

**DES MOINES PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPECIAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
901 WALNUT STREET
MINUTES
APRIL 29, 2013**

The Board of Directors met in a special open session on Monday, April 29, 2013, Dick Murphy presiding.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chair Dick Murphy.

Present: Boesen, Caldwell-Johnson, Elsbernd, Howard, Murphy, Sweeney
Absent: Jongewaard

Minutes

The superintendent's recommendation to deny the list of open enrollments presented to the board as approving these requests would have a negative impact on the district's diversity plan which has been approved by the Iowa Department of Education was moved by Ms. Elsbernd and seconded by Mr. Howard.

Mr. Murphy stated the board members have received the written requests from the parents to appeal their open enrollment denial. Since the requests contain confidential information, the board will not bring up that information.

Speakers:

1. Ardis Gardner, 3910 East Des Moines St.
2. Todd Copley, 6800 SE 30th St.
3. Sherri Hall, address not provided
4. Andrew Brunk, 2101 Beaver Ave.
5. Pat & Bob Gaston, address not provided
6. Kelley Greenlee, 10919 Southwood Dr.
7. Stephanie Mamuya, 1628 ½ 63rd St.
8. Sandra Dunlap, 1122 18th St.
9. Tim Crowder, 1512 Alpha Ave.
10. Linda Edwards, 3423 SE 35th St.
11. Erica Miller, 5076 Parkridge Ave.
12. Barbara Parsons, 2922 Des Moines St.
13. Janet Madden, address not provided
14. Janice Hibbeler, address not provided

Mr. Murphy stated the diversity plan was approved by the board and by the state. It was reaffirmed by the current board during a review in October. In November, the board approved strengthening it by having the parameters that apply to out-of-district open enrollment requests also apply to in-district requests for transfers. The cases have been reviewed by staff. Caution was expressed in going through the appeal cases individually as all have been presented to the board.

Ms. Caldwell-Johnson stated often the decisions made end up being a hardship on the families for a variety of reasons, many of which have been articulated by the speakers. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of latitude to change the recommendation made because of the way state law is written. We do have the ability at some point to reevaluate the diversity plan. When it was reviewed last October, she suggested that we really need to evaluate it based on how we define a minority student, which right now is predicated only on one factor and that is free and reduced lunch. When we originally adopted that, she was concerned that having one factor to determine what a minority is or what constitutes a minority student probably flies in the face of having a variety of other factors that we could use to evaluate it. While she's going to support the recommendation tonight, she's certainly going to suggest that we revisit our diversity plan and also how we define a minority student, which may or may not impact the decisions that we have to make tonight, but certainly could give us another lens through which to view how we impact our open enrollment and other factors that we have to consider.

Ms. Boesen stated the point is that there is a policy and by the time appeals get to the board, they've had the review process. We actually strengthened the one internally, and people are still not familiar with what the policy really is and what is meant by basing decisions on free and reduced lunch criteria. There always had been criteria and that's the bigger conversation that the board needs to have. The people who have done the research are the closest to it to make the final decision.

Mr. Howard stated that as with many things, we are limited in what we can do by the state and others, and this is one of those cases. If we look at the criteria for the open enrollment out, there is nothing we can do here because of what's in place and the constraints there are. The parties do have the right to go to district court. As a whole, maybe we need to look at our criteria for review. We are limited on a lot of things we can do by others that we have no control over.

Mr. Sweeney stated that the superintendent and administration have policy and he does appreciate that, but thinks there's a difference between out-of-district enrollment and in-district, and we need to address both of them as his colleagues have said. In the out-of-district enrollment and looking at the page where it talks about adversely affects the district if they leave, he doesn't think that a half a percent at this time for these families will adversely affect the district. It will give us time to look at it again down the road and we can make adjustments. We're looking at these families, right this second. We can do something that's for these families that will help them. Even though the administration and staff have followed policy—I appreciate that—but as a board, we can do something that will help these families right now. I feel strongly that we should do that. A half a percent will not adversely affect the 32,000 students that presently attend Des Moines Public Schools.

