



Do The Right Thing For Kids
dothrightthingforkids.org

KCMSD School Board Report Card

Meeting Date: February 8, 2012

All School Board members were present: West, Richey, Benson, Carroll, Jackson, Kelly, Rea, and Wilson

Note: After four years of observing and evaluating the Kansas City, Missouri School Board, Do the Right Thing for Kids has reluctantly concluded that the probability of the present system recovering full accreditation and providing a high quality education for the students is extremely small. Under current conditions, many more students are fated to receive inferior preparation while a highly dysfunctional system flounders. Therefore, rather than attempting to stimulate improvements by critiquing board performance we are supporting legislation that would turn the administration of the schools over to surrounding accredited districts--several of which have demographic characteristics similar to KCPS. Our Board Watch process is now focusing on keeping the public informed about the school board and administration in this period where accreditation has been withdrawn, enrollment is shrinking and key staff continue to leave.

A couple of things about pending legislation need to be clarified: In spite of rumors being circulated, there is no intention to force students to be bussed to suburban districts. The proposals would, in one way or another, make existing Kansas City schools part of an adjoining district. The only case in which students would be bussed is where the family voluntarily enrolled the student in another district. How this would happen is still being decided by the courts. A second point is the adjoining districts are not typically suburban districts with students dramatically different than ours. Most have some of their land within Kansas City, and most are similar demographically.

Report of the February 8, 2012 Kansas City School Board meeting.

The first meeting of the month is designated a "workshop" in which administrative staff members report to the board on operational and academic issues and projects. The focus of this meeting was "Shaping a Safe and Secure Learning Environment".

Observations by board watchers:

On-going changes in staff appointments and assignments continue. Only two members of the senior staff have been with the district for two years. There is a new interim chief academic officer after the previous one left.

A number of programs are proposed to improve safety and security. We agree that a safe and secure environment can enhance learning *assuming effective instruction and curriculum are in*

place. (We have yet to hear much about educational programs.) It was mentioned that the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools have 22 security officers for 18,000 students while our District requires 88 security guards for less than 16,000 students. We wonder why the discrepancy. Is this symptomatic of a school system in disarray?

In order to bolster accreditation points a "sweep" by truancy officers and other staff resulted in the arrest of a number of truants followed by calls to their parents and delivery of the students back to school. It was indicated in the meeting that most of the students had left again in a few days. We wonder why that was a surprise. As far as we could tell, no programs were developed to keep the students in school.

A member of the audience at the meeting mentioned a concern that is shared by board watch members. The school board conducts its "public" meetings as if they were in private, not in a fishbowl. There is no interaction with the observers; in fact, there is almost no acknowledgement that others are present, certainly no dialogue. People feel isolated from the board.

Other observations about the functioning of the District:

There has been a regrouping of Standards Based Learning students to grade level shuffling teachers, students and peers to prepare for State tests. One teacher reported that she has experienced 12 different changes this year. Teachers are being told to focus on the tests in hopes of reaching an accreditation standard.

The day after the meeting the Human Resources Department notified Head Start teachers that they will not have jobs next year; slots will be filled by persons with associate degrees.

Some \$25,000,000 in consent item expenditures was moved on to the next board meeting agenda for vote/approval. No explanation is given for these items but the public can go on the district website, look at the agenda for the upcoming meeting and find a page for each item. A brief summary of the item is accompanied by a listing of how the item impacts the transition plan and various policies. Since there is no longer a budget and finance committee to dig more deeply into the expenditures, a high level of trust in the administration is required. We hope that the current administration warrants the trust; past staff has not.

View the agenda/minutes of this meeting at: <http://www.boarddocs.com/mo/kanscsd/Board.nsf/Public>