

**PRELIMINARY**

Cook called the December 4, 2007, meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

***Roll Call***

The following members were present:

Matt Cook, president  
Jeanette Carmany, vice president  
Jane Barber, secretary  
Peter Cukale, treasurer  
Judy Edberg, director  
Mary W. Lewis, director  
Amy Prince, director

The following members were absent:

Also meeting with the Board of Education were:

John L. Barry, superintendent of schools  
Anthony Van Gytenbeek, deputy superintendent  
Lisa Escárcega, chief accountability and research officer  
Rodney R. Weeks, chief financial officer  
Kari J. Allen, chief personnel officer  
William Stuart, chief academic officer  
Anthony Sturges, chief operating officer  
Tonia Norman, assistant to Board of Education

***Pledge of Allegiance***

Cook led the Board and audience in the pledge to the flag. He then welcomed visitors to the meeting.

***Approval of Agenda***

The December 4, 2007, agenda was approved as written.

***Approval of Minutes***

The minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Education held November 13, 2007, and the minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Education held November 20, 2007, were approved as written.

***Opportunity for Audience***

**II. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

***Reports from the Board of Education***

Barber attended a presentation at the Aurora History Museum in which the Department of Communication Services was honored for a DVD they produced on West Middle School during the construction period. They also honored John Dale, who I consider one of the “jewels of knowledge” in APS. It was great to see APS staff honored for their hard work.

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Prince spent the day at Peoria Elementary touring the building and visiting with staff and kids. Teachers were busy and kids were engaged and on task. Prince thanked Harry Chan and staff for their warm welcome and giving her an opportunity to tour the school.

Cook also attended the awards presentation at the Aurora History Museum. Joan Blocker and her class received an award for an interactive 3D tour of the museum, which can be viewed on the museum's Web site.

Cook shared that Board members attended the Colorado Association of School Board convention this past weekend. It was great to meet with fellow boards and exchange ideas and best practices used throughout the state.

### ***Items of Current Interest***

Barry introduced students from the South Middle School's music department. The students performed instrumental holiday selections for the Board and audience.

Cook commented that APS has talented students and we want to see and hear from them. We will have more student performances at the beginning of Board meetings when feasible. Barry pointed out that student artwork posted in the Dr. Lord and Mrs. Lord boardroom is rotated often and is another opportunity to view the work of our talented students.

In 2006, the Board and I began a series of town hall meetings for the community. This fall, APS will informally discuss several topics including VISTA 2010, pilot schools, curriculum and instruction, bond improvements and student safety. Please join us at Hinkley High School on December 6 at 6:30 p.m.

The Horticulture and Animal Sciences Programs at Pickens Technical College will be holding a "Holiday Plant and Bird Toys" sale at Pickens, December 5 through December 8, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Downtown Aurora Visual Arts has earned the 2007 National Exemplary Award for Innovative Substance Abuse Prevention Programs, Practices, and Policies from the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors.

DAVA offers after-school programs that teach students about substance abuse prevention and arts education. Serving 800 at-risk inner city youth annually, DAVA's goal includes increasing youth resiliency and reducing use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Congratulations. Barry presented Susan Jensen, executive director of DAVA, with a coin.

Jensen shared that it is a pleasure to support after school programs in APS. She invited everyone to the DAVA holiday show and sale of original artwork on Thursday, December 6.

William Smith High School is holding an enrollment open house on December 12 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. The school serves students in grades nine through twelve and is open to all Aurora Public Schools students through an application process. The school provides smaller class sizes, high academic standards and a focus on college and career planning.

### **Vanguard Charter Contract Amendment**

Legal Counsel Brian Donovan presented a proposed amendment to the Vanguard charter contract. We currently provide special education services to all charter schools at a cost of \$595 per child. Under the proposed agreement, Vanguard would provide the majority of special education services and retain \$440 out of the \$595 allotment per child. APS would continue to provide a few special education services including orientation, mobility services, assisted technology, services to expelled students and some nursing services.

We would remain legally responsible under federal law if there is an error, which would be determined by a due process hearing. Both the charter school and APS would share the risk and cost of a due process hearing. The charter school and APS would retain \$100,000 in a fund; \$50,000 from the charter school and \$50,000 from APS, to use in response to a due process hearing. The amendment would go into effect in January 2008, and expire at the end of the current school year. In April, we would review the proposal to determine whether to extend it from year to year.

Donovan introduced Ralph Albertson, director of Exceptional Student Services, and Cindy Millikin, assistant director of Exceptional Student Services, to present rationale for the proposed amendment.

