

Windham School District
Board of Trustees
269th Meeting



Minutes

April 19, 2012
Austin, Texas

WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Crowne Plaza Hotel – Salons E-H
6121 North IH-35
Austin, Texas 78752
April 19, 2012
2:45 PM**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call to Order

Reconvene Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board)

I. Regular Session

- A. Recognitions
- B. Consideration of Approval of Consent Item – Minutes of the February 10, 2012, WSD Board Meeting
- C. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the WSD Plan to Achieve Objectives Required by Texas Education Code Section 7.056(b)(1)
- D. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding a Request for Waiver from the Commissioner of Education to Texas Education Code Section 21.003(a), as it relates to the WSD Superintendent
- E. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Adoption of Revisions to Windham Board Rules Title 19 Texas Administrative Code
 - 1. 300.1, Public Presentations and Comments to the Windham School District Board of Trustees
 - 2. 300.2, Windham School District Board of Trustees Operating Procedures
- F. Using WSD Performance Data to Improve Results
- G. Superintendent's Report – Overview of the Correctional Education Association 2012 Leadership Forum
- H. Report from the Chairman, WSD Board
 - 1. Overview of March WSD Education Operations Efficiency and Performance Standards Committee Meeting and Legislative Staff Visit to Gatesville Facilities
 - 2. Innovative Approaches to Offender Education
 - 3. Chairman's Fitness Challenge Update

I. Public Comments

Adjourn WSD Board

The WSD Board may discuss and/or take action on any of the items posted on this meeting agenda. The WSD Board may also convene into Executive Session on any of these matters when attorney-client privilege is warranted.

**MINUTES OF THE WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

269th MEETING

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Thursday, April 19, 2012, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Mechler, Vice Chairman
Leopoldo (Leo) Vasquez, III, Secretary
Judge Larry Gist
Terrell McCombs
Carmen Villanueva-Hiles

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Oliver Bell, Chairman
Eric Gambrell
Janice Harris Lord
J. David Nelson

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Debbie Roberts, Superintendent
Michael Mondville
Kevin Ainsworth
Allen Bourque
Johanna Canales
Linda Goerdel
Marjie Haynes
Karen Koenning
Sandra Nash
Owen Kelly
Mike Vickers

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Melinda Bozarth

CONVENED

Tom Mechler, Vice Chairman, convened the meeting of the 269th Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Thursday, April 19, 2012, at 2:17 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the *Open Meetings Act*. A quorum was present and the meeting was declared open. The Board adjourned into executive session which is closed to the public in accordance with Texas Government Code Section 551.074.

RECONVENED

Tom Mechler, Vice Chairman, reconvened the meeting of the 269th WSD Board to order on Thursday, April 19, 2012, at 2:46 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the *Open Meetings Act*. During the regular session, the Board would conduct business from the agenda posted in the Texas Register. A quorum was present and the meeting was declared open.

Mr. Mechler recognized John Newton from the Legislative Budget Board and Leah Daily from the Sunset Commission.

The vice chairman reported the WSD Board was committed to providing the opportunity for public presentations on posted agenda topics as provided in Board Rule 300.1. Persons interested in providing presentations at the meeting were required to complete a registration card and submit it at least ten minutes prior to the meeting's posted start time. For this meeting, no speaker registration cards were received by the board staff prior to the required deadline. Therefore, no public presentations would be heard on posted agenda topics.

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEM

Mr. Mechler called the Board's attention to the Consent Item on the agenda which consisted of the minutes of the February 10, 2012, meeting.

Mr. Mechler asked if there were any comments, objections or amendments to the Consent Item. Seeing none, the Consent Item was approved as submitted.

RECOGNITIONS

Debbie Roberts, WSD Superintendent, recognized two staff members that were recently promoted to executive management positions within the district.

Sandra Nash was selected as the new director of Operational Support, replacing Don Lawrence who retired in February. Ms. Nash joined WSD in 1999 as a counselor at the Michael Unit and was promoted to principal soon afterwards. She has served as principal at the Duncan, Beto, Boyd and Wynne units. She most recently served as North Texas Regional Administrator.

Karen Koenning was selected to replace Ms. Nash as the North Texas Regional Administrator. Ms. Koenning worked 13 years in public schools before coming to WSD in 1996 as a vocational counselor. For the last 16 years, she has served WSD in a variety of roles including counselor, principal and administrator for continuing education. Ms. Koenning was instrumental in the WSD college reorganization last summer.

