

I. PRELIMINARY

Cook called the October 21, 2008, meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Roll Call

The following members were present:

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

Also meeting with the Board of Education were:

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

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Approval of Agenda

The October 21, 2008, agenda was approved as written.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Education held October 7, 2008, were approved as written.

Student Performance

South Middle School students provided entertainment at the October 21 Board meeting. Renee Swanson directed the talented string ensemble in an instrumental performance of "Gypsy Tales." What an amazing group of young performers!

Cook acknowledged and welcomed Boy Scouts Troop 230 to the Board meeting. The scouts were in the audience working on their merit badge.

Opportunity for Audience

II. INFORMATION ITEMS

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Reports from the Board of Education

Prince attended the Aurora Education Foundation breakfast on October 10. The foundation does so much for APS students and staff. Donating to the foundation is a worthwhile investment.

Prince attended the Aurora Economic Development Council dinner. The AEDC is helping to keep the city of Aurora on the map and in the spotlight. Representatives spoke positively about APS and how imperative it is that both the bond and mill levy referendums pass in November.

Prince shared that "Girls with a Voice" performed at a recent Compass After School Program event. The group also performed at a city council meeting where APS was recognized for working with the city of Aurora and Compass to provide after school activities for students.

Prince attended the craft fair at Gateway on Saturday. There were more than 140 booths as well as a number of student performances. Proceeds from the fair will benefit after-prom activities.

Cukale also attended the Aurora Economic Development Council dinner, and was privileged to read to students at Wheeling during the Leaders are Readers Program.

Lewis participated in the Leaders are Readers Program at Clyde Miller and Century, and read to students in more than 11 classes.

Lewis encouraged the audience to vote in support of 3A and 3B.

Barber read to students in two classes at Lyn Knoll Elementary. She also attended a PBS ceremony at Virginia Court Elementary and jokingly asked how throwing a pie at a teacher encourages good behavior.

Barber thanked students at Paris for artwork that adorned the wall in the boardroom. She also thanked the talented string ensemble from South for providing entertainment earlier in the evening. What a wonderful group of students!

Barber encouraged everyone to get out and vote. Early voting started yesterday and October 28 is the deadline to request a mail-in ballot.

Carmany attended the Aurora Education Foundation breakfast. Thanks to all of the community that took time out to attend the breakfast. It was the largest turnout that we have had in quite some time. Carmany also attended the craft fair at Gateway and was privileged to read to preschoolers at Yale.

Cook had an opportunity to see the student production of "Little Shop of Horrors" at Aurora Central. He also encouraged everyone to attend the town hall meeting on Thursday, November 6, at Boston Elementary.

Congratulations to Rangeview, Hinkley and Aurora Central for making it to the state soccer playoffs.

Items of Current Interest

Barry encouraged everyone to attend a community conversation on Thursday, November 6, at Boston K-8 School at 6:00 p.m. This will be an opportunity for you to hear updates about APS, ask questions and share your views with Board members and district leadership.

We are very thankful for Darlene Ashley, an APS community member, who has been volunteering her time and talent at Laredo Elementary School for the past five years. Ashley helps out in the classroom two to three times a week, assisting students with spelling, reading and writing. She has become such a friend to students that many now call her “grandma.” Thank you for caring so deeply and for making a positive impact on our students’ lives. Barry presented Ashley with a Superintendent recognition coin.

We give high praise to the APS Citizens Bond Oversight Committee for their great success in ensuring that our bond-funded construction projects supported by Aurora voters in 2002 were completed on time and that every bond dollar was spent wisely. Thank you Mary Berrigan, Jim Bittle, Adrienne Bradshaw, Cathy Cooley, Cheryl Dalton, Dan Davis, Mark Davis, Stanley DePue, Georgia Duran, Rebecca Herbst, Curt Humphrey, Peggy Kerns, Mary Lewis, Randy Mills, Dale Mingilton, Ken Neeper, Randy Patrick, Anthony Sturges, and Rod Weeks for all your recommendations and ideas. They held great credibility and influence upon decisions made by the Board of Education. With your help, our students were given the better learning environments they deserve. Barry presented committee members who were present with Superintendent recognition coins.

We commend the APS Centralized Admissions Project Team, which includes staff from the IT department and both centralized admissions offices, for exploring and determining new ways to improve service. After assessing what worked and didn’t work well last year, the team created a new staffing strategy that improved customer service.

Barry requested that Mary Sleaf, Leah Wilkinson, Anila Dedi, Cathy Gonzales, Katherine Pope Hooper, Patty Roundy, Carisa Hull and Peggy Carlson stand up and be recognized by the Board and audience. He presented centralized registration staff members with certificates of appreciation.

VISTA 2010 Update

People

Allen reviewed a slide that illustrated results from work to improve teacher retention in APS. In order to measure the goal, we asked teachers who were resigning to share where they were going and if they planned to teach in another local district. We want to retain these teachers and our goal is to decrease the number of teachers leaving the district by 10 percent each year.

We have met and exceeded our goal by 19 percent from the previous year, 67 teachers from the previous year compared to 55 teachers this year. Fifty-five teachers represent about 2.5 percent of the total number of teachers in APS. Our goal in 2009 is to further reduce the number by 10 percent, 50 teachers or fewer, that leave the district to teach in another local district.

