



**Parents' Council General Membership
Partial Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2015**

Call to Order 9:16 am

Lisa Chaiken, Parents' Council President:

- Welcome and brief explanation of today's format.
- General Business: Approval of past month's minutes: motion by Penny Malloy, second by Sandy Roberts. Advised group that there are still open positions on next year's Parent's Council board. Reminded group of upcoming dates: Vendor Fair, March 4; March PC Meeting, March 9; and CCSD Foundation Gala, March 11.
- Meeting dates for 2015-2016 will be the 2nd Wednesday of the month starting at 9:30am.
- The year's Spring Presidents' and Treasurers' workshops will be held at the Instructional Support Facility (ISF), 5416 S. Riviera Way, Centennial 80015 (next to Thunder Ridge Middle School).

Jim O'Brien, President of CCSD Board of Education:

- January – March is a busy time for the Board. Board of Education school visits are ongoing; 30 schools will be visited. This is an opportunity to visit with staff, see best practices, sample foods and gauge how state/federal mandates impact students. Board also spends time with feeder groups (there are 6), which offers opportunity to assess quality of instructional programs and interact with staff.
- We are 7 months into school year and we are on budget and our expenditures are inline with our business plan. Capital expenditures are also on target with plan.
- Remainder of year contains a lot of celebrations and year ends with over 3000 diplomas.
- Legislation: House Dems control barely and in Senate Republicans control barely. We will get bipartisanship. In the area of education, there are more than 10 bills on assessment. Funding will be addressed later in the year but we are seeing legislature come up with ways to spend impounded Amendment 23 funds. Call to action for the community: call and email your state representative with clear message to restore funds to CSSD (\$54.6M). The work done last year did make a difference, please continue. On Federal side, we met with our congressional delegation will probably see modernization of education legislation. We seek increased flexibility and authority for local school districts. We would also like to maximize Title 1 and fund education (\$42mill gap for us) for disabled students. Bennet does feel there is a federal role for assessments. Gardner believes in reauthorization and letting local districts decide how to spend. Healthy Kids Act is 5 years old and is up for review. We have asked representatives to ease up on the

nutritional act – result has been a high cost to schools and increased cost of meals. Will probably see bill on this in the next month or so.

Dr. Harry Bull. Superintendent of Schools:

- Thursday evening state superintendents scheduled a press conference calling for an endorsement for the Governor's proposal for funding growth, inflation + \$200M. In addition, the superintendents are asking for an add \$50M for students qualified for free and reduced lunch. Finally, they also asked for \$20M for rural/small districts. 174 superintendents endorsed the proposal. Friday morning the governor spoke at the CASE conference and spoke to school funding. He suggested that this is not the time to address TABOR because politically it won't go far. Dr. Bull tends to agree. The problem is that when state is ready to address TABOR will be the time that the state feels pain of its restrictions. There are significant limits to funding in this state when TABOR, Gallagher and Amendment 23 collide. The impact is not just limited to K-12 education, but also Higher Ed, roads, prisons, Medicare. These needs will start to compete against each other. Conventional wisdom is that we are within a 2-year gap before we hit a fiscal cliff. Once this happens, state will have difficult decisions to make. Concern is that now there isn't anyone – governor or legislators – willing to step up and propose solutions but everyone knows what the problem is. If there is not leadership from the legislature, the leadership will have to come from the grassroots. No one seems to disagree that we are inside of two years, but no one wants to propose a solution. I don't believe that we will receive the funding we are asking for, but we will continue to advocate for it. If we had the \$54.6 M we are owed, we could do more.

Open Forum Session:

Question: High school start times. With the budget issues subsiding, and with recent studies showing detrimental effects of teens not getting enough sleep, are we revisiting start times?

- First, state economy is doing really well; it's the funding that comes into schools that becomes the issue. For our district, our enrollment is flat. This changes the revenue coming from the state.
- Start times. The American Academy of Pediatrics has taken the position that adolescents need more sleep but we start high school at 7:10am. Historically we went to 7:10 because of budget issues in the past. As we speak, there is a committee of about 30 educators that are starting with the question, "if we were going to start school later, what would it look like?" Ideally would start HS later, then MS, then EL and dismiss in that

order. But, if this schedule increases transportation costs, we can't do it. We must also consider the costs to parents for day care, HS participation in co-curricular programs and jobs, the impact on extracurricular activities, and if students have time for homework if they get home later. We are taking a sincere look at this, but it will take us some time. We understand that elementary kids wake up early, but starting them early will make sense until the dead of winter when these little elementary kids are standing at a bus stop at 6am in the dark. Hope to have prelim findings by end of year and starting community conversations next year. FYI – elementary schools have the most bus routes.

Question: Rezoning between Grandview and CTHS. Would the District consider grandfathering in students?

