

## **Urbana School District #116 Board of Education Synopsis March 4, 2008**

The Urbana School District #116 Board of Education meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m., by Board President Mark Netter. All board members were present. The board had met in executive session at 6:30 for the purpose of evaluating the Superintendent's contract. The board did not comment or take action on any matters regarding the executive session.

Leal Elementary 4th Grade Teacher Yvonne Vitosky spoke to the board in support of the professional development program in place by District 116.

The school board then approved several personnel items as presented by Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources Gayle Jeffries.

The University of Illinois Center for Education in Small and Urban Communities then presented its program to the school board (<http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/smallurban/>). According to its website, "Established in the spring of 2007, the Center for Education in Small Urban Communities is a research, teaching, and outreach unit within the College of Education. It focuses on enhancing teaching and learning, houses a number of the College's professional development activities, and serves as a liaison for school-university partnerships. The Center's entire staff work daily to play an active role in fulfilling UIUC's improved, strategic service directions and to guide the establishment of an ongoing, research-based professional development partnership." The center has been partnering with District 116 to provide professional development opportunities for Urbana School District teachers. Representatives from the Center expressed thanks to the school board and school district for a fruitful partnership. Superintendent Dr. Preston Williams remarked that the Center for Education in Small and Urban Communities has been a success story and indicated that he would recommend that the school board support the center through funding. "I think it's the right way to go," Williams said.

Board members then heard about District 116 Staff Development and Curriculum and Instruction Initiatives. The school district has built time into the school day, after school, and in the summer for teachers to collaborate on professional development and curriculum issues. Director of Staff Development, Kathy Barbour, told the school board that the goal of professional development will help provide teachers with a common body of knowledge and time for professional discussion about student learning and planning for change. Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Jean Korder, presented data that shows that student achievement has shown measurable gains since this form of professional development has been instituted. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Don Owen submitted a memo formally asking that the board extend the secondary early-out Wednesdays and full-day elementary in-service dates through the 2010-2011 school year. Preston Williams remarked that "some of the success we've had at the elementary and middle school levels (in a short amount of time) is unbelievable." Board member John Dimit admitted that while he was skeptical of the in-service proposal in the past, he announced that he will be happy to support the administration recommendation.

Under the superintendent's report, Public Relations Specialist Mark Schultz updated the board on some of the school district activities taking place. Schultz told the board the

online newsletter for April has been published (<http://www.usd116.org/enews/0803pages/0803index2.html>) and alerted the board of the highlights of the issue. Schultz also briefed the board on the March 8, 2008, "Read Across America Day" event at Lincoln Square Village (<http://www.usd116.org/news/newsfolder/readam08.html>). Schultz also announced that several UHS students participated in a recent IHSA Solo and Ensemble contest and scored very well. This month is also "Music in Schools Month" and Schultz said there will be many special concerts and activities to promote the arts in schools in March. John Dimit and Mark Netter both praised the District 116 music programs.

The District 116 Board of Education adjourned at 8:56 p.m. The next meeting of the Urbana School District #116 Board of Education will be March 25, 2008 (**note the special day**), at 7:30 p.m., at 205 N. Race Street, Urbana.