



VISION
To be a world-class school system.

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF LEE COUNTY
School Board Briefing Meeting – M I N U T E S
Wednesday – April 30, 2008 / 2:30 p.m.

Attendees: Mrs. Jeanne S. Dozier, Board Chairman
Mr. Robert D. Chilmonik, Board Member
Dr. Elinor C. Scricca, Board Member
Dr. James W. Browder, Secretary & District Superintendent
Dr. Jane E. Kuckel, Vice Chair
Mr. Steven K. Teuber, Board Member
Mr. Keith Martin, Board Attorney
Mrs. Denise Mangus, Recording Secretary

(Mrs. Dozier called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.)

A. BOARD MEMBERS

- 1. Comments/Reports** – Mrs. Dozier welcomed all; she noted the AdvancEd accreditation organization (with standards) reviews academic and business practices to validate things being done well and to help with continuous improvement.

B. EXECUTIVE SERVICES

- 1. Oral Report by the AdvancEd Organization/District Accreditation** – Dr. Browder's pleased today for the colleagues present. There has been work the last two years for AdvancEd, a quality review team (prior to this visit); over the past three days, the District hosted the AdvancEd Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team who met with Board Members separately as well as District office staff, cross section of schools, parents, etc. The recommendation today is from a team of 18 trained state and national professionals; the District reviewed performance data. There were site visits to 16 schools where District and school practices were observed. The Superintendent thanked the team and their help in identifying areas/opportunities for continuous improvement, noting their process and dedication is admirable; he thanked the District steering committee who prepared for the visit—Drs. Jones (chair), Itzen, and Lohmeyer and Principals Lynn Herrell, Beth Bolger, Erik Cioffi—and there was really good preparation by the adults, with the kids ready a year ago..

Dr. Nikki Armato is the Senior Vice President of Professional Services for AdvancEd, and she is honored to have served as the visiting team chair; it was a pleasure for her to get to know the team. Dr. Armato noted it's an experience which involves the blending of two special groups (QAR team she works with); most of the team didn't know each other but have become a high-powered team and friends. She commented it was a privilege to spend time in an exemplary system as ours and that the greatest joy is visiting schools (yesterday)/talking with children about what true quality education means and what it is; she noted thanks for the visit. The official report will summarize how the District did and what was found out. AdvancEd is a unification of three organizations; while there's a personalized touch (loving kids/teachers), AdvancEd is the world's largest educational community consisting of 23,000 public and private schools; 30 states and Navajo Nation; Department of Defense Education Activity; 65 countries; 16 million students; 18,000 volunteers; and 3+ million teachers. (Dr. Armato continued with a PowerPoint; copy on file.) AdvancEd (NCA CASI and SACS CASI are the its accreditation divisions) is dedicated to advancing excellence in education through: 1) accreditation—standards, continuous improvement, quality assurance; 2) professional services—professional development, technical assistance, conferences, consulting; and 3) research and innovation—publications, resources, tools, evaluation (NSSE serves as their research and innovation division). Dr. Armato noted, re accreditation, that five years ago they began to accredit school systems and not just schools since a real impact is sustained at the district level; districts started seeing the benefit of this, and Lee is one—an early adapter/pioneer. Re District accreditation, it's a national protocol for schools systems committed to systemic, systematic, and sustainable improvement. District accreditation builds the capacity of the system to increase and sustain student learning; it stimulates/supports improvement and effectiveness throughout the system. It also ensures all people, processes, departments, and operations of the system work in concert as well as strengthening efforts to meet accountability requirements. District accreditation encourages growth beyond compliance to achieve excellence and promotes continuous not episodic improvement. It applies a systems approach to improvement and examines how all elements of the school system work in concert for the benefit of student learning. Re systemic improvement, the interdependent functions within and across the district to produce improvement are used and aligned. For systematic improvement, improvement efforts that are regular and predictable at all levels of the district are fostered. Re sustainable improvement, it's about maintaining improvements over time.

