



## **Westlake Board of Education**

### ***Board Notes from Monday, 4/12/10, Work Session***

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:** Spring testing is approaching with Ohio Achievement Assessments. Baseball coach Jeff Short approaching his 300<sup>th</sup> win as a coach. Westlake calendar received a Mark of Excellence for effective communications in special purpose publications. Six presentations scheduled through campaign on bond issue. Group proposing hockey as a club sport continues to work with the district. Dave Puffer is looking at the insurance portion. Getting into filling administrative positions, including athletic director and LBMS and Bassett principals. Eight openings for staff. Plan to fill 5 and hold off on 3 until after May election. At the state level, students won Best in Show and State Champion awards in the State Engineering & Technology Conference. Design Squad team also won a state award. WHS senior placed second in state poetry competition.

#### **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

1. Planning for Review of District Expenditures-Cost Per Student.
  - a. Carol Winter: Last month we determined we'd set up parameters about discussion on this topic. Aug. 28 would be an ideal time to discuss this thoroughly.
  - b. Dr. Keenan: Cost per student one way of looking at overall expenditures and budgets. Have to look at where we spend money and why. Different districts categorize things differently. 19 similar districts spread out across the state. Cost per student also calculated differently. Try to use ODE data. Going to work with Mark Pepera on a potential of cost per student and break down instructional/operation, administrative, etc. in looking at other districts.
  - c. Mark Pepera: Need to define cost per pupil model. ODE model is the only one that exists in the state for comparisons. But districts code things differently. Food services different throughout the regions of the state. Want to do initial research to understand what the Board wants out of this and what direction to head. Then we can develop a game plan.
  - d. Dr. Keenan: We need a benchmark. Heard we need to be accountable and responsible and need to keep our costs down. Look at different practices to measure what we are doing. How can we continue to run efficiently as we can and maintain Excellence? Let's

look and see what other Excellent districts are doing and evaluate if we should adopt some of their practices. It will be comprehensive. Something I'd like the whole Board to hear.

- e. Nate Cross: This is something that will be an ongoing thing. I think this is something there is a need for immediate and consistent conversation at regular meetings and work sessions. If we do work up front and define what we're shooting for, that will help in long run. I'd like to be more specific to set process goal what we want to get at so working toward something. There are things that need to be answered: want to better understand 19 state designated similar districts as defined by ODE. I ran a top 20 list of similar districts through ODE and they are spread throughout Ohio. Property tax valuations of Westlake and these similar districts. Westlake private school attendance is a lot higher than other areas around the state. Spending v. performance. Look at how you define performance, not just the state report card, but there might be National Merit Scholars or Newsweek rankings on AP test scores. Important to up front understand where we're going with specificity in terms of what we want to do with this. Set some goals of expense per pupil targets, maybe stretched out over a 5-year-plan. Would like to discuss at every meeting.
- f. Carol Winter: I agree about setting goals. There is quite a bit of information to compile to present that. I see us as the first giving them the time to pull this together and at the retreat start to set goals. I'm not sure we're even in agreement. We have a lot of homework to get to before in agreement to look at the budget and make reductions. We do need to set goals, but this is the beginning of that process. We have to understand the depth of the amount of work they'll put into pulling this together with us, along with their other responsibilities with this district. There are a lot of time-consuming things going on. That Aug. 28 meeting gives them the time to do the work and put together a package for us to look at.
- g. Dr. Keenan: We are constantly evaluating our budget. Hard for the Board to make goals without understanding the context. A general goal is to make sure we're efficient, following best practices to maintain Excellence. How can we defend we are as efficient as we can be until we have the data? I'd rather you understand context and then set the goal.
- h. Cross: We need to have some broad framework or vision, otherwise you are wasting your time chasing numbers. Setting a framework for timing about beginning and ending the discussion. Set a broad goal for why we would want to do this. We make spending decisions at each meeting this information has a direct relationship to. It would be a failing to settle on two or three things in scope.
- i. Dr. Keenan: We have a broad goal and timing.
- j. Carl Winter: we have a broad goal to start with. At retreat we can narrow the goal. Broad goal to examine our budget and how to operate efficiently. We have a summit coming up for the Continuous Improvement Plan. Looking at setting goals for the district each year.

- k. Dr. Keenan: We talk about budgets and costs every meeting. Unless you want to move the retreat up to a different time, but soonest to devote a chunk of time is the August retreat. We put it in August because of CIP process in June. Keep in mind what we have on our schedule. Board meeting in April, work session in May. We'll keep you apprised of how we're progressing. Good idea to let you know how we're looking into it. Broad goal is to be as efficient as we can.
- l. Tim Sullivan: What is the survey?
- m. Dr. Keenan: Survey will allow us to define outliers and if they're doing something drastically different than us or if it is a function of something unique about one of the districts. Trying to break down data from ODE to have districts categorize their expenses per student.
- n. Tim Sullivan: You need to put request into context of your job. There needs to be a full understanding where it all goes and make sure it's done right. Mr. Cross has validity about providing broad goals and let you go to work with that. We spent \$11,900 per student. Average of surrounding districts showed us significantly higher. Still higher in comparison to other ODE districts. We know we break cost per student into instructional, administrative, etc. You can pick a bowl and want to be able to say to our community look what we do with our students and how efficiently we do things.
- o. Dr. Keenan: I think I said the broad goal was to work efficiently. Before we make a specific goal we need to understand parameters. Broad goal to keep costs down and make sure we're operating efficiently while maintaining excellence.
- p. Andrea Rocco: Are there other goals than keeping costs per pupil low and providing the best education possible?
- q. Tim Sullivan: I'd like to set a target goal for the next generation of students.
- r. Carol Winter: I don't think it's feasible before August.
- s. Tim Sullivan: I think it will produce benefits to the administration. We have to have a better context.
- t. Andrea Rocco: First time we did this, I didn't realize how many different ways costs are looked at by districts. Transportation, special education, etc. are high money tag buckets you need to look into. Always raises a flag to compare to our smaller neighboring districts. This is a beginning of the process. Record should indicate this isn't the beginning of any process. I've seen Dr. Keenan and his staff every time we have to do something, outline how we've done it.
- u. Cross: We spend more than surrounding districts and I wonder if we are doing as well as we could. This conversation is a good practice on an ongoing basis. We should strive to do better and push the envelope on this. Fiscally prudent to set targets to spend less to do more.
- v. Rocco: To say we can do better by looking at Bay Village or Rocky River is not productive. I want us to establish what we're going to do. This is the time to give Dr. Keenan direction.
- w. Carol Winter: Mr. Cross added parameter of performance compared to spending. Agree to look into what goes into cost per student.

2. Report on Broadcasting BOE Meetings

- a. Dr. Keenan: Looked into feasibility. We have a retiring TV production teacher. Hope to eventually include in co-curricular experience as part of the program. In absence of a student, we will have an advisor who can do that. Last person as a backup is Kim Bonvissuto. It would be a stationary camera with one person taping the meeting. They would be focused on the Board and whomever is speaking. Tough thing to manage is sound. Initially propose a mic system similar to taping something on site. It can be done. We also would look into eventual webcasts, a secondary step. We use analogue equipment for our TV studio, not digital. If that's a must it would prolong things. Some size and archiving issues to consider. We're not going to have the same type of equipment and quality production as the city. Propose general meetings and work sessions are the start, leaving out subcommittees and retreats. That follows patterns of other cities and districts. Currently we have an A and B schedule. We could define when those are on. We can run multiple times on multiple days. Propose afternoon and evening time and make it regular. Keep in mind we have a lot of student events that run. Biggest challenge is sound. Recommend no specific policy until we work out the bugs. Make a commitment, but not necessary to make a policy. Recommend we start in the fall with our new hire. Evaluate the quality and discuss before finalizing the practice. Eventually consider document cameras for the agendas. Well laid out plan of doing things right will reap better benefits.
- b. Nate Cross: During the interview process, did any of this come up about an interest in Board meetings?
- c. Dr. Keenan: It came up as different things we'd like to do with our station. It wouldn't be an add on, but something that would take the place of something we do now.
- d. Nate Cross: City worked with AT&T to make programming available like WOW and Time Warner. We need to do the same. Want to see consistent, frequent rotation of meetings. Marketing/communication, people need to know to go to it – scheduled air dates, web site schedule, e-blasts. Transparency should be the driving force to airing sooner rather than later. Important people have that availability. Partnership with the city, maybe they can help us out with the technical aspects, shared equipment, etc.
- e. Carol Winter: The district is used to dealing with those things and publicizing. You know people in that area.
- f. Tom Mays: I would do a practice run in July if we could, let's have as many bugs worked out as possible.
- g. Dr. Keenan: Will talk to our new hire about that.

3. Planning an OSBA Board Workshop-Date and customizing training

- a. Carol Winter: In contact with OSBA. Many districts do an annual training to bring everyone back to the table to evaluate work goals, board ethics, etc. Dr. Keenan talked to one district as a reference. Checking availability June 7 or 8 after 4pm. Checked into Porter Library availability. Agreement on June 8, 4:30-6:30pm. Topics recommend: Board member roles, board operational goals, team development. OSBA would send a questionnaire to get feedback on needs.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Approved classified resignation of Brenda Wirth.

**HEARING OF THE PUBLIC:**

1. Harry Applegate: I heard quite a discussion on cost per pupil prompted by Mr.Sullivan's spreadsheet a couple meetings ago. A lot of what I heard will take a lot of time to compile a lot of statistics. Time is money. Makes more sense the Board should tell the superintendent we're spending too much, what would it take to drop it down by a set amount? Look at the 5 buckets you describe. Televising Board meetings, my experience with WHBS is the sound sucks. Somehow you have to address that. I go to WHBS and I turn it off because my TV won't go loud enough to hear what is going on. Maybe you should look into those mics they use on the news, wireless or something. You really have to address the sound or you will make people mad. They will be able to see you but not hear you.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** to discuss superintendent contract.

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING:** The next meeting of the Board will be Monday, April 26, regular meeting at 5:30pm at the Westlake Schools Administration Building.

For more detailed information on these items, visit

<http://beta.westlake.k12.oh.us/boe/meetingschedule/default.aspx>