

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Hawthorn Community Consolidated School District Number 73, Lake County, Illinois, held in the Conference Room at 841 West End Court at 7:30PM on the 14th day of January 2008.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Tim Shanahan, President, at 7:30PM. Those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Debbie Limer called the roll, with the following members of the Board of Education answering present: Jeff Bard, Michelle Comitor, Lisa Jay, John Sonnenberg, Donna Gaidamak, and Tim Shanahan.

Staff Presentations:

Tim Shanahan told the audience that he wanted to change the order of the meeting. The first thing will be a letter from Dr. Yomtoob since he could not attend the meeting. Next on the agenda will be the presentation on report card and homework follow up. Public comment will follow the presentation. Tim Shanahan read Dr. Yomtoob's letter outlining his support of Dr. Zook and Hawthorn's efforts to create a new, useful, and consistent set of practices regarding homework, assessment, and report cards.

Donna Gaidamak introduced Tim Shanahan and Dr. Zook and their responses to the questions from the last Board meeting. Dr. Zook reported that we continue to implement the new report card with some adjustments Tim Shanahan read the first question in the presentation from three parents at the last meeting. They wanted to know if the Board policy regarding the homework can be revised to count as part of the academic grade. Tim Shanahan's answer was "yes." There is a process for changes. Dr. Zook answered the next question regarding minimal representation from middle school teachers on the report card committee. She explained that committee participation is voluntary. At the beginning of the process there was a better balance, but because of retirement and other reasons teachers dropped out. We look to get feedback from everyone in a variety of ways. Three teachers from Middle School North will be added to the committee in February. Dr. Zook addressed the next question regarding inconsistencies among school buildings. She explained that having a common report card between buildings has been a goal since the beginning of the work for the standards-based report card in 2005. Staff development is ongoing. That will improve consistency. Staff development will also work to provide appropriate homework with a clear purpose.

Dr. Zook answered a question regarding the number of teachers on the report card committee commenting on how homework would count in the academic grade and how it would affect student achievement. Dr. Zook said first concerns were voiced at Back to School Night and at fall conferences. That feedback is being considered. The original plan was to eliminate grades from all student report cards, but the committee chose to keep letter grades at the middle school level. Those grades will be separated from the progress on standards and work habits. After one trimester of using the new grading practices, there is no decline in student achievement. Audience member Steve Limer commented that he is a parent who served on the report card committee and brought up his concerns with the homework change at a meeting a year ago and that he did not agree with removing homework from the academic grade calculation.

Dr. Zook commented that the fifth question involved students at Middle School South not being able to take books home to study because of an insufficient number of textbooks. She responded that there is no excuse for this. Teachers have always been provided with necessary resources for their classrooms. Every student should have the resources he or she needs to be successful in the classroom. She stated that if this situation ever occurs a parent should inform the principal at that school immediately. The next question was about whether or not the Board approved the use of this new report card, the elimination of homework as a part of the grade calculation and why the elimination of the homework grading component was made without concurrence of the parents on the committee. Dr. Zook responded that the Board does not have to approve the use of the new report card. Even though parent and community input is valued and sought, the final decision in educational matters is made by the administration and teaching staff.

The next question was whether or not the implementation plan was well thought out due to the training up until the report cards were issued, the direction to teachers was perceived to be inconsistent, and there was no clear understanding of how to grade homework and projects. Dr. Zook said the original timetable was pushed back due to concern by members of the report card grade team. The plan was revised after training sessions with Dr. Guskey, an expert in the field with 25 years of experience. She reported that the plan was revised again after feedback on the first draft of the report card. To allow for more time, the new report card is being used with Kindergarten, third and sixth grades this year rather than the entire student population. On November 1, 2006 all teachers attended a two-hour training meeting with Dr. Guskey. Parents were invited to attend a meeting with Dr. Guskey that evening. The report card grade team has met at least once a quarter to work on the report card and get feedback from teachers. Training sessions were provided to the teachers on how to complete the new report card. The teachers at the elementary schools are ahead of schedule with using computers to complete the report cards. We will continue to have teacher training and feedback. She added that the report card team will meet again on February 5th to continue work on new report cards for grades 1, 4, and 7.

There was a recent meeting for all sixth grade teachers to answer questions and address concerns regarding homework and grades. There will be another meeting next month. Dr. Zook told the parents that we will continue to have discussions with the high schools.

