



Board of Education

Minutes

The Board of Education

A Regular School Board Meeting of the Board of Education of Fort Smith Public Schools was held Monday, April 18, 2022, beginning at 5:30 PM in the Service Center, Bldg. B, Auditorium, 3205 Jenny Lind, P.O. Box 1948, Fort Smith, AR 72901.

Ms. McFerran, president, called the meeting to order. Other board members present were: Ms. Talicia Richardson, Mr. Dalton Person, Ms. Dee Blackwell, Mr. Matt Blaylock, Mr. Troy Eckelhoff and Ms. Yvonne Keaton-Martin. District administrators present included: Dr. Terry Morawski, Superintendent; Mr. Martin Mahan, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Chris Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Campus Support; Dr. Tiffany Bone, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Mr. Charles Warren, Chief Financial Officer; Mr. Darian Layes, Executive Director of Student Services; Mr. Vance Gregory, Executive Director of Technology; and Ms. Zena Featherston Marshall, Executive Director of Communication and Community Partnerships. Ms. Nadine Brooks, Office Manager to the Superintendent was also in attendance.

A moment of silence was followed by the pledge of allegiance and mission statement.

RECOGNITIONS

Ms. Featherston Marshall presented the following recognitions.

Superintendent April Stars

Joseph Selby, Bonneville Elementary

Elias Perez, Carnall Elementary

Ava Rodriguez, Woods Elementary

Marley Walker, Barling Elementary

Other Recognitions

Luke Monk, Northside High School Senior, was the first FSPS student to earn an Associates degree through the Western Arkansas Technical Center at the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith and his high school diploma at the same time. Additionally, he was the first to earn an Associate of Science in Unmanned Aerial Systems. Because of the District partnership with UAFS through Peak and other programs, Luke was the first of many students to earn concurrent degrees. He was also appointed to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and will leave for “boot camp” shortly after graduation.

Southside State FBLA Winners

The following Southside students earned top honors in three categories in the recent state FBLA conference.

Ella Grannon and Brianna Andrews, 1st Place in International Business
Anaya Tagarsse, Jiaya Shah and Mackenzie Settlege, 1st Place in Business Plan
Emma Paulus, 1st Place in Client Services

These students qualified to compete in national FBLA competition in June and are sponsored by Susan Colyer.

NCWIT Awards

Urvi Sharma, Dipa Patel, Kathryn Wilson, Sydney Tran, Clair Merry, Natalie Tucker, Sarah Emmons, Vivan Apple, Jewell Callahan, Caroline Keck, from Southside High School and Courtney Nguyen from Northside High School were recognized for receiving the 2022 Aspirations in Computing Award from the National Center for Women & Information Technology. The award recognizes computing-related achievements and interests based on aptitude and interest, leadership, academic history, and plans for post-secondary education.

Gina Lewis, Southside High School Computer Science Teacher, received the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) Aspirations in Computing Arkansas Educator Award. The award identifies exemplary formal and informal educators who play a pivotal role in encouraging 9th-12th grade students to explore their interest in computing and technology. Lewis is the Arkansas recipient and is now eligible to apply for the National Award.

Shawn Hinkle, an educator in FSPS since 2000, completed and successfully defended his doctoral program in Educational Leadership from Arkansas Tech University. Dr. Hinkle graduated Fort Smith Public Schools and is currently an Assistant Principal at Darby Middle School.

Purple Star School Update

Ms. Marshall reported that the Purple Star School designation by the Arkansas Council for Military Children is now at all remaining FSPS schools, Cavanaugh, Euper Lane, Fairview, Howard, Morrison, Spradling, Sunnymede, Tilles, Trusty, Chaffin, Kimmons, Northside and Southside have now also earned the Purple Star School designation. With these accomplishments, Fort Smith Public Schools now meets the established criteria as a Purple Star District. FSPS represents 25% of all Purple Star Schools in Arkansas.

CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

Ms. Heather Aguilar spoke in support of veteran teachers and proposed salary schedules.
Ms. Wendy Peer also spoke in support of veteran teachers and proposed salary schedules.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Morawski yielded to Dr. Davis to introduce new staff.

Dr. Davis introduced Mr. Matt Coleman as Assistant Principal at Southside High School. Dr. Davis reported that Mr. Coleman has 20 years educational experience from Ozark School District with seven of those last years as principal at Ozark Middle School.