Ms. Elsbernd expressed concern on how that would impact in-district enrollment. We have a policy for open enrollment and she's not sure about picking and choosing if we did go that route.

Mr. Murphy believes they're supposed to be hand-in-hand. He's going to let his own biases play a role in this as well, but one of our roles as school board members is we've been elected to ensure that the Des Moines school district remains a strong and viable school district. Mr. Sweeney says less than one-half of one percent, but actually there were 300 people that asked for open enrollment. If we allow it if you appeal, that would probably be an arbitrary way of making a decision. His personal opinion is that being responsible for the strength of the Des Moines Public Schools, we have an obligation to our taxpayers. Our taxpayers are the ones that pay the bill, not the parents. Now parents are taxpayers, granted that, but the people that are paying your way through school is the whole community of taxpayers. They pay it through their property taxes and they pay it through their income tax. I don't think very many of them want people leaving the school district, which strengthens the school district they are going to; thus weakening our school district. We would be encouraging the Des Moines school district to become a low-income, poverty school district without the resources to educate the kids that we have. Our enrollment is going up, while our requests for out-of-district transfers are going down slightly. Maintain a well-balanced school district is the purpose of our open enrollment policy. Otherwise, our district may turn out to be a school district with no resources, no place that teachers want to teach, no place that people want to work, and no place that anybody wants to live. So, with that, I'm going to support this; but, I would agree with Ms. Caldwell-Johnson—we haven't done our due diligence. But I don't think this would make any difference to the people here. If we do include criteria other than free and reduced lunch, transfers may become even more restrictive. With free and reduced lunch, we just have one criterion—the purpose being to keep a balance. If our district has a 70% free-and-reduced-lunch rate, then we don't want our buildings to go over 68% of our kids being on free and reduced lunch and we don't want any of our buildings under 58% of our students being on free and reduced lunch. We're trying to maintain a balance of all our buildings and that's the purpose of this diversity plan. The Supreme Court said you can't use race as the only criteria. They didn't say that you can't use it, but they did say you could use socioeconomic status as defined by free and reduced lunch. In my role as a person who's been chosen by the citizens of Des Moines to ensure that we have a strong and viable school district, I'm going to vote to support the superintendent's recommendation.

The chair called for the vote:

Ayes: Boesen, Caldwell-Johnson, Howard, Murphy, Elsbernd

Nays: Sweeney

Motion approved 5-1.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Subject: OUT-OF-DISTRICT OPEN ENROLLMENT APPEALS

For: ACTION

Contact: Eleanor Shirley

(eleanor.shirley@dmschools.org/242-7707)

Attachment: None

Issue: Due to the district's diversity plan, some out-of-district open enrollments have been denied.

Superintendent's Recommendation: The superintendent recommends the board deny the list of open enrollments as approving these open enrollment requests would have a negative impact on the district's diversity plan, a plan which has been approved by the Iowa Department of Education.

Presenters: None.

Background: Between July 1 and March 1, the district accepts open enrollment applications from parents of students who want to enroll their students in another district. These applications are scrutinized, and a determination is made based on whether granting the request will be in conflict with the district's diversity plan.

Taylor & Aaron Losee	7 th & 3 rd Saydel
Reid Hicks	9 th -Ankeny
Chloe Copley	9 th -WDM
Ella Rieke	OK-Saydel
Andrew Crowder	OK-PCM
Simon Hibbeler	O9-CAM
Gage Miller	09-SE Polk
Jadyn Greenlee	OK-Carlisle
Madison Gilliam	09-Urbandale
Ivan & Vince Mamuya	Both OK-Urbandale
Alec Vannavong	OK-Carlisle
A'Taurea Dunlap	02-WDM
Sterling & Avery Brunk	08-03 Johnston
Jayden Bentley	OK-Ankeny
Tavien Gardner	09-Urbandale
Emma Edwards	10-Carlisle
Josh Hall	06 Johnston