

**MINUTES OF BOARD RETREAT HELD
July 6, 2010**

The Board Retreat of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by Mr. Hemant Marathe at 5:40 p.m. in the media center at Grover Middle School. The following Board members were present:

Mr. John Farrell	Mr. Todd Hochman	Mr. Alapakkam Manikandan	Mr. Randall Tucker
Mr. Anthony Fleres	Mr. Richard Kaye	Mr. Hemant Marathe	Mrs. Ellen Walsh

Board Member Johnson was absent. Present also were: Dr. Victoria Kniewel, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Dr. David Aderhold, Assistant Superintendent Pupil Services and Planning, and Mr. Russell Lazovick, Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction.

CONVENE

In accordance with the State’s Sunshine Law, adequate notice of this meeting was provided by mailing a notice of the time, date, location and, to the extent known, the agenda of this meeting to the PRINCETON PACKET, THE TIMES, THE HOME NEWS TRIBUNE, AND WEST WINDSOR and PLAINSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARIES. Copies of the notice have also been posted in the board office and filed with Plainsboro’s and West Windsor’s township clerks and in each of the district schools.

No members of the public were present.

BOARD PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS

Mr. Marathe welcomed everyone to the retreat and thanked them for participating during this busy time of the year.

SUPERINTENDENT’S COMMENTS

Dr. Kniewel stated that the main purpose of the retreat is to brief the Board on where we are and where we are going so that we have clarity and alignment between the Board and the administrative staff about the direction for 2010-2011. The Board will provide feedback and help set the direction for this coming year. As an outcome of the retreat, Board Members will understand the new reality and its impact; and, the administration will have a clear direction and understanding of the Board’s priorities.

DISCUSSION

“The mission of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District, valuing our tradition of excellence, is to develop all of our students as passionate, confident, lifelong learners who have competence and strength of character to realize their aspirations and thoughtfully contribute to a diverse and changing world.” A brief discussion ensued on the direction of our mission statement including: all students continually recognize community issues, propose solutions and choose to carry out plans that contribute to their resolution; all students continually identify, develop, and execute plans to pursue their personal and educational aspirations; all students continually and willingly share with an audience the results of ongoing learning that is important to them; and, then, all of our students will be passionate, confident, life long learners who have competence and strength of character to realize their aspirations and thoughtfully contribute to a diverse and changing world.

Core Values were reviewed and discussed. As a district, we believe strongly that: continuous learning is essential for individual fulfillment and for the advancement of society; every individual has intrinsic worth; embracing diversity enriches and empowers our community; honesty, integrity, and trust are cornerstones for continuing excellence; people reach their highest potential when challenged to believe it is possible; and, openness to change is essential to progress and future viability.

Board members spoke of challenges and opportunities. Among the topics discussed were: increased politicalization of public education; impact of unions versus governor on district; concerns about growing cost of Special Education services; rallying the public on education issues, e.g. charters; linking community interests such as field lights to other areas such as Robotics, Math, and Science; and, to work on policy issues. Responding substantively to these and other challenges and opportunities will impact student learning. The whole child, every child, perspective will be brought to focus after a discussion of 2009-2010 highlights and 2010-2011 next steps.

HIGHLIGHTS AND NEXT STEPS

Central Office

Developing a new central office team was an important part of the 2009-2010 school year. With retirements and new appointments, developing a new district-wide leadership team will be a significant part of the 2010-2011 school year.

Business Operations

The superintendent's earlier noting of the myriad areas for action by the team and district, areas beyond the few that will be focused on tonight, was re-emphasized for the business area. Key accomplishments were noted for 2009-2010 and also a variety of actions for 2010-2011. A four-page list of necessary financial activities required by state and federal rules and regulations can be matched with similar lists in other functional areas of the district. However, tonight the focus in this section will be on two areas: buildings & grounds and solar.

While the work related to buildings & grounds goes back several years, 2009-2010 saw a heightening of activity focused on accountability and productivity. A consultant was engaged, an economy & efficiency study created, many hours of discussion with and about employees were held, an invitation for bid was done and an award of a contract was made. In 2010-2011, the transition to a contractor must be managed, a quality environment for learning must be sustained, and the envisioned budget savings must be realized.

Efforts for a solar rebate started in 2004, but the 2009-2010 school year saw a great deal of activity. The district received a final extension on its \$576,500 solar rebate to October 23, 2010. In November 2010, the Board awarded a contract at \$997,000. In addition, the district won a Clean Renewable Energy Bond (CREB) allocation from the IRS for seven projects; \$7,585,553 CREB bonds must be issued within the next three years or they will be rescinded. Timely action programs for solar and needed roof projects were discussed. State approvals would quickly be sought as would an April bond referendum. Board Members urged recruitment of community members into this effort; such involvement in district efforts was a repeated theme through the evening's discussions. In addition to the CREB dollars, roof work for about \$3.5 million would be needed; \$2.3 million is covered by round three Regular Operating District (ROD) grant applications; the state would provide 40 percent and the district 60 percent. In addition, roof warranty extension costs might total \$0.5 million and non-ROD project roof work for about \$0.4 million is envisioned. Local funds would come from the annual capital outlay budget and from capital reserve withdrawals. It was noted that most of the roof work would be needed whether or not the solar panels

were done. Under most scenarios, this solar effort would be cash positive in its first year of operation with principal and interest of the bonds being offset by federal tax credits, state debt service aid, savings from generated electricity, and sale of Solar Renewable Energy Certificates (SRECs). With environmental, energy, financial, and educational dimensions, the Board consensus was to move forward.

Administration

The district has supported fundraising efforts for field lights by the West Windsor-Plainsboro Booster Club. Due to the aggressive/successful fundraising efforts, a meeting will be established between Booster Club founders and representatives of the district to discuss a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Dave Carroll of Parker McCay also will attend on behalf of the district. It is important that we protect the interests of the district in how we craft the MOA so that we protect the district's financial interests. While there are clear advantages for our student athletes, families, and teams with the implementation of field lights, there are numerous hurdles to clear. We have successfully crafted a Commercial Advertising Policy and now must turn to develop both the MOA and a Field Usage Policy. In the meantime, fundraising efforts continue with a Hall of Fame Dinner, which has been tentatively set for October 15, 2010.

The district has contracted Strauss Esmay to perform a full policy review and the district has provided Strauss Esmay a list of existing materials. Next, Strauss Esmay will conduct a series of interviews within the district on July 27, 2010. Following a period of data gathering, Strauss Esmay will begin to produce a draft manual for review. The Administration and Facilities Committee will maintain the lead in the review and recommendations of the policy and regulation manuals.

This year, the district will review our crisis manual in order to ensure compliance with the Attorney General Law Enforcement Directive No. 2007-1, approved Safety-Fire Drills legislation adopted 1/1/2010, and recommendations drafted by the NJ DOE Office of Education Support Services School Security Unit in October 2007. While our current crisis plan has many of the required and recommended components, there are numerous recommendations that we will need to study. During the fall, we will engage in a series of meetings in an effort to address any potential deficiencies in our plan. While the district signs a Memorandum of Agreement with both the West Windsor and Plainsboro Township Police Departments, the requirement for a school safety and security plan are completely separate documents. Within our assessment of the recommendations will be a full review of the five model school security policies recommended by the School Security Unit.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district has continued to expand the use of Infinite Campus as a means of communicating with the community. The rate of parents using the system has tripled over the past two years. This increase in use has been due to the district's efforts to teach parents how to use the system and to make important information available through the Parent and Student Portals. During the coming year, the district will continue to make additional information available through the portals, including report cards for all grade levels, to provide parents even more reasons to use the system. The district has continued to capitalize on its investment in Infinite Campus, increasing the professional use of the system by the faculty and staff to work more efficiently. Special Education, Medical Databases, and Athletic Planning no longer are in costly, separate systems; they now are connected to Infinite Campus saving time and money. Additionally, increased communication has been made possible through Infinite Campus, including non-public institutions and law enforcement agencies.

The district has adapted its curriculum format to meet updated state requirements, and continues to move all district curricula into this format. The new format includes required common assessments, and the data

from these internal assessments will be warehoused in Performance Matters. The system has been purchased as a means of aggregating and analyzing student performance data to improve professional practice. The program review process continues to move forward, with Language Arts and Special Services reviews continuing into the next year, to be joined with reviews of Technology and Fine and Performing Arts.

This year, the district completed the first year of a new three-year New Teacher Induction Program. The program used the new evaluation framework, based on the work of Charlotte Danielson, which will become the framework for all observations of teachers in the coming year. The district implemented a new system for evaluating administrators, which has been refined and will continue in the coming year. Both systems require the creation and use of data, including data measuring student performance, to foster professional growth.

“The Whole Child; Every Child”

Based on the findings of the district’s Professional Development committee based on building-specific and district-wide needs assessments and continuous review of current best practice, the district will be focusing all professional development activities toward one goal: “The Whole Child; Every Child.” The Whole Child refers to the district’s goal of preparing all students for success in the 21st Century. This will mean moving beyond a content-centric, content-only approach to an approach that exposes students to authentic challenges based on content. To guide this approach, the district has developed six 21st Century Competencies, in line with state and national standards. The competencies (Innovative & Practical Problem Solver; Effective Communicator; Collaborative Team Member; Flexible & Self-Directed Learner; Globally Aware, Active, & Responsible Student/Citizen; Information Literate Researcher) will guide instruction and assessment K-12, fostering collaboration of all faculty and staff as we create students prepared to compete in a global economy and participate in an increasingly interconnected world. Every Child refers to the district’s work in creating a culture of informed decision making. The commitment to the idea that every child will become a successful, lifelong learner requires that we find new ways to generate and use data at all levels and in all areas to ensure that each student reaches his or her full potential. “Whole Child; Every Child” will guide all of our instructional endeavors foster collaboration between all faculty and staff toward the same goal.

Vision Exchange

Discussion turned to what excites or concerns Board members as the district moved forward. Areas discussed included: more resources are needed or the load may be crushing; caution to not overdo the drive for data at the cost of interpersonal relationships; that as we discuss with the public, see that student learning is always front and center; revising policy; student competencies has exciting implications; importance of gaining data since a paucity of data is the norm; general appreciation and respect for the four administrators was expressed; the evaluation effort with the domains dimension excited; as was a general excitement that the district was pushing forward in many areas, showing a willingness to take risks.

The Mr. Marathe thanked everyone for their efforts. He noted the district’s success at constantly moving in the right direction.

It also was noted that the charter school was trying to come before the Plainsboro Township Zoning Board this week and attendance was encouraged. The PIAC did not comply with the Municipal Land Use Law requirements and should not be allowed to present at this July 7th meeting. True safety issues, especially with regard to parent drivers and in particular, kindergarten children, exist.

The superintendent and Mr. Marathe thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Mr Tucker, seconded by Mr. Kaye, and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary

Prepared by:

Kathleen M. Bertram

**MINUTES OF BOARD RETREAT HELD
October 28, 2010**

The Board Retreat of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by Mr. Hemant Marathe at 5:30 p.m. in the administrative conference room at High School North. The following Board members were present:

Mr. John Farrell	Mr. Robert Johnson	Mr. Hemant Marathe
Mr. Anthony Fleres	Mr. Richard Kaye	Mr. Randall Tucker
Mr. Todd Hochman	Mr. Alapakkam Manikandan	Mrs. Ellen Walsh

Present also were: Dr. Victoria Kniewel, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Dr. David Aderhold, Assistant Superintendent Pupil Services and Planning, and Mr. Russell Lazovick, Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction.

CONVENE

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No members of the public were present.

BOARD PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS

Mr. Marathe welcomed everyone to the retreat and thanked them for their participation. The main purpose of this retreat is to understand fully the district challenges as a context for setting direction for the administration.

SUPERINTENDENT’S COMMENTS

Dr. Kniewel thanked the board for its participation. Tonight’s outcome should be to engage the Board and administration in a way that is meaningful, powerful and furthers the strategic agenda of the district. All participants should understand the financial picture for the 2011-2012 budget; the impact that last year’s budget had on the district; the structures necessary to support “Whole Child, Every Child”; and, generate questions for increased understanding of Special Education.

CONTEXT FOR BUDGET DISCUSSION

To frame the discussion the Superintendent asked the board to speak to the core of the district that should not be lost as the fiscal constraints tighten further. Naturally, the board spoke of the need to focus on students. To give attention to preparing all students for 21st century challenges. To provide for the whole student, co-curricular activities as well as classroom activities. To have faculty and community engagement in our actions. In a tightening fiscal environment, how do the needs, requirements and mandates of special education get incorporated without hamstringing the regular education student?

DISTRICT GOALS IN ACTION

Mr. Lazovick utilized Performance Matters to show the impact of data on instruction. A particularly powerful example emerged with respect to language arts instruction. The board was walked through the data analysis and the subsequent staff discussions and actions.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRENT BUDGET (2010–2011)

The Superintendent noted that the district has been realigning and reducing costs over the past eight budgets. The process generally realized some reductions in a specific area one year while continuing to work toward additional reductions in subsequent years. The 2010-11 budget – faced with massive cuts in state aid – required the district to incorporate many of the individual steps that had been planned to be done over several years. In many respects the “inventory” of realignment areas is nearly “bare.” Dave did a heroic job last budget cycle in working with principals to realize the needed savings.

Mr. Aderhold provided the Board of Education with an overview of the budget process utilized in preparation of the 2010 – 2011 school budget. The overview discussed the original targeted budget reductions required to arrive at a 2.2% budget to budget increase. In order to arrive at this target we targeted potential savings associated with the privatization of Buildings and Grounds, equalization of budgets for HSS and HSN student activities, reduction of supplies in the amount of \$250,000, reduction of three administrators and the reduction of one teaching position. In addition, arriving at a 2.2% budget to budget increase several concessions were negotiated with the teachers and administrators associations.

In anticipation of a cut in state aid our March 18th budget projections focused on an anticipated 5 to 15% reduction in state aid. These reductions included guidance staffing, elementary computer and health teachers, middle school literature and math lab teachers, reductions in capital spending, decrease in an additional two administrators, central office supplies and staff and a reduction in dollars budgeted for the Charter school.

Following the Governor’s announced budget reductions which totaled 5% of the total budget (accounting for approximately \$7.6 million) on March 17, 2010 the district had to dramatically increase the number of position and programmatic cuts. Arriving at such a budget required enacting all cuts listed above as well as a multitude of additional reductions. Staffing reductions were felt at all levels; high school, middle school and elementary. Each elementary school reduced one grade level teacher. Middle schools reduced on mini-team and guidance counselors. The high schools cut several departmental positions. Additionally, cuts were made in athletics, transportation, student activities, special education, field trips, general supplies, library and nursing services, and co-curricular activities (such as Outdoor Education).

Overall, the budget changes required to arrive at a 0% budget to budget increase reduced the services provided to our students and increased class sizes. Any subsequent cuts will be felt in the core of our programs.

A discussion by board members centered on areas where the district might be “thin.” These included administrators enough to keep assessment of staff on track; class sizes, especially in the earliest grade levels; dealing with parent desires both for advanced classes and dropping such classes.

A copy of the PowerPoint presented during the BOE retreat is attached.

FISCAL REALITY

Mr. Shanok led a discussion of the major components framing the 2011-12 budget process. As a first step he reviewed a number of the actions taken in previous budget efforts. He then outlined a number of the functional areas that would require additional dollars if they continue unchanged for the 2011-12 school year. Finally he provided a several benchmarks by which to assess the success of the district's budget efforts.

