

Minutes – January 9, 2018

SPECIAL MEETING of the Adams County School District 14 Board of Education was called to order Tuesday, January 9, 2018 pursuant to notice by Mr. Archuleta, President, at 5:37 p.m.

MOTION was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mrs. Quintana to go into executive session under C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(e) - Contract Negotiations; discuss pending contracts.

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, aye; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, aye

MOTION CARRIED

Executive session commenced at approximately 5:38 p.m. with Board of Education Members Archuleta, Hyde, Quintana, Rolla, Thomas, and Superintendent Abrego, present. The Board discussed several contract matters.

Executive session adjourned at approximately 6:40 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING of the Adams County School District 14 Board of Education was called to order Tuesday, January 9, 2018 pursuant to notice by Mr. Archuleta, President, at 6:45 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Mr. Archuleta, Dr. Hyde, Mrs. Quintana, Mr. Rolla, Mr. Thomas

Also Present: Dr. Javier Abrego

MOTION was made by Dr. Hyde, seconded by Mrs. Quintana to approve the minutes of December 12, 2017.

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, no; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, abstained

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION was made by Dr. Hyde, seconded by Mr. Thomas that any speaker at a Board meeting shall have a written record of his or her comments archived verbatim whenever the speaker so chooses, submissions shall become an integral part of the public record and the medium of submission (paper or electronic) shall be left to the discretion of the secretary for the Board.

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, aye; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, aye

MOTION CARRIED

Recognitions & Celebrations

Superintendent Abrego–Recognized the Commerce City Rotary organization and Dupont Elementary Parent to Para Pipeline participants.

Audience Comments

Maria Rodriguez

Issue: Contracting with teachers at Adams City High School

Alisa Mavrotheris

Issue: Why I left Adams City High School

Jose Silva

Issue: Bilingual Education and Comments to Dr. Abrego

Alexandra Alonso

Issue: Bilingual Education

Tania Hogan

Issue: CoCabe

Jorge Garcia

Issue: Language, Culture & Equity

Maria Chavez

Issue: Dual language program

Guillermo Serna

Issue: Students

Barb McDowell

Issue: CTA Update

Treasurer Hyde—Expressed comments addressing several issues, view Exhibit A.

Superintendent's Report

Beyond Textbooks Update—Matt Schwartz, Interim Director of Secondary/Beyond Textbooks Liaison, presented an update on Beyond Textbooks.

Consent Items

MOTION was made by Mrs. Quintana, seconded by Mr. Rolla to approve the consent items.

1.0 Personnel

- 1.1 Superintendent's Recommendation
Personnel Actions

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, abstained; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, Aye

MOTION CARRIED

Business Items

1.0 Grant

MOTION was made by Dr. Hyde, seconded by Mrs. Quintana to approve grant item 1.1.

- 1.1 Superintendent's Recommendation
Approval to Apply for Funding from the Colorado Department of Education's Building Excellent Schools Today Program Grant

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, abstained; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, Aye

MOTION CARRIED

2.0 Other

MOTION was made by Dr. Hyde, seconded by Mrs. Quintana to approve other item 2.1.

2.1 Superintendent's Recommendation

Approval of Out-of-State Travel to San Diego, CA for SchoolDude University new Platform Training

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, aye; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, Aye

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION was made by Dr. Hyde, seconded by Mr. Thomas to pull out other item 2.2 for further discussion in executive session.

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, aye; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, Aye

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION was made by Dr. Hyde, seconded by Mrs. Quintana to approve other item 2.3.

2.3 Superintendent's Recommendation

Approval of the 2017-2018 School and District Unified Improvement Plans

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, no; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, Aye

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION was made by Mrs. Quintana, seconded by Dr. Hyde to approve other item 2.4.

2.4 Superintendent's Recommendation

Approval for Allocation of Funds to Increase 2.0 Table of Authorized Personnel for a Fifth Grade Teacher at Monaco Elementary and a Fourth Grade Teacher at Rose Hill Elementary

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, aye; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, Aye

MOTION CARRIED

3.0 Resolution

MOTION was made by Mrs. Quintana, seconded by Dr. Hyde to approve resolution item 3.1.

3.1 Superintendent's Recommendation

Resolution 18-001

School Board Appreciation Month

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Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, aye; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, aye

MOTION CARRIED

Communications

Board of Education members shared events and activities they had attended.

