



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, November 15, 2021, 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, Ms. Yvonne Keaton-Martin, Mr. Matt Blaylock and Mr. Troy Eckelhoff. 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 Laves, Executive Director of Student Services; Mr. Vance Gregory, Executive Director of Technology; Ms. Zena Featherston Marshall, Executive Director of Communication and Community Partnerships; and Ms. Nadine Brooks, Office Manager to the Superintendent.

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

RECOGNITIONS

Ms. Marshall presented the following recognitions.

September Star Student Award

Ana Chavez Barrientos, Morrison Elementary

November Star Student Awards

Matthew Austin, Park Elementary School

Sophia Blythe, Beard Elementary School

Michael D'Agostino Sunnymede Elementary School

Elizabeth Osorio Hernandez, Morrison Elementary School,

Cherry Perales, Howard Elementary School

Livia Pryor, Ballman Elementary School

Bryan Saldana, Spradling Elementary School

Sadie Soto, Fairview Elementary School

Amia Turner, Tilles Elementary School

Amy Vanna, Sutton Elementary School

Euper Lane Elementary Art Teacher Stacey Glover was named Arkansas Art Educator of the Year by the Arkansas Art Educators (AAE). This statewide organization advocates for art education through supporting legislation and providing quality professional development for all art instructors in the state.

Ms. Marshall noted that with the Vision 2023 celebrations that happened on November 14, it was a great time to acknowledge the work toward accomplishing Vision 2023 Capital Improvement priorities. She stated that on May 25, 2017, the school board set out on a journey that produced the Vision 2023 Strategic Plan, a list of priorities and a decisive millage election only one year later. This work led to the development of programs, construction and renovation throughout the district as well as the district's first School Based Health Center (SBHC).

The SBHC is a grant-funded partnership between the District, Mercy Fort Smith and Western Arkansas Counseling and Guidance Center. In the Vision 2023 continuum, it shows up in student/staff wellness as well as access-to-resources priorities, and is meeting both physical and mental health needs of students, so that students can be more successful in schools. The SBHC is also providing valuable access for district employees and their families.

Ms. Pat Morris, Dr. Courtney Morawski and Ms. Zena Featherston Marshall collaborated in January, February and March of 2019, making the final edits and mailing the grant application just a few days after the COVID shutdown began.

Dr. Deanie Mehl was the president of this Board when Vision 2023 work began in 2017. Current Board president Susan McFerran and past president Bill Hanesworth have also guided the work of this board since that time. Many thanks for their willingness to take the lead during this very active time in the district's history.

Former board members Ms. Jeannie Cole, Greg Magness, and Wade Gilkey were also recognized for their service on behalf of students and the community during this time. Current board members Talicia Richardson, Dee Blackwell, Yvonne Keaton-Martin, Dalton Person, Matt Blaylock and Troy Eckelhoff for the work that continues.

FSPS Police Department Chief Bill Hollenbeck and Deputy Superintendent Martin Mahan have provided direction and support from design to punch lists.

Mr. Shaffer was recognized for his continued primary responsibility for all of the capital projects as well as the continuing maintenance of current district facilities. He has managed dozens of diverse teams and assigned diverse projects through floods, tornados and a pandemic.

Dr. Terry Morawski joined the Fort Smith Public Schools team with extensive knowledge and experience in capital projects. His leadership over the past four years has ensured that this complex set of projects could move at the pace that it has, in the time allotted to complete the work. It has not been an easy task for any involved, but his leadership has guided the work in a way that also embodies his vision for a Culture of Excellence focused on a primary mission of Student Success.

Ms. Marshall closed by noting that the Peak Innovation Center scheduled for completion is the last building to complete the capital improvement projects.

CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

There was no one present for Citizens Participation.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Morawski thanked Ms. Marshall, the communication team, principals and students that helped with the open house events at several schools on November 14.

Dr. Morawski stated that the annual report featured in the E Fort Smith magazine was generating a lot of positive feedback.

Dr. Morawski reported that the Strategic Planning Team met last week to discuss progress and to see if any changes were needed moving forward. He noted that Ms. Richardson was the board member representative. Dr. Morawski stated that there would be a Vision 2023 Strategic Plan update presented at the December 13 Board Meeting.

Dr. Morawski stated that board policies would be on the agenda for consideration or discussion at the December 13 Board Meeting. He thanked board members Blaylock, Person and Richard who participated in the review of policies.

Dr. Morawski reported that Cavanaugh Elementary School, Cook Elementary School, Euper Lane Elementary School, Woods Elementary School and Chaffin Middle School would be recognized as Reward Schools at a future board meeting for high student performance and academic growth.

Dr. Morawski reported that District administration had decided not to partner with the Arch Ford proposal for alternative learning. He stated that the District is however interested in a hub model and ways to serve students at a deeper level.

Dr. Morawski reported that Mr. Mahan is chairing a committee to study enrollment trends and solutions to balance enrollment between both high schools.