Albertson explained that the Department of Exceptional Student Services operates under two principles. One is to be financially responsible, and the other is to provide services and accommodations that correlate with instructional services necessary for our special needs students to succeed.

Vanguard is a full inclusion model in that every student will be part of the regular classroom setting and have the necessary accommodations for their IEP. Approximately 48 students attend Vanguard. Three teachers provide special education services to special needs students. Vanguard is committed to providing services for the student's IEP and they are committed to the legal part of the agreement. This is a model worth reviewing until the end of the year.

Edberg asked how nursing services would be divided so the district would not be responsible for providing diagnostic and assessment services. Albertson explained that we are not assigning a nurse to the charter school. Vanguard would purchase nursing services from APS if needed.

Lewis asked how many students were enrolled at Vanguard. Millikin replied that about 330 students are enrolled at Vanguard. Lewis asked how many charters in the state offer services similar to the proposed model. Millikin replied that most charter schools have a low number of special education students. Vanguard has a realm of students with disabilities and some are quite significant. They also have a relationship with various organizations and different support groups for students with disabilities. Donovan noted that Jefferson County and a school in Colorado Springs have models similar to the proposal for Vanguard.

Barber commented that over the past few weeks several distraught parents have come before the Board to present concerns with their special needs students at charter schools.

Albertson replied that we have responded to parents that have come before the Board. We are working with both the charters and parents to alleviate concerns and provide services required for special needs students.

Carmany voiced concerns with item four in the proposed amendment regarding working with the charter to hire qualified special needs teachers. This is a high needs area and APS is having trouble finding qualified teachers. Cook echoed concerns and asked Donovan to clarify language in the proposed amendment. Donovan explained that the intent is only to assist in the hiring process of special needs teachers. He will revise language in the proposed amendment.

Cook invited Rod Miller, director of Vanguard Classical School, to the table to answer questions and concerns regarding the proposed amendment. Cook commented that when the charter contract was originally presented to the Board, we had grave concerns regarding your plan and the process for implementation. One of the main concerns was that Vanguard would be serving a broader, more severely impacted group of students at a higher grade level. You assured the APS Board at that time that you and your staff were experienced with special education services and procedures. We will be looking very closely at this process due to concerns brought before the Board from parents and concerns heard in follow up interviews. We want to ensure that there are no further mistakes. These are all APS students and we are very concerned about them.

Miller commented that in the beginning there were some concerns regarding who was providing services and that caused both disagreements and lapses in services. We are working with the district to ensure those problems do not reoccur. We have staff assigned to teach in special education classes and the district is providing specialist to accommodate special needs students. Our mission is to accommodate students utilizing our model with the curriculum we offer.

Carmany asked how many special needs students at Vanguard had multiple disabilities. Miller replied that seven or eight students attending Vanguard have multiple disabilities in the severe range.

This item will be submitted for action at the December 11 Board meeting.

## **DIVISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESEARCH**

*No Items*

## **DIVISION OF FINANCE**

### **Mill Levy Certification – Preliminary**

Weeks shared that prior to December 15 of each year; local boards of education are required to certify the number of legally allowable mills to the respective county's board of commissioners. Weeks introduced Martha Baldwin, budget manager for the district, to present preliminary information on the assessed valuations, mill calculations and impact on APS taxpayers.

Baldwin reviewed critical dates for mill levy certification:

- August 25 - county assessors are required to provide the assessed and actual value of taxable property to each school district in the state.
- December 10 – final date that counties have to provide the assessed valuations to school districts.
- Baldwin will provide the Board with any changes that occur at the Board meeting on December 11.
- December 15 – last date school districts are required to certify mill

levies to county commissioners

- The Board will approve final mill levy certification at the December 11 Board meeting.

Weeks noted that mill levy certification is statutory and we have a five-day window to complete the certification process.

Baldwin explained that there is a levy for the general fund and a levy for the bond fund. The general fund contains three components including:

- Standard Mill
- Certified by CDE, generates the property tax revenue portion of the School Finance Act.
- Legislation was passed in 2007 that froze our mill levy at 26.010.
- Credit or Abatement Mill
- Supplements any lost revenues due to decreased assessed valuations granted by the counties throughout the year
- Override Mill
- Approved by APS voters in 1990, generates more than \$7,639,028 each year for district operations

The bond levy generates revenues to help pay off the principal and interest payments on any outstanding debt that the district carries.

Mills are the same for both Adams and Arapahoe counties; the dollar values changes between each county. The assessed value in Adams County is \$560,933,033. The 45.530 mill will generate \$25,539,295 in tax revenue. The assessed value in Arapahoe County is \$1,279,626,180. The 45.530 mill will generate \$58,261,380 in tax revenue.

The total assessed value has increased over \$100 million between both counties. We have incurred \$4 million in additional tax revenue. The mill has decreased by .215 and will impact homeowners as follows:

- Owner of a \$200,000 home will pay \$3 less in school taxes than the previous year - \$728 to \$725
- Owner of a \$250,000 home will pay \$4 less in school taxes than the previous year - \$910 to \$906

Cook questioned how the mill freeze by state legislators would affect APS.

Weeks replied that the current message from the state legislature on the mill freeze, relative to the School Finance Act, is that the standard mill for Aurora at 26.010 would not decrease. If the freeze had not been implemented, it would have decreased further and reduced property tax revenue by about \$3 million. The freeze allows the \$3 million, the determined sum for APS, to be used in some way by the school district. The state will determine how funds will be used and distributed to school districts.

Barry expounded that mills are at 26.010. They would have likely decreased if we did not have a freeze and the taxpayers would have had less money to pay in. When the mills do not decrease, we retain the difference, which was about \$3 million. Governor Ritter has made a commitment that additional funds would be applied toward a full-day kindergarten. This will help with our goal in the VISTA 2010 Plan for a full-day kindergarten and the additional \$3 million would be applied toward the \$5.2 million cost of the program.

Barry commented that we have returned money to taxpayers and have not had a mill levy override since 1990.

Barber asked whether the \$3 million had been approved and if it would be challenged in court. Weeks replied that to his knowledge funds would be distributed to APS. Barry interjected that the mill levy freeze would not affect our bond rating and to date there has not been a challenge in court. The general consensus is that a challenge would not be filed and Governor Ritter is planning to go forward with the mill levy freeze.

This item will be submitted for action at the December 11 Board meeting.

### **Cash Flow**

Weeks presented an overview of cash flow analysis to date. Changes throughout the year have resulted in very low cash balances in December and February of each year, which is reflective of cash flows in many school districts throughout the state. On the 25th of each month, we receive equal monthly state equalization payments, but our property tax revenues are not available until the spring. We use available funds until we start receiving property tax revenues again in March.

In order to cover early payroll in December, we will need to obtain a low interest loan until we receive our state equalization payment on December 26. Due to our diligence over the past years, we were able to build fund balances in the general fund and did not have to obtain a loan. The district last borrowed money for cash flow purposes through the state's interest free loan program in December 2003 and December 2002.

A worksheet has been prepared and submitted to the state treasurer for consideration. Upon approval from the Board, the resolution will be submitted next week. The resolution is 16 pages long and every section is required.

Funds will be distributed to the district on December 17 and the loan will be repaid on the following week after we receive the equal monthly state equalization payment. We will borrow funds again in February to cover payroll expenses. We will pay back the loan in March, April, and May as we receive tax revenues from the counties.

Lewis asked whether this would affect or have a negative impact on our bond rating. Weeks replied it would not affect the bond rating, but we need to be very attentive to our fund balance at the end of the year and going into the new year. The Board passed a policy to retain five percent of ordinary revenue in fund balances and that is what affects the bond rating.

Bradshaw shared that many school districts in the state participate in the low interest loan program. It shows good foresight and cash management to participate in it. Weeks expounded that funds are paid back as soon as possible. Loans are required to be paid off by June 30 of the fiscal year funds are borrowed.

This item will be submitted for action at the December 11 Board meeting.

## **DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

***No Items***

**DIVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES**

**Use of Jamaica Elementary School Site**

Stuart invited Sheri Charles, director of Early Childhood Education, and Marsha Haxby, special education consultant, to the table to present information on the use of the Jamaica Elementary School site. Stuart commented that in January 2006, recommendations were presented to the Board regarding boundary changes at the elementary level in the northwest quadrant of the district. One of the recommendations resulted in the reopening of Peoria Elementary as a K-5 school. The second recommendation resulted in Jamaica Elementary being vacated. Boston Elementary is temporarily housed at the Jamaica Elementary site.

The Board directed us to find a suitable use for the site. We wanted the site to be used as a district wide resource and for early childhood programs. Charles and Haxby will present a proposal on how to best utilize Jamaica Elementary as an early childhood development center.

Charles shared that research supports the importance of early childhood education. Children who attend high-quality preschools have greater oral language skills and increased graduation rates. They perform higher on standardized assessments and receive special education services for fewer years.

Governor Ritter's P-20 Education Council has made several recommendations to improve Colorado's preschool programs. One recommendation has been to create a report that supports best practices in curriculum, instruction and assessment for preschool through third grade.

A child development center at Jamaica would support Vista 2010 goals, specifically Goal 1: Accelerate learning and raise expectations for every student and Action 25: Provide full-day kindergarten for every child and additional quality preschools by 2010. Converting Jamaica to a child development center would also support Goal 4: Adopt models and structures based on practices that are research-based.

Our current Childhood Education Program provides opportunities for collaboration between schools, parents and the community. We offer a wide variety of educational opportunities for three- to five- year olds.

Haxby explained that we currently have three different programs included in the Early Childhood Program. The Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program (CPKP) is a grant-funded program through the state of Colorado. We currently have 790 students, ages three to four years old, enrolled in the program.

Students identified with special needs between the ages of three- to four- years old are enrolled in the program. These students received funding from state and federal monies. Inclusive classroom settings are provided at various locations in the district. We currently have 350 preschoolers with special needs.

Our third funding source is through the Even Start federal grant, which is a family literacy program for parents who have children ages three, four and five. Parents participate in basic literacy instruction at our Child Development Center while

their child attends preschool or is in the infant/toddler room. We currently have 45 families participating in the program including 46 preschoolers and 10 infants/toddlers.

We currently have 30 classrooms housed in APS buildings. Our Child Development Center has 12 classrooms and various elementary schools have one or three preschool classrooms in the building. Those classrooms serve 900 students including Even Start, special needs students and the Colorado preschool funded students.

Some of our Colorado preschool funded students attend community preschool programs at various sites as well as two childhood education centers. The Colorado Department of Education mandated that the district provide resources for community programs, so children attending would have the same high quality early childhood experiences as other APS children. We currently have 243 students at eight different community or childhood centers.

Charles invited Josh Hensley, district planning coordinator, to the table to discuss boundary trends in the northwest quadrant. Hensley shared that over the last five years, 752 APS students in the northwest quadrant have left the district for various educational options that have been offered to families. The younger that we are able to enroll students and get families involved in APS, the better chance we will have of retaining students through their elementary, middle and high school years.

Haxby shared that having an early childhood center at the Jamaica site would be a plus for the northwest quadrant. We currently have five classrooms in elementary schools located in the northwest quadrant, leaving five schools without early childhood centers in their building. Students who are eligible for the program must travel to the child development center and it does create a hardship on some families.

An early childhood center at Jamaica would enhance the parent/school partnership. At the current child development center at Laredo, we offer programs for parents. We have parent days, field days, and literacy fairs. Preschool is a very approachable program for parents. They are excited about their child being in school and feel comfortable with the curriculum being taught to their student.

We have one preschool classroom at Crawford Elementary that provides services to children with disabilities. Other neighborhood students travel to the Child Development Center. We have 54 special education students who are bused outside the northwest quadrant to receive special education services. We would be able to consolidate resources, reduce transportation costs, and shorten the ride time by establishing a child development center at Jamaica.

Eight classrooms are available at the Jamaica site for the preschool program. The building would accommodate 250 preschoolers; 125 students in the morning session and 125 students in the afternoon session. Each class would have 16 students, one teacher and a paraeducator. The center would service CPKP funded students and special needs students. Special education and administrative support staff would also be housed at the center.

The projected enrollment of preschool children has increased significantly since the 2002-03 school year. We had 500 students enrolled in the program at the end of the 2003 school year. More than 1,400 students are projected to apply for

CPKP slots in the spring of this year for placement in the 2008-09 school year.

Amy Spatz, construction manager for the district, listed building improvements to the site as a result of the 2002 bond program.

- HVAC retrofit – new air conditioning and heating system
- Mechanical system
- Ceilings and lighting
- New roof
- Water system and windows
- Sprinkler system and grass for the playfield
- Exterior doors to each classroom

Spatz reviewed proposed projects that will be implemented at the site in the summer including:

- Additional plumbing fixtures to meet licensure requirements
- Age-appropriate playground equipment and surfacing material
- Shade structure on playground to meet licensure requirements
- Parking lot expansion for additional staff and parent drop-off
- Classroom furniture and equipment
- Estimated cost of the project is \$300,000

Barry added that Dutch doors and cameras to enhance the safety and security of students will be installed.

Carmany asked how many students were on the waiting list for preschool slots. Haxby replied that 918 students are currently on the waiting list. Some parents have expressed an interest in the program, but may not qualify for CPKP funding.

Charles commented that we are excited about opportunities for children to receive early childhood education services in the northwest quadrant of the district. It will increase our program capacity and parent support in the community.