To earn and maintain district accreditation, districts must meet the AdvancEd quality standards, engage in continuous improvement, and demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review—latter in two ways: 1) mirror/looking within—what we're constantly doing/self-checking how we're doing; and 2) external—group of unbiased experts come in from outside and look through window/unbiased lens to give feedback/recognition as today. Re expectations, the district: meets the AdvancEd standards for quality systems; identifies and guides the implementation of

a systemic continuous improvement process; monitors its schools through a quality assurance process; and prepares and hosts a QAR visit every five years. Re schools' expectations, they: meet the AdvancEd standards for quality schools; implement the District's continuous improvement process; and participate in the District's quality assurance process. The purpose and role of the QAR is to: 1) determine the extent to which the District meets the AdvancEd standards; 2) assess the efficacy of the District's improvement efforts; 3) evaluate the effectiveness of the District's methods for quality assurance; 4) provide high-quality feedback with clear recommendations and actionable next steps; and 5) make an accreditation recommendation. Activities of the QAR include: artifacts/documents' review; interviews; observations; school visits; and professional deliberations (they met every night and all day in sessions of the last of these five, in order). During the on-site QAR, team members interviewed 820 stakeholders: the Superintendent; the Board (and Attorney); 40 members of central staff; 99 school-based administrators; 256 teachers and staff; 230 parents, community members, business partners; and 188 students. When reviewing criteria to arrive at findings, the team: sought District perspective; pursued evidence that could be corroborated through multiple sources; examined District's content/capacity in relation to its vision, mission, and beliefs; and applied criteria for accreditation. Re structure of the team's findings, there are: strengths—strong/effective practices, processes, or systems which benefit the school district; commendations—significant accomplishments in meeting and/or exceeding accreditation standards and requirements; challenges—limitations and/or barriers that may be impacting (or have the potential to) District's performance and effectiveness; and recommendations—actions that will enhance district effectiveness and improve student learning. There'll be a full report in a month. Re District's strengths, there's: the pervasive belief and obligation to do the "main thing"—achievement and development of potential of the total child; competent/dedicated/collaborative staff with a strong commitment to students, District effectiveness, and each other; culture of respect and high expectations for staff and students; highly competent leadership at all levels that is respected, appreciated, and accessible; and a meaningful balance between expectations/guidelines with empowerment to decide and individualize. Also, re the District's strengths, there's: a multitude of diverse methods for informing and communicating with stakeholders; numerous learning opportunities designed to address needs and interests of the total child; and abundant support provided to administrative and instructional staff through professional development, data, instructional resources, and technology.

Dr. Armato noted the QAR team commends today the District for honoring the intent and exemplifying the purpose of District Accreditation. Re the District's systemic approach to improvement, there's: consistency of purpose and language at all levels (she noted kindergarteners and 3rd graders talking about alignment/world-class/potential of all and talking about it up the "food chain," right up to their folders); comprehensive alignment between and among strategic plan, department plans, school plans, classroom plans, professional development plans, student folders; responsive allocation of resources and support systems to implement plan goals; and uniform use of the "Plan, Do, Study, Act" cycle. Re commendations, the District has a systematic approach to improvement with having policies, procedures, processes, protocols, and curriculum, instructional materials, and assessments. Dr. Armato noted we: have packages and pieces of things organized, framework, predictability—allowing the District to guide major operations and functions; establish expectations and guidelines; and promote efficiency and continuity. Re the people under commendations, District personnel: are knowledgeable, passionate, and supportive of the vision and mission; see their role and opportunity for impacting the achievement of the District's purpose; and accept responsibility and are accountable for the results. The District has a data-drive culture—data is available, valued, and utilized at all levels. Re District challenges, she noted: reductions in revenue; enrollment stabilization; changing demographics, student mobility; recruiting/retaining quality staff that's reflective of a growingly diverse student population; and meeting increasing numbers/needs of AYP sub-groups. Collectively, it makes one big challenge—how we sustain continuous improvement and increasing results in light of challenges (so as to not break momentum). Recommendations by the QAR team for the District are to: 1) strengthen alignment between vision and definition of "world class" with District, school goals and initiatives as there was some disconnect (talking every student meeting full potential, there were big/rich accomplishments spoken; in school improvement plans, there were basic skills—what was minimum and the team thinks if to really believe in striving for world class, we should build some kind of that in initiatives to journey and not dream); and 2) establish a proactive protocol for District personnel for on-site contact to provide school-level dialogue, assistance, and recognition (staff's available but didn't hear District have a plan/system/formalized plan to come out to schools and dialogue with information about their SIPs—as through dialogues, they'll get recognition, assistance to be better; something we're doing is reactive—leverage strength to be more proactive on more regular basis in providing support and assistance).

