



MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Washington County School District
121 West Tabernacle, St. George, Utah
March 25, 2024
5:15 p.m.

Present: Board President Becky Dunn, Board Member Craig Seegmiller, Board Member LaRene Cox, Board Member Burke Staheli, Board Member Nannette Simmons, Superintendent Richard Holmes, Business Administrator Brent Bills, Assistant Superintendent Nate Esplin, Assistant Superintendent Cheri Stevenson, Executive HR Director Darin Thomas, Executive Director Amy Mitchell, Executive Director Steve Gregoire, Executive Director Craig Hammer, and Communications Director Steven Dunham., Jeremy Cox

Minutes: Executive Secretary Kajsia Boyer

Reverence by Member Cox.

Pledge of Allegiance by Member Staheli.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING – 2024-2025 SCHOOL SPEND PLANS AND SCHOOL FEE SCHEDULE

The Washington County School District will hold a Public Hearing on March 25, 2024 at 5:15 p.m. to receive public comments on the proposed 2024-2025 School Spend Plans and School Fee Schedule.

Brent Bills noted that this is the second hearing for the 2024-2025 School Fee Schedule. He said there has been one major change from the last review of the fee schedule. After receiving public input, meeting with the high school principals, and some of the co-curricular teachers, and had conversations with the Board an additional fee was added for co-curricular activities that could be charged once every three years. For co-curricular activities they have a fee for the regular camps and trips. Now every 3rd year they would have an additional out-of-state trip fee of \$650. Schools will be able to put the fee on their spend plan once every three years. He took this additional fee back and talked with principals to make sure it wouldn't cause problems for some of the lower demographic schools. The principals assured him that they would be able to make things work fine. Craig Seegmiller said the critical part is to make sure it works across the board for all of the schools. Some schools really, really wanted it and can do it while other schools will probably never charge it and they will still carry on a wonderful program without it. At least it is a choice. Brent Bills said some feel they can do it with some fundraising and other things, and they won't put it in as a fee. That is what they would rather do because of the demographics of their school. Becky Dunn said she appreciates that it is an up to amount and schools don't have to charge the full \$650 if their program is only going to cost them \$200 for an out-of-state trip, they can accommodate it to their program. Brent Bills said this would not limit out-of-state trips to once every three years. This limits charging the fee to every three years. Schools could still, as per Board Policy, take a trip once a year per program if they go through and get approval for that but would have to either fundraise for it or use the \$350 yearly trip fee. Becky Dunn asked about travel for curricular clubs. Brent Bills said curricular clubs have different competitions, but students don't have to participate in the competitions to be part of the club. Students may choose to participate in a competition and usually pay the fee for themselves to travel. Students can participate for themselves and represent their school. Becky Dunn asked about schools that hold the club as a class. Brent Bills said he was not aware that they hold them as

a class, and they would fall under co-curricular. Curricular clubs are clubs that the School District has sponsored. A non-curricular club is a club where students come forward and say they want to run a club. That is the difference. Brent Bills said students may take classes that tie in with their club such as accounting, agricultural, foods, or sewing, but the classes are not club classes. Brent Bills said curricular clubs do not fall under school fees. It is not part of the guaranteed educational program we are running as a School District. Becky Dunn suggested we may need to clean that up a little bit. She also asked about extracurricular programs that have students buy shirts or uniforms from another website, so it doesn't run through the School District accounts for logging how much the fees are or for school fee waivers. She feels a little more training need to be done on that again. Brent Bills said if anybody is ever asked to cut a check that is not to the school, they should not do that and let the District know. They should not pay or order from someone else. He has explained this to coaches and principals that they cannot do that and will continue to have conversations and do training on this. Brent Bills said he is also working on the booster club contracts and trying to make them the same across the district. He has already met with the high school principals and will continue talking with them about what the contracts should look like. He will also be running the contract through legal counsel to make sure they meet the arms-length transaction rules, and we have what is needed in them. There are some booster clubs that do not get a check to the school until the end of the year and the check seems smaller than it should be for the events that have happened all year long. They should be paying the school regularly and the school should have the right to be able to audit the books if they are supposed to get a percentage of the revenue to see what was brought in and where everything went. He said the District will make sure those things are included in the contracts moving forward. He feels as we get those things cleaned up it is going to help. Craig Seegmiller said he is hearing more and more about vendor relationships with our high schools that associate specific brands with our high schools and increase costs. Continued training is needed.

Public comments given:

Greg Walker said he has one child in the Desert Hills cone-site and has had four other children who have graduated. He expressed gratitude for the work of the School Board and for everything that's been done and the educational opportunities that have been provided to his kids. He said they have all been involved in the music program and have benefitted from it greatly. He came today to express my gratitude for who have working with the parents and listened to the input on the spend plan and fee schedule that was presented today.