Expulsion—Superintendent Abrego read into the record the following student expulsions pursuant to Board Policy and Colorado Revised Statutes – Student Number 1130596.

Executive Session

MOTION was made by Mrs. Quintana, seconded by Mr. Thomas to go into executive session under C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(e) - Contract Negotiations; discuss Inspire contract.

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, aye; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, aye

MOTION CARRIED

Executive session commenced at approximately 9:30 p.m. with Board of Education Members Archuleta, Hyde, Quintana, Rolla, Thomas, and Superintendent Abrego, present. The Board discussed the Inspire contract.

Executive session adjourned at approximately 10:29 p.m.

MOTION was made by Mrs. Quintana, seconded by Dr. Hyde to postpone action on the Inspire contract for January 23, 2018.

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, aye; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, aye

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION was made by Mrs. Quintana, seconded by Mr. Thomas to adjourn.

Mr. Archuleta, aye; Dr. Hyde, aye; Mrs. Quintana, aye; Mr. Rolla, aye; Mr. Thomas, aye

MOTION CARRIED

The Board adjourned the regular meeting at 10:30 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be Tuesday, January 23, 2018. The Board will convene in the Board of Education room located at 5291 East 60th Avenue.

Public Comment for BOE meeting: 9 Jan 2017 by Dr. Bill Hyde

At the last Board of Education meeting, many people raised concerns about the future of the District's bi-literacy program. I want to address that, but first I want to clear up a possible ambiguity brought to my attention. Some individuals may think that when I speak I speak for the Board. Let me clarify.

In my very, very, short tenure on the Board of Education I have never spoken for the Board, nor have I even held such a thought. The Board of Education speaks through its majority vote, or, in rare instances, when the Board agrees to allow one member to speak on its behalf, and those rare instances are often based on a vote as well.

MENTION FLIER

However, it is imperative to point out that when a member of the public speaks at a Board of Education meeting, that person comes before the Board of Education. It is the responsibility of the Board to respond. In some instances the Board may ask the Superintendent to respond for clarification but never on their behalf. And, as a Board member, I reserve for myself the duty to respond to public questions and concerns, regardless of comments made by the Superintendent or other Board members.

On a related matter, before the holiday break, I attended the Commerce City Council meeting where Superintendent Abrego and Chairman Archuleta presented the Crome Books project and showed a short video. Their appearance at the Council meeting had a positive impact. It's an example of the types of things we should be doing all the time. But I wouldn't have known about it unless I had read the Council's agenda. I encourage our District to publically announce these publicity events, even small ones, and then to give a 'shout out' afterwards. It informs the public.

On the other hand, I am perplexed by the handling of the public relations around Beyond Textbooks, a program intended to help teachers with curricular development.

I first heard about BT last July. I asked Matt Schwartz if I could sit in on some training sessions. I was told that there wasn't room in the training sessions. My wife called BT in Arizona to see if we could travel to BT's headquarters and learn about the program. Justin, at BT said, "Sure, but we're having a training in Adams 14 in August. We have visitors in our workshops all the time. Why don't you just come to that one and avoid the expense of a trip to Arizona?" So, I called Matt back and asked if I could attend without occupying a seat and computer terminal – I would stand in the back and just observe. He said okay, but then contacted me a few days later and said that the Superintendent didn't

want to get involved in politics, since I was a candidate for the Board at that time I let slide the notion that the Superintendent could remain impartial by allowing any of the other candidates to attend if they had requested it. Matt and I concluded our conversation with my willingness not to push further at that time for a BT demonstration and Matt agreeing to organize a public workshop on BT before the end of September 2017.

Not only has the public BT workshop not been held, but I learned a few weeks ago that Matt has become in charge of postsecondary preparation. Until this morning, when I ran into him at Rose Hill Elementary, I assumed, incorrectly, that he had relinquished his BT role. And today with his help I have learned more about BT, but this running saga of my efforts to learn about the program is not indicative of an open, communicative organization. BT is probably the single biggest curricular change the Superintendent is introducing. Wouldn't he want to publicize it? But maybe not. It competes with the Benchmark Bi-literacy program adopted in 2015.