Carmany asked where the majority of the 55 teachers had gone. Allen replied that most of the teachers were teaching in another local district or in state.

Lewis asked if information from exit interviews was used to help retain teachers. Allen replied that we have been conducting focus group, staying interviews, for the last three to four years and talking to teachers that we want to remain in APS. We now plan to change strategies and conduct staying interviews every other year in order to identify themes that will help us address concerns.

Carmany asked if interviews were anonymous and how they would be conducted. Allen replied that Joanie Ott, recruiting specialist, would conduct interviews. Teacher names will remain anonymous.

Achievement

Stuart shared that the Board was presented with information on the Response to Intervention Program in August. All districts are required to have a plan in place by August 2009. The Rtl plan is hard to quantify and track numerically. We have begun professional development with K-12 principals and have had the first of three sessions to familiarize them with the plan and determine responsibilities between now and August to ensure components are in place. We are emphasizing connections and initiatives that are already in place in regard to the Rtl plan.

Community

Escárcega presented a slide in regard to the District Accountability Advisory Committee. DAAC is required under state statute and its main purposes are to review the school improvement plan, district budget and initial charter applications and provide recommendations to the Board of Education. Our metric was to increase membership and we met our goal by 50 percent. Another goal was to increase the underrepresented group serving on DAAC by 25 percent. We did not meet the goal but have increased diversity on the committee by contacting school administrators to get names of parents to serve on the committee. Our goal is to get more parental representation from the northwest quadrant of the district and we will be meeting with principals.

Barber commended DAAC members for all of their efforts in reviewing charter school applications.

Environment

Cooper reviewed a slide illustrating out-of-school suspensions in the district. We normally review information at the end of the year to determine if we have met our goal to reduce out-of-school suspensions by five percent, which would put us at 4,667. We review this goal quarterly in school services and monthly with principals. We provide professional development with deans of students, counselors, new teachers and have ongoing conversations with impacted groups. We are in the process of developing a task force to review suspensions and overrepresentation of various ethnic groups of students. This process will occur this semester and ongoing conversations will be held to address student behavior under impacted groups. Last year at this time, we had 1,076 out-of-school suspensions at the end of first quarter, this year we had 816 out-of-school suspensions at the end of first quarter.

Barry commented that the decrease in out-of-school suspensions during the first quarter is very encouraging. Our positive behavioral support program is having a great impact. The PBS model is embedded in sixteen APS schools and many schools are utilizing PBS strategies. All of our schools will be embedded as fast

as CDE will allow. Districts can only implement eight PBS sites per year.

Prince asked what grade levels were the majority of out-of-school suspensions occurring in. Cooper replied that most out-of-school suspensions occurred at the middle and high school levels.

New America School Waiver Request

Legal Counsel Kathleen Hostetler shared that the Board received copies of the request for waivers from New America Charter School as information in the October 21 agenda. New America Charter School is requesting a waiver from district policies and state statute. The New America Charter School renewed their agreement with the district in June 2008. This request is pursuant to the renewal and most charters request waivers from district policies and certain state statutes. The request is almost identical to the waiver submitted by New America School with their original agreement in 2005, which was approved by the Board at that time.

Cook asked if the charter was requesting the waiver in order to develop its own policies. Hostetler replied yes. The charter would like to tailor policies unique to their school.

Prince asked if a representative from New America would be available to answer questions when the request for waiver is returned for action. Hostetler replied that we would request that a representative attend the meeting to answer questions. The attorney that drafted the plan was invited but was unable to attend.

Lewis asked if the charter had to provide an alternate plan. Hostetler replied that in the agreement it states the rationale for the waiver. New America School has a replacement plan and a lengthy school employee handbook that covers everything they have asked to replace.

This item will return for action on November 11.

Pilot School Proposal

Van Gytenbeek invited Lisa Nieto and both primary and intermediate design teams from Fletcher Elementary to the staff table to present two separate pilot school proposals. The design teams have done an amazing amount of work in the past year. Both proposals were presented to the joint steering committee on September 17 and approved to move forward.

Nieto introduced members of the Fletcher primary design team including: Tony Pinkstaff-Smith, educational assistant; Carla Chavez, ELA teacher; Jody Jones, third grade teacher, Kelsey Muellner, kindergarten teacher; and Cindy Gray, first grade teacher.

Pinkstaff-Smith shared that 100 percent of licensed staff voted in support of the proposed K-3 primary school. Classified employees were not allowed to vote but all support the pilot school proposal.

Chavez shared that the vision is to prepare all students to be community contributors who embrace multiculturalism and succeed in the 21st century world. We highlight and believe in capitalizing on student learning strengths and honor cultural backgrounds and languages. We believe in technology and

believe it is the bridge that will connect students to learning and experiences that foster critical and creative thinkers.

Nieto reviewed enrollment projections through the 2011-12 school year. The ultimate goal is to have a small school community of 350 students. The curriculum would be standards-based, language enriched, science oriented, have community as a purpose and constantly connect to content. It will build a foundation for numerical, reading and writing.