Calla Beykirch, orchestra student, shared her experience on an out-of-state trip a couple of years ago. She said they visited a professional recording studio and were given music and headphones. They practiced as a group for a couple of minutes and recorded for the first time. They got to see their recording put behind a film and she said it was so inspiring to be able to see their work. Since then, she has taken every opportunity to play in orchestras and watch pit orchestras and is considering auditions at Tuacahn in the coming years. She just wanted to say thank you for considering the fee schedule and asked the Board to approve it so other students can have the same opportunities.

Becky Schliesser thanked the Board for all they do. She is a parent of five kids with four in the music programs in the School District. She said it has literally changed their lives and her life for the better. She feels that the proposal looks wonderful and agrees with giving parents the option and letting schools have their own way of doing things.

Craig Seegmiller said it has been a really good process and he feels like we are closer to getting it right. LaRene Cox feels comfortable as it can work for every school. Burke Staheli said he is glad to have a public hearing where everyone said thanks. He said they have tried to listen. He said they were concerned about the cost for parents, but they have listened to parents. The schools know what is in their plan. Becky Dunn expressed appreciations for Brent Bills and his team, Mandi Peck and all the school secretaries who have helped with the process.

BOARD ACTION ITEMS

2024-2025 School Spend Plans and School Fee Schedule – Brent Bills

Board Member Staheli presented a motion to approve the 2024-2025 School Spend Plans and School Fee Schedule as presented. Board Member Simmons seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

WORK SESSION

Enrollment/Program Updates and Plans – Cheri Stevenson and Nate Esplin

Nate Esplin shared proposals for Dual Immersion at Three Falls Elementary. The numbers have been dwindling for the Chinese program. A survey was sent to parent of kindergarten and 1st grade students at Three Falls Elementary. Travis Wilstead said the survey went to parents of 178 students. They received 78 responses back. Questions included the child's grade level and plans for participating next year. There are 29 first grade students who are already signed up. Of those, 21 said they would keep their child in Dual Immersion if it changed to Spanish, four parents said they would like more information, and three said they would withdraw their student if the language were changed. For those who are enrolled to start Chinese in 1st grade next year there were 17 responses. Of those responses, 15 of the parents said they would stay if the language changed, one would like more information, and one would withdraw. There were 32 responses from parents who do not have a child currently enrolled or enrolled for next year. Of those responses 16 were in first grade and 15 would enroll in Spanish and one will not. In kindergarten, 16 responses were received with 14 who would enroll in Spanish and two who would not. The majority of concerns expressed were parents wanting to make sure the program would be supported. Students in the Chinese bridge program will remain. Jennifer Eggleston said this is her third year there. She could see the numbers dwindling and has worked for three years to recruit. The change would help with staffing, but her concern is for keeping the Chinese teachers. She would push to do Spanish in 1st and 2nd grades only. She realizes that 2nd grade students who missed a year may struggle a little. Travis Wilstead suggested filling the program with those enrolled at Three Falls Elementary already including the English students who may want Spanish, then opening it to the students on the waiting list at Hurricane Elementary. It could then be opened to other schools around if there are still vacancies. Travis Wilstead said he does not see Chinese going past the middle school in the Hurricane valley. Jennifer Eggleston said there were a couple of responses that said they would pull their student from Chinese after elementary. Travis Wilstead mentioned that the Chinese teacher has built a great reputation but has been working to get employment out of the area. Becky Dunn said she is concerned that we will have some parents upset in the near future saying we still need to support their student in the Chinese program. Travis Wilstead said no numbers have been given for withdrawing the program. Superintendent Richard Holmes suggested putting a number out then sharing other options for students to continue with Utah Online or enrolling in another Chinese school after 6th grade. Jennifer Eggleston said she can support Chinese for three more years if we can keep the numbers us. Cheri Stevenson said in secondary schools it is difficult as it would not keep a teacher full-time. It would only be two periods. Travis Wilstead said the teacher is currently teaching four periods and then teaches coding. Craig Seegmiller suggested announcing that the program will only be available for three more years. Cheri Stevenson said more clarity would give a picture of what we are doing for families. Jennifer Eggleston would like to see it for three more years in elementary. She said keeping the two-teacher model for Chinese and Spanish would help to relieve a lot of stress. She would need an additional .6 FTE to make that work. The two-class models would keep them in-line with the state. She would just loose one Chinese teacher a year as the program fades out. Travis Wilstead said if more than one Chinese teacher were to leave it would be harder to replace them, but he mentioned there are some options to help. There are currently three Chinese teachers at the school, and it would help to split the classes 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. Travis Wilstead said he did meet with the teachers today. They do not have plans to leave but hope to have help with placement to other schools if the change is made. He said that the intermediate level would be the biggest struggle. The program for 6th and 7th would end a year from now. Cheri Stevenson said we would have to help the teacher if the numbers drop. Travis Wilstead said there are 117 students in Chinese at Hurricane Intermediate. They only lose 35 next year and could increase by 39 for one more year. He said he will talk with the 5th grade parents and give them the option to select another elective at the intermediate school. Becky Dunn said she would like parents to know the options they have for their child to continue and that they will have support. Cheri Stevenson said Snow Canyon and Dixie would both be options to continue. Nate Esplin said it is difficult with Dixie and Snow Canyon as there are

