

SPECIAL MEETING - JANUARY 31, 2000

The School Board of Okaloosa County met in Special Session on January 31, 2000, in the Fort Walton Beach Administration Building, 120 Lowery Place, SE.

PRESENT: Rodney Walker, Chairman
Cindy Frakes, Vice-Chairman
Don Gaetz
Howard Hill
Lloyd Taylor

Walter Gordon, Superintendent
C. Jeffrey McInnis, Esq., Attorney to the Board

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. for the purpose of considering recommendations regarding the establishment of School-Within-A-School Programs at Edwins, Northwood and Shalimar Elementary Schools.

Susan Lowery stated that the three schools were requesting the Board approve and designate a School-Within-A-School program at each of the schools. This designation will allow the District to apply to the Florida Department of Education for a master school identification number for each program. The School-Within-A-School programs will then be eligible to submit an application for conversion to charter school status. The deadline for submitting charter applications is February 1. Approval of the School-Within-A-School designation does not guarantee approval of the charter application.

Janeane Williams explained the process by which the Northwood Elementary School Program of Discovery was designed. She stated that the mission of the program is to provide a strong, systematic program of instruction that focuses on young children's natural abilities to perceive, create, and appreciate the fine arts that will enable them to develop a positive attitude and a lifelong interest in learning. The program will target a heterogeneous grouping of approximately seventy students in grades K-2. Donna Holloway followed up with explanation of the academic design, key objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment methods. (Exhibit 00-65)

Board members discussed the expectations of the schools that additional funding will be received through the charter school process. As calculated by the schools, they would receive their regular school funding which includes a small school supplement and receive funding for the charter school at the regular FTE rate. The additional funding would have to come from the District's Fund Balance or be taken from the other schools. The decision to be made by Board, if the proposals are approved, is whether to take the additional funding from other schools, or from the reserve funds, or to not provide any additional funding. At this time the only available new dollars would be from the Charter School Start-up Grant.

Mrs. Williams indicated that she could operate the instructional portion of the program without additional funding but would not be able to provide the fine arts portion of the program.

In response to Mr. Walker's question, Mrs. Williams stated that she would not be recruiting students for the program from other attendance zone but would accept zoning waivers under the established guidelines.

Janice Gordon presented the proposal for the Shalimar Academy for Accelerated Students, a high ability grouping program for students in grades K-2, one class per grade level. She outlined the mission of the program, the targeted student population, and the educational program. (Exhibit 00-66)

Mr. Taylor asked if this would be a K-2 program only with no intent to expand. Mrs. Gordon responded that it would be K-2 this next year, but expansion will be considered.

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However, expansion will be carefully considered because when you pull your high achieving students out of the mainstream of the school, it will impact the school's grade.

Responding to Mr. Taylor's inquiry, Mrs. Gordon stated that she would not be soliciting students from other schools but would take zoning waivers as usual.

Mrs. Gordon addressed questions from Mrs. Frakes and Mr. Gaetz regarding the use of and funding for student interns and instructional aides in the regular classroom and the ability based classrooms.

Mr. Gaetz asked Mr. McInnis to address the issue of how the charter school status will effect teachers. Mr. McInnis stated that the statute provides two paths. In regard to a new or start-up charter school, there is flexibility at the charter holder's level to determine if their employees will be public or private employees. In the conversion setting, the statute says that employees of a conversion school shall remain public employees for all purposes unless those employees choose not to be.

For clarification, Mr. Gaetz stated the ability based grouping could happen without any extra cost. The portion of the program that would require additional funding would be some on-going salaries if classroom aides were added, on-going staff development costs, and paying any contracted personnel. Mrs. Gordon agreed.

Mr. Gaetz asked what part of the program could not be done if the Board did not approve the proposal. Mrs. Gordon stated that the grouping could take place with Board approval. However, the internship program, the parent contract, and a number of statutes that are not as applicable to charter schools could be obstacles to implementation of the program.

Mr. Gaetz asked Mr. McInnis if there would be any legal barrier to a special program being established at a school and the principal asking parents to agree to the conditions of that program for their child to participate. Mr. McInnis responded that it would be permissible with the approval of the Board.

As to the statutes referenced, those addressing the Florida School Code, Mr. Gaetz stated that nothing presented in the proposal was prohibited by the Florida School Code. And, there is a process for requesting the Department of Education grant waivers from certain aspects of the Florida School Code to allow school innovation.