Nieto reviewed an example of a quarter unit from one grade level. Curriculum would be aligned overall with current pacing guides but tweaked somewhat to ensure content is aligned and supportive of second language learners, who are the majority of students at Fletcher. The curriculum would be infused with instructional technology with a common theme around social and natural sciences.

Chavez shared that ELA teachers will use science and social study units to support the academic language that all learners need to know. ELA strategies would be incorporated in our science and social studies units, and visuals and real objects would be used to teach vocabulary. Science notebooks would be used and content planning with teachers would be provided to determine academic vocabulary and language functions for language starters. We have content walls highlighting vocabulary; real objects that student use during science time; big ideas from science and social studies units; and real resources for second language learners to review during experiments and when writing in notebooks. Nieto shared that pilot school status would allow us to build on successes that have occurred in science and expand the curriculum needed for second language learners.

Muellner shared that another component of the proposal is building the community within Fletcher, which would be accomplished through the responsive classroom approach that instills responsibility in students and educates the whole student.

Jones shared that students must be proficient with computers and technology in the 21st century world. We will allocate more funds toward technology upon approval of pilot school status. One of our goals is to have interactive promethean whiteboards in all classrooms. We have seen successes in students that have been able to interact with technology used by the teacher.

Nieto reviewed student demographics as compared to district CSAP demographics. We currently have a 73.5 English language learner student population and a 90 percent free and reduced lunch student population. We are above the district in both student population groups.

One of the components of pilot school status is autonomy. We will continue to use quarterly curriculum-based assessments, CELA testing and the MONDO oral language assessment. In the K-3 primary school, only third grade students will be required to take the CSAP test and we have created proficiency targets to work toward. Our pilot school math goal is to meet or exceed the district's average in three years. We currently are at 33 percent; our goal is to be at 47 percent by 2011. We have also projected that we will exceed district writing targets once we obtain pilot school status.

With pilot school status, we will continue to review truancy and discipline referrals. We have reduced truancy at Fletcher from 73 percent in 2006-07 to 22

percent this school year. We have also reduced the number of discipline referrals. Last year, we had 93 referrals compared to the district's average of 142 for elementary schools. Out of the 93 student referrals, 39 were repeat student referrals. We currently have an overrepresentation of male students with discipline referrals; 33.74 percent at Fletcher compared to 26.51 percent for the district. Our goal is to reduce and maintain the number of discipline referrals.

Muellner shared that we will utilize the same calendar as the district. Staff would work eight hours per day and teachers would have 30 minutes of planning before and after school. The student day would be increased by 30 minutes, Monday through Thursday, in order to allow for an early release on Friday to give teachers time to plan, collaborate and work together. Gray reviewed a possible student day at the K-3 primary school. Time slots would be opened to integrate more literacy; math blocks would be designed for whole group or small group/independent instruction; and time would be incorporated for content with language development. Each grade level team member would be part of a primary committee that would meet on Friday afternoon to co-plan, discuss student data or interventions, or have other meaningful and purposeful conversations.

Nieto reviewed critical time lines for staffing including hiring of the K-3 primary principal and establishment of curriculum planning committees and the governing board. Every teacher at the primary school would have to serve on two committees that would report findings to the governing board. Annual Election-to-Work agreements would need to be signed and submitted to HR in early February.

Fletcher is a full title school and has both a general fund budget and a title fund budget. Most of the funds would be allocated to the instructional technology budget in order to ensure classrooms are equipped with the latest technology. Fletcher has been under student capacity for some time and could easily accommodate two pilot schools. There are plenty of conference rooms as well as a science lab, technology lab, library, athletic field and a large gymnasium. The proposed primary and intermediate school would share the library and cafeteria and each school would have a separate entrance. Classrooms are very large but classified staff and academic interns would work alongside ELA and technology teachers in order to maintain small class sizes.

Lewis asked if the amount of time allotted for electives such as art, music, and physical education would be more or less than is currently allotted by the district at the primary level. Jones replied that we have not had an opportunity to meet as a staff to discuss it. It most likely would be the same amount of time as the district allots in primary grades but more classroom integration so kids can better connect to the content.

Carmany asked if kids would have elective classes during a separate period or if a specialist would come to the classroom. Jones replied that it could be a flexible schedule but believes it would be a separate period that provides an activity connecting to the classroom. One of the reasons we proposed grade level team meetings on Friday afternoon is to increase communication between specialists and teachers, and provide time to work together and co-plan.

Carmany asked if the community had been surveyed on the proposed early release time for students on Friday and if students had after school activity options. Nieto replied that we have an active parent group and have discussed options for students. We have a letter of commitment from the city of Aurora

through the Youth Development Organization and are developing other partnerships and relationships so students have places to go. The Compass After School Program is at Fletcher and provides an hour of instruction and an hour of recreation for students after school. Carmany asked if there was a charge for the program. Nieto replied that Fletcher is a full title school. Services are free and not expected to change.

Cook asked how pilot school status would affect title funding. Nieto replied that it would not affect funding for the K-3 primary school. Title funding is provided for kindergarten through fifth grade students that live in the Fletcher attendance boundary. It may affect funding for sixth, seventh and eighth grade students at the proposed intermediate school of choice.