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE WSD PLAN TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES REQUIRED BY TEXAS EDUCATION CODE SECTION 7.056(b)(1)

Mr. Mechler stated that Items C and D were related. The WSD Plan to Achieve Objectives is a requirement for submission of the proposed waiver to be discussed in the next item. The plan, discussed in executive session, reiterates the mission of the school district and emphasizes the benefits of continuing under its current leadership.

Carmen Hiles moved that the WSD Board of Trustees approve the Windham School District Plan to Achieve Objectives Required by Section 7.056 (b)(1) of the Texas Education Code as presented.

Terrell McCombs seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING A REQUEST FOR WAIVER FROM THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION TO TEXAS EDUCATION CODE SECTION 21.003(a), AS IT RELATES TO THE WSD SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Mechler stated that typically when a person serves as superintendent in the State of Texas there is a certification requirement. The school board has the option to have that certification waived. In 2006 and 2009, the Board applied for a waiver and was granted a three-year waiver by the Commissioner of Education each time. The current waiver will expire at the end of this school year and the board must consider reapplying. In the case of the WSD, he believed the school district has a solid, strong leader in its current superintendent. Ms. Roberts understands education and program management and is devoted to the staff and to offender education.

Judge Larry Gist moved that the WSD Board of Trustees approve the request for waiver from the Commissioner of Education to Section 21.003(a), of the Texas Education Code, as it relates to the Superintendent of the Windham School District.

Leo Vasquez seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.

Mr. McCombs stated that he would like to have on record how grateful everyone on the WSD Board was to have Ms. Roberts' continued leadership. He added that the board was very fortunate to have a leader of her caliber. Mr. Vasquez agreed.

**DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING
ADOPTION OF REVISIONS TO WINDHAM BOARD RULES, TITLE 19 TEXAS
ADMINISTRATIVE CODE**

1. 300.1, Public Presentations and Comments to the Windham School District Board of Trustees

Mike Mondville, WSD General Counsel, explained that at the February 2012 meeting, the board approved publication of proposed changes to Rule 300.1 in the Texas Register. After that was done, staff noticed three changes that were needed to further improve the language of the rule. Those changes were made but no public comments were received. He requested the Board adopt the amendments to Rule 300.1 as presented.

Mr. Vasquez moved that the WSD Board of Trustees adopt the revisions to Title 19 Texas Administrative Code Section 300.1, regarding Public Presentations and Comments to the Windham School District Board of Trustees as presented, and that the Chairman sign the order to this effect.

Judge Gist seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.

2. 300.2, Windham School District Board of Trustees Operating Procedures

Mr. Mondville stated the board also approved publication of the proposed changes to Rule 300.2 in the Texas Register at the February 2012 meeting. No comments were received during the 30-day period after publication. He requested the Board adopt the amendments to Rule 300.2 as presented.

Judge Gist moved that the WSD Board of Trustees adopt Title 19 Texas Administrative Code, 300.2, regarding the Windham School District Board of Trustees Operating Procedures as published in the Texas Register, and that the Chairman sign the order to this effect.

Ms. Hiles seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.

USING WSD PERFORMANCE DATA TO IMPROVE RESULTS

Ms. Roberts informed the board that during the education committee meeting in January the discussion focused on effective practices in correctional education. One of the key ingredients of effective programming is program integrity, which is the consistent implementation of the program according to how it was designed. WSD has identified specific processes the district uses to maintain program integrity. This presentation will cover the types of performance data the district gathers and how data is used as part of that process to maintain integrity.

Much of the data gathered is used to quantify services that are being provided. This type of data is often referred to as output. Examples of output include the number of offenders who participate in Windham programs each year, or the number of contact hours WSD provides.

Performance data is also used to demonstrate the results of providing those services, which is referred to as outcome. As a comparison, output data shows that a specific number of students were served in literacy programs and that they received a specific number of contact hours, while outcome data demonstrates the result of that level of participation. An example of outcome is the average educational achievement gain in an average number of contact hours.

Performance data is used to identify problems in the delivery of district services. If the district is using the data as previously discussed, and a reduction was identified in the average educational achievement gain from one year to the next, the reason for that reduction would need to be identified and a strategy developed to address the issue.

Windham collects many types of performance data for a variety of reasons; some of the reasons are legislatively mandated.

Windham is appropriated funds through the state appropriation process and like all other state funded entities, performance measures are tied to that appropriation. These performance measures are concerned with outcome and output. The measures provide a target for the level of services to be delivered for the specified number of dollars appropriated. An example of a performance measure is “the total number of contact hours earned in the best 180 out of 210 instructional days.” The majority of Windham performance measures are reported to the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) since the majority of Windham’s budget is included in the TEA appropriation. There are some performance measures relative to the college program that are reported through the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to the LBB.

In addition to the performance data required by the appropriations process, Windham has other statutory requirements for reporting performance data to the legislature. Chapter 19 of the Texas Education Code requires Windham in coordination with the LBB to complete an annual report on the effectiveness of WSD’s job training programs. Required elements of that report include data on the employment rates, wages and retention of released offenders who have completed vocational programs. Chapter 19 also requires WSD to submit an annual report to the legislature documenting district activities under the strategic plan (Annual Performance Report). Windham’s Annual Performance Report includes a variety of information covering all areas of operations, including cost per participant, average educational achievement gain per offender, number of offenders served by class type, number and types of college degrees awarded. Windham is also required by an appropriation rider to complete a one-time recidivism study of the district’s programs and is currently working with Sam Houston State University (SHSU) to complete that study, which should be available this summer.

In addition to the performance data required by the legislature, Windham is also required to gather and compile data necessary to maintain the school accountability system mandated by Board policy. Information necessary to maintain that system relative to standards, established by the Board for offender achievement, is gathered and reported on an annual basis. Performance data is also required for the effective and efficient operation of the district. It gives the district the feedback needed to identify and evaluate services that are being provided. That feedback might be the most significant benefit derived from gathering of performance data because it can be used to identify problems and develop strategies that may actually impact program results.

Depending on the type of data being gathered, staff may receive feedback on a daily, monthly or annual basis. In the case of recidivism and employment studies, the feedback may not be available for a much longer period of time.

The length of time that elapses before the data is available and feedback received impacts the usefulness of information. For example, recidivism studies often measuring an event or a service that was delivered three or four years ago. The same issue applies to employment outcomes. A good employment study will include things like retention and salary increases over a set time period (the WSD study covers one year following release). Since it takes three or four months to gather and compile the data, by the time the report is completed, WSD is evaluating a service that was provided two or three years earlier.

The challenge for Windham is to identify data that can provide feedback in a timelier manner. Although, it isn't possible to have timely recidivism data, it is possible to collect timely data, which is predictive of recidivism. This data is referred to as benchmark data. One such benchmark is the average increase in educational achievement levels of releasing offenders. Research has shown that incremental increases in education achievement levels result in incremental decreases in recidivism rates. Windham captures average educational achievement gain regarding releasing offenders as part of its Annual Performance Report. That number can be compared year to year to determine if there are decreases in educational achievement gains that need to be addressed. If the average educational achievement gain increases, there should be a corresponding decrease in recidivism and vice versa. Since that information is collected and reported annually, it is more readily available than actual recidivism data. From a management perspective, the information is better than recidivism data, but it is still older than the district would prefer.

In order to access even timelier data, WSD needs to determine what factors impact the average educational achievement gain of releasing offenders. The answer: gather and review the educational achievement gains of current offenders. WSD monitors educational achievement gains of current students on a routine basis, since the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) test is administered to participating offenders three times throughout the year. The achievement data collected from those tests is available shortly after the test is administered so achievement gains can be evaluated relative to accountability standards. The data from those tests is used to identify problems at a particular unit, in a specific classroom, or even with a specific student.

WSD knows that a factor impacting student progress is "dosage" or hours in the classroom. Windham collects and monitors student attendance data on a daily basis. Monthly reports are produced and distributed to executive-level staff, including regional administrators and principals. These monthly reports track enrollment and attendance by unit and class type. This enables WSD to use performance data on a daily and monthly basis to solve problems relative to student attendance.

A similar approach is taken with employment results. The WSD effectiveness study deals with services provided two or three years previously. One of the predictors of successful employment is industry certification. WSD monitors industry certification on a monthly and annual basis. If fewer and fewer offenders are getting industry certification, a strategy can be developed to positively impact that trend immediately.

The Criminal Sentiments Scale is administered as a pre-test and post-test to measure decreases in pro criminal attitudes in the Cognitive Intervention Program. A recent study by a SHSU doctoral student using WSD data showed that reductions in recidivism were associated with decreases in pro criminal attitudes as measured by the Criminal Sentiments Scale. By monitoring the scores on the pre-test and post-test, WSD should be able to develop strategies to quickly identify issues that are happening with the cognitive program and respond to issues before they negatively impact recidivism rates. WSD is currently working on a process to provide feedback on the results of the Criminal Sentiments Scale to teachers and principals.