Dr. Davis next introduced Dr. Shawn Hinkle as the new principal at Kimmons Middle School, Dr. Hinkle has 22 years with the District and the last six as assistant principal at Darby Middle School.

CONSENT AGENDA

The consent agenda included the March Financial Statement, March 14 Minutes and March 28 Minutes, April Professional Staff Recommendations, April Student Services Report, approval of Special Education Statement of Intent and Accompanying Assurances and Agreements, and approval of Special Education 2022-2023 Tuition Agreement with Residential Facilities.

Mr. Person made a motion, seconded by Ms. Keaton-Martin, to approve the consent agenda items as presented. The vote passed 7/0.

CONSIDER ADOPTING CURRICULUM RELATED POLICY CHANGES

Dr. Bone stated that the administration wished to update current policies to the most recent recommendation provided by the Arkansas School Board Association (ASBA). Dr. Bone reported that the curriculum policies were the last section of policies to be updated using the ASBA Model Policies. Dr. Bone stated that in addition to herself, the Curriculum Policy Review Team included Mr. Marty Mahan, Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Kellie Minton, Director of Student Achievement & Accountability, Ms. Lori Griffin, Director of Elementary Education, Dr. Tony Jones, Director of Secondary Education, Mr. Steve Marion, Library Media Specialist, and Ms. Zena Featherston Marshall, Executive Director of Communication and Community Partnerships. Dr. Bone added that the committee met with Mr. Marshall Ney, Attorney, Friday, Eldridge and Clark to review these recommendations. Twenty-nine policies were submitted in both redline and clean copy for board review. Dr. Bone noted that most of these policies had not been updated since the 90s. Updating these will align with current legislation. Dr. Bone noted that any needed revisions of the student handbook and course catalog would follow the adoption of these policies. The administration recommended that the Board approve the changes to Board Policies, Section 5–Curriculum, as presented to be effective upon board approval.

Mr. Person asked if all policies were presented as ASBA Model Policies. Dr. Bone confirmed that all were with minor adjustments.

Mr. Person noted a removal of a section to a policy that referred to summer school, asking if it was not applicable as to why it was removed. Dr. Bone stated that the policy referenced using summer school as a promotion or retention and that is not a tool that the District uses for summer school. The District's policy for summer school is to allow students to "catch up" or extend their learning not as a punitive method so this section was removed.

With no further discussion, Ms. Blackwell made a motion, seconded by Ms. McFerran, to adopt Curriculum Policies as presented. The vote passed 7/0.

CONSIDER ADOPTING UPDATES FOR LICENSED AND CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL POLICIES

Dr. Davis provided updates to Certified Policy Nos. 3.6, 3.7, 3.19, 3.26, 3.40, 3.45, 3.49 and Classified Policy Nos. 8.4, 8.13, 8.20, 8.34 and 8.37 for the Board's review and approval. These reflect modifications of the Model Polices by Arkansas School Boards Association. These changes have been reviewed and approved by the District's Certified and Classified Personnel Policy Committees (PPCs). Clean and redlined versions were provided to enable the Board to see the specific changes proposed.

Mr. Person asked Dr. Davis to review the addition of the social media policy. Dr. Davis reported that Policy 3.45 Licensed Personnel Social Networking and Ethics is a new policy that was reviewed extensively by the Certified Policy Committee as well. Dr. Davis stated that it is an ASBA Model Policy and was reviewed by the subcommittee and the Licensed PPC for approximately a year.

Mr. Person noted that Classified Policy 8.37 includes a cross-reference to Certified Policy 3.28 and should have been cross-referenced to Policy 8.22 instead. Dr. Davis noted this correction.

Mr. Person noted that Policy 3.6 was adopted in 2020 but discusses in depth school years 2013, 2014 and 2015. Dr. Davis explained that this is a reference in the ASBA Model Policy related to professional development rotation years.

With no further discussion, Mr. Person made a motion, seconded by Ms. Keaton-Martin, to adopt updates for licensed and classified personnel effective July 1, 2022. The vote passed 7/0.

INFORMATION - 3.3.1 ANTI-NEPOTISM OR RELATIONSHIP POLICY

Dr. Morawski reported that the Board Policy Committee met a few months back and the discussion of hiring relatives within departments or campuses was discussed but a recommendation was not brought forward at that time. Dr. Morawski stated that this item was on the agenda as an information item should the Board wish to discuss the policy further. Dr. Morawski noted that specific staff should not be mentioned. Dr. Davis provided the policy for review.