Carmany asked how fluent groups would be structured and envisioned. Jones replied that groups would be envisioned as they are now. Grades would still be separate but with the integration of specialists, ELA teachers, and classified staff. Students would be placed in fluent groups appropriate to their instructional abilities.

Carmany asked how the addition of the second literacy block would balance with other subject areas. Nieto replied that the proposal is written to allow for a weekly schedule so we would not be limited to a specific amount of block time. We would never want the student to have less than three days of math so we incorporated language into the curriculum to ensure it is balanced. That is the flexibility of pilot schools: to be able to meet the needs of students, maintain focus and have flexibility to work as a team.

Barber asked what the teacher to student ratio was. Nieto replied that it is currently 19 to 1. Our kindergarten and first grade students have high language needs. With pilot school status, we can maintain small class sizes by allocating funds to ensure we have a teacher and classified staff member in every classroom. Through our partnership with the Colorado School of Mines, we have one intern that serves six classrooms.

Barber asked if the classroom intervention model was being used. Nieto replied yes. Barber asked how the pilot school transition would affect life skills students. Nieto shared that the life skills program is a district run program. There are currently 16 students utilizing life skills converted classrooms. In our proposal, we recommend that the life skills program be relocated to another building in order to utilize the district calendar and be completely autonomous.

Barber asked if funds would be set aside for visual arts and field trips. Nieto shared that this is a very preliminary budget developed to hit the targeted dollar amount. Proposed projected amounts include: \$1,000 for visual arts; \$700 for music; and \$10,000 for science. All of the teachers would provide input on budget decisions when the final budget is developed.

Carmany commented on the scope of the pilot school proposal. She asked if staff planned to write their own grants or utilize the district grants office. Nieto replied that staff would work with the district grants office to write grants.

Carmany asked if pilot school representatives would attend job fairs. Nieto replied that it would fall under the criteria of pilot schools since we are not automatically set up to use job pools created through HR. The governing board would select teachers and the K-3 primary school administrator. Current teachers can choose to work at the primary or intermediate school. Teachers

also have the option to transfer to a traditional school. Members of the governing board would attend job fairs and work with HR.

Nieto introduced members of the Fletcher intermediate design team including: Angelina Walker, fourth grade teacher; Jody VanderHamm, ELA and literacy teacher; Ben Gondrez, educational assistant - technology; and Lori Martin, fourth grade teacher and AGATE leader.

VanderHamm shared that the Fletcher intermediate school highlights and emphasizes science and technology. Both are relevant and will enhance student learning.

Nieto shared that we would be enrolling 54 additional sixth grade students and 59 additional seventh grade students at the intermediate school. We plan to request that current fifth grade students and parents sign letters of commitment and are hoping that 80 percent of our fifth grade students return to Fletcher. We are also excited about recruiting students that left the previous year as well as out-of-district students. We are developing partnerships with feeder middle schools so students can participate in district athletic programs.

Walker reviewed a slide that illustrated how the science and technology school in conjunction with the community would develop independent, critical and creative thinkers. Martin shared that one of the main components of the program is guided student choices. Students should be in charge of their learning and driving it. Teachers would guide learning and help students make healthy choices.

We plan to utilize the same specialists as the primary school in fourth and fifth grades. Electives will be offered in sixth through eighth grades and guest teachers would be hired so students have different learning choices. We are connecting with the city of Aurora and the Colorado School of Mines to create partnerships with the community to help students get to science and technology fairs.

Last year, we took fourth grade students on a field trip to the Challenge Center in Colorado Springs where they took part in an amazing simulation to the moon. We are already embedded in the science curriculum and saw a 20 percent increase on our science CSAP score as a result of these types of experiences as well as science note-booking. VanderHamm added that we have increased writing through science note-booking and it will help address and increase our writing CSAP scores.

VanderHamm shared that we have a partnership with the Colorado School of Mines in which graduate student interns work with classroom teachers. One of our goals is to provide students with the choice to attend college and having college interns, who are closer to student age groups, makes it seem more obtainable. This summer, we attended a science professional training sponsored by the Bechtel K-5 Educational partnership and it helped us connect to student learning. We had to be scientists and do several experiments that are part of the graduate level program. The process and inquiry used in the experiments is what we want for our students. Nieto shared that Fletcher is the only elementary school that is involved in a partnership with the Colorado School of Mines. The specific grant was written for K-5 elementary students and we were able to send six teachers to the seven-day workshop. A graduate student intern works at Fletcher 10 to 12 hours per week in separate classrooms. These are the types of internships and partnerships we want to continue to build for the science and

technology school.

Gondrez shared that one of the things we are piloting this year for fifth grade students and plan to continue next year for our sixth and seventh grade students is the GenYes program. This is a special technology integration program where we teach students special technologies pertaining to educational instruction. Teachers submit technology projects and students assist them with projects such as PowerPoint presentations, building Web sites or full movie productions. Another technology feature for students is our weekly newscast and it will be one of the elective choices for the intermediate pilot school.

