

Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park  
April 25, 2023 Regular Meeting

This meeting was held in-person and virtually using Livestream. Board members met in person along with Administration.

President Kim called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Present: Kim, Moore, Ross Dribin, Spurlock, Kinhal, Hurd Johnson

Absent: Kearney

Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Ushma Shah, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Dr. Eboney Lofton, Director of Human Resources Dr. Margo Schmitt, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Equity Dr. Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Buildings & Grounds Jeanne Keane, Senior Director of Finance Patrick King, Senior Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, and Lonya Boose Board Secretary.

ROLL CALL

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Ross Dribin moved, seconded by Spurlock that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees, Collective Negotiating and Litigation.5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1)(2)(11) at 6:07 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

**OPEN SESSION**

President Kim motioned that the Board move into Open Session at 6:49 p.m. All present members of the Board were in agreement. The Board convened in Open Session at 7:03 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dear District 97 Board Members,

I come to you this evening because I am big believer in the value of clean air and the impacts that it can have on learning. Governor Pritzker is championing a new program that his administration is rolling out with IDPH. The goal of this new program is to help all schools in Illinois to better achieve the goal of clean air. Cleaning the air inside classrooms is one way to create healthy schools. Through this new program that was recently launched, IDPH is providing free portable HEPA air purifiers to help keep students and staff healthy. Eligible Schools will be able to receive one small air filter unit for each 20 students in a school, with a limited number of larger units for districts with more than 1,000 students. It will also include a number of replacement filters.

PUBLIC COMMENT

IDPH is hoping more schools will participate and, according to their records, District 97 has not signed up for this program. 097 is eligible for this program because of how poor our external air quality is. Based on the information that is provided around this program, 097 would be eligible for over 283 smaller units and 10 larger units along with replacement filters as well. The retail value of these air purifiers is in excess of \$140,000. April 30, 2023 is the deadline to opt-in. I'm asking that the administration take advantage of

this free opportunity and sign up to receive the free air purifiers. To enroll, school administrators must directly contact the IDPH Air Purifier Project inbox at [DPH.AirPurify@illinois.gov](mailto:DPH.AirPurify@illinois.gov). Thank you for your consideration,

Ranga Bodla  
Parent of Two Holmes Hawks

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak in front of this body today. My name is Afshan Syed and I have two children in District 97 schools, one in 1st grade at Holmes, another at Brooks in 8th grade.

I am a part of a broader group of parents and educators who are concerned about the way students are currently being taught to read in Oak Park. I became involved in this group as, during my years as a member of the D97 community, I've seen first hand the varying levels of struggles my fellow parents and I have had to ensure our all children are learning to read.

As a part of this group, I learned that, according to the most recent IAR data on ISBE, 58% of Oak Park students are reading below grade level. There's also a racialized pattern to this data, indicating a racial achievement gap in the district. I've since learned that D97 uses a balanced literacy framework, and currently educators are using the curriculum developed by Lucy Calkins called Units of Study. I was surprised to learn that this curriculum has been proven NOT to be effective. Various reviews conducted on this resource reveal significant gaps in:

- Lack of explicit, systematic and diagnostic foundational skills instruction
- Lack of texts that are appropriately complex for all grade levels
- Lack of opportunities to systematically build knowledge for students

I've learned that structured literacy instruction, that emphasizes knowledge building and foundational skills, IS the solution.

School districts around the country are out-pacing Oak Park by making significant changes towards evidence-based literacy curriculum. Districts in states like Tennessee and North Carolina are two notable places where evidence-based literacy curriculum is improving outcomes for students. More locally, district 39 in Wilmette and district 203 in Naperville have moved towards evidence-based literacy, and their IAR scores show significantly higher percentages of students reading at grade level or above.

District 97's equity policy states, "It is the right of every student to have an excellent equitable educational experience. Educational equity benefits all students and our entire community Equity provides all students with what they need to thrive, achieve at the highest level possible, and graduate prepared for college, career and community success." Literacy is a basic civil right and ultimately a matter of equity. To that end, I am asking that the district strongly consider taking the following action steps:

1. Move away from this balanced literacy curriculum, and move towards an evidence-based literacy curriculum.
2. Invest in teacher and leader training around evidence-based literacy practices.

Thank you for your time and service. We look forward to hearing your next steps to help all District 97 students thrive as readers and writers.

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#### **4. #D97Joy Culture and Celebration Update**

#D97JOY

##### **Staff Recognition – April 2023**

The month of April brings us some special staff recognition. On behalf of the district, we would like to recognize our assistant principals, teacher librarians, media assistants and administrative assistants for all of their hard work and dedication to our schools, students and families.

**Happy National Assistant Principals Week! Week of April 3-7, 2023**

**National School Librarian Day! April 4, 2023**

**Administrative Professionals Day! April 26, 2023**

##### **Staff Spotlight**

Congratulation to Nichelle Stigger Language and Literature Teacher at Brooks Middle School. Nichelle is the recipient of the 2023 Staszak Outstanding Educator of the Year Award from the Oak Park Education Foundation. She will be honored on May 12, during the foundation fundraiser event at the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Club.

##### **Music Program Highlight**

District 97 Music Education Program receives National Recognition Four Years in a Row!

For the fourth year, District 97 has been honored with the Best Communities for Music Education designation from The NAMM Foundation for its outstanding commitment to music education. This award is given to districts that demonstrate achievements in its efforts to provide music access and education to all students. Congratulations!

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#### **5. DISTRICT PRIORITY UPDATE**

PRIORITY  
UPDATE

The evenings presentation falls under the district priority area of Be Safe and Healthy. This virtual safety updated provided the board with information on the systems approach to virtual security and safety. Top threats include: Phishing Scams, Ransomware, Cyber Bullying and Inappropriate Content and Online Predation. The presentation gives information on statistics, infrastructure and best practice.

\*The complete presentation can be view by watching the livestream of the board meeting on the District 97 YouTube channel.

**6. ACTION ITEMS**

**6.1 Consent Agenda**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

- 6.1.1 Approval of Minutes from the April 11, 2023 Board Meeting
- 6.1.2 Bill List
- 6.1.3 Personnel
- 6.1.4 Approval : Brooks Curriculum Donation and Recycle Request
- 6.1.5 Approval : Irving PTO Donation

Ayes: Kim, Spurlock, Ross Dribin, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal  
 Nays: None  
 Absent: Kearney  
 Motion passed.

**6.2 ACTION**

**6.2.1 Funds Transfer | Tort Fund to O&M Fund (4.11.23)**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education, Oak Park Elementary School District 97, approve the attached resolution to transfer \$3,800,000 from the Tort Immunity Fund to the Operations and Maintenance Fund

Ayes: Kim, Spurlock, Ross Dribin, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal  
 Nays: None  
 Absent: Kearney  
 Motion passed.

**6.2.2 Funds Transfer | Working Cast Abatement Transfer (4.11.23)**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education, Oak Park Elementary School District 97, approve the attached resolution to transfer \$1,500,000 from the Working Cash Fund to the Operations & Maintenance Fund.

Ayes: Kim, Spurlock, Ross Dribin, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal  
 Nays: None  
 Absent: Kearney  
 Motion passed

**6.2.3 Funds Transfer | O&M Fund to Capital Projects (4.11.23)**

Moore moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education, Oak Park Elementary School District 97, approve the attached resolution to transfer \$8,000,000 from the Operations & Maintenance Fund to the Capital Projects Fund.

Ayes: Kim, Spurlock, Ross Dribin, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal  
Nays: None  
Absent: Kearney  
Motion passed

**6.2.4 Funds Transfer | Education Fund to Debt Service Fund (4.11.23)**

Moore moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education, Oak Park Elementary School District 97, approve the attached resolution to transfer \$424,636 from the Education Fund to the Debt Service Fund to support the payment of lease obligations.

Ayes: Kim, Spurlock, Ross Dribin, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal  
Nays: None  
Absent: Kearney  
Motion passed

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**7. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

**7.1 SY24 Leadership Roles (action 5.9.23)**

The OPTA Collective Bargaining Agreement outlines leadership roles for District 97 teachers. These leadership roles are based on the recognition of teachers’ expertise and belief in the importance of having practitioners in positions of leadership. Specific roles are designed to achieve several purposes:

- Support increased student growth and attainment
- System development and program implementation
- Support the implementation of the district’s Educational and Racial Equity Policy
- Establish and support collective leadership at the district and school level
- Maximum support for the classroom teacher
- Innovation
- Increase leadership and development opportunities

The OPTA Collective Bargaining Agreement established Leadership Roles for OPTA members within Section G of the agreement. In the Section G language, the parties agreed to establish the Leadership Role Committee consisting of two (2) OPTA members appointed by the OPTA Executive Board and three (3) members selected by the Superintendent. The Leadership Role Committee that convened during the current school year consisted of the following individuals:

**Jeremy Christian – Julian Middle School, Principal**  
**Gina Harris – OPTA Member**

**Dr. Tawanda Lawrence - Senior Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**  
**Patrick Robinson – Whittier Elementary School, Principal**  
**James Zander – OPTA Member**

The OPTA Agreement states that the Leadership Role Committee shall annually meet, by no later than March 20th of each year, to discuss whether to recommend that the Board add, delete, or reduce the number of types of roles and whether to make any adjustments in the tiered pay level of a specific role based on new initiatives and/or whether the actual time commitments made by teachers in a specific leadership role exceeds or falls short of the initial estimated commitments.

The Committee has met to review and discuss the needed roles for the 2023-2024 school year and has engaged relevant district and school administrators in role review.

In order to have a timely teacher leader roles application process that supports planning for summer professional learning, the Committee proposes the following timeline:

- On 4.25.23: The district committee presents the roles proposal to the Board of Education and request funding
- On 5.9.23: The Board of Education acts on the funding request
- On 5.10.23: If the Board of Education approves funding, the roles application is launched via Frontline
- On 5.19.23: The roles application period ends
- By 5.30.23: Principals complete role selection
- By 6.1.23: The Teacher Leadership Role Committee meets to finalize roles
- On 6.2.23: SY24 Teacher Leader Roles are communicated to staff members

#### Financial Impact

For the 2023-2024 school year, the projected financial impact of the proposed roles is \$623,500.

\*Additional information is available in the April 25, 2023 board of education meeting materials packet.

## **7.2 Lakeview Transportation | Contract Extension (action 5.9.23) – Patrick King**

### Summary

The transportation agreements between District 97 and Lakeview Bus Lines, Inc. for regular transportation, in district special education transportation, and out of district special education conclude at the end of school year 2022-2023 and may be extended 2 additional years by mutual agreement of the parties per Section 13.1 of the contract.

We were pleased to obtain a favorable pricing proposal given the challenging transportation market which includes historically high fuel prices and national bus driver shortages. The price per route will increase 7.5% in school year 2024 and 6% in school year 2025. These increases are well within our 5-projections presented to the board in the Fall of 2022.

Section 12 of the current contract also stipulated that the parties may negotiate fuel surcharges upon a possible contract extension. These are now commonplace in transportation contracts given the high fuel

prices and the concern was raised three years ago when the current contract was agreed to. The proposed fuel surcharge is \$16.25 per route if the price of diesel fuel is over \$4.00, which seems most likely for the foreseeable future. The District is currently paying \$59 per route for COVID cleaning. The fuel surcharge will not kick in unless the District chooses to discontinue the COVID cleaning. We cannot be charged for both so the District will realize savings in this area given that we have been paying COVID cleaning for the past 3 school years.

During our last bid in 2020, Lakeview was the only bidder for regular transportation. They also had the best bid for both in-district and out of district SPED routes. Grand Prairie only bid on about half of our out of District routes but their price was not competitive. Zum was a much different transportation model (similar to Uber), and it was determined we would try them for some out of district routes over 30 miles and for our McKinney-Vento families. There has been a significant increase in McKinney-Vento transportation requests in 2023 and Zum has been unable to accommodate any transportation request.

Lakeview has been our transportation provider for over 30 years and continuity is a big plus given the bus driver shortages all companies are experiencing. We have reached out to all major transportation companies throughout the year for various requests and none have been able to provide any drivers due to shortages in each circumstance. Lakeview has always been our best option.

For all the reasons noted above, administration recommends District 97 continues with Lakeview Bus Lines, Inc. for the next 2 school years for regular transportation, in-district special education transportation, and out of district special education. State law requires a full transportation bid every 5 years, so D97 will prepare that in 2 years and will again reach out to all the providers at that time. Please let us know if you have any questions.

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## **8. BOARD ASSIGNMENTS**

No IGA report-outs for board assignments. More information to come as provided.

- Board member Ross Dribin: May 12, OPEF will be hosting Bingo Bash. The Foundation is committed to having programming for all ages. This event helps with scholarships for student access to summer programs. I encourage those that are available to support this event.

## **9. CONCLUDING ITEMS**

### 10.1 Board Remarks

Board President Kim and Board member Kinhal engaged in discussion around literacy and its implication on learning and long-term student success. To hear this dialog, please view the livestream recording of the April 25, 2023 Board of Education Meeting on the district YouTube channel.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

ADJOURNMENT

All Six present members of the Board were in agreement that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, President Kim declared the meeting adjourned by voice vote at 9:00p.m.

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Board President

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Board Secretary