

MINUTES
MURFREESBORO CITY SCHOOL BOARD RETREAT
December 2, 2008
2:00-7:00 p.m.
Chamber of Commerce Board Room

ATTENDANCE

Board: Chair Mary Wade, Susan Andrews, Ray Butrum, Butch Campbell, Nancy Duggin, David Hopper, and Nancy Phillips. Absent: Council Liaison Ron Washington.

Staff: Director Marilyn Mathis, Gary Anderson, Cheryl Harris, Michelle Hummel, Danielle Kaminsky, Crystal Roshon, Priscilla Van Tries, and Lee Wilkerson.

Others: City Staff Attorney Kelley Baker, STAT Carol Stinson, and *Daily News Journal Reporter Chasity Gunn*.

Chair Mary Wade called the special meeting to order at approximately 2:10 p.m.

Major Topic for Discussion:

- **Murfreesboro City Schools Master Plan**
Facilitator: Dr. Tammy Grissom, Executive Director, TSBA

Dr. Grissom complimented the Board on the system's master plan noting that it is an excellent blueprint. She stated that this is a time of change for the nation, state, and school systems, so is a good time for the Board to review their beliefs. Dr. Andrews stated that having input from the community was important. Mrs. Phillips emphasized that the beliefs should be current, vital, and forward thinking addressing future needs.

Mrs. Grissom asked that the Board not get too tied down with the words. Focus on what they want for children. The changes would be a Board decision, so inquired if everyone would be good with adding a few adjectives to which the Board responded they would be. After several suggestions on revisions, Mrs. Wade stated that the beliefs should be cut and dry and easy reading for parents to understand without a lot of verbiage. Mrs. Grissom stated that the Board must make the vision clear; the Board has an excellent superintendent that can help them get there. Mrs. Stinson asked that if these beliefs were developed with the help of stakeholders, could they be revised without their input. Dr. Grissom stated that the beliefs and mission are the responsibility of the Board and they should revisit these annually. Mrs. Stinson agreed stating that this is a work in progress. Mrs. Kaminsky added that the state TCSPP raters want a statement to the effect that there is "open communication within the system and community." Dr. Butrum stated that they should be proactive in continuous improvement using best practices. In response to Mrs. Duggin's question, Mrs. Mathis stated that the Master Plan has been on the Board's

agenda at every retreat, and although the master plan may not have been reviewed for revisions at each retreat, a written progress report on the master plan was provided to the Board each year. Dr. Grissom stated that action results through the goals, objectives and strategies identified by the staff.

After discussion, the Board agreed to the following changes to the existing beliefs:

- ~Mr. Hopper recommended adding "vigorous" to the third bullet which will now read: *A vigorous, broad-based curriculum with high standards will be offered using a variety of instructional strategies.*
- ~Dr. Butrum recommended that the sixth bullet now read: *Children should enjoy a safe and positive learning environment.*
- ~Mrs. Duggin recommended the ninth bullet now read: *Excellence involves an intentional commitment to purposeful improvement for our educational community.*

After discussion, the Board agreed to the following changes to the existing shared vision statements:

- ~Based on recommendations by Mrs. Phillips and Dr. Andrews, the second bullet was split and revised to read:
 - *Research-based information and data will be utilized to inform all system level decisions.*
 - *Open communication between the school, home and community is vital for success.*
- ~Mrs. Duggin recommended that the sixth bullet read: *Murfreesboro City Schools will continue to be a leader in educational excellence in the state and in the nation.*
- ~Mrs. Phillips recommended a new bullet be added: *Family and community are valued components of our educational success.*

Dr. Grissom referred to the Board's existing mission statement: *To assure academic and personal success for each child.* Mrs. Phillips stated that she thought the statement needed to be freshened up. Mrs. Mathis stated that she believes the statement to be exactly what the system needs explaining that it addresses the academics and personal success, is short and easily memorized, plus it is posted on bronze plaques in all schools and is printed on school and central office letterhead; Dr. Grissom agreed. After discussion, Mrs. Phillips and all other Board members agreed that the mission statement should remain as is.