VanderHamm shared that our goal is to help students become decision makers in their education process. All students receive the same instruction in the first seven weeks of the content unit and conduct the same experiments. Students then choose a smaller unit of study within the scope of coursework in the remaining two weeks of the quarter to get a deeper understanding of the content. This will help get students to science and technology fairs.

Gondrez shared that we will be using the guided inquiry model utilizing the five Es: engage, explore, explain, elaborate/extend and evaluate. We will use this model to help plan lessons around student inquiry and knowledge.

VanderHamm shared that we would have expert members in content areas that make up grade level teams. Each team member would serve on two committees and report out with the entire team. The ELA certified person would ensure we are doing what is best for second language learners.

Nieto shared that a school advisor would be hired to work with students and develop mentorships. In-service days would be moved to the beginning of the quarter in order to have a day and a half of planning to discuss the yearly focus at the beginning of the year. Every quarter we will review our focus to ensure we are on target and meeting the needs of kids. School indicators would remain the same except seventh and eighth grade students would participate in at least one technology fair and be involved in an internship or mentorship. The biggest focus in regard to time lines are hiring of the K-3 administrator, establishing a governing board and developing a marketing plan. The lobby will be used for the main entrance to the intermediate school. Both schools will have their own office.

Lewis was excited about pacing guides and quarterly assessments to gauge student learning. She questioned how students who transfer from school to school would be affected. Walker shared that there was a trend of stability in pilot schools of choice in the Boston model that was reviewed. Nieto added that curriculum is standards-based and it would be easier for transfer students to make the adjustment. It is our hope that students remain at the pilot school especially at the intermediate school of choice. Barry commented that when the choice element is interjected to parents, it is a very powerful motivator and it becomes a stability element.

Prince asked if we are hindering students from attending other schools and if it would create competition within the district. Nieto has met with middle school feeders regarding the transition to pilot school status. We are hoping to draw out-of-district students including some of the Stapleton families and have a letter of support from the Stapleton Foundation. This is a win-win situation for APS. Barry added that North would be the element of choice for biomedical and Fletcher would be the element of choice for science and technology. Schools will

not be in competition and it will provide choices for parents.

Prince asked how teacher professional development would be structured. Gondrez shared that a technology specialist would support teachers in the classroom. The GenYes program would also be utilized for teacher professional development as a trainer-to-trainer program. Nieto shared that once pilot school status is approved, we would move into transition and begin utilizing some of the professional development initiatives already in place. Nancy Cummings is a consultant for Fletcher and will provide professional training for teachers as well. Barber praised staff and hopes that they continue their idealistic views.

Edberg noted that there were not enough elective classes on the schedule and hopes that music and the arts are not sacrificed. Nieto replied that we are following William Smith's lead and elective classes are very much a part of the curriculum. As an example, if music will enhance curriculum, we will hire a teacher that specifically teaches it to increase student learning.

Barry commended the Fletcher staff for their energy and enthusiasm. When choices are made and people are energized to pick their pathway, it helps students choose their direction. You are choosing this journey and making it your own. It will not be easy, but it is a worthwhile journey.

Communication Audit Report

Chief Communication Officer Georgia Durán presented information on the communication audit report. One piece of feedback received was in regard to district staff, especially teachers, and how dedicated and committed they are to students. The presentation from Fletcher pilot school design teams exemplifies what we heard. A large number of parents have chosen to take their kids out of APS even though they live in the district's attendance boundaries. A pilot school at Fletcher would be a great marketing opportunity to bring kids back to the district.

Durán introduced Lesley Dahlkemper, Schoolhouse Communications, and Jennifer Reeve, assistant executive director, Colorado Association of School Boards. In 2003, we did an initial communication audit of APS to obtain feedback on general communication in APS. After we reviewed new issues facing APS including students attending schools outside the district and changes that occurred after the adoption of VISTA 2010, we decided to do another communication audit. This audit was conducted to determine how our constituents and shareholders perceived APS in order to tap into their beliefs and determine what they would support in the district.

Dahlkemper commended APS for the amazing work regarding pilot schools and offering more choices for parents. Schoolhouse Communications in partnership with the Colorado Association of School Boards and Stacey Lewis and Associates, a firm specializing in branding, conducted a comprehensive communications/reputation audit of APS from February to May 2008. A full report was provided to district leadership in early June.

The audit focused on targeted audience groups and items addressed included:

- major district initiatives
- district perceptions
- district communication to employees, parents and community members

- district messages for familiarity and believability

Communication research consisted of a number of components including:

- 20 inquiry interviews
- interviews of all APS Board members
- 15 focus groups
- three-hour session with communication staff members prior to launching the comprehensive project
- online staff survey and review of select communication tools.

There were a number of major APS branding attributes that surfaced consistently across all focus groups. Overall common themes included:

- caring, dedicated and experienced teachers across the board
- rich cultural, socioeconomic, racial and ethnic student diversity seen as highly desirable in terms of offering students what many termed “real world learning”
- innovation and transformation to improve student achievement
- an environment for student-centered learning and a whole-child commitment

Other specifics included:

- increasing emphasis on greater choice in academic programs
- vocational education and dual college credit opportunities

The three major branding themes that emerged focused on diversity/academics, teachers/academics and transformation/academics.