Mr. Walker expressed concern that this proposal could have a negative impact on the gifted program. In particular, it could pull students out of the Learning Center as well as draw students from other schools. He also stated concerns regarding the financial impact because additional funds will be required for recurring expenses. Additionally, if the program converts to charter school status, it could result in reduction of the small school supplement and FTE funding to Shalimar the next year.

The Chairman recognized Patricia Sasser, parent of a Shalimar Elementary School student, who spoke in support of the proposed high ability grouping proposal.

The Chairman recessed the meeting at 10:50 a.m. and reconvened at 11:00 a.m.; all members present as before.

Guyla Hendricks presented the Edwins Enhancement Program proposal founded on the Theory of Multiple Intelligences. The program will serve students in grades 2-5, one class per grade level. Mrs. Hendricks outlined the mission of the program, the program components, and the targeted student population. (Exhibit 00-67)

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Mrs. Hendricks responded to questions from Mr. Hill regarding the enforcement of the parent contract, performance based grouping combined with age sensitive grouping, integrated curriculum, and the expected length of time to show program success.

Addressing the funding issues, Mrs. Hendricks stated that the proposal could be implemented without additional funding with the exception of the school-to-work component and the accelerated projects. However, the only additional funding being relying upon for implementation of the program is the charter school start-up grant.

Mr. Gaetz asked if there would be any on-going expenses that would not be paid for by the initial start-up grant. Mrs. Hendricks responded that she does not expect there to be any recurring expenses that could not be covered by the regular FTE component.

The Chairman recognized those individuals requesting to address the School-Within-A-School proposals: John Jinks, Jean Hood, Gwen Hood, and Mike Foxworthy.

Board members stated support of the educational programs proposed by each of the schools; however, concern was expressed regarding the effect of the Shalimar proposal on the gifted program. Concern was also stated regarding the financial impact on the District and the lack of time and information to debate the issues and make an informed decision.

Mr. McInnis addressed questions regarding the relationship between approval of School-Within-A-School designation and the application for charter school status.

Motion was made by Mr. Gaetz to approve the proposal by Edwins Elementary School for School-Within-A-School designation based upon representation made by Mrs. Hendricks that there will be no financial demands made on the School District other than funding which is presently provided to Edwins.

Mr. Hill stated that he would seconded the motion with the understanding that the small school supplement and the FTE funding provided to Edwins this year may not be the same next year. Mr. Gaetz stated that his motion was offered with that understanding. Mrs. Hendricks affirmed her understanding of the funding provisions.

The motion carried unanimously.

Motion was made by Mr. Gaetz that the Board approve the use of ability based classroom designation as presented by Mrs. Gordon; that the Board approve the use of a contract between parents and students to voluntarily participate in the program as presented; that the Board requests that this program as presented by Mrs. Gordon be integrated into the School Improvement Plan; and that the Board expresses its sentiment that it will look favorably and will support waivers of Chapters 230 and 239 of Florida Statute to effectuate all aspects of this program as described. And further, the Board denies the School-Within-A-School designation for the Shalimar Elementary proposal on the basis of uncertainty of funding sources for recurring expenses. Mr. Hill seconded the motion for discussion.

Discussion followed regarding recurring expenses, the financial impact on the school and the district, and the effect on the Learning Center and other schools. Discussion resulted in Mr. Hill withdrawing his second. The motion was then seconded by Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Hill offered a substitute motion to approve the proposal by Shalimar Elementary School for School-Within-A-School designation with the understanding that there will be no financial demands made on the School District other than funding which is presently provided to Shalimar and that the program not be expanded beyond second grade until further information is received to determine the effect the program will have on other

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schools. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Frakes and failed 2-3, Mr. Walker, Mr. Gaetz, and Mr. Taylor dissenting.

The original motion offered by Mr. Gaetz carried 3-2, Mr. Hill and Mrs. Frakes dissenting.

Motion was made by Mr. Gaetz that the Board approve Northwood moving forward with all aspects of the proposal that can be accomplished within the current available resources but deny the School-Within-A-School designation at this time. The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Hill offered a substitute motion to approve the proposal by Northwood Elementary School for School-Within-A-School designation with the understanding that there will be no financial demands made on the School District other than funding which is presently provided to Northwood Elementary. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Frakes and carried 3-2, Mr. Gaetz and Mr. Taylor opposed.

There being no further business to come before the Board, and upon motion being duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Teresa Epperson, Recorder

WALTER C. GORDON
SUPERINTENDENT AND
EX-OFFICIO SECRETARY

RODNEY WALKER
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD