

FINNEYTOWN LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special Meeting, March 4, 2024
Secondary Campus Media Center
8916 Fontainebleau Terrace
Cincinnati, OH 45231
6:00pm

The Finneytown Board of Education met in special session on Monday, March 4, 2024, in the Media Center of the Finneytown Secondary Campus, 8916 Fontainebleau Terrace, Cincinnati, OH 45231. Ms. Lee, Ms. McMullen, Mr. Plaut, Mr. Rea and Mr. Reeb were present. The President called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

26-24 Mr. Rea moved, seconded by Ms. McMullen, that the Board approved the minutes as corrected from the regular meeting of February 20, 2024. The President declared the motion passed.

27-24 Ms. McMullen moved, seconded by Ms. Lee, that the Board move to Executive Session, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 121.22(G)(3), to consult with and attorney for the Board of Education concerning disputes involving the Board of Education that are the subject of pending or imminent court action.

RC: Ms. Lee, yes; Ms. McMullen, yes; Mr. Rea, yes; Mr. Reeb, yes; Mr. Plaut; yes. The president declared the motion passed.

The Board entered Executive Session at 6:07pm.

The Board returned to Special Session at 6:25pm.

Discussion – Strategic Planning

The following updates and discussion took place:

- The strategic plan is at the metrics development phase (i.e. progress measurement). Collaboration between our consultant and the administrative team is necessary for efficient alignment. Drafts should be ready next month.
- Board of Education strategic priorities include high support for the arts programs and high support for staff. Mr. Burton has ideas, even if not explicitly stated in the strategic plan.
- Dr. Banks expressed the administrative team's desire to condense the strategic plan:
 - from five goals to three goals
 - from a five year plan to a three year plan.

Reasons include improved focus and greater flexibility to implement new learning. Three years gets us through secondary campus facility construction, aligns with the literacy curriculum, provides metric data for refinement, and can always be stretched to five years, if desired.

- OSBA supports development of a three year strategic plan.
- Lackluster strategic plan staff support feedback needs further investigation. Mr. Burton will be asked to provide perspective and comparable information from other districts. We need to combine and compare this feedback with other surveyed staff feedback.

- The value of additional surveys was discussed:
 - Serial annual surveys are needed to identify trends and measure improvement.
 - The first year only provides baseline data.
 - Third-party anonymous staff surveys may be the best way to get honest responses. Drawbacks include the high cost and lack of specific fitness for our needs.
 - The formation of an internally designed survey, involving both administration and staff, could get us the right questions to pinpoint hot button issues and the underlying causes. Unfortunately, they can also be worded to draw out the answers those in charge of the survey want to hear.
- Student exit surveys – There are many ways to do this. A short, simple set of questions is all we really need. Why are you leaving? What type of school are you going to?
- Staff exit surveys – We probably don't need a formal survey. It is likely we have a good understanding of the reason why the staff member is leaving.

Discussion – Facility

Dr. Banks, Superintendent, gave the following update:

- Bids for the 100-building renovation came in higher than anticipated. The HVAC renovation portion of the project helped drive up the cost. Because we are using ESSER funds for HVAC, the entire project became subject to prevailing wage requirements. We plan to separate the HVAC out into its own separately bid project.
- Once we found we could keep the entire 100-building, we started to think in a different way and things have started to shift. Changes include:
 - Temporarily retaining Brent Elementary as district office flex space to minimize secondary campus student learning spaces disruption over the next couple of years. The move will take place during spring break. This will be shared with community and staff tomorrow.
 - Stepping back to reevaluate with the Long Range Facility Planning Team our best option for permanent district office space. Is it renovating the 100-building after this campus is done? Is it a standalone building on the Cottonwood site? Is it renovating Brent Elementary?
 - Making sure funding baseball, softball and renovated student learning spaces are addressed first in this high inflationary environment in case we don't have exhaust funds prior to completion of the entire master plan.
- The administrative move to Brent is a temporary solution until we figure out a permanent solution. Although this delays Brent demolition, we have till the end of the OFCC project to demolish and receive the 60% state co-funded share.
- It was financially not feasible to keep and renovate the entire Brent building the last time we looked at it. The location is somewhat problematic for Finneytown Elementary. We will revisit with Mr. Tom Hernandez and the long range facility planning team.
- The bidding process is still on for the Whitaker Elementary demolition. The pre-bid meeting is on Thursday, March 21. Bid opening is April 4. The current timeline is abatement in May/June, demolition in June/July, and site restoration in August.