Reed praised the district for the great emphasis that has been placed on communications under the direction of Chief Communication Officer Georgia Durán and Superintendent Barry. Overall findings include:

- APS uses multiple and varied communication channels to disseminate information
- APS has received a lot more positive media coverage and people have noticed
- Board members felt that the communication department is responsive to the needs of both leadership and schools
- high marks for concerted effort by the Superintendent and Board to increase visibility in the community
- Board members work hard to communicate in one clear voice
- Communication from Board members are formed as a team
- The ideal goal for a school district is to have one clear voice for the entire school district and it is a goal of the APS communication department.

Dahlkemper shared that the district’s size and the rapid pace of transformation presents a problem in regard to speaking in one clear voice. The scope and speed of change has raised concerns among key communicators such as school-based employees and high school student and parent leaders. In interviews with Superintendent Barry, leadership teams and Board members, there was a general comfort level in regard to the transformation pace. School-based employees had concerns about the pace and asked for more advanced communication to help move the district forward and avoid setbacks. Parent leaders expressed concerns about the fast pace of change and the implications

for their students. Both staff and parents were eager to see whether district initiatives were improving student achievement.

Reed reviewed findings from internal and external stakeholder groups that emphasized the need for more active listening; more opportunities for dialogue and reflection in venues such as town hall meetings or school-based and community forums; and more feedback after input is provided during staff, district or community discussion opportunities. Staff members noted disconnects and requested more opportunities for small group forums with leadership.

Dalkemper reviewed how internal and external groups perceived current district messages. Most district staff members were aware of the district's vision and slogan "Picking Up the PACE." Certain phrases in the district's vision did not resonate with either internal or external groups. For example, the vision statement's use of "without remediation" was confusing and raised red flags to some stakeholder groups. It is important to note and be aware of what is believable and credible, and determine core messages to better communicate with internal and external stakeholder groups. Reed added that messaging must be relevant to staff members, who are key communicators in the building.

Dalkemper shared key messages and branding statements from the online survey. She noted communication challenges that exist between the culturally diverse student population and APS teachers. The survey also indicated that staff felt less equipped to talk about pilot schools, standards-based grading and specialty education options like IB or full-day kindergarten.

Schoolhouse Communications shared findings with leadership and presented two purposed branding statements. Option One: "Learning for the Real World," focused on student academics and the changing work force. Option Two: "Where the Heart of Learning and the Real World Meet," focused on the role of APS teachers and student academics. Parent and community focus groups preferred the diversity/academic branding statement; the staff focus group preferred the teaching/academic branding statement. Proposed statements were reviewed by Durán and revised to state "World of Learning Every Day." Durán shared that once the branding statement is selected, we will work with Schoolhouse Communications and a communication plan that integrates VISTA 2010 will be developed and launched. We have also developed an online marketing research page over the past year for school staff in order to help each school market.

Lewis asked how branding statements were identified and developed. Dalkemper shared that we asked focus groups to provide perceptions and strengths of APS. We listened for elements that were unique and separated APS from other districts. The critical piece is making sure everyone is on board with the statement and core messages. If the internal audience is not on board and embracing it, it will not go far. The statement has to be believable, memorable and simple.

Dalkemper read proposed branding statements that were presented to leadership. Option One: "Learning for the Real World" is as follows:

During this time of rapid innovation, demands for highly skilled and educated employees are growing. The global marketplace is changing the face of tomorrow's work force. Our children require an education that emphasizes both academic rigor and 21st century work skills – critical thinking, imagination and collaboration.

Aurora Public Schools (APS) is one of Colorado's largest and most culturally diverse school districts, and our students mirror our growing global economy. A child from Aurora, Colorado, learns alongside a child from Ghana, Russia or Mexico. This culturally rich and diverse learning environment is one of our greatest assets. Learning together builds understanding, acceptance and friendships across ethnic and socioeconomic lines. At APS, we bring the world to our classrooms each day.

We also know every child's learning style is unique. Our teachers work one-on-one with students to build upon their strengths. After all, academic achievement is our top priority – not just for a few, but for every student in every classroom. APS offers a wide choice of innovative, proven learning programs that help parents identify the best pathway for their child's success.

By blending rigorous academics with a vibrantly diverse, culturally enriching classroom experience, we offer APS students more than just a solid academic foundation – they leave with a real-world, real-life understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Option Two: "Where the Heart of Learning and the Real World Meet" is as follows:

A single teacher has the ability to change the course of a child's life. At Aurora Public Schools (APS), our students are taught by some of the most highly committed and highly trained educators in Colorado. That's important because we expect more from our students than ever before. Not only must they excel in subjects such as reading, writing and math, they must develop 21st century work force skills such as creativity and critical thinking.

We take teaching and learning seriously at APS. We invest in ongoing professional development so teachers are well-equipped to help every student in every classroom excel. Our teachers are at the heart of learning. They care and connect with students, which is critical to our students' growth – academically and personally. We know that students who feel supported by their teachers succeed.

We combine excellence in teaching with a choice of innovative, proven programs to improve student achievement. Our goal is to help students uncover their own unique path, and according to statewide test scores, we are getting results.

