

Windham School District
Board of Trustees
274th Meeting



Minutes

April 5, 2013
Austin, Texas

WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Crowne Plaza Austin – Salons D and E
6121 North IH-35
Austin, Texas 78752**

**April 5, 2013
2:45 – 3:30 PM**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call to Order

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

I. Regular Session

A. Recognitions

B. Consideration of Approval of Consent Items

1. Minutes of the January 11, 2013, WSD Board Meeting
2. Appraisers for the 2012-2013 School Year
3. Personal Property Donations
4. Excused Absences

C. Interim Superintendent's Report

D. Report from the Chairman, WSD Board

E. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Resolutions to Authorize the WSD to Participate, through Interlocal Agreements, with the following Purchasing Programs

1. The Interlocal Purchasing System administered by the Region VIII Educational Service Center
2. PACE Purchasing Cooperative administered by the Region 20 Educational Service Center
3. The Local Government Purchasing Cooperative operated by the Texas Association of School Boards

F. WSD Accountability Update

G. Presentation on the Evaluation of the Windham School District Correctional Education Programs by Sam Houston State University and Indiana University of Pennsylvania

H. 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**

Meeting No. 274

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, April 5, 2013, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Oliver Bell, Chairman
J. David Nelson

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Veronica Casanova, Interim Superintendent
LeeEtta Clabron
Latreace Craig
Gina Ganderson
Linda Goerdel
Karen Koenning
Michael Mondville
Kim Mooneyham
Sandra Nash
Karin Ruppelius
Mike Vickers
Luke Ward

RECONVENED

Tom Mechler, Vice Chairman, convened the meeting of the 274th Windham School District (WSD or district) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Friday, April 5, 2013, at 2:47 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the *Open Meetings Act*. During the regular session, the Board conducted business from the agenda posted in the Texas Register. A quorum was present and the meeting was declared open.

Mr. Mechler reported the WSD Board was committed to providing the opportunity for public presentations on posted agenda topics as well as for public comments on issues within its jurisdiction as provided in Board Rule 300.1. For this meeting, no speaker registration cards were received, therefore no public presentations or comments were heard.

RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Mechler recognized Debbie Roberts for her service as superintendent of the WSD from March 2006 through January 2013. He read a resolution honoring her contributions to the district and to correctional education. On behalf of the Board and the state of Texas, Mr. Mechler thanked her for her dedication, loyalty and hard work in helping rehabilitate the offender population. He congratulated her on her retirement and wished her well in the future.

Ms. Roberts thanked the Board for the work it does and for the support they gave her over the years. Veronica Casanova, Interim Superintendent, and the board members each expressed their appreciation to Ms. Roberts.

Ms. Casanova introduced Karin Ruppelius, the new WSD Director of Information Technology (IT). Ms. Ruppelius holds a Master of Science degree in Information Sciences and Systems and a Bachelor of Arts in Information Systems Management. She retired from the U.S. Air Force in 2002 as a network operations manager in Germany. After her military career, Ms. Ruppelius was employed with Northrop Grumman Corporation for several years, supporting the company's Department of Defense contracts. She has had demonstrative success in the IT field as a program manager, project manager, data base and security administrator, enterprise architect, network operations manager, and infrastructure manager. Ms. Casanova noted the district is very pleased to have Ms. Ruppelius join the Windham team.

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS

Mr. Mechler called the Board's attention to the Consent Items on the agenda, which consisted of the minutes of the January 11, 2013, meeting, appraisers for the 2012-13 school year, personal property donations, and excused absences of Judge Larry Gist and Terrell McCombs who were not able to attend the November Board meeting due to personal business.

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

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Legislative Update

Ms. Casanova informed the Board that she and Linda Goerdel, WSD Chief Financial Officer, made several visits to Austin the last couple of months, sharing two documents with various legislative offices. They provided House and Senate members with a copy of the report conducted by Sam Houston State University, titled *Evaluation of the Windham School District Correctional Education Programs*. This report evaluates Windham programs in terms of recidivism, employment rates, and student achievement. They also provided the legislative offices with a copy of WSD 2011-2012 Annual Performance Report, which highlights several facts regarding programs, students, and accomplishments. In addition, they shared information on the size and scope of the district, its programs, and how it operates.

Ms. Casanova had the opportunity to testify in support of House Bills 797 and 799, which speak to WSD vocational programs and furthering Windham's efforts to help WSD students develop relevant marketable skills and ensure their clear understanding of the employment licensure process. She also had the opportunity to testify in front of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Article III in regards to WSD's exceptional item request. The district has asked for additional dollars to cover the costs related to implementation of computer-based GED testing, to keep the level of instructional programming intact, and to restart literacy programming at several substance abuse facilities.

Ms. Casanova noted, as introduced the House Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 1 is appropriating additional dollars over the next two years in response to the exceptional item request. The Senate substitute however did not provide for any additional funding. The difference will be addressed by the conference committee.

Overview of WSD Administrators' Meeting

Ms. Casanova reported on the WSD statewide administrator's meeting that was held in February at the WSD administration building in Huntsville. Participants included the district's 45 principals. The first day addressed improving the digital literacy. Training was provided on the use of computer applications to help administrators access and examine student data. Time was also spent on using technology to improve organizational skills and to better manage budget and financial issues on their campuses.

The second day staff from the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners; the Plumbing, Heating and Cooling Contractors Association (PHCCA); and the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation attended the meeting. These groups provided information regarding the process WSD students must follow as well as tips on applying for licensure.

The meeting ended with a panel discussion with three former offenders who have been successful following release. One had received his Commercial Drivers License and is driving for a company in San Antonio; he also has recently purchased his first home. Another former offender received his National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Certification at the Luther Unit and continued his training after released to become a Master Electrician. The third individual had completed WSD's small engine class and is using those skills as an employee for the City of Houston. He was so excited to have a job with benefits and he attributed part of his success to having taken the Cognitive Intervention Program.

Report on Correctional Education Association Forum Activities

Ms. Casanova reported that she had the opportunity to attend the Correctional Education Association Leadership Forum in late March. She met several directors of correctional education programs from across the country. The conference focused on the GED 2014 and technology within correctional classrooms. The group discussed technology from two perspectives: using technology to improve instruction, and teaching students how to use technology or digital literacy.

During the forum, Ms. Casanova viewed a software program that provides students with the experience of being on the internet. Basically it's "Internet in a Box". With this program, students would be able to search topics for research papers, and they would be able to practice searching for jobs and applications. It had the look and feel of being on the internet but was all contained in a little black box that would be connected to a server. The company has received permission from over 1,200 authors to include their documents on the server, and they have copied and developed websites so that the system can have a very real feel for the user. Ms. Casanova noted she understood the system has been tested in three prisons. WSD is investigating the possibility of using this software program to see how it can be used to improve the impact of instruction.

A computer tablet was also unveiled at the Leadership Forum. This tablet was specifically designed for use in a correctional setting. Three states have tested it from a security standpoint and it is now being piloted for instruction. The tablet is about the size of a Kindle Fire, and it has a clear case so you can easily see if it's been tampered with, and it has an exclusive operating system so that only the company who designed it can load content to it. The tablet is not on the market yet, but is something WSD will be watching to determine if it can be used in the future to further prepare Windham students for today's job market.

Overall, the Leadership Forum was full of current and relevant information for Windham and Ms. Casanova said she was glad she was able to attend.

Referring back to the Legislative Update, Ms. Lord asked Ms. Casanova to briefly inform the Board about the seriousness of the GED testing, the waiver, etc. Ms. Casanova advised in January 2014, all public GED test centers are required to go to computer-based testing. Prisons across the country are able to apply for a waiver for the computer-based testing each year, but only for the next three years. Within that three year period, all sites will be required to administer the GED in a computer-based format. WSD is currently in the process of setting up trial computer-based test locations at the Pack, Luther and Hamilton units. If trial testing goes as planned, GED 2014 computer-based test will begin at those units in January 2014. Currently, the GED test is administered at 86 locations; those units not included in this trial will continue using the pencil and paper version until such time they can be converted to the computer-based format. The cost to implement this conversion district wide is one of the requested exceptional items.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WSD BOARD

Mr. Mechler stated that the results of the third quarter of the 2013 Chairman's Fitness Challenge had been released. During this quarter, Windham School District participants earned more than 1.4 million points. Within Division 7, which is dedicated to the WSD, the West Texas Region won first place, the North Texas Region came in second, and the WSD Administration finished third.

As for the special platinum challenge, the top challenger was from WSD's West Texas Region. Kenneth Prebish earned a total of 73,353 points which equates to more than 12,000 points per week. Mr. Mechler thanked the participants for their participation and support of this fitness initiative.

**DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING
RESOLUTIONS TO AUTHORIZE THE WSD TO PARTICIPATE, THROUGH
INTERLOCAL AGREEMENTS, WITH THE FOLLOWING PURCHASING
PROGRAMS:**

Ms. Goerdel reported the following resolutions would allow WSD to establish interlocal agreements with education service centers and the Texas Association of School Boards to join their purchasing cooperative. Participating in cooperatives is not new to Windham; WSD has been a member of the State of Texas Comptroller purchasing program since 1997. In addition, the WSD currently utilizes agreements with both the Region 4 and Region 19 education service centers.

