

MINUTES OF THE WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Meeting No. 304

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, February 23, 2018, at the Wyndham Garden Hotel, Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Hon. Dale Wainwright, Chairman
Terrell McCombs, Vice Chairman
Mano DeAyala
Tom Fordyce
Patrick O'Daniel
Derrelynn Perryman
Thomas P. Wingate

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Eric Gambrell, Secretary
Pastor Larry Miles

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Clint Carpenter, Superintendent
Charles Bell
LeeEtta Clabron
Dr. Latreace Craig
Susan Norris
Robert O'Banion
Karin Ruppelius

CONVENED

Chairman Dale Wainwright convened the meeting of the 304th Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Friday, February 23, 2018, at 10:02 a.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.

Chairman Wainwright recognized Janis Reinken of the House Corrections Committee.

Chairman Wainwright 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. As no speaker registration cards were received by the board staff, no public presentations on posted agenda topics were heard.

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS

The Chairman called the Board's attention to the Consent Items on the agenda, which consisted of the minutes of the December 15, 2017, meeting, appraisers for the 2017-2018 school year and excused absences.

There being no other comments, objections or amendments to the Consent Items, the Consent Items were approved as submitted.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

American Probation and Parole Association Winter Training Institute

Dr. Clint Carpenter, WSD Superintendent, said on January 23rd, Windham joined with TDCJ directors in a presentation at the American Probation and Parole Association Winter Training Institute in Houston. This conference is a collaborative training program for individuals who work with probationers and parolees as they reenter society. Many of the attendees at the conference work directly to secure jobs and assist probationers and parolees in achieving success in turning their lives around.

Dr. Carpenter, along with April Zamora, Pam Thielke and Bobby Lumpkin, addressed the group about programing in the prison system and how the agency works together to support the goals of each program. The panel shared an overview of the educational, industrial, vocational and on-the-job training available to offenders in the TDCJ. Presenters also described the effectiveness of collaboration between multiple TDCJ departments and the Windham School District. Information was shared about the collaborative apprenticeship programs between TDCJ's Manufacturing, Agribusiness, and Logistics Division and the Windham School District. Recent collaborative grants for offender training were described, and these have been awarded to Windham by the Houston Galveston Area Workforce Board and the Tarrant County Workforce Solutions. Reentry and Windham described the industry partners working with TDCJ and WSD and provided insight on future improvements. These include website access for employers and information on training credentials that offenders receive while incarcerated.

Windham is proud to be a partner with TDCJ in working to build reentry success for those releasing from the system.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Creative Writing Volunteer Program

Chairman Wainwright said the Pen City Writers is a college level, two-year, creative writing certificate program for men incarcerated at the Connally Unit. It is sponsored by the English Department at The University of Texas at Austin. The program emphasizes academic rigor and excellence, community building, creativity, and leadership. Professor Deb Unferth volunteers her time to teach the men participating in this program.

The program originated in the summer of 2015 as a simple monthly creative writing workshop with 15 students. Over time, the class has evolved to include more academically rigorous materials.

By January 2017, the program changed into a two-year, creative-writing certificate program. The UT English Department is the official sponsor, and the certificates are signed by the Chair of the English Department at The University of Texas at Austin.

A class library was created for students in the program. They can access approved reading materials that educate and challenge them. The reading materials are selected by the professor, and all books are approved by Windham and TDCJ before they arrive at the Connally Unit.

In January 2018, The University of Texas agreed to grant three college credits per year for students enrolled in the program. This will be a university extension program and the English department will cover student fees. Students who complete the program will earn a certificate of completion, as well as a college transcript reflecting coursework and hours completed.

In order to complete the certificate, students must:

1. Design, write, revise, and complete a thesis of short stories 60 to 80 pages long. This will be made up stories they have worked on and revised for their entire second year in the program. The thesis must be read and approved by two professors in The University of Texas English Department.
2. Read 50 books from the Pen-City Library and write 50 short literary responses to them, focusing on their craft.

The program recently received approval to be classified as an Intensive Volunteer Program based on program duration and hours of programming. The students work hard and must support each other to do well in this program. These students are gaining professional skills they will be able to use when they re-enter society. In addition, they will have a certification from the English Department from The University of Texas to show their education, commitment and potential to employers.