For recommendations, Dr. Armato noted the District should: 1) evaluate and implement a comprehensive assessment system that incorporates formative assessment, alternative assessment methods, and synthesizes the wealth of assessment data (building in comprehensive assessments with results to get how we're doing on surmised tests; when data given to anyone, vision/mindset of all assessments state that District gave—want to expand usefulness/day-to-day thinking to have seamless package, as we've a lot of ingredients here and then synthesize into something coherent for edging/combining

ingredients; and we’ve a strong foundation in data); and 2) evaluate and refine the District’s SIP template to create a clear blueprint for strategic action, meaningful growth, and decision-making (e.g., SMART goal attributes)—it’s giving some confusion (though melded from state sites), make more clearer (many are trained in SMART goal attributes) and take the template and live through it as schools are planning so it truly can be blueprint. Re next steps, within 30 days, there’ll be a written findings’ report submitted; after receipt, the District is to: review and communicate findings (critical since 824 individuals talked with); address the recommendations (when they became AdvancEd—for integrity and credibility of process, they make all districts/systems do non-optional recommendations and see progress made); monitor accreditation standards on ongoing basis (not just District, but school levels); monitor strategies for improvement (want to do some research to make sure and question if strategies working to cause student learning; in two years, progress report submitted to AdvancEd in template form); and submit the Accreditation Progress Report. Dr. Armato noted the QAR team recommends to the AdvancEd Accreditation Commission that the School District of Lee County be awarded District Accreditation as a quality school system; once approved by the Commission, the District and all of its schools are granted a 5-year term accreditation (must turn in 2-year reports). On behalf of the QAR team, Dr. Armato expressed appreciation for the hospitality, support and professionalism; their respect and acknowledgment of the quality of the District; and congratulations on District progress in achieving accreditation as a quality system. Friends were made but objectivity maintained; it was seriously tackled with dedication.

Mrs. Dozier thanked staff, acknowledging the preparation for this very rigorous process. Mr. Chilmonik noted congratulations to staff, that it’s wonderful and we learned a lot; it was confirmed to him that we are among some other districts in Florida that are accredited. Dr. Kuckel appreciates the team’s time to be with us and noted we can’t keep reinventing but need to draw on expertise of others. Dr. Scricca acknowledged Dr. Jones, thanked all those involved, and noted appreciation for Dr. Armato’s words on synergy; Dr. Scricca’s doctoral theme was on community synergy and she feels fortunate we strive for school/community synergy but with parents and the community at large, we’re a great school system as a result. Mr. Teuber echoed his fellow Board Members, thanking: Dr. Armato for the great presentation, Dr. Jones, the review team, staff, and the steering committee; he was: amazed at how in-depth and intuitive, noting there’s learning even after his past years here; appreciative of the points to be addressed; and proud/thankful for the work of all and the importance of children.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT – none.

D. BOARD ATTORNEY (none) /SUPERINTENDENT’S COMMENTS – Dr. Browder gave thanks to all and noted this truly exemplifies what’s been talked about for six years—it’s not about individuals but how strong we are together. He gives credit to those children daily and commented that the county office is second to none as well as the Board; together, all make a dynamic team of folks working hard to get the job done. The Superintendent continued in noting that this will make us stronger, better, and it’s all about the ‘main thing’—doing what’s best for children every day. He concluded with wishing Godspeed to the committee and again noted that, together, we’re more powerful than individuals. Meeting adjourned at 3:53.

/dwm

MINUTES BOOK NO. 44 - FY08

Jeanne S. Dozier, Meeting Chair

ATTEST:

James W. Browder, Ed.D., Secretary and District Superintendent

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