Ms. Blackwell noted that the policy was adopted on Feb 24 2020. She asked if this was an ASBA policy. Dr. Davis stated that the policy was initially a legacy policy before the District adopted the ASBA Model Policies. He added that there was not a match from the FSPS Legacy Policy to the ASBA Model Policies. Dr. Davis reported that the PPC along with Mr. Ney, Attorney, created the policy being reviewed.

Mr. Blaylock noted that Special Education positions were sometimes hard to fill. He asked how that affected filling those positions. Dr. Davis stated that depending on who the supervisor was

determined who could be hired for those positions in regards to evaluations and subordinate relationships.

Mr. Blaylock noted job listings for head and assistant coaches and asked if a person could not be considered for an assistant coaching position if related to a head coach. He referenced that job listing indicated that person reported to the principal or athletic director.

Dr. Davis explained that job postings were typically listed this way but the athletic director could assign the evaluation and supervisory role to a head coach. The Athletic Director evaluates head coaches. Head coaches typically supervise the assistant coaches which includes evaluations. Head and assistant coaches are also evaluated by a principal for their duties as a teacher.

Mr. Blaylock stated that his opinion was that the District could miss an opportunity of hiring a good candidate.

Mr. Person stated that he thinks this is a good policy and with 2,000 employees the District should adhere to an anti-nepotism policy.

Ms. Richardson stated that when reviewing the anti-nepotism policy from a corporate view her opinion as a school board member is to rely on the experts since the anti-nepotism policy could have gray areas and there could also be grandfathering of employees as an example. She stated that maybe there should be more questions and answers.

Mr. Blaylock referenced having issue with #2 of of the policy "Have the potential for creating an adverse impact on work performance." and that job postings indicate reporting to a principal of the athletic director but it does not indicate that an assistant coach reports to the head coach.

Mr. Person asked if committee members wished to review the policy again. Committee members agreed. Dr. Morawski stated that the District would set up a meeting.

Ms. McFerran stated this was an information item and no action was required.

PRESENTATION - SCHOOL FINANCE UPDATE

Mr. Warren provided a 2022-2023 School Finance Update along with opportunities to make some changes to the Certified Salary Schedules. Mr. Warren provided a career salary comparison of peer districts that included Greenwood, Van Buren, Alma, Fayetteville, Rogers, Springdale and Bentonville. He noted that we are \$10,000 below some NWA schools. He noted that at step 13 Fort Smith salaries were equal to the River Valley schools and actually became more competitive at steps 15 to 26. The gap is larger with the northwest Arkansas schools. He also provided current and history of Fort Smith certification salary schedule increases noting that there had not been growth in the last few years. Issues with the current Certified Salary Schedules include: no consistencies in step increases over a 21 year career, some steps with no

increases, some steps with a percentage increase (these grow as the base salary grows), and the educational increments increase as a percentage, and grow as the base salary grows. This “patchwork” structure creates a competitive advantage for neighboring districts.

Mr. Warren reviewed the FY 22 Salary Schedules – State Analysis of 235 districts noting Fort Smith ranking of 49th in the state for a teacher with bachelor’s degree and 0 years of experience.

Mr. Warren reviewed the four factors of funding and the available local and state revenue available for 2022-2023.

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Local New Revenue- \$1,800,000
State New Revenue- 200,000
Total Available Revenue- \$ 2,000,000

Under current salary schedule structure, the recommendation may have been as follows:
Certified salary schedule base salary increased by \$500
Base salary base moves from \$38,500 to \$39,000

The proposed FSPS Certified Salary Schedule would include a base of \$44,000 with increases of \$675 each year and increases based on additional education hours and degrees up to 21 years of service. Mr. Warren referred to a one time increase to returning staff in dealing with a “market correction” to repair the gap in salaries

Restructuring the salary schedules would be a significant impact to recruiting immediately.

Fixed step increases and fixed educational increments.

- Foundation for future changes to be more competitive with NWA.
- Foundation for potential expansion of steps.

Mr. Warren reviewed aggressive financing for 2022-2023 noting the following sources.