BOARD PRESENTATION: COMPUTER-BASED GED TESTING

Dr. Latreece Craig, Administrator II of Special Programs & Populations; Karin Ruppelius, Administrator II of Information Technology, and Susan Norris, Administrator of Counseling, Testing and Records gave the presentation on Computer-Based Testing (CBT) for the GED.

Dr. Craig reported that WSD began the implementation of computer-based GED testing in November 2014, and completed the implementation in November 2017. CBT is a simple and better way to offer the GED test. It allows testing centers to offer a more consistent test delivery, faster scoring and reporting, and enhanced test security. Testing is done in person, on a computer, and at an approved testing site. Testing is not done online. Each WSD facility is an approved testing site with a unique testing ID number assigned. Only two computers are required to become a testing site: an administrator computer and a student computer. Testing sites can use desktop computers or laptop computers, as long as the minimum requirements are met.

WSD staff met with officials from GEDTS, the makers of the GED, and a three-year implementation plan was agreed upon. The three-year implementation timeline for the transition from the paper-based, GED 2002 to the computer-based GED 2014 involved the district incorporating the skills and vocabulary associated with computer-based testing into the existing classrooms. WSD curriculum resources also had to align with the new assessment. Eighty-seven sites would need to be converted, which was a huge undertaking.

A plan was devised to focus on the 15 state jails, 60 ID units, and 12 transfer facilities. On-site computer based trainings for approximately 77 counselors, 28 testing specialists, 17 lead teachers, and 46 principals were provided as part of the implementation.

Ms. Ruppelius said there were three options available for testing: use the existing computer lab, build a testing lab, or use laptops. WSD staff visited each unit to survey the option that would work best at each location.

If the unit could not use the existing lab for testing, the option of building a testing lab in another room was investigated. If staff found a room that would work for testing but had power shortfalls, the principal worked closely with TDCJ maintenance to see if it was possible to have additional power installed. Currently, WSD has 44 testing labs.

There are 15 units where labs were not available and/or space was limited. Laptops are used at these locations. The laptops are set up before testing and put away when the testing has been completed. The laptops are stored in a charging cart and kept in a locked location when not in use.

Ms. Norris reviewed the data collected since the computer-based GED was implemented in 2015:

- In 2015, 47 computer-based GEDs, were awarded on seven units offering CBT. This was a 69 percent pass rate.
- In 2016, 678 computer-based GEDs were awarded on 21 units offering CBT. This was an 81 percent pass rate.
- In 2017, 9,254 computer-based GEDs were awarded on 87 units offering CBT. This was an 82 percent pass rate.

In the last three years, the number of overall GEDs achieved in WSD has ranged from 20 percent to 31 percent of those achieved in the state. The State of Texas achieves anywhere from 17,000 to 21,000, and WSD achieves between 4,000 to 5,000.

Ms. Norris concluded her presentation by stating WSD is, and has been, responsible for awarding more GEDs than any other entity in Texas.

Terrell McCombs asked what implementation option was the most cost-effective overall and how often is testing conducted?

Ms. Norris responded that the staff initially thought laptops were the most cost-effective, but over time, it has been determined that the computer labs are the most cost-effective. She said units are required to test a minimum of four times per year. Testing will be done many times per year on units with a high turnover rate.

Mr. McCombs asked if the space can be used for alternative purposes when testing is not being conducted. He also asked if facilities had accommodated WSD when rooms needed electrical updates.

WSD staff gave a positive answer.

Chairman Wainwright asked for clarification on the overall pass rates. He said that in the past two years, WSD's pass rate of above 80 percent is well above Texas' pass rate and higher than the national pass rate for GEDs.

Ms. Norris responded that this statement was correct.

Mr. Wingate asked, “How many subtests are within the GED and which subtest has the best pass rate?”

Ms. Norris said there are four subtests, and it takes seven hours and five minutes to complete all of them. Science traditionally has the best pass rate, she said.

Chairman Wainwright thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The next meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees will be Friday, April 20, 2018, at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in Austin.

ADJOURNED

There being no further business for the regular session, Chairman Wainwright adjourned the 304th meeting of the Windham School District Board of Trustees at 10:29 a.m.

Chairman*

Secretary*

*Signature on File

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.