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Mrs. Duggin asked that the system's name on our logo be changed so that it is more prominent and easier to read. Mrs. Mathis explained that at Dr. Nuell's request some years ago, some of his art students had designed this logo. She will look into a redesign of the logo.

Dr. Grissom provided a folder with information for the Board. She referred to the document regarding general questions about technology, engaging the Board to discuss where we are now in terms of technology compared to twenty years ago and where we will be twenty years from now. She suggested that current policies sometimes prevent school systems from using the latest technological tools in the classroom. In response to her question, some of the new technology available was listed as being iPods, wireless headphones, laptops, Xbox, calculators, etc. Dr. Butrum suggested that before saying the use of these devices supports the curriculum, it should be determined what it is we are being required to teach. Software is already utilized; what hardware will run the software for the elementary child.

Dr. Grissom stated that it is important to make sure teachers know how to teach these things. Dr. Butrum noted that sometimes it is harder for the teachers to learn than the students. Dr. Grissom stated that computers are becoming old school to our students. Mrs. Phillips stated that the students at The Discovery School use laptops. Children's minds learn differently now, and we must commit to change. Dr. Butrum suggested that we be careful, and first determine if this is realistic with the state curriculum, with what students are being required to learn and what is being tested. Dr. Grissom noted that MCS was the first school system in the state to provide the Internet and is a leader in providing different methods of delivery. Mrs. Duggin asked that the Board look at the current and future demographics, especially the lower socioeconomic and ELL students. Some systems use iPods to reach these students. Look at the difference between student and teacher inquiry. Mr. Hopper stated that technology is a great tool, but he is not comfortable dictating that teachers use technology; a good teacher will use technology in the appropriate manner. Mr. Campbell added that he hoped we never get away from teaching children on paper. Mrs. Duggin stated that we should keep in mind how we will use technology to communicate with parents; since this is different from communicating on the phone, training should be provided on how to communicate using technology.

Dr. Butrum suggested that it should first be determined what is needed at each school. Every classroom doesn't need the same thing; identify what the different groups need first. The system has technology reserves available to purchase identified technology needs. Dr. Andrews pointed out that we are raising children to be in the digital world. Dr. Grissom referred to the fact that textbooks are now online. Mrs. Duggin stated that school systems will always need textbooks. Mrs. Baker shared that her daughter has been using online math and has shown improvement, and it is easier to get her to study. Mr.

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Campbell voiced a concern about the child who does not have a computer at home, adding that we are measured by test scores and the tests are not currently administered online but on paper with pencil. Dr. Grissom stated that in the future all homes would have computers.

Mrs. Duggin noted that all MCS students feed into the RCS system, so we need to look at what they do and have a true collaboration with them. Mr. Campbell asked how many languages are spoken in this school system. (The response was approximately 60.) Dr. Butrum asked the Board to look at where we will be socioeconomically in the future; how will we meet the needs of all students. Mrs. Phillips suggested contacting a social scientist to gather information on where the population is headed as well as where technology is going in the future.

In referencing goals, Mrs. Mathis stated that the important thing is that the plan identifies ways to make the goals happen and to measure and be able to show progress. She explained that the Master Plan, the TCSPP, and SACS accreditation all dovetail. Dr. Grissom stated that the Board should require regular updates on the master plan. Mrs. Mathis noted that progress reports are made annually at board retreats. Principals are reporting at board meetings on their schools, sharing information and progress towards goals. Dr. Grissom stated that it is the Board's responsibility to develop broad goals and the director's responsibility to come up with objectives and goals. She referred to an article in the packet she provided written by Louis V. Gerstner, Jr. in which he suggested that school boards/systems be abolished and start over. She emphasized that if the Board and administration don't share the success stories, the public won't hear the good news.

Dr. Grissom recommended that the Board review the goals annually and that the goals should be kept to ten or below which is what this Board has. She added that the Board should make sure teachers have the tools to carry out the master plan. MCS is an excellent school system; all systems will eventually be on the list (NCLB). She noted that there must be changes in NCLB. It is not known yet what will take place in the new administration, but NSBA and her organization are making sure the president-elect hears all of the concerns about NCLB. The state doesn't want to take over school systems; they want to provide assistance to get them off the list. Dr. Andrews added that the goals are strong with good strategies and measures of progress. The plan was well thought out.

Mrs. Phillips moved that Mrs. Mathis make sure the revised beliefs and vision statements are reflected in the goals, objectives, and strategies and bring these revisions back to the Board for formal approval. Dr. Andrews seconded the motion. On roll call: Andrews—yes; Butrum—yes; Campbell—yes; Duggin—yes; Hopper—yes; Phillips—yes; Wade—yes. The motion carried.

Mrs. Wade thanked Dr. Grissom for her leadership in guiding the Board through this review of the Master Plan.

Mr. Hopper asked Dr. Grissom about the taxing authority proposal. He noted that he did not feel this would be beneficial to MCS as our City Council has been very supportive.

He is familiar with two systems that have taxing authority and doesn't feel it is beneficial. Mrs. Wade added that this was addressed at TSBA's convention and, in her opinion, "don't fix what isn't broken." Dr. Grissom stated that TSBA's clients took a vote and that is what they will go to Capital Hill with. She noted also that with the political changes that have taken place, the proposal to have elected superintendents would be the first one to come up. Dr. Andrews stated that elected superintendents would not serve the school systems as well as having an educational professional in the position.

Other Topics:

- Report: "A Plan to Retain Sixth Graders" (Tab 1)

Mr. Anderson referred to the information provided behind Tab 1. Mrs. Phillips stated that parents are happy with the alternative calendar until they have a child that enters the county school system on a traditional calendar. She asked if it would be advantageous to have the same calendar as the county. Mrs. Wade stated that even if conducting a survey, you cannot make everyone happy. It is tough to have two calendars. Mrs. Duggin asked if the parents were surveyed to determine if the calendar was a reason for leaving. Mr. Anderson stated that the calendar could swing both ways. If a parent has a sixth grader and a younger sibling, they are likely to stay in MCS to keep them on the same calendar. If the parent has a sixth grader on an alternative calendar with an older sibling, they might move the sixth grader to the county's sixth grade to keep them on the same calendar. He did point out that the schools losing the most sixth graders are Erma Siegel, Scales, and Cason, all three are located within a close proximity to the county's new middle schools. Mr. Anderson stated that he visited all schools gathering responses to four questions:

1. Why do some students leave MCS to attend sixth grade elsewhere?
2. Why do some students stay in MCS to attend sixth grade?
3. What is most important to you in your decision to stay or leave?
4. What would your "dream" sixth grade look like?

He did verbally ask at the end of the survey if laptops would be a determining factor for whether a student stayed or left. He explained that he did not get specific or list reasons

because he did not want to guide the discussion/responses. Although sports was given as an answer, it was not listed as important and neither was academics. Only one student mentioned laptops. Approximately 50% of all students and parents responded that it was for social or emotional reasons as indicated on the graphs provided.

Mr. Anderson pointed out that he has provided a list of enhancement opportunities that could be implemented now at no cost to the system which include: market to all students the activities that sixth grade students will be involved in, develop a special privileges program, provide at least one overnight field trip, have students change classes, add extracurricular activities (clubs, social, community, intramurals, etc.), conduct a meaningful sixth grade graduation, develop a sense of family at the schools, and increase school pride. Those items to be considered that would be budgetary would be student lockers, offering a foreign language, and developing enrichment or honors class opportunities.

Mr. Anderson further stated that Murfreesboro City Schools is one of three districts in the state with the Pre-K through sixth grade configuration. Of the other two, one has only one school and the other has three. Our system is the only one with Pre-K through sixth grade with over 7,000 students. This is perceived as the best configuration for students, and there has been some talk of systems going back to that grade configuration.

Dr. Andrews stated that there are a number of reasons to keep the alternative calendar, one being the remediation that takes place for students during the breaks. Mrs. Baker suggested that a sixth grade dance be offered.

Dr. Butrum stated that he would like to see the Board increase the out-of-county student tuition. The current cost is \$900 per family, and the system loses money. He does not like out-of-county students taking a slot at The Discovery School. Mr. Hopper commented that conversations had taken place with Mayor Bragg, and he was in agreement that if there is a vacancy, we should accept these students. Dr. Andrews stated that the families that apply and come to our school system bring benefits to us. Mr. Anderson added that for every student we accept, BEP money follows them. Our cost is not increased if it does not cause us extra expenses, like hiring an additional teacher.

- Results of Technology Surveys of Licensed Staff and Children (Tab 2)

Mrs. Kaminsky referred to the technology survey results and comments listed behind Tab 2. She is not sure how many teachers responded but did note that the higher grade levels use technology more. Special areas use technology differently. She stated that she was disappointed in the responses from teachers indicating that they are using some software once a week. There was a heavy emphasis on the use of Imovie, a willingness to

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implement almost anything, frequent use of the G-scope, and many requests for Elmos and smart boards. Dr. Butrum asked if teachers are using projector screens. Mrs. Kaminsky responded that they are, but smart boards are more sophisticated. Some buildings have Elmos purchased by the system. The cost for an Elmo is \$500 and a smart board \$2,000 plus installation. She noted that overall teachers are happy with the professional development being offered. The Internet and word processing are used more frequently. The use of the spreadsheet needs to increase. Mrs. Duggin asked that interactive boards versus smart boards be looked into. Mrs. Kaminsky stated that technology conferences will be taking place soon and information will be gathered when attending them.

Mrs. Mathis suggested that a committee of professionals convene and come back with recommendations. Mrs. Kaminsky explained that the system has a body called the Technology Usage Group that works with the two technology support personnel who would be able to provide good feedback. Mrs. Kaminsky stated that it appeared about one third of the teachers responded. Both teachers and students are exposed to the use of spreadsheets. Spreadsheets can be used in the student banking program. Mr. Hopper pointed out that 60% of the teachers responded that they do not use the laptop carts and asked if this is due partly to them not having access. Mrs. Duggin asked that the administration look into how computer labs are being used and of what benefit they are to students. Mr. Campbell inquired about the cost of a computer lab versus the laptop cart. Mr. Anderson responded that the cost of a laptop cart is approximately \$21,000 versus a lab of computers at a cost of \$15,000-\$18,000. Mrs. Mathis explained that although teachers remain in the computer lab with their students, the lab is staffed with an E.A. Mrs. Kaminsky added that these E.A.s are very knowledgeable.

Mr. Hopper suggested the survey be redone so that the information is more pertinent by determining grade levels, access to the technology in terms of use, etc. Mrs. Mathis stated that the technology group needs to provide the leadership in what we believe is needed in our schools, like iPods. Dr. Butrum stated that computers and technology are tools for the teacher; he would like to see more technology support, perhaps one for each school, rather than use a teacher in the school who is technologically savvy. We need to look at the grade levels and needs of the population and justify what we purchase. Teachers can become overwhelmed with the technology and may not be prepared to implement it in the classrooms. Mrs. Kaminsky noted that state standards in technology are integrated into the curriculum. Dr. Butrum asked that collaboration take place between MCS and RCS in terms of what the expectations will be of students entering seventh grade. Mrs. Kaminsky stated that she has been in contact with RCS, and their administration (Mr. Odom) has been very busy. She will continue to work for collaboration. Mrs. Phillips stated that she has had two children enter the county school system, and it was a seamless transition. Mrs. Duggin asked if it would be helpful to

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have the two school boards meet. Mr. Campbell stated that if it is part of a teacher's job to use technology in the classroom, then they should do it. Dr. Andrews added that teachers are encouraged to attend training offered to them, and the principals know what the expectations are.

- Study of Assistant Principal Job Duties (Tab 3)
- Systemwide Equity Assessment Committee Report (Tab 4)
- Report on Teacher Mobility (Tab 5)
- Report on Student Mobility (Tab 6)
- Rezoning Information

Mr. Anderson stated that the rezoning plan being presented is designed to provide relief to John Pittard and Scales, disrupting as few students as possible. Erma Siegel now has room mainly due to the slow housing market. He explained that the rezoning would include K-6 students, but fifth and sixth grade students would have the option of remaining at their existing school. Mrs. Duggin pointed out that a school could be overcrowded even though the total enrollment may not indicate it as it depends on how students break down to grade levels/classrooms. Mrs. Baker noted that two subdivisions, Wynthrop Hall and Laurel Hill have filed for bankruptcy.

Mrs. Phillips pointed to areas bordering the Siegel zone and asked if the lower socioeconomic areas could be rezoned to Siegel to help with the free/reduced ratio there. Mr. Anderson responded that you do not want to take any students from Northfield or MNE as they have existing classrooms available. Dr. Butrum suggested looking at restructuring the schools by pairing two together, one for grades K-2 and the other for 3-6, like MNE/P. This would be unique and help create a new identity. Dr. Andrews pointed out that this had been looked into in the past, and it was decided against due to the fact that parents do not want to have to travel to two schools to drop children off, busing might become an issue, and it provides even less of a neighborhood concept. Families might become even more attracted to the county's K-8 for the continuity offered. Mr. Campbell stated that if schools were paired, consideration would have to be given to where children are zoned to middle school. Dr. Butrum added that if Central Middle School becomes a magnet school, the city could lose even more sixth graders.

Mr. Campbell asked Mr. Anderson to look into the possibility of zoning Jamison Place to Erma Siegel as residents have told him some students attend Siegel and some Northfield.

Mr. Anderson explained that this could be due to those families who were enrolled in Siegel in the original zoning plan in which it was a choice school, so they are grandfathered in. This will decrease as time goes by. He reiterated that Northfield and Mitchell-Neilson do not need to lose students. Mrs. Wade stated that additional grandfathering of some students into schools should not take place as others who have applied for some schools were denied admittance. She suggested that Board members should attend the hearings, but they should not comment. Attend only to hear parent input and gather information regarding rezoning.

Mrs. Duggin asked what the timetable is for construction of a new school. Mrs. Mathis explained that an offer has been made on property in the Marymount Springs subdivision, but at the time, the Mayor and the City Manager advised that it was not time for a new school. She stated that with the growth taking place in that area, this would need to be readdressed. In light of the fact that a new school might be considered and how growth is taking place, Mr. Anderson stated that the rezoning plan presented to the Board would move the least number of students possible while still providing relief to Pittard and Scales. Mrs. Duggin asked then if what they are proposing is to take care of rezoning until a new school is built. Mrs. Mathis stated that growth will also be taking place in the Jennings/Rebecca Jones property on Manchester Highway, but at the time it was proposed, provisions were included by the developer for a new school. Mrs. Duggin asked that the Board be proactive to address the needs of schools with low socioeconomic students; but, she pointed out that students from low socioeconomic homes may not have some of the advantages of others, but many are bright and capable of learning as has been proven at Hobgood. Don't send the message that they cannot learn. Mrs. Mathis noted that schools with high socioeconomic numbers have received additional assistance and support to assure the students' academic success. With reference to the suggestion that students be distributed across zones to balance socioeconomic numbers, Mrs. Mathis explained that it is illegal to bus for racial balance. With little growth in the MNE/P and Northfield zones, it would not be beneficial to decrease their zones.