Local New Revenue- \$ 1,800,000
State New Revenue- 200,000
Total Available Revenue- 2,000,000
2022 Special Session- 300,000
Payoff \$2.4M in Debt- 1,800,000
Available for Restructure-\$ 4,100,000

Mr. Warren reported that unfortunately the \$4,100,000 was devoted to Certified Salary Schedules. He noted that Classified Salary Schedules had been targeted in prior years with structure changes of 21 steps and a pathway to \$15 per hour plan with these changes covering multiple years of growth.

Mr. Warren provided competitive base salaries comparison for Northwest Arkansas and the River Valley Districts with the proposed Fort Smith Base Salary.

District	Bachelors	Masters
Fort Smith (Proposed)	\$44,000	\$50,900
Rogers (FY22)	\$47,250	\$49,696
Bentonville (FY23)	\$48,755	\$52,173
Springdale (FY22)	\$48,782	\$51,306
Fayetteville (FY23)	\$50,000	\$53,555

District	Bachelors	Masters
Alma (FY22)	\$41,700	\$44,500
Greenwood (FY22)	\$43,830	\$47,080
Fort Smith (Proposed)	\$44,000	\$50,900
Van Buren (FY23)	\$44,011	\$47,761

Mr. Warren reported that the restructuring of the salary schedules was discussed with the Certified Personnel Policy Committee in depth noting the following:

Long-term goals of a Certified Salary Schedule restructure:

- More competitive salary schedule base
- Add additional steps beyond Step 21

Discussed the following parameters of a restructure:

- Must be financially viable
- All educators must make more in FY23 than in FY22
- No educator should get a smaller step increase next year than expected on the current Certified Salary Schedule (if no changes were made)
- It's a long-term investment, but a restructure would not be supported if it's in lieu of a significant increase to all teachers

Mr. Warren concluded that with the salary schedule increase to the base salary the District could move up from 49th to 8th in the state, with no other changes considered.

Mr. Person asked how the one-time compensation increase for returning staff would be taxed. Mr. Warren stated that it would be tied to a payment and avoid the supplemental income tax rate.

Mr. Person noted that the District has to get the beginning teacher base pay increased and asked that a 22 step be added this year with a plan to get to 28 steps long term for experienced teachers.

Mr. Warren stated that he and the team would continue to work on it confirming the \$675 step increase.

Ms. Blackwell thanked Mr. Warren acknowledging the time spent on this proposal.

Ms. Blackwell asked for clarification on the funds available for the one-time payment funding.

Mr. Warren stated the payment would be paid from ESSER funds after Department of Elementary and Secondary Education approved.

Ms. McFerran asked Mr. Warren to introduce those whom had worked on this proposal. Mr. Warren introduced Dr. Chris Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Campus Support, Ms. Kelly Davis, Direct of Human Resources and Campus Support and Ms. Angie Davis, Director of Benefits. Ms. McFerran thanked them for their time spent on this proposal.

Mr. Blaylock stated that Mr. Warren provided a fantastic presentation and he wants to see educators rewarded for additional education. He added that if revenue growth isn't available where can the District cut expenses to free up money.

Mr. Warren stated that the District needs to take into consideration the increased expenses with fuel and other operating expenses when a budget is put together. He also noted that once ESSER funds are no longer available the District must sustain what is put in place with salary schedules.

Dr. Morawski added that the Vision 2023 is nearing the end and the District will be looking at a new Strategic Plan long term and it will be completely helpful to include some compensation goals.

Ms. Richardson commended the PPC and stated that it took a decade to get here and it can't take another decade to get it fixed. Ms. Richardson added that poverty is a concern and a salary of \$38,000 can put some families at risk. Ms. Richardson encouraged educators and administration to discuss needs of teachers. Ms. Richardson reported that 50% of teachers are at the 15 to 21 step will very little increases. Ms. Richardson asked for consideration to the benefit package also.

Mr. Eckelhoff asked for a teacher survey.

Mr. Person stated that although it is a good plan, can we do better.

Ms. McFerran stated that this was a presentation and no action was required at this time. Salary Schedules will be brought back to the board for approval in May.

BOARD MEMBERS FORUM

Mr. Blaylock asked Mr. Shaffer for an update on projects. Mr Shaffer reported that he had the majority of contracts with a few still to come from the design teams. Once received, he will present to the attorney for review and present for signatures.

Mr. Shaffer stated that groundbreaking is projected for October on these projects.

Mr. Mahan added supply chain is a concern.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Susan McFerran, President

Dee Blackwell, Secretary