The bi-literacy program with Benchmark materials was an adoption by the Board of Education directly related to the OCR (=Office of Civil Rights) and CDE (=Colorado Department of Education) approved turn-around plan. Most perplexing of these two adopted curricula by our Board is that they are opposed to one another; yet, adopted by our Board less than two years apart, with over a million dollars spent on each of the two programs for materials. Just to be clear: the Benchmark program is for bi-literacy; Beyond Textbooks is English-only.

The Superintendent and other District staff have mentioned to me that if I have any questions, feel free to bring the questions to them. Dr. Abrego has stated publicly that he has an open door policy. That's as it should be, but most issues ought to be discussed in an open forum such as Board of Education meetings. For me to have a private conversation with Dr. Abrego may address my questions or my personal curiosity, but I represent the people and it is important that I ask openly and that the Superintendent responds openly.

With these communication issues put aside for now, I want to contribute to the dialogue regarding our bi-literacy program.

First, I want to state that this was probably the most frequently asked question from voters that I heard about during my campaign. There are at least three separate situations that need to be addressed.

1. Basic definitions. Bi-literacy and bilingualism are sometimes used interchangeably confusing the debate. Bilingualism means that a person can speak and comprehend a spoken second language. Bi-literacy is being bilingual plus being able to read, write, and learn in a second language on a professional level.
2. Bilingualism ought to be language-neutral but it isn't. We assume that we are dealing with a Spanish-speaking student who is learning English, rather than with an English-speaker who wants to learn Spanish.
3. Bi-literacy requires a much higher standard of achievement. For the District to encourage students to become bi-literate requires a massive amount of resources – although the District has already made a large investment through its Benchmark program -- and many families may not place a priority on bi-literacy.

The superiority of a bi-literacy program over “early exit” approaches is well known, as reported upon last week and through reading research literature. I will not take time now to repeat that information except to say that permanently closing the achievement gap occurs best with students enrolled in Developmental Bi-literacy programs. In early-exit programs, known as band-aid approaches to ELL(=English language learner) learning, which are advocated by Ms. Burgos and Dr. Abrego, students do more poorly than students in Developmental programs.

In exactly this vein, I would like to point out the distinction between the Office of Civil Rights mandate for bi-literacy education and the duration of the contract with the BUENO Center. I think that Dr. Abrego is confusing the two. Just because the current contract with the BUENO Center expires at the end of this year does not mean that the District's obligation to the Office of Civil Rights expires as well. In fact, it doesn't. They are separate matters. Rather than “fly on our own,” we ought to consider extending our contract with the BUENO Center.

This whole issue of bilingual/biliterate programs need not be complex, but it becomes so when there is unclear direction from us on the Board, ambiguous directives from the Superintendent, and a community that isn't of one mind.

Since November 28, 2017, the Superintendent has verbally offered two solutions, but nothing in writing has been given to the Board. Additionally, these changes would be considered policy changes within the purview of the Superintendent but requires Board of Education approval, and the Board will be the body held legally responsible. He stated that each school population is different and that each school should decide for itself what to do about bi-literacy. That may be an alternative, but that is surrendering any District mandate, and done so without getting approval from the Board, the CDE, or the OCR.

The second suggestion by the Superintendent is that parents and families have a responsibility to foster and develop their native language among their children, as if a school district has no federal mandate to do it. In fact, an ELL program is a federal, legal obligation. It cannot be disregarded and pushed onto the parents. Our Superintendent's comment that "we are ready to fly on our own" is indicative of his disregard of the mandate.

Shifting slightly, I have some specific comments regarding the last Board meeting in which a number of speakers had questions for the Superintendent. I think it would allay the anxieties of many people if the Superintendent offered point to point answers. I offer this proposal.

First, according to public comments, the turn-around plan submitted to CDE mentions a full implementation of a K-5 bi-literacy program but does not appear anywhere in the Unified Improvement Plan. If that discrepancy is true, was it an administrative oversight? If so, I think a public acknowledgement of that error, and publication of the correction, would do a lot to reassure the public. If there wasn't any discrepancy between the two documents, I would like the specific section of the appropriate documents brought before this Board.

If the Superintendent has veered away from the CDE-approved turn-around plan, I want to know what Board action authorized the change. Board policy, under File IG, Curriculum Development, states in part, "All new programs ... as well as the elimination and extensive alteration of the content... shall be presented by the Superintendent to the Board for its consideration and action." I am not aware of any such presentation by the Superintendent nor action by the Board of Education.