Based on the proposed rezoning plans provided by Mr. Anderson and the ensuing discussion by the Board, Mrs. Duggin moved that Mr. Anderson move ahead with the rezoning hearings. Mrs. Wade asked that he report back to the Board with a final plan after receiving input from the hearings. Mr. Hopper seconded the motion. On roll call: Andrews—yes; Butrum—yes; Campbell—yes; Duggin—yes; Hopper—yes; Phillips—yes; Wade—yes. The motion carried.

- Discussion of Revisions/Additions to Board Policies (Tab 7)
 - ~BO 2—Rules of Order
 - ~BO 7—Agenda Preparation and Dissemination
 - ~BO 40—Code of Ethics

Mrs. Baker explained the proposed board policy titled Code of Ethics which must be approved or beginning January 1 the School Board would fall under the City of Murfreesboro's Code of Ethics. She explained the proposed Code of Ethics in regard to conflicts of interest and the acceptance of gifts.

Mrs. Duggin moved that Board Policy BO 40—Code of Ethics be approved as presented; Dr. Butrum seconded the motion. On roll call: Andrews—yes; Butrum—yes; Campbell—yes; Duggin—yes; Hopper—yes; Phillips—yes; Wade—yes. The motion carried.

- Continuation of Discussion of Board Work Sessions—Nancy Duggin
- Discussion of Adding “Other Business” or “Brief Comments” to the Regular Board Agenda—Butch Campbell

Mr. Campbell asked that before the meeting is dismissed, the Board consider his request to have “other business” added to the agenda. He noted the information Mrs. Baker had provided, and he has checked with other systems and found that they do it.

Mrs. Wade stated that she does not have a problem with having “other business” as long as the item is to promote the school board's efforts to work for children. It should not be used as an opportunity to discuss an inappropriate item, to be used as an opportunity to put a staff member on the spot, or to blindside anyone with information not available to the rest of the Board. Mr. Campbell stated that as Board Chair, Mrs. Wade could deny the discussion of a topic that she feels is inappropriate. Mrs. Wade stated that would be fine with her as long as everyone is in agreement should the situation warrant her to do so. Mr. Campbell said he is perfectly all right with that.

Dr. Andrews stated that at TSBA she did hear responses from other districts that they had at the beginning of the board meeting “approval of the agenda.” At that time, a board member could recommend for approval that an item be added to the agenda. Mrs. Baker referred to the proposed revision to Board Policy, BO 7—Agenda Preparation and Dissemination behind Tab 7. She pointed out that she has included in the proposed revision under “Agenda Format” approval of the agenda. At that time, a topic to be added to the agenda could be recommended. It was the consensus of the Board that for the January board meeting, the agenda be revised to include “Approval of Agenda.” The proposed revisions to BO 7 in its entirety would be brought to the Board for approval at the January board meeting.

- Discussion of Ways to Utilize Technology to be More Informed of the Day-to-Day Things that Occur Within the System; i.e., “Post Questions of Interest to All Our Stakeholders Via the Net”—Ray Butrum

Mrs. Mathis stated that with the time constraints, the items on this agenda that were not addressed at this meeting would be brought back before the Board at a later meeting.

At Mrs. Duggin's request, Mrs. Mathis stated that Mrs. Harris would write a letter to all employees in appreciation of their service on the Board's behalf to be sent with the funds provided for a holiday celebration.

Mrs. Wade asked for a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Duggin moved for the meeting to adjourn; Dr. Butrum seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:17 p.m.

Appendices (Tab 8)

- a) Planning Calendar for New Construction, Zoning, and Related Issues
- b) Building Utilization Summary Sheet
- c) Murfreesboro City Lot Inventory Report by School Zone
- d) Attendance Data
- e) Free/Reduced Lunch Report
- f) Out-of-City Student Population
- g) Zoning Map

Marilyn M. Mathis, Director of Schools

Mission Statement
To assure academic and
personal success for each child.