Joining cooperatives allows Windham to have greater opportunities to procure equipment/supplies at the best value, and to purchase from vendors who offer equipment and instructional materials more adaptive to school districts. It also increases the district's buying power, and membership in three purchasing programs is free.

1. The Interlocal Purchasing System Administered by Region VIII Educational Service Center

This resolution will allow WSD to join the Region VIII Education Service Center Cooperative, known as the Interlocal Purchasing System. Board approval of this resolution is requested as presented.

Ms. Hiles asked if WSD was invited to be a part of these purchasing programs. Ms. Goerdel advised that when a district's purchaser goes online and looks at vendors' pricing for a particular item, it will list pricing options from education service centers, the Comptroller's Office, and other venues. In order to select a price option from these selected sites you must be a member. WSD has come across many opportunities in these areas and because these cooperatives offer more school district related items, it would be advantageous for the district to be a member.

Mr. McCombs asked Ms. Goerdel to estimate the amount the district would save by using these purchasing programs. Ms. Goerdel responded that she would be guessing, but felt the district could save 10 to 20 percent.

Ms. Hiles moved that the WSD Board of Trustees approve the resolution authorizing the Windham School District to participate through interlocal agreement with the Interlocal Purchasing System administered by the Region VIII Educational Service Center as presented.

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

2. PACE Purchasing Cooperative administered by the Region 20 Educational Service Center

Ms. Goerdel noted this second resolution would allow Windham to join the Region 20 Education Service Center Cooperative, known as PACE (Purchasing Association of Cooperative Entities). Board approval of the resolution is requested as presented.

Judge Larry Gist moved that the WSD Board of Trustees approve the resolution authorizing the Windham School District to participate through interlocal agreement with PACE Purchasing Cooperative, administered by Region 20 Education Service Center as presented.

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

3. The Local Government Purchasing Cooperative operated by the Texas Association of School Boards

Ms. Goerdel stated the final resolution is for Windham to join the Texas Association of School Boards' Cooperative, known as the Local Government Purchasing Cooperative. Board approval of the resolution is requested as presented.

Ms. Lord moved that the WSD Board of Trustees approve the resolution authorizing the Windham School District to participate through interlocal agreement with the Local Government Purchasing Cooperative operated by the Texas Association of School Boards as presented.

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

WSD ACCOUNTABILITY UPDATE

Sandra Nash, WSD Director of Operational Support, advised this presentation was a follow-up to the accountability presentation made at the January board meeting. It will address questions raised after that initial presentation.

What are other states doing to assess student performance in correctional education?

WSD staff contacted correctional education representatives from New York, Florida, California, and Indiana. These states were selected because they are similar in size to Texas. All of these states have similar components that are being measured. Three of those four states actually do not have a formal accountability system in place; Indiana was the only state that had implemented an accountability system.

Ms. Nash stated the components of Indiana's accountability system are similar to Windham's because they measure the same major things: the number of GED and vocational completions, and literacy gains as demonstrated on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Program completion is the key variable in their system.

Indiana's accountability system differs in that they use an A – F rating scale for their schools. They use this scale because it is familiar; it is the rating scale used in Indiana's public schools. Performance goals are individualized by campuses at the beginning of the school year. If the school attains all of its quarterly and annual goals, the campus receives an A. Their report card measures a campus' performance versus its goals. Their site managers (principals) and teachers

are held accountable for campus and student performance, just as WSD's principals and teachers are held accountable.

Ms. Nash spoke with John Nally, Superintendent of the Correctional Education Program in Indiana. He noted they implemented their accountability system because it was very important to measure student achievement.

How does the WSD compare to public schools in Texas?

Texas public schools look at student achievement by assessing if a student is actually performing on grade level. Windham does not have the student achievement component in the district's accountability system because WSD is a non-graded system.

Both public schools and WSD measure student progress and both look at whether students meet the expected standard of growth. Public schools look at whether students demonstrate progress on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test and WSD looks at whether students demonstrate progress on the TABE. Both systems look at post-secondary readiness. Public schools look at their graduation rate, and in their alternative education programs, they look at the graduation rate as well as the number of GEDs. Windham looks at the GED rate and college eligibility numbers.

Student achievement, student progress and post-secondary readiness were in the previous public school accountability system and are also components in the new accountability system that began this school year. Windham uses the same rating system designators that public schools used in their previous system. At this point, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has not indicated what designators will be used in the new public school accountability rating system.