Cukale asked what were the advantages of the preschool curriculum and how would it impact children when they enter kindergarten. Charles shared that the state allows you to choose from three preschool curriculums and we selected creative curriculum because it aligns more closely with our K-5 programs. It will help our preschoolers with the transition to kindergarten.

Barber asked if the OK Program would be incorporated into the Early Childhood Development Program. Haxby replied that we do not administer the OK Program. One of the OK Programs meets at the Child Development Center each Friday. If the program needs a permanent location, the Jamaica site would provide the needed stability.

Stuart requested that the Jamaica Elementary site be used for the Early Childhood Education Program and be submitted for action at the December 11 Board meeting.

Carmany asked if the \$300,000 estimated cost was for building renovations only. Stuart replied that the \$300,000 estimate was for building renovations. Barry explained CPKP funds would cover curriculum costs. Stuart will provide the Board with any additional curriculum cost.

Barry commented that this is yet another innovative and thoughtful approach of what we can do with available resources. He commended the presenters for their hard work and efforts.

**DIVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES**

*No Items*

**III. CONSENT AGENDA - ACTION ITEMS**

**SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

*No items*

**DIVISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESEARCH**

*No items*

**DIVISION OF FINANCE**

*No Items*

**DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Classified Personnel**

**Licensed Personnel**

**DIVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES**

*No Items*

**DIVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES**

*No Items*

Edberg moved and Cukale seconded to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Roll Call: Barber, Carmany, Cook, Cukale, Edberg, Lewis, Prince #7946

Approved on a 7-0 vote

**IV. ACTION ITEMS**

**SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

**Revision of VISTA 2010 Strategic Plan**

Barry commented that the VISTA 2010 Strategic Plan is a living, breathing document. Revisions and clarifications from the Board have been addressed and implemented by district administrators. I recommend that changes to the VISTA 2010 Strategic Plan be adopted as presented.

Cook moved and Edberg seconded to adopt the VISTA 2010 Strategic Plan as presented.

Prince asked if we could be more specific and lists where actions have been combined or addressed in the VISTA 2010 Strategic Plan. Barry will follow up and provide information to the Board.

Cook shared that at the Colorado School Board Association convention that board members attended last weekend, there was a lot of focus around strategic planning. APS has incorporated most of the proposals that other school districts are now discussing. We are extremely pleased with the VISTA 2010 Plan and I recommend that we wholeheartedly approve it.

Roll Call: Barber, Carmany, Cook, Cukale, Edberg, Lewis, Prince #7947

Approved on vote of 7-0

**DIVISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESEARCH**

*No items*

**DIVISION OF FINANCE**

*No Items*

**DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

*No Items*

**DIVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES**

*No Items*

**DIVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES**

**School Club Charter**

Sturges recommended that the Board approve the school club charter application for the Hinkley High School Hispanic Organization Promoting Education (H.O.P.E.).

Barber moved and Prince seconded to adopt the school club charter application for the Hinkley High School Hispanic Organization Promoting Education (H.O.P.E.).

Cook invited club sponsors, Shannon McBrayer and Angela Vega, and club president, Carlos Brados, to the table to answer question regarding the application.

Vega read the club's mission statement and purpose to the Board. The club meets every Thursday morning and every Thursday afternoon. Twenty-five students are members of the club.

Cook shared that Board members would like to attend some of the sponsored events and requested that club sponsors keep them apprised of their schedule.

Roll Call: Barber, Carmany, Cook, Cukale, Edberg, Lewis, Prince #7948

Approved on a vote of 7-0

**Utility and Fire Lane Easements at Rangeview**

Sturges shared that the City of Aurora is requesting two easements as part of the Rangeview High School addition. It is recommended that the Board approve the two easements as part of the addition. Sturges invited Josh Hensley to the table to answer questions or concerns.

Edberg moved and Lewis seconded to approve the two easements as part of the Rangeview High School addition.

Hensley explained that easements are needed to support renovations at Rangeview High School.

Roll Call: Barber, Carmany, Cook, Cukale, Edberg, Lewis, Prince #7949

Approved on a vote of 7-0

**IV. CONCLUDING ITEMS**

***Opportunity for Audience***

Cook recognized members of DAAC seated in the audience. DAAC is a valuable part of the community and we appreciate all the work you do. The Board will be meeting with executive members of DAAC to discuss upcoming projects for next year.

***Correspondence***

***Next meeting date***

The next business meeting of the Board of Education will be held December 11, 2007, at 6:30 p.m. in the Dr. Lord and Mrs. Lord boardroom at the Educational Services Center, Peoria Building.

***Adjournment***

The regular meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**President**

**ATTEST** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Secretary**