

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 10<sup>th</sup> day of March 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, Lisa Jay, Michelle Comitor, John Sonnenberg (via phone), Tim Shanahan.

**Public Comment period:** None

**Student and Staff Accomplishments, Recognitions:** None

**Consent Agenda:**

Lisa Jay moved to approve the consent agenda. Jeff Bard seconded the motion.

03/08.72 Meeting Minutes, regular session, 02/11/08

03/08.73 School Calendar 2008/2009

03/08.74 Board Policy changes, Title 1

03/08.75 Personnel Report

Voice Vote: 5 ayes; 0 nays. Motion carried

**Staff Presentations:**

Dr. Zook told the Board that on November 12<sup>th</sup> the TLCs gave a presentation on My Access, the new writing program that is being used in the District. She stated that Lisa Cerauli and Karen Olker are back for an update. Ms. Olker explained that they are continuing to monitor the technical aspects of My Access and work with Vantage Learning to make necessary adjustments. On January 30<sup>th</sup> they had a workshop that involved over forty teachers. The focus of the workshop was to move beyond inputting prompts to integrating the tools offered in the program. The workshop was headed up by Vantage Learning. She went on to explain that the coaches and tech department continue to help teachers in the classroom. If a teacher sends an email regarding My Access it goes to the entire team, so that it can be responded to by the correct personnel. Lisa Cerauli went over the usage numbers at each of the schools. The usage ranges between 82% and 93%. Dr. Yomtoob reminded the Board that at the elementary level only fourth and fifth graders are using the program. Lisa Jay wanted to know if there are still technical issues with My Access. Ms. Cerauli stated that a few students are getting error messages or are timing out, but the issues are much less frequent. She stated that they are experimenting with the server. They are tracking errors. Lisa Jay wanted to know if there are any teachers who are not using the program. Ms. Olker responded that most students in SEDOL or in special programs are not using My Access. Michelle Comitor questioned if there were any classrooms not using the program at all. Ms. Olker stated that every teacher from fourth to eighth grade is using My Access, but they are not all using it the same way. Ms. Olker stated that there have been some issues with the fourth graders not being able to type very well, but even that seems to be improving.

Donna Gaidamak arrived at 7:40 PM.

Jeff Bard wanted to know about usage and distribution. Ms. Cerauli stated that there is a weekly volume report done. Ms. Olker added that usage is going up monthly. Jeff Bard asked about the number of teachers at the workshop versus the trainings. Ms. Olker stated that they had a lot of teachers at the workshop. Dr. Zook explained that at the beginning we were training one teacher per grade per building. We then used the Trainer of Trainer models to get more teachers oriented to the program. The workshop was only for the teachers who are being trained to be trainers. She added that in addition we want to make sure that every Language Arts and Social Studies teacher at the middle schools is trained and the fourth and fifth grade teachers at the elementary schools. Ms. Cerauli went over some of the positive comments that have been made by teachers. They showed a video clip of two teachers discussing the program and what they like about it.

Ms. Cerauli went over the future plans for My Access. They included further development of the My Access trainers and better use of the detailed reports. She went over an error analysis list and how it can be used to strengthen our students' skills. Ms. Olker highlighted examples of some of the errors. Ms. Cerauli commented that there is ongoing staff development. They have learned from data that students at all of the buildings are struggling with organizational skills. Upcoming staff development will focus on this skill. Jeff Bard asked how spell check is used. Ms. Olker stated that as with other writing programs spell check is only 60% accurate. Teachers at the middle schools are looking at the writing scores and editing them where they do not feel that My Access is accurate. The usual mistake has more to do with word usage than misspelling.

Ms. Cerauli added that teachers are using mistakes like that to stress to the students the importance of checking their work. It is a very important skill. Michelle Comitor stated that her seventh grader loves My Access. Jeff Bard questioned if there are plans to train more teachers. Ms. Olker responded that the TLCs are looking into that. They are looking at the problems and successes. They are planning the next step. She added that she was not sure if that would involve more training, but it will involve more support. Ms. Cerauli reported that next year will be much easier because there will already be a large base of students who have been exposed to the program.

Jeff Bard wanted to know if parents can help their children at home. Ms. Olker stated that the middle school teachers are looking into that possibility. It is in the works and will be brought up at Parent Night. Ms. Cerauli commented that Vantage is looking into being able to journal on My Access. Jeff Bard questioned if My Access will be available to students over the summer. Dr. Zook stated that it will be. Karen Cencula commended the TLCs and techs for their help in the classroom. Jeff Bard questioned if we are doing other things to help with writing skills besides My Access. Ms. Olker mentioned a three-day Writing Institute for teachers. Dr. Zook explained it would be for second to eighth grade teachers. It would be an intensive workshop and training. Ms. Olker added that teachers are doing a lot to improve writing. Dr. Zook told the Board that we are looking at making an adjustment with sixth grade scheduling to allow for daily intensive writing time. We are also looking at having a separate Language Arts teacher and Social Studies teacher rather than the one for both subjects that we have now. This would allow the Language Arts teacher a better focus. We would provide additional training for the Language Arts teachers. She added that we are articulating with the high school. Donna Gaidamak asked about the seventh and eighth graders. Dr. Zook responded that there is no available writing time because of foreign language. Currently there is a 40-minute reading class for students who are not in the foreign language class. We are working to meet the needs of the sixth graders.