A number of general fund spending categories were reviewed in the context of past budget actions and implications for the future. A very useful one is health costs. Health costs have more than doubled over the past decade. While the move to the state plan for medical won the district some time, the January 1, 2010 increase of 25% demonstrates that the plan is in difficulty. And early in that ten year period – as well as most recently – expenditures have increased by about (or more) than two million dollars in one year alone. Budget \$2 million and have \$2 million of increases: no additional budget problems. Budget \$2 million and have only a \$1 million increase: there is a healthy amount of tax relief coming up. Budget \$1 million and have \$2 million of increases and immediate drastic cuts will be required – not simply in areas of least interest, but in any area in which the dollars are not completely committed; this could hurt students.

Consider the future. While 1.5% of salary from employees toward benefits is a nice amount in its first year, subsequent years see little additional dollars. This is not very useful should expenditures increase by \$2 million or more – as they have four of the past ten years. Even a modest but hard won employee contribution is of marginal help. 5% of a two million dollars increase still leaves the district with a need for an additional \$1.9 million for the next budget. Meaningful percentages are needed; percentages high enough that employees will be receptive to increases in copays/deductibles as well as plan changes. These considerations take on even more importance in a 2% cap environment (even if exempt from the cap, there will be pressure not to exceed 2%).

Another area in which the district has taken steps to constrain the growth of spending is energy. Whether it was the new chiller/boiler at High School South a few years ago, or last summers High School South corridor lighting project, the district has been encouraging and investing in this area. Staff pays more attention to HVAC conditions and lights. The Phase I solar installations at both high schools this summer were another sound step. Our intention is to have a referendum for a larger Phase II solar in April is another exciting avenue for action. Indeed, three of the past four years have seen energy expenditures at around the \$3 million level – however, the other year saw a 15% year to year increase in costs as energy prices and the weather can conspire to drive costs higher. Just as in the health area, costs exceeding budget can be toxic to valued programs.

While highly valuing co-curricula activity, changes are happening there too. While over the past ten years no significant increases were allowed, expenditures have crept higher – until the past year. Holding a firm dollar limit stipends, as official and meet fees escalate have meant a “shaving” of activity. Such incremental reductions will continue and attract more attention as time passes. Some call for student fees but our families already place a great deal of funds into them unofficially from a budget standpoint. Explicit fees have serious negative potential consequences, often on the students least able to deal with them. And in most districts, collection problems appear to compound when fees get much higher than the \$150,000 level – not a great deal of help in a \$2.3 million co-curricular effort, given the negative aspects.

How have the efforts alluded to impact the district over the past eight budgets? Over those years, enrollment is up 12%. How has staff grown? While the general public clamors about the “increasing” ranks of administrators, the district has been reducing in the face of growing enrollment – and has more aggressive administrator to student and faculty ratios than the state average. With the reductions in the 2010-11 budget, total administrators are down 21% over the eight years.

Until the 2010-11 budget the regular education teacher count was up slightly as the district squeezed for more utilization from partially engaged staff as well as disallowed small class sizes and gently increased general class size, especially in the upper grades. With the reductions this year such staff is down 2% in the face of 12% enrollment growth.

With better utilization of office automation systems, secretarial staff is down 22% across the district and regular education instructional assistants have been reduced 61%. The move in Buildings & Grounds was stressful but essential in the face of \$7.7 million state aid reduction. With having brought back to the district a number of special education students that had previously been served out of district, better services, often at lower total cost, have increased staff in that area. Certified staff has increased 27% and IAs by 70%.

So, the staffing aspect has received a great deal of attention. How have the dollars followed? The budget is up 31% over that time. How can we assess that figure?

The district started the period (using the State of New Jersey’s comparative spending guide, actual costs) at a per pupil spending level comparable to sister districts Hopewell, Lawrence and Princeton; district spending was \$336 above the state average. For the last actual data available, WWPRSD spends \$2,253 and \$2,358 respectively per pupil less than Hopewell and Lawrence and \$4,359 less than Princeton. The district’s spending is \$1,285 under the state average for larger k-12 districts. The increase in district per pupil spending is 14%. In comparison, the consumer price index over that period is up 19%. Also of interest is the employment cost index for state and local government workers, which is up 23% over that time period.

How might we look at the 31% increase in total budget mentioned earlier? The Finance Committee some years ago suggested that a “fair” increase would be defined as the increase in the employment cost index of state/local workers plus the increase in enrollment minus one percentage point. Compounded over the years this figure is 33% - a favorable comparison to the 31%.

So, where might the 2011-12 budget stand? If all existing programs and personnel continue as is, what are the financial demands? What resources might be available?

A 2% increase in the general tax levy could bring just over \$2.7 million additional dollars into use. Unfortunately, tightening resources, as predicted, brought down the year to year amount of tax relief available to aid the budget. The governor’s taking \$2.9 million of state aid from 2009-10 is rather directly linked to the fall in available relief. Other revenue or cost reductions would be needed in the place of such tax relief dollars.

Resource demands? The WWPEA is currently due (based on the last salary guide) almost \$3 million additional dollars next year (this may be reduced when staff departures are fully taken into account as the budget process proceeds). Similarly, the WWPEA is due about a quarter of a million dollars additional next year. Other employees desire comparable treatment to the EA and AA staff. The State Employees Health Benefit Plan has already announced an 8% increase for January 1, 2011 and the prospect for a 2% increase on January 1, 2012 is bleak. Prescription and dental premium increases are likely. This year is the last for ARRA funds that have provided a million per year for the past two

years. The April 2011 PERS payment required by the state is up \$332,798 or 23% from a year ago; what will April 2012 figure be? If the charter school needs to be budgeted for next year, an additional \$0.8 million will be needed.

Clearly the pressures are great. Which of these pressures can be slacked? What reductions can be made in current spending areas? Will a meaningful toolkit finally appear? These are the considerations as 2011-12 is developed.

SPECIAL EDUCATION QUESTIONS

Dr. Kniewel provided the Board of Education an opportunity to generate questions about Special Education. As time was limited, Dr. Kniewel informed the Board that this would be an opportunity to ask questions and not a time to receive answers. She shared that the questions of the Board of Education would either be answered by district administrators or utilized during the program review.

Questions generated are listed below:

- Can we do a compliance review to ensure that students are classified and placed appropriately? (Specifically with regards to residency)
- Can we consider using an outsourced service to lower cost? Should we?
 - Outsourcing current staff duties to a firm?
- What is the right leadership/professional development for Special Services?
- What benchmarks are available in other districts to measure how Special Services is performing in WW-P?
 - Do we spend more on litigation than others?
- At what point are community expectations unrealistic?
- Are we settling (litigation) too quickly/easily?

The Superintendent and Mr. Marathe thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Mr Manikandan, seconded by Mr. Tucker, and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary

Prepared by:

Kathleen M. Bertram

**MINUTES OF BOARD RETREAT HELD
June 13, 2011**

The Board Retreat of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by Mr. Hemant Marathe at 6:00 p.m. in the Administrative Conference Room at High School North. The following Board members were present:

Mr. John Farrell	Mr. Todd Hochman	Ms. Dana Krug
Ms. Rachelle Feldman Hurwitz	Mr. Robert Johnson	Mr. Hemant Marathe
Mr. Anthony Fleres	Mr. Richard Kaye	Mrs. Ellen Walsh

Present also were: Dr. Victoria Kniewel, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary; Dr. David Aderhold, Assistant Superintendent Pupil Services and Planning; and Mr. Russell Lazovick, Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction.

CONVENE

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No members of the public were present.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Mr. Marathe welcomed everyone to the retreat and thanked them for participating during this busy time of the year.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Dr. Kniewel thanked everyone for participating during such a busy week that includes committee and Board of Education meetings. Tonight is to understand what we, as a school district, are trying to achieve and why; to clarify the relationship between instructional goals/programs and Board of Education decisions and budget; and, to understand the place of Board/administration communication and its timeliness.

