

Synopsis
Urbana School District 116
Board of Education
Study Session
March 6, 2007

The first report of the evening was made by Piper Harvey, ARAMARK Food Manager for the district. She updated the Board on the actions she has taken since an article appeared in the News-Gazette quoting middle school students who had general complaints about the choice of food offered.

Ms. Harvey met with the students and also met with a group of students at King School. She was happy to report that several of the student suggestions were possible to implement immediately. She continues to explore options to address other concerns. Carol Baker noted that the district Wellness Committee was meeting and would have further updates in the coming weeks. She did note that ARAMARK was meeting all U.S.D.A. guidelines. As the district looks at proposing more rigorous standards, there may be additional costs involved.

Central Office administration appointments were announced with Don Owen named Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Gayle Jeffries named Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources. Susan Baker Ory's title will be changed to Assistant Superintendent for Special Services.

Urbana High School administrative appointments were made with Greg Hall being named Assistant Principal/Athletic Director and Danielle Cook being named Assistant Principal.

Two intergovernmental agreements were approved by the board. The first with the Regional Office of Education pertains to Human Resources. With the expertise in place in the Regional Office of Education it is anticipated that the R.O.E. will be our first point of contact relative to a variety of Human Resource questions, thus resulting in fewer calls to our school attorney.

The second agreement is with the Urbana Police Department. Board members asked that a regular report/update become a part of the agreement to keep the board abreast of the number and type of contacts involving Urbana students with the Urbana Police Department.

The next section of the study session consisted of two major reports from Don Owen, currently Director of Staff Development and from Grace Mitchell, Director of Secondary Alternative Education presenting an update on the district's comprehensive plan for service to students who are best served through an alternative program.

Mr. Owen first reported on the status of student discipline in District 116. Using data gleaned from the Skyward student information system and with the assistance and input of building principals, he reviewed the current number and character of discipline referrals to a similar point in time in the previous school year. In most buildings the number of referrals is running close to the number of incidences reported in the previous year. One area noted as reflecting a difference from last year was the number of out-of-school suspensions versus the number of in-school suspensions. He noted that this year we are seeing a higher percentage of in-school suspensions with a corresponding reduction in the number of out-of-school suspensions. Last year the percentages were somewhat reversed with there being a larger percentage of out-of-school suspensions and a smaller percentage of in-school suspensions.

Principals were called upon to describe the plans in place in their buildings to address discipline issues. In all cases, the administrators focused on the goal of creating a building climate that was positive for learning while also assuring a safe and welcoming environment. Specific references were made to the P.B.I.S. model that is used in several buildings. While the district is making good use of the Skyward program in reporting the number of incidences of discipline referrals, it was noted that not all referrals result in a consequence for the student.

The district's emphasis on transitions for students from Elementary to Middle School and from Middle School to High School were credited with improving building climate and assisting students in adapting to new expectations and assuming responsibility for their behavior. Board member Dimit reflected that the number of incidences reported by Mr. Owen was running at a level of approximately one-third to one-half of those reported 8 to 10 years ago.

Mr. Owen noted that district staff would be taking additional training on the Skyward system this summer and that future reports would reflect sub-group categories, such as gender and race.

Mr. Owen then turned to his report on Staff Development initiatives for the district. He first thanked fellow staff members Kathy Barbour, Alexis Smith, Linda Gibbens, Jean Korder and John Morrow for their support and involvement in the Staff Development Program for the District. Also cited as a key ingredient in the planning and delivery of staff development activities was the Instructional Support Team (IST)

District Initiatives in Staff Development were described and discussed. These included: CRISS (Creating Independence through Student owned Strategies); A Framework for Understanding Poverty; Write Traits; New Teacher Mentoring; Safety and Prevention; Lesson Study; Technology; Gifted Education; Support for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Beginning School Math; DIBELS; and support for new curriculum guides.

Mr. Owen described the variety of partnerships which make the Staff Development program possible including: The Chancellor's Academy; Title IIC grants; Graduate K-12 Project; Moveable Feast Technology Training; and, the American History Teacher Collaborative which our district coordinates for six school districts in the county.

Mr. Owen said that he and the IST are reviewing the district's Board Credit Policy as to its relationship to the No Child Left Behind policies.

He concluded his presentation with a look at the funding for Staff Development noting that an important way that our district is able to provide such a comprehensive program is through the competitive grants process. The overall effect of these grants and title programs is to provide the district with the equivalent of 7.8 full time staff.

Grace Mitchell, Director of Secondary Alternative Education, reviewed options available to high school students. She began her presentation with a description of the "Recapture Credits" program which holds classes in the high school from 3:30 to 6:00. This program provides the opportunity for high school students who fall behind in credits to catch-up or "Recapture" the credits needed to get back on pace for graduation. Additional services include transportation and an evening meal. Classes are offered in a 6-week session format with six sessions offered each school year. The program has proven to be popular with students with typical enrollments in each session of 45-50 students.

Additional alternatives used by the district include: the R.E.A.D.Y. Program provided by the Regional Office of Education and housed at the M.T.D. Terminal in Champaign. It serves middle school and high school students with 37 Urbana students as part of a total enrollment of 102 students which is a record high enrollment for R.E.A.D.Y.; Storefront School; Urbana Adult Education; Lincoln's Challenge; Circle Academy; Parkland College; The Urban League's Youth Empowerment Program; and a new program for 15-18 year olds sponsored by the Don Moyer's Boys and Girls Club.

Dr. Amberg provided the board with information regarding the procedures for filling the vacant board seat of Pres. Hudson who is not running in the April 17 election. The board will have 45 days from the election to appoint a person from Ms. Hudson's sub-district. Regarding the possibility of a write-in candidate, Dr. Amberg cited the School Code and Board of Elections Handbook which states that a person wishing to be a write-in candidate must file a notarized declaration by 5:00 p.m. on the Tuesday one week prior to the election. This process must be done through the County Clerk's office

Dr. Amberg asked the board to schedule a third March meeting for March 27 in order to meet R.I.F. time requirements. A second agenda item will be to review the district's budget list.

The next business meeting of the board will be Tuesday, March 13. There will be no meeting during Spring Break.