Jeff Bard asked about keyboarding. Dr. Zook told the Board that we are trying to get it into the master schedule for the elementary schools. Aspen and Elementary South are piloting a tech rotation. We will be adding it to Elementary North next year. It is very challenging to get it in at Townline because of the Spanish instruction. Karen Cencula explained that they are looking into purchasing small keyboards or laminated copies of the keyboards. Students should have time to practice during recess and morning supervision. John Sonnenberg wanted to know if typing skills have improved with My Access. Ms. Olker commented that there seems to be less frustration and improved speed, but there is no hard data. Those are the comments of some of the teachers. Michelle Comitor questioned if while doing guided reading if some of the students could do a keyboarding center with a teaching assistant. Dr. Zook stated that literacy time is sacred. Ms. Cencula commented that teaching the keyboarding is easy, if we can fit it into the available time. Dr. Zook added that we are talking about a color coded multi-sensory keyboard. The time needed is 10 minutes a day for a few weeks. The students can practice with the alpha smart keyboard or laminated keyboard first thing in the morning. Jeff Bard asked about monitoring of My Access. Ms. Cerauli explained that they are doing weekly reports; the principals are watching. All of the buildings are focused on writing.

Dr. Yomtoob told the Board that there is a movement brewing to put a referendum on the ballot for a 1% increase in Lake County sales tax to benefit Lake County schools. Every district is doing the presentation that Alan Hahn is about to give. He acknowledged that it will be difficult to pass. The money would be allocated per capita. Alan Hahn explained that this Power Point has been delivered to most schools in Lake County. PA095-0675 would allow for state wide funding for schools facilities maintenance. 2001 was the last year of the State funding for maintenance. It was also the last year of school construction grants. We applied for a grant to help with the construction of Aspen. It was approved, but we have yet to see any of the money. Alan Hahn stated that the increased sales tax would be added to tangible goods. It would not be added to drugs, food, or cars. The District would receive funds based on enrollment. It is estimated to be about \$550 per student, which would net Hawthorn about \$2M. The money can be used for capital projects, renovations, and additions. Alan Hahn stated that we could have used these funds for the additions at Elementary South and North. The funds can be used to offset future bond payments. The money would be distributed by the Regional Office of Education. He added that the tax is an all or nothing proposition.

Alan Hahn stated that this will benefit taxpayers. Non residents will help to fund the schools. It will decrease the need for future real estate property increases. He read an example of how the referendum question would be worded on the ballot. Fifty-one percent of the districts have to pass the vote to request that the Lake County Board put the referendum on the ballot. The other option is that the Lake County Board will put it on the ballot with out the 51%. It then has to be passed by the voters in Lake County. So far 19% of the Lake County Districts have passed the resolution. Donna Gaidamak asked if any districts have tried to pass the resolution and failed. Alan Hahn commented that that has happened. Michelle Comitor stated that the lottery was supposed to fund education and that has not happened. She questioned if the same situation could happen again with this. Alan Hahn stated that it could not. Twenty years ago the County used to hang onto the money that was earmarked for the schools and earn interest. Legislation has stopped that, and the money is passed on right away.

Tim Shanahan asked for a time frame on the tax increase. Alan Hahn responded that as he understands it the tax increase would be in perpetuity. Jeff Bard asked for a time frame for the District. Alan Hahn explained that they are hoping that all resolutions by Lake County Districts would be adopted by May. August 11<sup>th</sup> is the last day for the County Board to request the addition of the referendum to the ballot. On September 4<sup>th</sup> it has to be with the Lake County Clerk for the November 4<sup>th</sup> election. Michelle Comitor asked when the tax increase would start. Alan Hahn stated that he did not know.

Lisa Jay left the meeting at 8:30 PM.

John Sonnenberg wanted to know if there is any concern about driving businesses to Wisconsin with an additional sales tax increase. Alan Hahn commented that the tax is passed onto the consumer. He stated it was his personal opinion that that would not happen. Lake County is a prime area.

**Action Items:** None

**President's Report:**

Tim Shanahan stated that Michelle Comitor, Lisa Jay, and he attended the School Conference in Arizona. They were blown away by all that was presented. He added there will be a report for the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Superintendent's Report:**

Dr. Yomtoob commented that he has known Larry Lezotte for 30 years. Larry Lezotte has changed his life. He believes that every kid must be successful, and we are responsible for that. Michelle Comitor stated that consolidation of all of the material will be an issue. There was so much information presented.

**Discussion Items:** None

**Committee Reports:**

Jeff Bard told the Board that he attended the SEDOL Board meeting. They have a real issue with capacity. They are turning students away. Their options are to build a new Larmont School, rehab the old one, or build a new facility on an adjacent property. They will vote in May for one of the options. Any of them will cost between \$24M and \$26M. SEDOL would like the area school boards to vote for approval of one of the options. They will come, present, and answer any questions that we have. Dr. Yomtoob added that we have already scheduled April 14<sup>th</sup> for SEDOL to come and present. Michelle Comitor added that at a past meeting they showed pictures of how insufficient the facilities are. Everyone should see those pictures. Tim Shanahan asked what percentage each district would pay to SEDOL. Jeff Bard commented that SEDOL will have that information. Dr. Yomtoob added that he recalled that the amount each tax payer would have to pay is very small.

**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: 5 ayes: 0 nays. Motion carried.

Adjourned: The meeting was adjourned at 8:35PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie Limer

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Timothy Shanahan, President

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Anne Hoffman, Secretary