The next question pertained to inconsistencies in the District, specifically why flexible grouping is left up to individual grade levels in some of the buildings and why some buildings use text books and others do not. Dr. Zook explained that seven years ago the District moved away from the six-year curriculum evaluation cycle. In that seven-year period we have aligned our curriculum, assessment, and instruction practices to State standards and that curriculum assessment is ongoing. All teachers have been trained to think about student learning and the best ways to meet their needs. Flexible grouping is only one way of differentiation. Teachers must follow a set curriculum, but have autonomy in lesson and unit planning. The target has been set. Teachers can get their students to hit the target in a variety of ways. Dr. Zook commented that there is no one best program. Our teachers use data and share the achievement results they are getting with their students. As a parent in the audience, Heidi Erchinger asked how this is monitored and measured. Dr. Zook commented that there are teams of teachers working together. Ms. Erchinger wanted to know how it is evaluated. Dr. Zook stated it is evaluated by Teacher Learning Coaches and administration. Ms. Erchinger said some the students are doing book reports while others are not. Dr. Zook stated that that is okay since there is more than one way to teach and for children to learn. Levels and expectations are set and monitored. MAP and ISATs are some of the ways we assess achievement. Dr. Zook said that after reviewing teacher survey results and talking to the teaching staff, there will be some adjustments to the implementation plan for the report card at the middle schools. Teachers may use their previous grading methods for determining a student's achievement and work study habit grades. Teachers will provide an end of term assessment of a student's progress toward each standard in each subject area. Teachers will communicate to students and parents as to their grading practices and clarify the expectations for work completion. Effective grading practices will be used when assessing student progress and work completion. Teachers will monitor student progress regularly and communicate any concerns in a timely manner to students and parents. Dr. Zook stated that there will be new homework brochures sent out to parents. Steve Limer debated with Dr. Zook about grading practices and believes that if teachers are allowed to grade differently from each other that will create more inconsistencies within the schools. Dr. Zook responded that teachers address the needs of the students. Grades are not a good indicator of progress toward the standards. Mr. Limer believes that every student has the right to the same calculation of grades. Teachers utilize common formative assessments to determine student's progress toward standards. They will also need to assign appropriate homework that has a clear purpose and an expectation of completion. Homework should not be assigned for punitive reasons, but as a meaningful learning experience. Teachers work in partnership with parents and the administration to develop a plan when a student is not making adequate progress. Teachers will also need to provide an end of term assessment of the student's progress toward the standards that is separate from a student's achievement grade and work habits. Dr. Zook stated that we are committed to homework as an important component of a student's educational experience. Homework is critical for practice, preparation, elaboration, reading, and study. We are committed to everyone doing his or her part. Teachers, parents, and students all have their responsibilities in the process. We will continue to review and revise our plan. We will continue with staff development and regular revision of our curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Dr. Zook stated that we are committed to "Learning for all – Whatever it takes."

Ms. Erchinger commented that it is up to individual teachers to decide how he or she wants to count homework. Dr. Zook reported that the teachers will look at the data and make a thoughtful assessment. Donna Gaidamak wanted to know when teachers will communicate this change to parents. Dr. Zook stated on January 23rd when midterms come home, but students may hear earlier. Unrelated to the questions being addressed, Amy Lebovitz, a parent attending the meeting, asked if MAP testing determines class placement and commented that she doesn't think this is the best approach because some students do not test well. Dr. Zook stated it is not the only assessment used. Ms. Lebovitz wanted to know who monitors academic grades versus MAP scores. Dr. Zook indicated that that is where thoughtful assessment comes in. Ms. Lebovitz commented that if students are being placed based on their tests, placement expectations need to be addressed to parents. Dr. Zook stated that we use MAP scores and teacher recommendations. We know that some students do not test well. Sharon Harris, a parent in attendance, commented that she appreciates the change in the homework calculation. Her concern is about the variability within the homework. She thinks it is encouraging her son to be lazy. Dr. Zook told her that she would encourage her to talk to her son's teacher about the motivation issues. Ms. Harris believes we are setting these kids up for high school and college. Dr. Zook reported that students will work with a lot of different teachers along the way. We have told them to make their expectations clear. Another parent in the audience, Christie Kozil, reiterated that the homework calculation as a part of the academic grade will be up to the individual teacher. Dr. Zook stated that the majority of the teachers will revert to including homework in the academic grade.

Michelle Newman, a parent in attendance, said that we have differentiated instruction, but not differentiated assessments. Dr. Zook explained how this is part of the UbD (Understanding by Design) process. Ms. Newman wanted to know if teachers will be required to assess differently without homework. Dr. Zook stated that they will.

Another parent at the meeting, Audrey Lichtenstein told Dr. Zook that she has a high school student who cannot write. He has papers to do every week. Parents at Hawthorn have been told there will be more work on writing. She has not seen it with her younger child. Dr. Zook reported that it is an ongoing process. Ms. Lichtenstein commented that this is a need for all students now. A Vernon Hills resident Terry Becker told the Board of Education members that consistency is their job and it is extremely important. Some kids learn keyboarding; others do not. One teacher at Elementary South is teaching her kids keyboarding. She wanted to know what happens for the rest of the students who don't get the opportunity.

Ms. Becker commented that she has a fifth grader who has never done a book report and she believes it is not fair that everything is so inconsistent. A Vernon Hills resident Judy Blitstein said there is a 30% difference between our top performing

and bottom performing schools within the district. Dr. Zook stated that is more about our differences in demographics. Ms. Blitstein argued it is more about our consistency. Parent Maureen Sprieser commented that the focus seems to be new tools at the new schools. She said her son, who is in sixth grade, is doing third grade work. He has never done a book report and she thinks it is inappropriate. She wanted to know who is looking at this. She wanted to know if it is the TLCs. She doesn't think the District is where it should be in reading and writing. Donna Gaidamak asked if Ms. Sprieser has gone to her son's teachers. Ms. Sprieser stated that she has not received a lot of feedback from the teachers. She added that she does not feel that she should have to be the policeman; it should not be the parent's job. Dr. Zook told the parents that she wants to address the concerns. She will set up a Curriculum Coffee specifically to focus on these issues. Parents are welcome to call or email her. Resident Benita Haberman commented that a coffee will not include the Board of Education members. She thinks this is a systemic issue. Ms. Haberman said there is a lot of frustration from parents who feel they are not being listened to and that the Board needs to be included in these discussions. The upcoming Town Hall Meeting is a step in the right direction. Dr. Zook added that we also need to celebrate our success. We should look at our achievement over the years. We have gone from scores in the high 70s in percentile to the high 80s and mid 90s. We have increased our achievement every year. Dr. Zook went over the ISAT test results from last year. She is thankful and proud of our teaching methods. Our students are learning. We value things beyond academics. We have well- rounded programs. We want the best for our students. We instill a love for learning. Tim Shanahan suggested taking a break before continuing with the rest of the meeting.

The Board went into recess at 9:05PM

The meeting resumed at 9:18PM

Public Comment period:

Tim Shanahan asked if any audience members had comments on Board matters other than the previous presentation. There were no comments.

Student and Staff Accomplishments, Recognitions: None

Staff Presentations:

Alan Hahn introduced Dan Dalziel, the landscape architect for the Elementary North addition and shared three landscape design concepts. Alan Hahn explained that we began the design of the building a while ago. We started with curved structures. He showed a copy of the first design. When Board members asked how the flag in the front of the school is raised he explained that there is room for the flag to fit through the structure. He said we need access to the entrance and the parking lot, so we used landscaping to make it work. Since the first design, we have moved from curved structures to angular. Alan Hahn told the Board how the open courtyard area works. It has to stay open for some windows into classrooms and vents for the ventilation system. In the design, a window wall was put in, so that students can look out into the courtyard. Alan Hahn explained that the courtyard is enclosed and not meant for physical activity. We wanted to make sure that there is nothing live growing in there because it would be too hard to maintain. The second option, called "rays of light" was discussed. He showed the Board that design. He reported that the design was too costly and hard to maintain. In the current design there will be synthetic lawn and a green screen. Alan Hahn brought that design forward for the Board members to view. Mr. Dalziel stated that student artwork will be displayed in the green screen. Alan Hahn explained the art work will go in window boxes. It was also suggested that we add a few sculptures such as a globe and eagle. With the third plan we have smoothed out the outdoor walkway and added synthetic turf along the walkway. Mr. Dalziel added that the angles of the walkway match the angles of the addition. Alan Hahn told the Board that we are hoping that the artificial turf will solve the salt problem we have every winter. Mr. Dalziel stated that there will be seasonal plantings spring through fall. Alan Hahn reported that in the courtyard there will be colored glass gravel added to the ground. Mr. Dalziel added that the glass is a recycled glass bead. It is very colorful and pretty. We wanted to mute the brick wall.