Excellent teachers. Proven programs. Steady academic gains. These are among the drivers of a successful education. And there's another major asset our schools offer: a culturally rich place to learn. Our students come from Aurora, Colorado, and from Vietnam, Russia, Mexico and other countries around the globe. APS is one of Colorado's largest and most culturally diverse school districts. Our diverse learning environment is one of our greatest strengths and something uniquely our own.

APS' ability to provide a student-centered education in one of Colorado's most culturally diverse urban communities ensures that students not only graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global marketplace, they also leave with a more real-world understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Prince asked about the purpose of the branding statement. Dalkemper shared

that the branding statement is for internal use. Key messages would be developed from the branding statement and included in the district communication plan, and would be the foundation for articles, presentations and Web copies. Talking points would also be developed from the branding statement. Durán added that we would link branding statements in articles and presentations so everyone hears the same type of message. The branding statement should have a life of at least five years.

Barry shared the importance of having a consistent message to promote in order to reach our mission. Dalkemper added that it is important to make the distinction between the mission statement and the branding platform. The branding platform is something unique to APS, simple and memorable, but separates the district from other districts. The vision can help support the branding statement.

Durán shared that the branding statement is a huge point and will shape a lot of our messages. We are in the process of reviewing feedback, item by item, from the communication audit report. One of the main points we heard was that staff wanted to make listening opportunities look different. When we are taking feedback, we need to do a better job of getting back to staff members that provided feedback and explain what we heard and what we are doing. The communication plan will look at those different dimensions.

Lewis voiced concerns and requested feedback on an item in the executive summary regarding current district messages failing to resonate with most audiences. Many focus group members were aware of the district's vision and slogan but messages drew negative responses. At what point do we need to tweak common phrases. Reed replied that this is the tweak and proposed branding statements are direct results of feedback from focus group participants. Cook added that the Board has been very transparent and will continue to review ways to improve it.

Durán shared that communication is never done and is constantly being reviewed. We are doing more and getting better but it does take time.

Cook thanked Dalkemper and Reed for their time and efforts with the presentation. Durán thanked Brenna Isaacs for helping to get teachers involved. She also thanked classified staff, Board members and district leadership for participating in the audit and the tremendous feedback.

DIVISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESEARCH

No Items

DIVISION OF FINANCE

Budget Scenarios

Weeks reviewed budget scenarios and processes in place in preparation of election results and the impact it will have on programs and staff for the remainder of the 2008-09 school year and the 2009-10 school year.

In the best case scenario, we would receive community support for 3A and 3B and our enrollments would increase over projections. In the worst case scenario, we would not receive community support and we would lose a total of 600 students as projected.

If the mill question passes and we receive \$14.7 million, we would be able to maintain current programs and district employees would receive a two percent general salary increase. We would be able to have the fifth block of instruction in June and provide a portion of mill funds to charter schools. If we go over projections and have additional student enrollments in 2009-10, we would be able to address GSI for staff and continue with salary steps. In July, we would be able to expand the truancy program; continue the PBS program; continue the IB program; increase instructional technology in all grade levels; continue with the fifth block of instruction; and address energy fuel.

In the worst case scenario, employees would not receive a two percent salary increase, and we would not be able to do the fifth block of instruction or provide allocations to charter schools. In 2009-10, we would not be able to maintain current programs and phasing for full-day kindergarten would look different. We would not be able to further expand the PBS, IB, pilot school programs or instructional technology at all grade levels. If we do not receive additional funding from student enrollments in 2009-10, there would be significant occurrences including increased class sizes and a reduction of force in support divisions. We would also have a fund balance issue.

If the mill override fails, the bond passes, and student enrollments increase 300 over the 600 student enrollment projection, employees would not receive a two percent salary increase and we would not be able to do the fifth block of instruction or provide allocations to charter schools. We would still need to decrease expenditures somewhat in 2008-09 by increasing class sizes and through a reduction in force in support areas.

Communications plans have been developed for each case scenario. Key messages have been prepared and action plans have been put in place. Action plans have been developed with principals, directors, and division heads. Staffing simulations have been completed for each case scenario and RIF procedures are being finalized. In December, the Board will be presented with the 2008-09 budget for reoption. Election results and student enrollments will be included in the budget. Information will be shared with school administrators on Thursday, October 23.

Lewis asked if the state had ensured the October count. Weeks shared that we are taking the documentation for attendance, registration and schedules of all students to the Colorado Department of Education and ensuring that appropriate documentation is in place. Documentation is not due until November 10; our target is November 5.

DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

No Items

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

No Items

DIVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES

Citizens Bond Oversight Committee Annual Report

Lewis introduced Dick Huwa, RLH Engineering, whose firm was hired as the third

party bond consultant in March 2003. Last year when the Citizens Bond Oversight Committee's report was presented to the Board, we suggested surveying businesses that participated in the 2002 bond program to determine if improvements needed to be made and to use findings for the next bond program. The Citizens Bond Oversight Committee met four times last year mainly to discuss the survey; the last meeting was held in September 2008. Huwa was asked by the Citizens Bond Oversight Committee to prepare a survey for firms that had assisted APS with projects in the 2002 bond program. Survey findings were received, evaluated and prepared by APS.

