

Windham School District
Board of Trustees
261st Meeting



Minutes

December 9, 2010
Austin, Texas

WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Crowne Plaza Hotel – Salon E
6121 North IH-35
Austin, Texas 78752**

**December 9, 2010
1:00 – 1:30 PM**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call to Order

Convene Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board)

I. Regular Session

A. Recognitions

B. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Consent Items

1. Minutes of the October 14, 2010, WSD Board Meeting
2. Appraisers for the 2010-2011 School Year
3. Personal Property Donations
4. Excused Absences

C. Presentation on School Year 2009-2010 Accountability Results

D. Superintendent's Report – Meeting with Workforce Development Boards

E. Report from the Chairman, WSD Board

1. Chairman's Fitness Challenge
2. Student Participation and Statistics from Annual Performance Review

Adjourn WSD Board

The WSD Board may discuss and/or take action on any of the items posted on this meeting agenda. The WSD Board may also convene into Executive Session on any of these matters when attorney-client privilege is warranted.

**MINUTES OF THE WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

261st MEETING

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Thursday, December 9, 2010, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Oliver Bell, Chairman
Tom Mechler, Vice Chairman
Leopoldo (Leo) Vasquez, III, Secretary
Eric Gambrell
Pastor C.L. Jackson
Janice Harris Lord
Terrell McCombs
J. David Nelson
Carmen Villanueva-Hiles

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Debbie Roberts, Superintendent
Marjie Haynes
Don Lawrence
Sandra Nash
Gail Swik

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Brad Livingston
Bryan Collier
Melinda Bozarth

CONVENED

Oliver Bell, Chairman, called the meeting of the Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Thursday, December 9, 2010, at 1:07 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the *Open Meetings Act*. During the regular session, the board conducted business from the agenda posted in the Texas Register. A quorum was present and the 261st meeting of the board was declared open.

The Chairman reported the Board was committed to providing the opportunity for public presentations on topics posted on the meeting agenda, as well as public comment on issues within its jurisdiction as provided in Rule 300.1. Persons interested in providing presentations at the meeting were required to complete a registration card and submit it at least ten minutes prior to the meeting's posted start time. As no cards were received prior to the required deadline, the Board would not hear public presentations on posted agenda topics.

RECOGNITIONS

Ms. Roberts introduced Sandra Nash, the North Texas Regional Administrator. Ms. Nash has been with WSD more than eleven years. She was hired as a counselor at the Michael Unit in January 1999, and was promoted to principal in May 2002. She served as a principal at various units, including Duncan, Boyd, Beto and Wynne, until she was promoted to administrator for Continuing Education in December 2009. Ms. Nash assumed her new position in July 2010, but due to her transition, this was the first opportunity for her to be introduced to the Board. Ms. Nash has wasted no time in settling into her position and WSD has already benefited from her experience on many different units.

Ms. Roberts also recognized Gail Swik, WSD's Administrator for Counseling, Testing and Records. During the annual statewide GED In-Service Training held in Austin this September, Ms. Swik was named the recipient of the Cathy Erwin Award. The award is named in honor of Cathy Erwin, who served as the state's chief GED examiner for many years. The award is given to an outstanding chief examiner who exemplifies the attributes that Cathy Erwin possessed. Those include outstanding work ethics, high moral standards, and a reputation for going above and beyond what is expected. Paris Ealy, the current Chief GED examiner for the State of Texas, and Julie Hearne, from the University of Texas Scoring Center were in attendance for the recognition.

Chairman Bell thanked Ms. Swik for her dedication to WSD, adding that the Board was very proud of the Windham GED program.

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING CONSENT ITEMS

Chairman Bell called the Board's attention to the Consent Items on the agenda which consisted of the minutes of the October 14, 2010, meeting, appraisers for the 2010-2011 school year, personal property donations, and excused absences.

Chairman Bell asked if there were any comments, objections, or amendments to the Consent Items. Noting there were none, he stated the Consent Items were approved as submitted.

PRESENTATION ON SCHOOL YEAR 2009-2010 ACCOUNTABILITY RESULTS

Don Lawrence, Director of Operational Support, presented the annual campus-based accountability results, which are based on student performance over the past year. For these accountability reviews, a district Accountability Committee is established. Mr. Lawrence explained how the committee is selected and its responsibilities.

From 2004 until 2009, the formal rankings for these reviews were based primarily on academic scores. Beginning in school year 2009-2010, campuses were ranked not only on academic scores but vocational achievement or Career and Technology Education (CTE) standards. Plans are underway to also include Life Skills programs in the future.

Marjie Haynes, Director of Instruction, explained the review of academic programs included Literacy I, II and III, English as a Second Language (ESL), and Special Education. Progress in these program areas was defined as a certain incremental gain.

In the past, WSD has noticed differences between students at Institutional Division facilities versus at State Jails, Substance Abuse Facilities, and Transfer Facilities. The differences are related to factors like age and the length of time that has elapsed since their most recent school experience. Students at State Jails, Substance Abuse Facilities, and Transfer Facilities have demonstrated they are capable of making more progress than students at prison facilities. As a result, higher accountability standards are set for students at these types of facilities.

Ms. Haynes explained the standards that are used to determine progress in literacy programs. These standards are reviewed each year and are raised when appropriate. Data for ESL and Special Education programs is collected and reported but not included in the total average making progress. WSD's accountability system allows those programs to help, but not hurt, the unit's accountability rating. If there is a 3% increase from one year to the next in the percent of ESL or Special Education students making progress, then a point is added to the unit's total average making progress.

Accountability data is readily available to each campus through the WSD Intranet. The data is updated after each testing session and each campus is given a report card. A sample report card was displayed and reviewed (slide 12).

Schools receive an academic rating each year based on the Total Average Making Progress. To be considered acceptable, 57 to 66% of the students must demonstrate progress in all three areas – reading, math, and language. To be considered recognized, 67 to 76% must demonstrate progress, and to be exemplary, 77% or more of the students must demonstrate progress in all three areas. During the 2009-10 school year, three WSD campuses rated exemplary, 29 recognized, 53 acceptable, and seven had rated low performing.

Ms. Haynes reported the Accountability Committee is in the process of developing accountability measures for the life skills programs. The committee is planning to use the Criminal Sentiments Scale as an accountability measure for the Cognitive Intervention program, comparing scores on a pre-test to scores on a post-test. WSD is also in the process of developing pre/post tests for the CHANGES, Perspectives and Solutions, and Parenting programs.

The Career and Technical Education program campus ratings for 2009-2010 were based on the percent of students earning completion certificates. To earn a completion certificate, a student must have:

- a test average of at least 70%;
- completed at least 70% of the skills covered in the course;
- on a scale of 1 to 4, earned an average module competency rating of at least 2.7; and
- completed at least 450 hours of a 600-hour course or 270 hours of a 300-hour course.

Schools received a separate rating for their CTE program. To be considered acceptable, a school must have demonstrated a completion rate of at least 70%. To be recognized, the completion rate must be at least 80%, and to be exemplary, the completion rate must be at least 90%. For the 2009-2010 school year, eight campuses received an exemplary rating, 25 campuses were

recognized, 19 campuses were acceptable, and 14 received an unacceptable rating. Attention is being paid to the campuses that received an unacceptable rating.

In the future, the Accountability Committee has a goal to add a quality component to ratings for the CTE programs. They are planning to average four indicators - modular test or grade average, average percentage of skills completed, average modular competency rating, and the scores on an End of Course exam, to determine quality.

As part of WSD's continuous program improvement efforts, End of Course exams were implemented this past school year. Plans are underway to collect and analyze the data from those exams to determine a baseline from which to base future decisions.

WSD has tried to develop an accountability system with standards and benchmarks that can be adjusted as the need arises. On the academic side, the bar has been raised in terms of the standards and benchmarks to strive for improved performance. The accountability system helps campuses identify areas for improvement. It also helps the district identify campuses in need of assistance so that they can focus technical assistance and staff development efforts appropriately.

Tom Mechler asked if Windham's accountability system is similar to the public school accountability system. Ms. Haynes responded that it is very similar.

Mr. Mechler inquired on what plan of action will be taken for the unacceptable campuses. Ms. Haynes noted the first thing would be to determine why the campuses did not have higher test averages or certificate completions. Many times offenders are transferred before they complete the program. TDCJ works very closely with WSD to try not to transfer offenders if they are enrolled in a vocational program, but sometimes they get a parole vote and need a particular treatment program to meet their targeted parole date. Sometimes offenders get in trouble and get locked up and don't complete the class. There are many factors that can affect a student's performance. WSD looks at each campus on an individual basis to see what can be done to improve ratings.

Mr. Mechler asked how extended lockdowns effect completions. Ms. Haynes responded that the lockdowns do not effect completions because WSD programs are operated continuously and are run on an open-entry open-exit concept. New offenders can come into the programs at any time.

Terrell McCombs asked if this system of accountability had been in place since WSD began and, if it was a Texas Education Agency (TEA) requirement. Ms. Haynes advised it began in the mid-1990s and it was not a TEA requirement. She added that it was developed so that WSD could have a system to evaluate program performance and be able to focus on areas that need improvement. Ms. Roberts added that every year each campus completes a campus improvement plan and the accountability results are taken into consideration when the campuses are formulating those plans for the coming year.

Mr. Mechler asked if we have offender tutors in the WSD programs. Ms. Haynes responded that Windham does allow offender tutors. She added that they learn well from each other.

Mr. Bell stated that he was glad the accountability system has been expanded to include CTE programs. He commented that maybe a unit should not be penalized if a student was transferred to another facility before completing a program. Ms. Haynes noted WSD was looking at that. Mr. Vasquez suggested putting this information on the internet to show people how well Windham is performing. Ms. Roberts acknowledged the suggestion and expressed appreciation to her staff for their efforts in this area.

Attachment – PowerPoint Presentation

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT - MEETING WITH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS

This past September, at the invitation of Cheryl Fuller, Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Investment Council, Ms. Roberts met with the Directors of the Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston Workforce Boards to discuss the types of programs that Windham provides to offenders in order to make them more employable. The group also talked about the information that WSD is sending the Texas Workforce Commission electronically and how that information is shared with the local workforce boards across the state to assist them with job placement. This information includes offender academic participation and achievements, as well as vocational completion and industry certification. Ms. Roberts commented this was the first time she was actually able to view that information on a computer as it is displayed at the local workforce boards. In reviewing, she noticed that information on the offender’s TDCJ work history was not included; the directors indicated that work history would be beneficial especially when it relates to the vocational training the offenders receive while incarcerated. The group discussed ways to strengthen their ties and improve results. From the WSD perspective, Ms. Roberts advised the directors that continued feedback about what was working in the field would be a great benefit to improving the district’s operations.

As a result of that meeting, a second session was held in October between the workforce staff who work with offenders after release and WSD staff who are involved in the provision of vocational programs. Sitting across the table from workforce staff that actually assist offenders in finding employment, WSD staff took full advantage of the opportunity to ask them questions. What they heard confirmed what was found in WSD’s annual vocational effectiveness study - vocational completion and industry certification do improve an offender’s ability to find a job and earn more money. The workforce staff also indicated that Windham is providing training in areas in which offenders can find employment, although there were some differences identified among the workforce boards. For example, staff from one of the boards indicated that truck driving was not an area where there was a high employment demand, while staff from the other two workforce boards indicated that they had no problems in finding employment for truck drivers. Workforce staff also provided some suggestions as to additional training areas. It was a very productive meeting and they all agreed that continued communication and collaboration are essential in meeting the needs of the releasing offender population as well as local workforce demands.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WSD BOARD

Chairman’s Fitness Challenge

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WSD BOARD

Chairman's Fitness Challenge

Chairman Bell gave an update on the first quarter of the Chairman's Fitness Challenge entitled "Training Camp and Pre-Season Games" and stated that it was a great success. "Division 7" was designated to the Windham School District. During the six-week challenge, participating employees earned more than 2,011 points for their team. This is outstanding participation for the district, and he thanked everyone that joined.

Student Participation and Statistics from Annual Performance Review

Chairman Bell stated that statistics are in for the 2009-2010 WSD Annual Performance Review. Student participation in educational programs remains strong. Of particular interest, significant growth was made in the number of GED and industry certifications earned. During the school year, 5,287 GEDs were issued to students, up from 4,893 in 2008-2009. Of the actual test takers, 84% earned their GED certification. This is up from 79% for the prior year. There were 4,532 industry certificates awarded during the 2009-2010 school year. That is an increase of 43% from 2008-2009. An increase was also seen in the continuing education area, with close to 454 additional students participating in the college two-year academic program.

Chairman Bell concluded noting these increases are tremendous to see as education is a key component in helping ex-offenders succeed by obtaining employment upon release.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Bell adjourned the 261st meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees at 1:49 p.m.

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Chairman

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Secretary

**Signature on File*

Note: Referenced attachment is available upon request from the Office of Record.