Welcome/Review Outcomes & Agenda/Ground Rules/Set the Context

Dr. Kniewel stated that the main purpose of the retreat is to understand our mission: where we are going instructionally and why; reflection and report out: "Whole Child, Every Child;" and, Budget: Comparative Spending and Priorities and Communication and Involvement.

Reflection and Report Out: "Whole Child, Every Child"

Mr. Lazovick dissected the district mission statement, connecting the work over the past year and the work that has yet to be done to achieve the district's long-term instructional goals.

He reviewed past presentations on student performance, highlighting again both how based on these measures the district is supported the highest levels of students learning and, more importantly, how these measures examine neither the depth or breadth of the district's instructional goals.

Focusing on the district's Competencies for 21st Century Learners, Mr. Lazovick presented a comprehensive guide to the pieces of the K-12 instructional program for all students. He highlighted the instructional focus, by level (K-3; 4-5; 6-8; and 9-12) and how they are interconnected. Mr. Lazovick defined where and why student progress is measured, how performance data is shared and used to inform instruction, and how state-mandated programs have been implemented to support the district's program and goals. The various supporting technologies were defined, including Virtual, Infinite Campus, Let Me Learn, and Performance Matters. The value of each system in supporting the district's program was made clear.

Finally, Mr. Lazovick presented on the district's new evaluation process and its role in supporting the district's instructional program. Implemented this year, the evaluation process includes Frameworks with a continuum of performance that supports professional growth and accountability. Further, the process and its documents now include specific measurement of a faculty or staff member's contribution toward achieving the district's instructional goals.

In all, the district has initiated large-scale change in the pursuit of its instructional goals, is at the beginning of this change, and must now stay the course and move toward the goal of reaching the Whole Child, Every Child.

Budget: Comparative Spending Perspectives

Future meetings and discussions will involve everyone in myriad aspects of the budget and negotiations. Tonight we will focus on providing a common base and in seeing that the numbers need a context to have the most meaning. Mr. Shanok discussed the costs of the district from several perspectives.

A straightforward one is to look at how major categories of staff personnel have shifted over time. The comparisons will be 2002-03 to 2010-11. The number of students has increased by 12%. Administrators over that time have decreased by 15%. During the defeated budget process, numerous officials noted that the common benchmarks of administrators to students and staff show that the district compares very favorably to other districts. Up to a year ago the number of teaching staff had increased as economies were realized as enrollment in some grades declined and while some areas grew with increasing enrollment; however, a year ago the loss of \$7.7 million of state aid forced a reduction in teaching staff that leaves the district flat over the above years. To press economies over these years there has been a decline in district staff serving as regular education aides, secretaries, bus drivers, and buildings & grounds staff. With the impetus on bringing special education classes back to the district, there has been great growth in district personnel serving special education students. This has uniformly resulted in improved services to children and often served to contain the growth of costs. It should be noted that these students get services determined by their IEPs and these services cannot be unilaterally reduced as part of a general attempt to decrease spending. State and federal law serves to protect these services. Due to this fact, economizing necessarily falls more heavily in other areas.

Another perspective is to look at the growth in per pupil costs (State of New Jersey Comparative Spending Guide figures). Over the 2002-03 through 2009-10 period this has grown by 17%. Is this a favorable or unfavorable result? Well, the consumer price index has increased by 21% over that period. The Employment Cost Index (ECI) of state and local government employees has grown by 25%.

Years ago, the Board of Education and the Finance Committee had growing concerns over budget growth. This was heightened as the budget was defeated three times in the 1990's. They evolved a target concerning growth in spending: take the annual percentage growth in the Employment Cost Index (state and local government employees), add the enrollment growth to that. These were growing between 4 to 6% and 1.5 to 2.0% respectively. The committee wanted growth to not merely reflect that growth so they subtracted 1% from that sum. That was to be their target for growth year by year.