Dr. Abrego has told the public that he will bring in an outside consultant to evaluate work environment and compliance with the Office of Civil Rights. I suggest that he request the Office of Civil Rights to review our situation. The Office of Civil Rights is far more familiar with our circumstances than any other third party. Instead of treating the OCR defensively, we should embrace their help. Through their technical assistance, they will help us do the right thing, and, very importantly, they will do it for free. Why should we pay more money for someone else who is less familiar with the specifics of our situation? This is a waste of our taxpayer dollars. We all say that we are for the kids; as Director Quintana said in her swearing-in speech, "the kids come first". Director Thomas has reminded us on a number of occasions, we need to spend our dollars wisely. Well, let's not throw away our precious dollars. Let's use it for the kids.

[Motion addressed already or put on agenda for next meeting.]

This hemorrhaging of dollars is not new. How many of you know that the District has paid out millions of dollars for personnel terminations? How many of you know that most of those cases involve “non-disclosure” agreements? This is not Guantanamo Bay. This is a public school district in the United States of America. If a person is terminated, it ought to be done properly. There should be no reason for paying off the person for the termination. Think what we could do with that money to hire more teachers or to buy more classroom materials. In my opinion, the Board needs to re-evaluate its own performance criteria as well as that of the Superintendent.

I have requested information from the District on whatever evaluative instruments the Board has used in the past for its own self-evaluation and for its evaluation of the Superintendent. I encourage the Board to hold workshops as soon as possible to review and possibly improve those documents and to conduct evaluations of itself and of the Superintendent. Both of these activities should be on-going tasks.

I would like to return to a public comment made at the last meeting by Mr. Serna. I thought his suggestion of the Board commissioning a task force to examine the community’s stance on bi-literacy was excellent. While it may take such a process a few months to play out, I am emphatic about the Superintendent sticking to the original CDE plan until the Board has approved any changes, and I think it is prudent for the Board to hold in abeyance any change in policy until the appointed committee has concluded its work and the Board has reviewed some of its own major decisions.

For example, the Benchmark program, which the District adopted in 2015, if I am correct, should not be abandoned when it was so recently installed. And now, Beyond Textbooks, which is another big ticket item, is pulling in a different direction. Two years ago the Board adopted an OCR approved K-5 bi-literacy program, spent over a million dollars for Benchmark materials for grades K through 5, and approved the hiring of personnel to implement a rigorous ELL program. Subsequent to that time, the Board has presided over the dismantling of this directive. It hired a superintendent with little or no ELL experience from Arizona, which happens to be the only state in the country with mandated English-only instruction.

Under the current Administration, our District is emphasizing Beyond Textbooks (an English-only curriculum) over the Benchmark materials, placing the key ELL staff person on administrative leave, abrogating District level responsibility for developmental bi-literacy programs, and verbally encouraging school-site decisions to put early-exit programs into place.

In closing, I must state that I believe these issues arise as they do because we lack the Big Three -- good communication, accountability, and transparency within the District. Furthermore, we have a superintendent who has a defensive style rather than a cooperative style. District staff are told not to respond to inquiries from its own Board of Education and from organizations outside the District. Requests for information from Board members must go through one person, Ms. Avina, creating a bottleneck. For me, as Treasurer of the Board, not to be able to talk directly with the District's financial managers and accountants makes routine correspondence very cumbersome, to say the least.

The defensive style of our Superintendent fosters an atmosphere of retaliation, does not encourage open discussion, and shuts down transparency. Prosecuting a messenger for the message is ill-advised. To claim that a messenger is the source of unrest is to deny the underlying reality. To advance as a system we need strong school leaders, ones who are open to criticism and able to address these critiques in a positive and constructive manner. It is the Board's job to articulate the characteristics that we want modeled by our superintendent.

No matter how many times we say that we have "open communications" in our Administration and in our school district does not make it so. And for anyone who doubts that, here's some evidence from just a few days ago. The news headline, referring to Adams 14 reads, "This Colorado school district was supposed to be a model for advancing bi-literacy. Now it's scaling back." As a Board member, I am embarrassed to be learning about my District through the news media. Not only do we have a communication problem but we now have gained a big public relations headache as well.

Thank you.

Monica Aviña
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Education

Approved and Entered into Proceedings
January 23, 2018

Harvest Thomas
Secretary, Board of Education

Timio Archuleta
President, Board of Education