When Windham compared the Career and Technical Education (CTE) component, it found public schools in Texas did not have a vocational component in their previous accountability system. They are however currently assessing whether some career and technical measures are appropriate for inclusion in the new system. TEA is working to develop vocational distinction indicators that can be awarded to their public schools as early as 2014.

Windham incorporated a CTE component in its accountability system at the beginning because vocational programming is paramount to Windham's mission. Prior to 2012, WSD only measured the percent of completers who mastered the skills and objectives for course completion. Beginning in 2012, a quality indicator component was added that would measure the level of mastery for students who completed WSD classes.

Initiatives to Promote Continuous Improvement

WSD wants all campuses to perform well each year. All campuses participate in activities that promote continuous improvement. Data is analyzed and dissected to identify specific skills that require concentrated instruction. Campus and student needs are addressed in the campus plan. Identified skill deficiencies can be targeted through new or modified instructional strategies and curriculum. Training is provided for WSD teachers through staff development activities.

Decisions are made regarding staff teaching assignments because it is imperative to have the right people in the right assignment. Teachers are held accountable for student success, and the teacher evaluation system (PDAS) allows the district to address teachers who do not or cannot perform effectively through intervention methods or separation from employment.

Because Windham's vocational accountability is based on the percent of students who complete vocational programs, WSD works with unit counselors to stress the importance of appropriate student placement. WSD is working with CTE teachers to provide instruction to meet the needs of students who have such diverse learning styles.

WSD unit staff work with unit administration to keep students enrolled or to reenroll them if they are dropped for any issues that are not security concerns. The WSD administrative staff works with TDCJ's state classification committee members to assist students who are transferred to another unit before the completion of their trade. Windham staff has developed a good working relationship with state classification and when possible, they will either allow the offender to transfer back to their original unit for course completion or they will send them to another unit that offers the same trade so the offender can complete the course. Vocational course completion better equips students to be employable upon release, so every effort is made to ensure students are given the chance to complete their vocational courses.

WSD will continue to monitor changes that are currently taking place in Texas's public school accountability system to see how WSD's system aligns with theirs. WSD will also be watching changes that take place within its operations as a result of GED 2014, the inclusion of student Digital Literacy, and the infusion of technology in WSD classrooms. WSD will continue to monitor the accountability system to determine if modifications need to be made to standards or if the components that are currently in place will still be relevant. WSD wants to make certain the accountability system emphasized the components that would help students be employable upon release.

Ms. Lord asked if counselors used any type of standardized testing when placing students in classes, or if the process is more subjective. Ms. Nash replied it was more subjective. Counselor meets with the student and asks them about their previous experience, what they are interested in doing, and where they are going upon release. WSD has been working with the Workforce Commission to determine what the job opportunities are in different areas of the state, and WSD tries to steer students in the right direction.

Judge Gist asked if bringing technology into the classroom will have an effect on the quality of the instructors, or will it change staffing. Ms. Casanova responded WSD is looking to improve the level and effect of instruction. It is hard to function in society if a person does not have any technology skills. Windham has two objectives: helping students gain an understanding of the content in math and reading through the use of technology; and learning how to use technology. WSD is piloting the use of laptops in the classroom to improve the speed at which a student learns.

Ms. Hiles noted computer technology would be used as another teaching modality and not to replace a teacher. Schools still need someone who knows different strategies that work with this diverse group of students. Computers are just another tool used to teach.

Ms. Casanova advised one of the first things employers ask WSD to do is teach soft skills, which cannot be taught by a computer. Teachers are the ones that really make a difference in teaching those skills.

Mr. McCombs asked for some schematics of achievement versus progress. He views achievement as a point in time, and progress as an amount of movement on a timeline. Ms. Nash said this was correct. Accountability is reviewed at the end of the year; WSD looks at where students were before the year started and at growth made during the year. Ms. Casanova added that achievement in public school measures whether the student is on grade level.

Mr. Mechler stated Senator Dan Patrick has introduced the A-F rating system for public schools in Texas, and TEA Commissioner Williams has the authority to make that change. He inquired who has the authority to make such a change to the WSD accountability system, to which Ms. Casanova replied the Board; the accountability process is a board adopted policy. Mr. Mechler asked WSD staff to investigate the possibility of changing the district to an A-F rating system.

**PRESENTATION ON THE EVALUATION OF THE WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS BY SAM HOUSTON STATE
UNIVERSITY AND INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

No discussion was held on this topic.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the 274th meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

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Chairman

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Secretary

Note: Referenced attachments for draft minutes are available upon request. Following approval of the minutes, attachments will be maintained with the signed minutes in the Office of Record.

*Signature on File