

**SRS HOME AND SCHOOL MEETING
MARCH 10, 2010**

ATTENDEES: Sharon Graham, Katie Crawford, Carlin McCoy, Brook Penders, Beth DeBruyn, Kathryn Mehan, Gary Davis, Vippy Yee, Marcia Hiehle, Sally Fullam, Elma Jones, Jodi Dawes, Linda Armour

MOTION: to approve the minutes of February meeting. Motion carries

SPECIAL GUEST – *WSSD Superintendent Dr. Rudy Rubeis*

When Dr. Rubeis was hired, it was clear that it was with the intent that his term would last 5 or 6 years. Things have changed recently, which is why he has chosen to retire at this time. Dr. Rubeis states that he is going to try to not work for a year and see what happens.

When Dr. Rubeis was brought in, he felt that he was seen as a good fit for WSSD for a few reasons:

1. Serious financial problems in the District needed to be straightened out. This was not due to a lack of revenue, but we needed to address where money was going. There are now 34 less people employed in the district and zero complaints about this drop from parents or principals. We now have \$45 million in unappropriated reserve and \$7.3 million in capital reserve.
2. Ensure that the middle school construction project would not repeat the SRS construction project. Middle school is complete this month and under budget.
3. To challenge our children as we should, especially at middle and high school.

The future is going to be a challenge, no matter who comes in or the Board; we are well positioned for two more years. What will cripple the District the most is:

1. The looming retirement funding issue for teachers and support personnel. Our contribution rate is going up 70% to \$600,000.
2. Health care must be addressed through more employee participation in cost sharing because our medical costs are up 19% - a \$2.2 million increase.
3. Special education costs. The federal and state governments are putting requirements in for those who need special education support, but there is no money to fund it.

We are getting a one-time funding increase of \$723,000 from the federal government and are using half for the Intermediate Unit and half for special education and technology.

The middle school was in terrible shape a few years ago. Problem is that the \$52 million financed included \$25 million financed as SWAP, which is subject to the interest rate worldwide. This arrangement started out badly where we paid more in interest, but now we are ahead by \$126,000. Right now it will cost us \$3.7 million to get out of the SWAP.

Wallingford Elementary School (WES) should have been closed years ago. It has a wood foundation, sewage must be pumped up and out to the main sewer line. Hasn't worked properly for 15 years. Things were left to decay too long. We've spent \$50,000 on studies in last eight months. The first study ensured that what we knew was true: WES was obsolete – especially

the north side where the modulares are - and couldn't be repaired. The second study looked at Summit School: there isn't much to that building and it is in a watershed. There will be a tremendous cost to utilize the Summit site – at least \$2 million in site work is required. A third study appraised the value of the two buildings. Based on the results of all the studies, it was decided that we can build a brand new building on the south side of WES and still maintain education as in the middle school. After 20 years of financing with \$7 million down we will save \$3.5 million by building this option at WES verses. Summit. The Board voted 8-1 vote to build at south side of WES at a cost of no more than \$18 million. We will be building a three-story academic wing, and will modernize the office, library, gym. The north end will be removed and a new playground area will be built.

Next building to be renovated is Nether Providence Elementary. It is not much better than WES. The project will be a smaller scale because there are fewer children. It should cost \$15 million if done right – just as with WES. In fact we can use the same plans and remove a few classrooms.

Curriculum – our children do phenomenally well for a number of reasons. We have well prepared children ready to run when they come to us. Then, they arrive at middle school and “take a nap”; this is changing now with new principals in place.

A Board retreat was held last Saturday – a revised list of focused initiatives was presented. Next fall, all 5th graders will get a normed reference mathematics test to compare our skill achievement against similar school districts nationwide who may or may not be using Everyday Math. If we do well, we will continue to use Everyday Math with some caveats including an increased focus on math facts. However, if our children don't do well on the normed tests, we will replace Everyday Math with a more moderate approach.

Teachers spend different amounts of time teaching fundamental areas; this will change in next month or so. Teachers should be allowed to apply and teach the curriculum with their own skills within a window; time and quality of delivery are equally important. We are considering a reading and math lead teacher – and the next step would be science.

With reading materials: kindergarten are teacher developed; grades 1-3 are 1999-2000 materials that can't be replaced no longer published; grades 4-5 depends on the elementary school and what classroom you are in. We can't have teachers select their own novels to teach so the Board approved buying a new reading core program for grades K-5 that everybody will use. Novels will be used in grades 4-5 with some direction and some ability to choose: two novels will be same across district, then 1-2 novels selected by individual choice.

Dr. Rubeis states that he charts our improvements against Radnor, and we are right with them or beating them at elementary school level. But at middle school math, we take a whacking. Something is not right – it's not the children, but the materials, instruction or time spent or some combination.

In the future, The Kids Place will be closed and kindergartners will go back to their home school. Right now it costs us \$352,000 a year to operate TKP mostly due to separate transportation,

principal, secretary, cleaning service. This should occur on our around 2012-2013. We are not sure what will happen to TKP; 1 ½ floors are still needed.

Right now we are doing curriculum mapping, which is what we expect children to learn in what grades and what course. Reading and math are first and information will be on our website.

Advanced placement classes – right now we have 25 AP courses. The value of AP classes is in the content and instruction for success in college. There is an exam with AP course, but our district decided years ago that our children didn't have to take the test; as a result, only 28% of our students in the AP classes actually take the exam so we can't tell of the success in these courses. The test is a national competitive exam that is an external validation of the course. So the Board voted that beginning in 2014, every student in AP courses will take the exam which is an \$86 fee. The Board agreed to take care of financial need that can be validated.

When looking for the next superintendant, look for a person who has an understanding of finance, facilities, and curriculum. It won't work if we hire only a principal coming up the ranks. We must have high expectations for our students, teachers, administrators. The next superintendant must have outstanding business skills and must be knowledgeable of the fiscal situation of the District. Some knowledge of facilities and facilities management is a third criteria. The superintendant must be out with the kids at night to see what they are doing and to celebrate with them. Dr. Rubeis wishes that the Board would the superintendant to live in district.

Regarding air conditioning at SRS...air conditioning will be installed after NPE if possible. SRS was not renovated - it was modernized. Every classroom should be 880 square feet, but are instead 660 square feet. The internal structure doesn't support air conditioning at this time, so it is a major, multi-million dollar project.

TREASURER'S REPORT – *Beth DeBruyn*

- We are on track with fundraising and are starting to build out next year's budget.
- Teacher's Initiative fund now has a balance of \$842

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT – *Dr. Gary Davis*

- We raised close to \$900 for Haiti.
- An assembly yesterday focused on sustainability.
- Ed Gaynor shared the mounted projector placement with teachers.
- Weather is getting better; we are going over our playground rules for consistency.
- PSSA's are scheduled and ready to go.
- We are looking forward to parent conferences that are coming up.
- A reminder that no siblings are allowed on field trips when parents chaperone.
- Please be aware of our limited parking onsite, especially during snowfall. Constantly try to make people aware that there is staff parking only.
- This year we will have two field days, but we can't use the college fields any more due to insurance reasons. Intermediate field day will be on April 23 and the primary field day on April 30.
- Special persons breakfast will be on April 23 and 24.

- Arbor Day on April 29 will include a walk up to the college
- May 2nd is Blue Rocks game for the 5th graders
- Our district website has some highlights of what we did in honor of Dr Seuss birthday
- Discussion around kids being told they can't run at recess; they can't play tag when there is limited space on the blacktop and the field is still too wet to go on. Question on if children can be signed out at recess and then brought back? Dr. Davis states that there are parents coming a few days a week for more supervision inside and outside. Elma Jones states that getting mud off children can impact instructional time. Dr. Davis is working on alternatives with Karen Shore and other parents to use space as optimally as we can; we do use every space available. Kids are still having a great time during recess and are and running around and communicating. We should be thankful for our current lunchroom system; there are lots of opportunities in proactive, child-focused way.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Dimensions in Social Studies – Sally Fullam

- For the primary grades, the Japan study week (during conferences) is coming together.
 - On Monday there will be a presenter talking about math concepts with origami. We will display lots of Japanese artifacts, hopefully in the student store.
 - On Tuesday, we will have a Japanese person in kimono with cherry blossoms and music.
 - Thursday will be a sushi tasting.
 - For the other two days, teachers will be given a curriculum pack to follow up on activities. We are considering going to the Koi pond at college.
- On April 19 and 21, 2nd, then 1st grade will go to the Japanese Tea House in Fairmount Park. Students can purchase a brown bag lunch for this day with a Japanese theme.