- OFCC secondary campus pre-site work has begun. Demolition will occur in June and July. Our official groundbreaking for the Secondary Campus will be in the fall when new building construction begins.
- We are working with the Finneytown Alumni Network (FAN). They hired Mr. Mike Steele. Mr. Steele and Mr. Haarlammert will be our two primary contacts. FAN will focus on building the network and connections before moving into its campaign. Its support will be focused on the PAC and gym renovations, not to begin until after the OFCC project is finished. This is necessary due to the tightness and complexity of the construction site.
- Allerton, our communication partner, is working on a facilities update, set to go out in the next couple of weeks. We will follow with monthly community updates.
- Mr. Fernandez, Mr. Oliverio and Ms. Ruffin met with Springfield Township Administrator, Mr. Chris Gilbert. Final details are still being negotiated for a proposed Whitaker development on our behalf by the township. We hope to sit down with the developer ourselves at some point. Inclusion of a minimum service payment, which is our best leverage in making sure that the project stays on schedule, is a sticking point. The developer is reluctant to make that guarantee, despite assurances that they're ready to mobilize and will start site work this summer, if the property becomes available in time.

Discussion – Staffing

The following discussion took place:

- The Board discussed and asked questions about various staff roles for evaluation of their educational and financial impact and effect on future levies.
- Discussion was strictly limited to the positions, not the people in the positions.
- The superintendent's newly updated job description specifically identifies responsibility for recruiting, selecting, and evaluating administrators, teachers, and support staff in accordance with district policies, and with ongoing professional development.
- The Board of Education is responsible for the vision and overall budget picture, the superintendent with the details and actual execution.
- There are seven teaching support positions this school year:
 - 4 RP/PBL facilitators
 - 1 Gifted Coordinator
 - 1 Literacy Coordinator
 - 1 Transition Coordinator
- Restorative Practices (RP) and Project Based Learning (PBL) require a lot of staff, a lot of time, and a lot of resources to make them work. There was discussion about the appropriateness of four dedicated staff in the RP and PBL facilitation role.
- One member felt, at four RP and PBL non-classroom support staff positions, the district was overstaffed; others felt the district was properly, or even possibly understaffed, with these four positions.
- All board members agreed that RP and PBL require a significant long term financial commitment to be successful and to change the culture. Dr. Banks stated she believes three to five years are needed to realize the shift we are looking for.
- RP and PBL overstaffing concerns included:

- the cost to employ four full time non-classroom staff is significantly more expensive than professional development (by perhaps a factor of 10)
- individual professional development may be a better approach for building RP and PBL skills and capacity across all teachers,
- survey information suggests that staff is looking for a different kind of support from administration than it is currently getting,
- RP facilitators spend too much time with only one or two students,
- many teachers don't appreciate other teaching staff in their classrooms telling them how to teach their students.
- Dr. Banks explained that small size RP intervention is a misperception. RP and PBL facilitators have been invited to the March regular board meeting to explain what their days look like and how they are in constant partnership with classroom teachers. They never spend time manning an RP room.
- RP and PBL properly staffed proponents relied upon the following:
 - Our strategic plan survey suggests signs our staff feel under supported. Curtailing RP and PBL facilitators, trained and qualified that help restore relationships and build instructional practices, would be a step in the wrong direction.
 - Facilitators are embedded professional development for our staff every day in both buildings, designed to shift increasing responsibility and ownership for RP and PBL to the classroom teacher,
 - The five year forecast accounts for the positions moving into the general fund after this year. We've been very diligent and intentional about that. Only three of those positions are paid for out of ESSER this year.
 - Downsizing at this point sends a wrong message about the work we're committed to doing. These are new positions, strategically created. We're only in year three. It takes time to move the ship and to switch directions. These positions are a part of that work.
- The transition coordinator is paid out of IDEA funds, not ESSER funds. IDEA funds are not going away.
- Since the shift, the positive impact of Project Based Learning is readily apparent. Some amazing things are being accomplished. The Restorative Practice shift is showing a lot of potential, but we're still in learning mode. It has room to improve.
- Related to staffing, a request was made to revisit the hiring plan put in place a few years ago. The idea behind the new hiring plan was to shift the focus from a very heavy emphasis on quality and ability to having the right attitude. Now, we've found the right attitude, but maybe some of the quality has fallen off. We may need to shift back a little bit.
- Diversity is a factor too. We are very intentional about trying to diversify. But we can't make that the only decision maker.
- Dr. Dinan and Mr. Muchmore and the hiring team cohort will be invited to a future board meeting to give an update. They're going to be busy in April and May.
- Related to staffing, we may want to revisit the posting of a benefit link with our job postings. It could prove an effective recruiting tool. We have very competitive benefits that could open the funnel, getting more applicants in our pool.


- Finally, regarding staffing, we may want to consider referral bonuses for staff members whose referrals result in new hires for the district. This is about opening the funnel. We may want to wait until a renewed contract is awarded to ensure it was a good hire, before the bonus is awarded. This could be a topic for the personnel committee.

28-24 There being no further business, Ms. McMullen moved, seconded by Mr. Plaut, that the meeting be adjourned. The president declared the meeting adjourned at 7:57pm.



Lindsay Lee, President

ATTEST:



David L. Oliverio, Treasurer