Dr. Morawski reported that Arkansas Activities Association (AAA) made the decision to place Northside and Southside volleyball teams in the western division. He added that as each sport concludes, a decision will be made about other sports.

Dr. Morawski reported that vaccinations clinics were scheduled for Ramsey and Kimmons middle school on Friday, November 19, for ages 5 to 11.

Dr. Morawski wished board members and District staff and students a nice and restful Thanksgiving break for the following week.

CONSENT AGENDA

The consent agenda included October 25 Minutes, October Financial Report, November Professional Staff Recommendations, October and November Student Services Report.

Ms. Blackwell made a motion, seconded by Ms. Richardson, to approve the consent agenda items as presented. The vote passed 7/0.

PRESENTATION - LOSS OF LEARNING #ONTRACK REPORT

Dr. Tony Jones and Ms. Lori Griffin provided a presentation on Loss of Learning #Ontrack.

Dr. Jones reviewed data comparing percentage of students in grades 6-12 with at least one “F” from the first quarter of 2019 (pre-COVID to first quarter 2020 and 2021. See below.

Grade	1st Quarter - 2019 (Non-COVID)	1st Quarter - 2020 (COVID)	1st Quarter 2021 (Current)
Seniors	14.5%	61%	36%
Juniors	21%	59%	35%
Sophomores	18%	62%	35%
Freshman	17.5%	60%	37%
8th Grade	14%	57%	11%
7th Grade	12.5%	58%	16%
6th Grade	10%	52%	9%

Dr. Jones reviewed data with percentages of students in grades 6-12 with two or more “F’s” from the first quarter of 2021. Dr. Jones stated that middle school data from 2021 is back to the pre-COVID percentages in 2019. Grades 9-12 percentages are not quite back to pre-COVID but are trending down and much better in 2021 than in 2020.

See data below.

Grade	1st Quarter 2021
Seniors	19%
Juniors	20%
Sophomores	22%
Freshman	22%
8th Grade	5%
7th Grade	7%
6th Grade	4%

Dr. Jones stated that current interventions to support students include: more communication with parents, W.I.N. (Whatever I need) period, assessment retakes, after school tutoring, school interventionists, social workers, school counselors, NWEA map, school interventionists, social workers, school counselors, and NWEA (Northwest Education) map.

The following chart reflects the progress made in 2020 from 1st quarter to end of second quarter and the decrease in the number of students with 1 “F”.

School	End of 1st Quarter # of students with 1 F “2020”	End of 2nd Quarter # of students with 1 “F” 2020	Decrease in # of students with 1 “F” 2020
Northside	339	200	139
Southside	291	202	89

Belle Point	20	15	5
Chaffin	77	51	26
Darby	153	101	52
Ramsey	109	48	61
Kimmons	147	99	48
Overall	1,136	716	420

The following chart reflects credit recovery support for students that did not pass classes. Both high schools were upstaffed to provide help by providing credit recovery labs available for students to attend both during the school day and after school. Certified math and English teachers were available at the labs to support students in these courses.

School	Credits Recovered 2021
Northside	142
Southside	79
Total	221

Ms. Griffin stated that new literacy and math curriculum is being implemented in elementary schools. The State is no longer using ACT Aspire and is currently researching through focus groups how to change the summative assessment. Fort Smith Schools have staff in these focus groups.

Ms. Griffin provided the following data presented for Reading and Mathematics Performance Comparison for grades K-5 that referenced the percentage of students on track and those needing support.

K-5 READING October 2021		K-5 MATHEMATICS October 2021	
Percentage of Students ON TRACK	Percentage of Students NEEDING SUPPORT	Percentage of Students ON TRACK	Percentage of Students NEEDING SUPPORT
71%	29%	64%	36%

K-5 Istation Assessment
 October 2021

SCHOOL	READING		MATHEMATICS	
	Percentage of Students ON TRACK	Percentage of Students NEEDING SUPPORT	Percentage of Students ON TRACK	Percentage of Students NEEDING SUPPORT
Ballman	75%	25%	66%	34%
Barling	70%	30%	66%	34%
Beard	79%	21%	74%	26%
Bonneville	77%	23%	69%	31%
Carnall	61%	39%	55%	45%
Cavanaugh	79%	21%	76%	24%
Cook	89%	11%	83%	17%
Euper Lane	88%	12%	85%	15%
Fairview	74%	26%	65%	35%
Howard	51%	49%	52%	48%
Morrison	65%	35%	57%	43%
Orr	79%	21%	72%	28%
Park	65%	35%	59%	41%
Spradling	61%	39%	53%	47%
Sunnymede	59%	41%	52%	48%
Sutton	57%	43%	50%	50%
Tilles	52%	48%	41%	59%
Trusty	69%	31%	53%	47%
Woods	84%	16%	79%	21%
District Total	71%	29%	64%	36%

Ms. Griffin stated that the current state assessment that the District is using for K-5 is Istation. She stated that is imperative to improve Tier 1, which will mean less students will need Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention. IStation is tailored for each student and what that student needs.

The following are ways elementary teachers and staff are supporting students.

- Small group and one on one intervention with classroom teacher focused on essential learning (Tier 2)
- Small group intervention with interventionists (Tier 2 and Tier 3)
- Tutors (School Staff and Community Support)
- Social/Emotional Support (School Staff and Community Mentors)
- Collaboration with administrators and staff members
- I-Station intervention

Ms. Griffin referenced PLC (Professional Learning Communities) and Capturing Kids Hearts as ways of improving student success.

Ms. Richardson commended the teachers and administrators for their work toward improvement. She added that she would like to see all teachers using the same curriculum and more technology for the benefit of all students. Ms. Richardson noted a curriculum gap during the COVID period.

Dr. Bone referenced the PLC (Professional Learning Community) training that the Board received as to how the District is leveling the playing field across the District. She stated that the new curriculum adopted is being taught across the district. She noted that all teachers may teach differently but are teaching to mastery on the same standards. Ms. Griffin and Dr. Bone noted that they are seeing more collaboration between teachers and principals as they visits schools and how they share through meetings.

Ms. McFerran noted that this was a presentation and no action was required.

PRESENTATION - VIRTUAL OPTION CONVERSION CHARTER UPDATE

Dr. Samantha Hall provided an update on the Fort Smith Virtual Academy, K-8 Conversion Charter. She reviewed the timeline beginning with March of 2020 when schools closed and the District pivoted to remote learning. She noted the virtual option implemented using the Act 1240 waivers in August 2020, and the application process concluding with the State Charter Authorizing Panel approval in October, 2021 and the State Board of Education approving in November 2021, the FS Virtual Academy as a Conversion Charter School is to open in Fall, 2022.

Dr. Hall stated that a charter school is not for all students but for a segment of students that function better in a digital environment.

The teaching staff will be housed at the Peak Innovation Center with space developed for the teaching staff. Students will come onsite occasionally for educational or social emotional purposes. Students will be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities in their zoned schools or if attending through school choice, their designated school of choice. Students enrolled in the Academy will be Fort Smith School students and students outside of the school district boundaries will need to apply through school choice.

Dr. Hall presented the mission statement and the four cornerstones.

Mr. Person stated that this is truly innovative.

Ms. Blackwell also stated that she was impressed with this option for students.

Ms. McFerran thanked Dr. Hall for the presentation and noted that this was a presentation and no action was required.

PRESENTATION - VISION 2023 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Shaffer provided an update on capital improvement projects.

Mr. Shaffer reported on the following capital improvement updates.

Northside - The scoreboard is close to completion and projected to be installed at the end of this week. Seat brackets have arrived at Los Angeles International and are on track for mid December installation. Mr. Beaumont is coordinating scoreboard training.

Peak Innovation Center - A vendor for the roofing material has been selected and the roof will be able to get back on track and finish in December.

Darby Middle School – A few minor items to complete that include the overhead door and HVAC on the third floor.

Trusty Elementary Access and Security Phase 2 Pkg C should be complete the first week in January.

Morrison - HVAC equipment is to arrive mid to late December.

BOARD MEMBERS FORUM

Ms. Blackwell bragged on the student led tours at the open houses on Sunday.

Mr. Blaylock asked if there was any word from the Arkansas Activities Association regarding the other sports being moved back into the West Division.

Dr. Morawski stated that the administration would continue to advocate for getting both high schools in the same division.

Ms. Richardson asked that the administration continue to ensure that Northside High School has a track in a reasonable amount of time.

Ms. Richardson asked about keeping students athletes focused on academics first.

Dr. Morawski stated that the need for a track for Northside is something that the administration is researching, possibly with the City of Fort Smith. and as capital projects are completed, he would like to see what can be done.

Dr. Morawski stated that Mr. Beaumont has some ideas to keep students focused on academics while competing as athletes as well.

From an email he had received, Mr. Eckelhoff asked about fill rate and pay scale for substitutes.

Dr. Davis stated that sub fill rates currently are 83%. Non-COVID years was as high as 97%. Dr. Davis stated that national average is 50% with northwest Arkansas districts rates at the 70 to 80s range. Dr. Davis provided current pay rates for the district as follows: \$95 a day for a non-licensed substitute, \$100 a day for a licensed substitute, \$90 for an office administrative assistant, and \$80 for a paraprofessional.

Mr. Eckelhoff also asked about teachers having their pay “docked” for substitutes.

Dr. Davis explained that each staff member accrues one day per month for paid sick leave. Most teachers earn 10 days a year. Teachers have the opportunity to accumulate these sick days on an unlimited basis. If an employee has exhausted their sick leave, the employee has an option to use extended leave. The cost of the sub is deducted from the daily salary of the employee in that case. Because the employee has exhausted their leave, the deduction cost is made to their salary for that day.

Mr. Person stated that peer districts have given temporary pay increases. Dr. Morawski stated that the administration is considering options particularly with bus drivers.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Susan McFerran, President

Dee Blackwell, Secretary