STEM – Linda Armour

- Dimensions in Science had the birds of prey program. A trip to the Schuylkill Center hasn't happened yet. 4th graders will do rockets in May. Embryology is done.
- STEM is sponsoring an ongoing project with Teacher Helen in Art on how to read a blueprint which is going well. First two classes for the children are instructional from parent architects and engineers. Then the remaining sessions will show children how to draw a floor plan of their room, or a dream room; then they will fold up paper to create the four walls and a floor plan for the room. We hope to have this displayed at spring parent teacher conferences.
- TE@M night – March 26th at 6:30 - will be a game show format in auditorium with a host. We expect a multi media display of children against parents, with experts. Questions will be STEM-related. The program is designed to allow people to come and go throughout the evening.

Dimensions in Sustainability – Denise Disney

- Judy Taylor and Peg Falla will run the new garden club. On March 27th they will be building raised beds and have four parents who have volunteered to help. We did receive a cabbage grant so that every 3rd grader will receive a plant.

Assemblies Committee – Kate Crawford for Linda Martin

- African dance funding has been cut this year, so perhaps we can direct some of next year's H&S budget to support it.

Grants- Brooke Penders

- We are submitting for a grant for five fruit trees
- We are meeting with Jim Hardy about installing the rain barrel and gutters. It looks like we can install the gutters and put rain barrel tied into in nearer to the school
- If H&S or SRS has programs that are cutting funding sources, we might find grants to cover that cost. For example, many states have wetland grants that are availability and there are lots of art related grants. If you have an idea, you need to meet up with Brooke to make it happen.
- American Dermatology has a shade structure grant but we need a dermatologist to sponsor a year-long information building application to apply for the grant. Involve nurses in education, too.
- Brooke has learned of a McClean Contributionship where large ideas can get funded across many categories
- A timeline for grant applications can be great for September to give us an idea of where the year is going.

Cafeteria – Kate Crawford for Karen Shore

- We have volunteers on Wednesday and Friday - parents are helping out the younger kids when they need help and are showing support to the staff. Denise Disney is helping Karen with ideas to make the cafeteria more comfortable. Mary McCabe is working on a quiet reading corner in the auditorium.
- When a child runs out of money on the meal plan, they get a cheese sandwich. There is a stigma to the sandwich and we are looking at alternatives. We are also looking at alternatives to snacks in cafeteria and how to better handle the line for snacks.

Corporate Fundraising – Jodi Dawes

- Acme is discontinuing the tape saver program which will impact on the money we raise. We can sell gift cards but do we want to do that? If we sell \$1000 gift cards at face value, we would earn \$50. There is a program to collect ink toners, but will that be in conflict with the district's efforts to collect them? Not if we collect our own toners.

5th grade Representatives – Beth DeBruyn

- They are looking at a 5th grade night at the Phillies as fun night out and not fund raiser

NEW BUSINESS

- How does field trip process work? Each grade has traditional list that is renewed and goes to Board in June or September for approval/funding.
- The Nominating Committee is in place and will be meeting soon and begin asking if people in their current positions if they want to remain in that role. We will also be circulating these roles to the kindergarten parents. The incoming presidents have met

with H&S presidents at WES and NPE so that there is information on all H&S programs going home to kindergarteners.

- A coach at Swarthmore College is asking us to promote their Kids Night Out which is a fundraiser for them; this would help strengthen our partnership with the College. WES and NPE H&S are emailing the Kids Night Out to their parents; however, precedence on the SRS H&S email is that we only promote H&S activities so that you know what to expect when you open the email. There are other methods of communication to get Kids Night Out home as in a stuffer for Friday Folders. In addition, some Kids Night Out activities have conflicted with H&S events. The College and the coach have been very supportive of H&S in the past and it seems that we should support them with this. Where do we draw the line then? It was asked if we can we open this policy on the H&S email blasts up for conversation on how best to use it.
- Can we add a counter to the Rising Star online to see how many people access it? Can the link we send out be to the actual document rather than the H&S page where you have to find the Star? We'll check into it.

TEACHER INITIATIVE FUND

- Request from the primary grade teachers for a field trip for Dimensions in Social Studies to the Japanese Tea House. We applied for an \$800 grant, but we don't know if we have received it. Whatever is unfunded will be passed onto parents as a cost – right now that looks to be \$15 - \$20
- *Motion* – to approve \$800 - \$400 from contingency, \$400 from TIF. Second. Motion carries.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Next meeting is April 14th at 7:30 p.m. in the library.

MOTION - to adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Sharon Graham