Huwa shared that the survey was sent to 235 individual firms. A long form was sent to firms that provided services exceeding \$50,000; a short form was sent to firms that provided \$10,000 to \$50,000 worth of services. The results from both surveys were provided to Board members.

We received 37 responses from both surveys, a 16 percent response rate. The overwhelming conclusion was very good to outstanding efforts by APS staff in carrying out activities of the 2002 bond program. This includes construction management and the design department, where the majority of activities took place, as well as APS financial accounting and purchasing staff that supported construction managers and design coordinators.

The committee requested that we tap into firms that had done a significant amount of work. Survey findings indicated that APS handled communications, change orders, decision making, and contract and payment processes very well and did a great job supporting the work of the bond program. One of the firms commented that "all aspects of business with APS were professional, fair and timely. We may not have agreed with every decision, but APS representatives were clear; instructions were complete; and the scope for every project was well put together and easily understood. APS representatives were always available to respond to issues and correct situations." The survey was sent out anonymously and we did not receive any negative comments. One of the committee members shared that this would be a good marketing tool. Some questions were designed to compare APS to other districts and the overall response was that it was a better experience working with APS than any other districts.

Lewis shared that 98 percent of the 2002 bond projects have been completed and 95 percent of bond funds have been spent. The committee recommends that a new bond committee be convened once the bond referendum passes in November. We must do a better job recruiting parents from all sections of the district. The most fun on the committee was spending additional funds and helping make decisions that impacted and benefitted APS kids.

Lewis commended Rod Weeks, Jim Bittle and staff members in both departments. It has been a wonderful opportunity for APS to demonstrate faith to the public that bond funds were spent wisely and exactly how we promised.

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

Non-Licensed Administrative and Professional/Technical Personnel

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

No Items

DIVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES

No Items

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

Roll Call: Barber, Carmany, Cook, Cukale, Edberg, Lewis, Prince #8033

Approved on a vote of 7-0

IV. ACTION ITEMS

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

No Items

DIVISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESEARCH

No Items

DIVISION OF FINANCE

No Items

DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

No Items

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

Instructional Materials Adoption

The Board was presented with a list of proposed instructional materials for adoption at the October 7 Board of Education meeting.

The recommendation is that the Board adopt the basic and supplemental textbooks and instructional materials as presented.

Barber moved and Edberg seconded to adopt the list of proposed instructional materials as presented.

Roll Call: Barber, Carmany, Cook, Cukale, Edberg, Lewis, Prince #8034

Approved on a vote of 7-0

DIVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES

Budget Adjustments to Bond Accounts

Weeks shared that the Board reduced the approved budget for the Hinkley remodel in December 2006. The amount of the recommended reduction turned out to be excessive due to a spreadsheet error. The approved budget for Aurora Frontier also was previously reduced but we subsequently incurred an unanticipated additional cost. The added cost for Crossroads was the result of environmental charges to clean up contaminated soil discovered on the construction site. The added cost for the Columbia project is the result of a negotiated settlement of an equipment failure issue on this project, a cost which is being shared with the designer and contractor. Sufficient funds are still available in the central contingency account to cover these adjustments. Since all projects in the 2002 bond program are now complete, no future needs for contingency funds are anticipated. These adjustments were explained to the Citizens Bond Oversight Committee at their final meeting on September 10. The committee recommended Board approval of these changes.

The recommendation is that the Board approve changes to bond accounts as presented.

Edbeg moved and Prince seconded to approve changes to bond accounts as presented.

Roll Call: Barber, Carmany, Cook, Cukale, Edberg, Lewis, Prince #8035

Approved on a vote of 7-0

Contingent Cancellation of Projects at Aurora Hills

Weeks shared that Aurora Hills is recommended for a \$23.2 million total remodel in the next bond program. Improvements planned under the 2002 bond are included in the budget for the new project. Since the exact scope of the future remodel has not yet been determined, there is a risk that money spent on repairs and improvements to the building prior to the remodel may be wasted. The issue was raised at this time, rather than waiting for the election results, so we could present the matter to the Citizens Bond Oversight Committee before it disbanded. The matter was discussed at the committee's September 10 meeting and the committee concurs with the recommendation being presented. The following projects are recommended for cancellation contingent on voter approval of the 2008 bond referendum. If the referendum is not approved, these projects will remain active, but until the status of the referendum is known, no further work will be done on these projects.

The recommendation is that the Board approve the contingent cancellation of projects at Aurora Hills.

October 21, 2008

Cukale moved and Barber seconded to approve the contingent cancellation of projects at Aurora Hills as presented.

Barber commented that Aurora Hills is in need of improvements. She encouraged the community to vote in support of 3A and 3B so improvements can be made.

Roll Call: Barber, Carmany, Cook, Cukale, Edberg, Lewis, Prince #8036

Approved on a vote of 7-0

IV. CONCLUDING ITEMS

Opportunity for Audience

Correspondence

Next meeting date

The next business meeting of the Board of Education will be held November 11, 2008, at 6:30 p.m. in the Dr. Edward and Mrs. Patricia Lord Boardroom.

Adjournment

The regular meeting of the Board of Education adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

President

ATTEST _____

Secretary