Ms. Roberts noted it was important to use the data on a continuing basis to evaluate and maintain the integrity of program implementation. She assured the Board that as the district moves forward with the Sunset Review and the recidivism study, WSD will use the research to identify additional benchmarks to enable the district to be proactive in impacting results.

Mr. McCombs asked for a definition between output measures and outcome measures. Ms. Roberts responded they are similarly related, but output measures would just be data.

Mr. McCombs stated that in the corrections industry, recidivism is the gold standard for success. He asked Ms. Roberts if she felt the two-to three-year delay in the recidivism studies caused the data to be outdated. Ms. Roberts responded that she felt the recidivism studies were an important piece, but they are not a source that WSD can always use to improve programming because of the delay.

Ms. Roberts stated benchmark measures are very important in program management. The recidivism studies, as they relate to correctional education, help make it possible to identify the benchmarks and make the connections.

Mr. McCombs commented that WSD collects a significant amount of data, and asked if WSD had to collect more data than public schools. Ms. Roberts responded that she did not believe so.

Mr. Vasquez noted that what WSD is doing is almost a parallel to what his company is doing in the private sector. They do not wait until the end of the month to evaluate performance' they break it down each week, each day and each shift. What WSD refers to as "benchmarks," his company refers to as "key performance indicators." He added that if this information is shared with WSD staff, then the district is doing what private sector companies are doing.

As to the three-year recidivism study, Mr. Mechler asked if the first year was running at 8% and then dropped to 6%, would it be reasonable to predict the second and third year would also be smaller. Ms. Roberts responded that was probably correct. One of the complications in the way WSD delivers programs, is WSD does not wait until the end of incarceration to provide services, especially in literacy programming. If someone comes into prison and cannot read, WSD wants to get them as far as they can get education-wise. Services may be provided for a particular offender over a six or seven year period. The data for that type of offender will not kick in with the recidivism data.

Mr. McCombs asked, in terms of predictability, if Ms. Roberts puts more emphasis on the cognitive intervention benchmarks than recidivism benchmarks. Ms. Robert replied that a SHSU

study was done a couple of years ago on the Cognitive Intervention Program and showed a clear correlation between scores on the Criminal Sentiment Scale and the recidivism rate. Offenders who lowered their criminal sentiment scores the most were the ones that reduced their recidivism rates the greatest.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Roberts reported that she attended the Correctional Education Association meeting in Columbia, Maryland, the first part of April. During the meeting, there was a lengthy discussion about the future of GED testing. Responsibility for the administration of the GED is being partially contracted with an education vendor, in what is being called a public-private partnership.

The plan is for the GED to be a completely computer-based assessment by January of 2014. In addition, the cost of the test is expected to significantly increase. Both of these issues present huge challenges to Windham. WSD staff plan to meet with representatives from TEA to discuss all options. The district plans to monitor both the requirements for the new GED test and the possible adoption of an alternative test for Texas. Ms. Roberts will continue to report back to the board regarding which direction the district should take in the future.

John Linton, representative of the U.S. Department of Education, attended the national meeting and updated state directors on what is happening in Washington. He talked specifically about the Incarcerated Individuals Grant appropriation and the current thinking relative to those funds. The grant was not included in any of the appropriations requests for the upcoming budget year, and Mr. Linton did not believe the money would be reinstated. This grant helped pay tuition costs for incarcerated college participants. The loss of that money will significantly impact the college program.

Mr. McCombs asked if a reason was given for the increase in the cost of the new GED. Ms. Roberts responded that no reason has been given but felt it was for fee charges, administrative costs and the new computer requirements. She felt if Texas adopted a different assessment, the state's universities and colleges would accept that in lieu of a GED, and it would serve the same purpose in Texas. Mr. McCombs asked if it would require legislative action to make that happen or if the decision could be made by TEA. Ms. Roberts advised she understood the legislature gave the State Board of Education the ability to adopt rules to establish an alternative test, and that the agency is gathering data to see if an alternative test would be a good idea.

Mr. Mechler commented that if there was an acceptable alternative accreditation, the state will have to do a good job in educating employers to let them know the two tests are the same. Ms. Roberts responded that she felt the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Workforce Investment Council, and those entities that deal with labor issues will have to be a part of that process. Mr. McCombs commented that the implications of the changes to the GED are enormous. Since WSD awards more GEDs than any other district in the state, it could have a huge impact.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Mr. Mechler stated there would not be a chairman's report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the 269th meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

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Chairman

Signature on File

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Secretary