multiple languages feeding in from the elementary schools. The staff reviewed some of the numbers of students in the language programs feeding into the schools. Cheri Stevenson said Chinese and Spanish are doing well in the Dixie cone-site. Crimson Cliffs seems to be dropping. Travis Wilstead share numbers at the intermediate schools. It is hard at the intermediate schools as they pull from several elementary schools. He said the numbers beyond 6th grade are hard to sustain. His suggestion is to find a way to align the languages to specific cone-sites which could help fix a lot of the problems. He mentioned having a bridge program at CT High could be a way to help. They expressed interest in Chinese with a Cyber Security class. However, Cheri Stevenson said she feels it would create some inequity in the pathway programs and the way kids are coming into the CT High. Superintendent Richard Holmes suggested that the only way to have one program at each school would be to go with Spanish. Cheri Stevenson said it is becoming difficult with staffing to have the full-time language teacher. Burke Staheli feels it would be a hard sell to change boundaries for Dual Immersion. Cheri Stevenson said the Chinese program is struggling in all our cone-sites. She feels it might be better to take the funds and put them into a program that can be sustained. Nate Esplin said the Chinese program is not being as strong with enrollment. The upper grades are up but the numbers are going down. We will have more clarity in another six months to see what happens with enrollment. LaRene Cox suggested having just one location for Chinese. Superintendent Richard Holmes suggested watching at Three Falls for the next year to see if it is a pattern to follow. He would be concerned with Chinese in the Pine View cone-site. He suggested that the staff bring numbers to show where students are going and where the students belong. He suggested eliminating the program at Horizon and only keeping it at Bloomington. It was mentioned that Dual Immersion in 6th grade eliminates an elective choice for those students.

Cheri Stevenson shared a possible boundary change consideration for Crimson Cliffs High and Pine View High. She mentioned as they drove the neighborhoods the homes are close together and would split neighborhoods. She looked for natural boundaries. Moving those north of Washington Dam Road would be a natural boundary. She shared the numbers and said that really is the best boundary divider. There are 64 intermediate, 64 middle, and 93 high school students in that area. There are some other nice growth areas coming for Pine View. Fossil Ridge is also seeing growth. She shared that Principal Mees feels it would be a good addition. He would also support dual immersion if the Board would like to move a program there. Moving all of Horizon Elementary would be a significant move. Crimson Cliffs High is staying pretty stable with enrollment. Craig Hammer also mentioned some development between exit 11 and exit 13. Cheri Stevenson said her suggestion would be to make a boundary change north of Washington Dam Road and keep the Dual Immersion at Crimson Cliffs. Currently enrollment at Pine View High is 1124 and enrollment at Crimson Cliffs is 1381. Craig Seegmiller said the split would keep them fairly even. Becky Dunn said the District has tried to keep the school enrollment the same to keep schools in the same region. Superintendent Richard Holmes mentioned discussions on Dual Immersion and suggested down the road to eliminate Chinese at Horizon and have Spanish. That would help to push some of the students back to their boundary. Burke Staheli suggested having a timeline to start the process early fall as a way to help all prepare.

Board Member Seegmiller presented a motion to go into a closed session at 7:03 p.m. Board Member Simmons seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Present: Board President Becky Dunn, Board Member Craig Seegmiller, Board Member LaRene Cox, Board Member Burke Staheli, Board Member Nannette Simmons, Superintendent Richard Holmes, Business Administrator Brent Bills, Assistant Superintendent Nate Esplin, Assistant Superintendent Cheri Stevenson, Executive HR Director Darin Thomas, Executive Director Craig Hammer, Technology Director Jeremy Cox, and Executive Secretary Kajsia Boyer.

CLOSED SESSION

Personnel and Property Items

Board Member Simmons presented a motion to go out of the closed session at 7:26 p.m. Board Member Cox seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

The Board reviewed graduation assignments and NSBA plans.

Board Member Cox presented a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 p.m. Board Member Staheli seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT