

**Urbana School District #116 Board of Education Meeting Synopsis
January 8, 2008**

The January 8, 2008 Urbana School District #116 Board of Education meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m., by Board President Mark Netter. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss goals and priorities for the upcoming year.

District 116 Superintendent Dr. Preston Williams briefed the board on the current status of the school district, saying the district is in a position of excellence that is recognized locally, regionally, and nationally. Williams applauded District 116 staff for putting forth excellent programs and initiatives all while having to deal with shrinking funding.

President Netter then polled the rest of the school board asking them for their opinions about needs and issues facing the district. The board identified Washington Early Childhood School, other facilities, summer school, working with the U of I, community engagement, district funding, bilingual education, redistricting, and technology as major issues needing attention. Netter then invited board members to discuss those issues.

As the board discussed facility issues, John Dimit assured the public that this discussion is not an attempt to put a referendum on the ballot. Dimit said the school district can find funding in other ways. Netter said District 116 also must find a way to keep Washington Early Childhood School viable for early childhood education until a new facility can be built or found. Dimit also said that redistricting also is a component in the facilities discussion.

Board members then discussed community partnerships. Cope Cumpston stressed the need to work even closer with the University of Illinois. Cumpston said District 116 should be the "research district for the university." Dimit said the school district also needs to work with Parkland College and the Champaign-Urbana Schools Foundation to help strengthen the district.

As the school district discussed technology issues, District 116 administrators briefed the school board about the cost of ongoing replacement of computers. Administrators said in order for teachers to have a computer at their desk less than five years old and have the proper software, it will cost the district \$300,000 annually. Board members agreed with the need to make sure teachers and students have the best technology, and agreed to research ways to find monies to make that happen. Dimit said distance learning should be considered by the school district as technology is upgraded.

Board member Benita Rollins-Gay discussed her concerns about summer school and the need to make sure middle school students attending summer school are properly taught reading and math. Dimit said the summer school discussion also gives rise to the balanced-calendar issue and the district must keep that in mind as they discuss summer school. Superintendent Williams says before, after, and weekend school programs have been instrumental in closing the achievement gap.

As the board moved on to talk about bilingual issues, Cumpston said she wants to see a fully integrated bilingual education program. She said it is the right thing to do. Williams said he talked to Leal Elementary Principal Spencer Landsman and he says the district would need to find willing teachers AND parents to move forward to make an entire school building bilingual.

As the board began to wrap up its discussions, Dimit said the common denominator in all the issues is money. Dimit said the district needs to find money for hard capital investments as well as operational issues. He also said that District 116 cannot use the same money sources to fund all programs.

Board member Ruth Ann Fisher said now is the time to act. She said that this meeting was good, but she also stressed the need for board members to now act on these discussions.

The board of education adjourned at 10:13 p.m.

The next meeting of the Urbana School District #116 Board of Education meeting will be Tuesday, January 15, 2008 at 205 North Race Street, Urbana.