- Dr. Bull not convinced that we are going to need another HS based on current growth. But we are going to have to create space out east. Simple solution is to bring some of current enrollment out east, back west. Part of conversation is what would that look like? If anything, we are looking more at boundary “tweaks” than boundary changes. District is looking at areas and assigning numbers, e.g. if we do “this”, how many students would move? Historically, districts have tried to “grandfather” – and we can continue to discuss, but there is a cost associated with it. Liberalization of school of choice is also a possible tool, but this is typically a one-way approach and not everyone likes this.

Question: Has there been any consideration to adding another challenge school on the south side of the district?

- We can absolutely look at this through programming and enrollment, but you must have land. We have land, but that is south and east. If we are talking about southwest, we don't have land and if there is any available, it's cost prohibitive.

Question: Request to speak to assessment.

- Two pieces...Personally, I believe that we are spending too much time assessing. Second is the protest to PARCC the test. Both of these issues coming to the forefront. Testing is like snow days. District's job is to have schools open. Parents can always decide to keep child home, snow day or test day. But schools job is to have school and administer tests we are required to administer. Ramifications of not taking test? If school is below 95%, it is possible that the school will drop one accreditation rating. Possible only, because state has said that it will not hold school district accountable for parental decisions. Frustration is that the law as it exists not (state or fed) unfortunately is starting to pit parents against schools. This should never happen. Rather, let's let schools do what they have to do ad parents do what they feel they should and let's see where it goes. Honestly, I feel any legislation out there now is going to fail but something will come forward.

Note: not everyone agrees on this. Some believe that we should leave assessment alone; others believe there should be more.

Question: How are teacher evaluations impacted when students don't take tests?

- We are trying to keep assignment of test data to a teacher as reasonable as possible, so looking at evaluating collective data from school as well as taking into account other possibly impacting considerations, such as socio-economic indicia, etc. But we are new to this and are still trying to determine how to best do this.

Question: Please speak to Common Core.

- Regardless of which standard you look at, and there are a number, you will see that it directs that, at some point in elementary school, we need to teach kids to read and they ought to understand number sense. Regardless of which standards you look at, they boil down to this. Unfortunately, we have politicized this topic and it's polarized us.
- (Follow-up by Ms. Judy Graham). Standards are not new. We have been operating under standards since late 1990s. When the standards were revised, the materials did lag for a period of time, but a lot of work has been done to bring these up.

Question: What has the district done with the money we received from marijuana?

- We have received no money from marijuana. It was a great sales job. There has been some money made available for grants around education around marijuana use. Nothing has been received from excise taxes. The only thing we got from legalized marijuana was marijuana in the schools because it is now easier for kids to get. With only one exception, all of the expulsions this year have been marijuana-related.

Question: Is the State Board lowering graduation requirements?

- First, we have a representative on the committee. When we (the state) set graduation guidelines, they were very high and not very realistic. Some of those standards were college, mid college and even college graduation requirements. What we are trying to do now is get those standards back to levels appropriate for high school. The current process is really an adjustment. For example, ACT college benchmarks in science are very high. Basically someone who meets the benchmark will probably get an A in freshman science. For the rest of us, it's not possible. We need to be able to get kids into college, not already done with it. We need to bring our guidelines back to realistic levels.
- In 2021, new guidelines will not only be certain classes, but also passing a test at a certain level, e.g. ACT score of 18.

Question: Will there be a calendar change for next year?

- The calendar process started about 5 years ago. We are essentially picking the calendar up and moving it a week. Next year school starts Aug 13 (Thurs). School ends Memorial Day. The fall semester will end before winter break. Having said that, we need to remember that calendars cycle every 7 years, so some years we will start at what seems to be an early date.

Question: Why not get rid of fall break?

- (Tongue-in-cheek) I would redraw district boundaries before I would take away fall break. Reporter's note: removal of fall break would be a fairly explosive topic.

Question: What can we do to help teachers and students deal with stress coming from all the changes we are dealing with?

- Not to minimize, but we are in a period of change. Change is a stressful time for students and teachers, but I hope that if we stay the course, things will settle down. As a district, we have over the past 3 years added somewhat to mental health staffing. Could we use more, maybe, but we are back to finance and having a limited pie.

Question: How is the district trying to protect students from the outside distractions that affect education in the classroom (funding, assessments, etc.)? How can parents help with this?

- Contact your elected officials. The District is posting information today on finance and at the end is guidance for talking to your legislators. Reach out to these people. Talk to them about finance, about assessment, about greater autonomy for local boards. We assume that they know more about what happens in our schools on a day-to-day level than they actually do. You need to talk to them.
- Principals – break out your pirate flags. Figure out how to make it work in your school. Don't violate the law or school policy, but find ways to make it work.

Secretary's Note: Because of time constraints, our administrators were not able to respond to all of the questions presented at the meeting. Responses to those questions, however, are being prepared so that they can be made available on the Parents' Council's website. We will message when those additional questions and answers are available.

Lisa Chaiken, Parents' Council President:

- Please go to your accountability committee meetings, a lot of the questions you have are being addressed at these meetings.
- There are a number of questions that we were not able to get to during our time here today. Answers to those questions will be posted on our website.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:15 am

Respectfully Submitted,

Kris Ciccolo