Tim Shanahan wanted to know if the students in the classroom that has the windows into the courtyard will be distracted. Mr. Dalziel commented that other students walking by the courtyard will not be able to see into the classroom windows. Donna Gaidamak commented that she likes the creativity, but she wondered if putting in a wall inside the building with cabinets for displaying artwork would simplify the process. Mr. Dalziel commented that it is very expensive to build a new wall. Donna Gaidamak asked if the artwork will be protected from the elements.

Mr. Dalziel explained how the artwork would be protected. Donna Gaidamak asked how things outside in the courtyard will be kept clean. She added that someone will need to go outside to display the artwork. Mr. Dalziel indicated that some cleaning will be necessary, but most of the weather elements will run off. He explained that he is suggesting a pre-manufactured piece. Donna Gaidamak wanted to know if we considered hanging something in the courtyard that is permanent. Mr. Dalziel explained that we do want something out there for when artwork is not displayed. John Sonnenberg wanted to know what happens when students walk over the landscaping materials. Mr. Dalziel stated that the landscaping will need to be denser in one area to keep that from happening.

Jeff Bard asked for the next steps and procedure for the proposed landscape plan for the proposed Elementary North addition. Tim Shanahan explained that we will get a consensus to go forward on one of the three designs. Jeff Bard wanted to know if we

are waiting for the next meeting for comments. He also wanted to know if we plan to approve the landscaping plan with the addition or separately. Dr. Zook explained that landscaping is typically done as part of the project as a component. We are just showing the Board what we have already looked at and approved. Donna Gaidamak commented that the last building project was Elementary South. She questioned if the landscaping was done separately. Dr. Zook stated that the administration made recommendations, but the landscaping was part of the original plan. We are bringing this landscape plan here as a courtesy to show the Board. We would like to get the bids out, but we can delay the landscaping if necessary. It is on the January 28th agenda to accept bids. Jeff Bard asked why we are putting the landscape plan out now. Mr. Dalziel commented that contractors are typically looking for work now and are more competitive but acknowledged that we do not have to and waiting two weeks will not make a difference. Jeff Bard asked that we wait until we have the bids for the proposed addition. Tim Shanahan stated that we are planning to approve the addition on the 28th. Donna Gaidamak added that the approval on the 28th is only for the building. Tim Shanahan responded that the landscaping bids will be sent out on the 28th. Donna Gaidamak wanted to know if we have an approval from the Village. Alan Hahn reported that everything is a go. Donna Gaidamak asked if the board makes changes, will we need to go back to the Village. Alan Hahn reported we do not have to go back to the Village with a minor change.

Consent Agenda:

Tim Shanahan stated that we are pulling the policy changes from the consent agenda. There are some inconsistencies in the paperwork. John Sonnenberg moved to approve the consent agenda. Donna Gaidamak seconded the motion.

01/08.53 Board Minutes, regular session, 12/10/07

01/08.54 Board Minutes, regular session, 12/21/07

01/08.55 Personnel Report

Voice Vote: 6 ayes: 0 nays. Motion carried – 6– 0

Action Items: None

President's Report: None

Superintendent's Report: None

Discussion Items: None

Committee Reports:

Donna Gaidamak reported that the Communications Committee met before tonight's meeting. The Town Hall Meeting will be February 7th at Middle School North from 7PM until 8:30PM. The Board will present its vision, values and priorities for the district. She said that the Board is looking for community feedback on this work. Free babysitting will be provided by students and adults to encourage greater participation. Questions may be submitted in advance for people who cannot attend the meeting. There will be a Committee of the Whole Meeting on January 26th to prepare for the Town Hall meeting from 9AM to 11AM in the District Office.

John Sonnenberg stated that the Finance Committee met Monday and went over the budget and calendar for next year. We got some good input on the budget.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business: None

Announcements: None

Informational Items: None

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Tim Shanahan requested a motion to adjourn.

Michelle Comitor moved to adjourn the meeting. John Sonnenberg seconded the motion. Voice Vote: 6 ayes: 0 nays. Motion carried

Adjourned: The meeting adjourned at 9:55PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie Limer

Timothy Shanahan, President

Anne Hoffman, Secretary