on art project. Buses will be paid for by Cheekwood.
- ✚ Congratulations to Mitchell-Neilson School sixth grade teacher David Lockett who was selected to the 2016 Astronomy in Chile Educator Ambassadors Program (ACEAP) and will travel to Chile this summer to participate in summit related astronomy initiatives.
- ✚ Congratulations to Mitchell-Neilson School teachers Michele Slusher and David Lockett, and Rachel Prater for winning two \$150 Linebaugh Library Lifetime Membership Grants.
- ✚ Mitchell-Neilson School would like to thank the following community partners:
 - First Baptist Church Main Street for their generous donation of \$2,552 to MN’s field trip scholarship fund.
 - Fann’s Air Conditioning and Heating for sponsoring a sixth grade student for the LBL field trip.
 - MTSU’s College of Educational Media for the very generous donation of video and sound equipment for *Leader News Today*, the student-written and produced live daily newscast.
- ✚ Mitchell-Neilson School would like to thank the following businesses for sponsoring student trips to Land Between the Lakes:
 - West Fork Building Company, LLC
 - Avery Smith Nursery & Landscaping, LLC
 - Percy & Elizabeth Rucker
 - Haynes Bros. Lumber Company
- ✚ Congratulations to Hobgood Elementary School for obtaining a craft outreach grant from Cheekwood Botanical Gardens and Art Museum whereby Hobgood hosted three artists on March 11 who demonstrated their crafts in the paper, clay, and marbling fields.

- ✚ Congratulations to John Pittard Elementary and special education teacher Craig Nelius who received a Friends of Linebaugh Library grant for his project *Improving Literacy with Graphic Novels*. The grant was for \$250 in addition to books from the Friends of Linebaugh Library book store.

V. CONSENT ITEMS

Minutes: February 23, 2016 Meeting Approval of School Fees (Field Trips)

Dr. Brown moved to approve consent items. Mr. Barrett seconded the motion, and all approved by saying aye.

VI. ACTION ITEMS

None.

VII. REPORTS/INFORMATION

School Social Worker Presentation

Mr. Marlin introduced social workers Heather Anderson, Amy Wyatt, Kelly Blanchard, Lakeisha Carter, and Latoya Beard. He said they are presenting a view of the services provided using case studies. Mr. Marlin noted that the case studies are examples and are not specific to actual students because they would never breach confidentiality. Ms. Anderson presented PowerPoint slides to the Board. She said the social workers are a vital link between home, school, and community. Regarding truancy, she said they are trying to get parenting classes established. She said they conduct bio-psycho-social assessments adding that this is really what social workers do - go in-depth to connect family with resources. Ms. Smith asked if the workers go in pairs to the sites for safety reasons. Ms. Anderson said they certainly try. Ms. Phillips asked if this is diminished in the BEP. Mr. Anderson said yes. Ms. Phillips asked about their educational background. Mr. Marlin said they all have social worker or early child development degrees. Ms. Phillips said they probably have success stories to tell but probably don't even really know how their work impacts lives. Dr. Brown said statistically they are touching one in eight children and visiting one in 20 providing a tremendous service. Chair Campbell commended them on a job well done. Mr. Marlin recognized the interns in the audience from MTSU who assist the social workers.

Revenue and Expenditure Report

Mr. Anderson presented the Revenue and Expenditure Report to the Board stating the district is at 66.67 percent of the year on revenues. He said sales tax numbers are up over this time last year and that expenditures are in line at 59.9 percent of year. E-Rate funds have not come through yet. He noted that the staffing level for custodians is finally coming up to where it should be.

Personnel Report

Dr. Gilbert told the Board that Mr. Ringstaff is here if the Board has any questions regarding the Personnel Report.

Enrollment (PTR) Report

Mr. Anderson reviewed this report. He said the district is up 367 students over the end of last year. The district average pupil/teacher ratio is 19.87:1. Mr. Anderson said attendance has slipped to 97 percent.

Update on TN Ready

Dr. Gilbert said the Resolution was sent and it asked primarily for two things:

- (1) This year's data be used only for baseline data and not be released publicly.
- (2) State Department and Legislature consider impact of data and not to use 2015-16 data to label, etc.

Dr. Gilbert said there is a policy in place as per state law that if scores are not back in five days, they do not have to count. She said she hopes they won't because she does not believe they are valid. Dr. Gilbert reviewed the testing debacle with the state server crashing, dates continually moved, timeliness of receiving written exam, etc. She said the second part of TN Ready is scheduled to be administered after spring break.

The Board asked what tests are not required by the state. Dr. Gilbert said they are all required.

Chair Campbell said he thinks the state put principals in the same category with teachers [regarding scores not counting against them] which is a move forward. Dr. Gilbert said schools will still be graded unfairly. She said when the state first found out MIST failed in October, they should have addressed it then.

Dr. Dodson explained RTI2 (Response to Instruction and Intervention) and required assessments. She said every fall, winter, and spring we have to administer screening to see who needs intervention. NWEA map rest, progress monitoring is AIMswEB and iReady. She said these are required for all students especially to identify students with disabilities. Dr. Gilbert said testing is tied into financial support. She said the positive side is screening every child for intervention so by third grade they don't need intervention.

Ms. Davis-Louis said the tests were supposed to have been online. She said we were not expecting to need warehouse, have three times the testing materials as last year, had to move backpack food to the corner of the warehouse. Ms. Davis-Louis said there were test booklets and an answer sheet for each. She said we had to make sure we received everything on the packing slip; teams counted each and every book and verify serial numbers and the numbers were not in order this year. Building and testing coordinators developed plans for each building. She said we did not have proctors prepared because tests were supposed to have been online. She said we had to find proctors. She said today was spent counting answer documents. She said they have to account for absences and there is paperwork attached to each of those steps. The same teams have to count non-scoreable materials. Ms. Davis-Louis said that all books were not used so

everything not used has to be identified and shipped back. She said this has to be done again in three weeks. She noted that WIDA and SPED exams are going on now and that WIDA replaced ELDA for ELL students. She said kindergarten is a one-on-one exam that only ELL teachers can give. ELL teachers have to go through a four-hour webinar and test before they can administer the exam.

Ms. Smith said kids are tested too much. She said she was a proctor at one of the schools and the teachers and administrators were so nervous. She said with MIST, the test logins didn't work, and they were administered the Monday following the time-change - kids were exhausted. Ms. Smith said some of the students were falling asleep by the end of the test. She said page numbers did not correspond with answer sheets.

Ms. Davis-Louis said the written test looked completely different than last year and there was no chance to prepare. She said we have to train building level test coordinators. She said they received a Notice of Errors after the tests were done.

Ms. Smith said the kids didn't know if they were supposed to simplify fractions because it wasn't in the instructions so one answer is going to be wrong. The kids started crying because they were worried about the test affecting grades. She said stress is flowing down. Ms. Smith said they have worked all school year. She said she has heard of one school system that said they were not going to test. Dr. Gilbert said she was not aware of any system not taking the test, and money is tied to the test. Even if we try to take stress off, it has consumed us.

Chair Campbell said he begs the audience to call state senators and representatives to get something different done. He said he is sure the Commissioner is upset but if it doesn't work don't try to fix it in the middle of the stream. He said we should skip it and move on to next year. Chair Campbell asked if there are there other states that contracted with this company and had this problem. Shavon said it is her understanding they developed this for TNReady.

Ms. Phillips said testing has always been stressful but this year was a great big debacle and the state owes every student an apology. We do not need teachers so stressed out that students are stressed out. She said her experience was the opposite of Ms. Smith's - teachers made it a positive experience for students, adding that we have a responsibility to make that culture. She said the Community Advisory Committee can help make that culture. Ms. Phillips said children crying in the classroom is unacceptable.

Mr. King said that everyone gets measured in their job, but he likes to think we get measured fairly. He said he doesn't believe that teachers mind assessing students, but the system failed them for two years in a row. He added that it seems to be a moving target. How can we fix it when it's a moving target? He said he doesn't know how to fix it. He said it is frustrating for him so he knows it's frustrating for teachers.

Ms. Rainier asked who is bearing the cost for the switch to paper and pencil. Dr. Gilbert said Measurement, Inc. will bear the cost. Ms. Rainier said it may sound silly that we have to teach students how to bubble, but we have to do it. She said test books and answer sheets do not match.

She said it is a debacle and not fair to anybody. She said she has seen so many teachers with the deer in the headlights look. Ms. Rainier said every school system should say no, we have had enough. She said she wants to see the day again when teachers go in the classroom, shut the door, and teach. She said some children worked on sample questions and did not even get to finish the test.

Dr. Brown said he supports a culture that is positive and non-punitive. He said if he can be assured that those scores would stay in our local culture he could support them, but for those moving out of our system, we cannot assure these are not going to follow them. He said he has a firm aversion to wasted work and wasted effort and to start the same process in 19 days is totally wasted. He added that if we could have months between that would be fine. Dr. Brown said speaking as a citizen and not a school board member, he would rather teachers spend that time teaching our children and imparting knowledge rather than testing. He said he would like to see superintendents get together and say we are not going to do the second part. He added that until we take a stand things are going to continue the way they are, and we have to say enough is enough.

Mr. Barrett said we were the first to pull the plug and the first to use this company for this kind of testing. He said it blows his mind that we have all this wasted time and effort, and we should take a stand and not take it anymore. Ms. Smith asked what can be done. Chair Campbell asked what the repercussions are if we don't take the second phase. Dr. Gilbert said she would advise asking TSBA. Ms. Baker said she does not have any information. Chair Campbell encouraged everyone to call legislators. He said parents need to make those phone calls. Mr. Washington said the legislative folks are the only ones who can bail the schools out of this. He said to get them to lobby to put a halt to this kind of stuff and revisit how Tennessee is doing their testing. He said there has to be a better way and TDOE and legislators should drop and punt. Dr. Gilbert said if we could get the two things we've requested in the resolution - that would be huge.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Barrett moved to adjourn. Ms. Smith seconded. Board adjourned at approximately 7:44 p.m.

Director of Schools