The budget over these years has grown 33%. Is that good or bad? Well, the ECI plus enrollment growth minus 1% has grown 34% over the years. We have kept to the goal targeted by the Board those many years ago; in fact, we are currently one percentage point better than our target.

Step back a year. The budget had grown 31% at that time while the indices minus 1% had increased 33%. A two percentage point favorable gap. Today it is a one percentage point gap. Why and does it suggest anything for the coming year? It likely does. The ECI grew last year by the smallest amount of any of those years. The enrollment growth was negligible. But 1% is still one percent! If this target is kept, further reductions in programs and personnel will likely be needed. Does 1% make as much sense today as it did when the ECI and enrollment were growing at a faster pace?

Next, examining some perspectives relating to the state's per pupil cost figures. Back in 2002-03 the district was 336 dollars above the state average and rather close in spending to Princeton, Hopewell and Lawrence. Overall, the district was the 4th most expensive in the county – the district had not lost the Finance Committee's desire to be about in the middle of the pack. With the fiscal disciplines exercised in subsequent years, the district's relative cost performance improved. In the last year of actual data available, the district is the 7th most expensive Mercer County district and thousands of dollars below the three previously cited districts, indeed, the district is nearly \$1,300 below the state average.

Examine the percentage rate of spending growth. Over the 2002-03 to 2008-09 period the district's per pupil cost has grown by an average of 2.3% per year. That is half of the state average rate of growth. It is the lowest rate of growth in the county. The district is the top performer by that measure. Move to a 2002-03 to 2009-10 comparison and the district remains the best performer though the growth rate declines in some districts and the state, but grows in a few too.

Looking at the absolute growth in the number of dollars per pupil spending over those years. WWPRSD has increased its spending by \$1,839 – the lowest increase in the county. The state average is an increase of \$3,431. (Some folks mention Montgomery as a consistent role model: Montgomery's spending increased by \$3,518 in that period of time – shrinking their spending per pupil advantage over WWPRSD from \$2,438 in 2002-03 to \$759 in 2009-10.)

For a final comparison tonight, examining the major classifications of per pupil spending in 2009-10: classroom spending, support services (media center, guidance and nursing), administrative costs and operations costs (facilities). WWPRSD has lower administrative costs per pupil than Lawrence, Princeton, and the state average; Hopewell is at our level (as is Montgomery). WWPRSD operations costs are well below all of the above districts.

Because our total spending is relatively low, the classroom dollars per pupil are lower than Lawrence, Princeton and Hopewell. And, we are a few dollars lower than the state average. Yet, as a percentage of total spending the district spends 63% on the classroom compared to 56% in Lawrence, and 60% in Princeton (Montgomery spends \$895 dollars per pupil less than WWPRSD in the classroom and only 59% of their total in the classroom. Montgomery spends a larger % of their total on admin and operations than does WWPRSD. So, if WWPRSD spending is to be reduced, a likely target by elimination will be the classroom and its support services).

With these common perspectives everyone should be able to make more productive comparisons during upcoming budget and negotiations discussions.

Budget: Communication, involvement and passage of time

Dr. Aderhold explored the complexity of some of the relevant contractual numbers: 1,230 instructional minutes per week; 5 instructional periods per day; 53 instructional minutes per period for core subjects and 40 minutes per period for electives; less than two duty periods; minimum of 400 minutes of planning time per week, etc. Change these numbers and variations and possibilities emerge in great numbers. It is impractical to explore them all.

Another set of numbers is the time to implement a change. The middle and high school schedule changes took years from start to finish. The effort with Town Center was a two-year effort. It may be awhile for a contractual change to impact budget.

Closing and Next Steps

The superintendent and Mr. Marathe thanked everyone for their participation.

Upon motion by Mr. Fleres, seconded by Mr. Kaye, and by unanimous voice vote of all present, the meeting adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary

Prepared by:

Kathleen M. Bertram