

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC SESSION
OF THE SOUTH BEND EMPOWERMENT ZONE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
4/24/23**

MINUTES

- Meeting Time Start: 6:10 pm
- Meeting Called to Order: Sam Centellas, Board President
- [Meeting video is available on Youtube](#)
- Meeting presentation is available on the Zone [website](#)

LOCATION

- SBCSC Boardroom

QUORUM

- Attendees:
 - Sam Centellas, Board President
 - Rosa Hiestand, Secretary
 - Ryan Matthys, Treasurer
 - Ashley Northern
 - Jeff Rea
 - Duane Wilson
 - Davion Lewis, SBEZ Chief
- Absent:
 - Stephanie Ball
 - Kareemah Fowler
 - Sonya Watkins
 - Leslie Wesley
- Quorum Established (Y/N): Yes

SUMMARY

The April board meeting included a discussion of: the preliminary budget for the 2023-2024 school year, survey results, student academic data, enrollment and transportation, and recommendation for the Zone's calendar for the 2023-2024 school year for board approval. The board voted unanimously to approve the calendar. The board also discussed the SBCSC facilities master plan and the closure of Warren Elementary School in June 2024.

The board anticipates voting on the budget for the 2023-2024 school year in the May meeting. It anticipates voting on the transportation policy in the May or June meetings.

AGENDA ITEMS

I. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

- Motion to approve agenda: Jeff Rea
- Seconded: Duane Wilson
- Discussion: None
- Approved unanimously

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Motion to approve minutes of March 14, 2023: Jeff Rea
- Seconded: Ashley Northern
- Discussion: None
- Approved unanimously

III. MAY BOARD MEETING DATE

- Motion to reschedule the May meeting from May 9th to May 16th: Jeff Rea
- Seconded: Duane Wilson
- Discussion: None
- Approved unanimously

IV. BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT

The Board President discussed the SBCSC's master facilities plan and the closure of Warren Elementary School in June 2024. He emphasized that the Zone will communicate plans to support families and staff in their transition to a new school for the 2024-2025 school year. He also shared information about the upcoming West Side Refresh event, for the entire West Side community, on May 6th, as part of Mental Health Awareness Month.

V. ZONE CHIEF REPORT

Recognitions

The Zone Chief welcomed Francesca Jimenez, the new principal at Harrison Elementary, and recognized the Zone's honorees for Teacher of the Year:

- Sarah Rodriguez, 2nd Grade, Coquillard
- Angela Pedraza, 2nd Grade, Wilson
- Sheilese Combs, 2nd Grade, Harrison
- Kristi Chrzan, Kindergarten, Warren
- Rebecca Pryor, 8th Grade, Social Studies, Navarre

Personnel

In the month of March, the Zone continued to have minimal changes in personnel onboarding (two) and offboarding (four).

VI. FINANCE COMMITTEE

The board discussed the proposed budget for the 2023-2024 school year, which outlined key changes that improve the Zone's financial sustainability. An anticipated decrease in revenue of about \$3M was attributed primarily to a decline in average daily membership, which is also primarily due to new enrollment caps. However, the Zone will continue to spend approximately \$11,000 per pupil, which is a higher rate than at SBCSC schools, due to the extra support and services Zone schools provide. The Zone anticipates saving approximately \$2.1M due to eliminating 35 FTE, however that may change if some of the affected individuals move into different roles. The end of the ESSER III grant does create a budget cliff, however due to cost-cutting and other increases in efficiency, that cliff has been pushed back to the 2024-2025 school year. The Zone also received a clean opinion from the auditor about the financial statements of the Zone. The Zone's 501(c)(3) will be audited separately in the summer.

The board decided to defer approval of the audit and monthly financial report until the May meeting. Approval of the 2023-2024 school year budget will also be on the agenda for the May meeting.

VII. FOCUS TOPICS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Q2 Student Focus Groups

Dr. Lemrow shared the results of her focus groups with students at each of the five Zone schools, focused on the issue of bullying. Overall, students shared themes of wanting to be part of changes in their schools, and developmentally appropriate expressions of self-efficacy and affirmation. Dr. Lemrow shared additional plans for continuing this research and how it could inform both classroom and extracurricular initiatives in the schools.

Q3 Survey Results

The quarterly survey is one tool that the Zone uses to capture feedback from students, families, and staff. Much of the discussion focused on the survey results within the context of additional data points, and the different factors that can influence survey responses. For example, while survey data still indicates students feeling bullied or unsafe, disciplinary incidents have also decreased significantly. Similarly, teachers and staff report low ratings on culture, however other data also shows improved engagement—e.g., higher “intent to stay” and lower rates of absenteeism. The Zone does not currently have the right data to fully explain these mixed messages, however is working on a cohesive data strategy to improve insights moving forward.

Board questions:

- *What is the timeframe for the new data process?*
 - We are aiming for the beginning of the next school year, and also want to implement a balanced scorecard or dashboard. We do recognize that we will be giving up longitudinal data when we move to a better survey tool.

- *Academic performance, discipline, and attendance are critical pieces of information–will we still have that same data moving forward?*
 - Yes, only the surveys will change.

Academic Data

The Zone shared results of the iReady results from students in Grades 3 to Grade 8; younger students have not yet completed iReady. Notably, the third through eighth graders took the “end of year” iReady before spring break, which means they had eight fewer weeks of instruction before testing. The test took place earlier because the Zone currently has no common formative assessments. The data report showed iReady results in math and ELA, and the growth of Zone students relative to their placement levels and annual growth goals.

The two key takeaways from the data:

- (1) Our students are growing faster than their national peers
- (2) Every grade level made significant gains from the previous year

Board questions:

- *Our ILEARN results are mixed at best–how does that square with this iReady data?*
 - ILEARN testing is happening now, and we will have that data soon. This is iReady data, and in prior years, ILEARN data has correlated with iReady.
- *Does the data about a grade (e.g., third grade) and its progress this year relative to last year–is that the same set of students improving, or is it two different cohorts of students?*
 - It is two different cohorts of students. It means that students who are in third grade this year (2022-2023) have made more progress versus national peers, than students who were in third grade last year (2021-2023) versus their national peers. For example, this year’s cohort “lapped” their national peers.

Enrollment and Transportation

Currently, the majority of students at Zone schools do not live within the boundaries of those schools. For example, at Coquillard, approximately 60%-70% of students are choosing to come, even though Coquillard is not their home school. Similarly, many students for whom Coquillard is their home school are choosing to go elsewhere. The group discussed reasons that it is beneficial for students to attend their home schools, for the students, their families, and their (geographic) communities. There is also a significant cost to transporting out-of-boundary students from across the district to

Zone schools. In the 2022-2023 school year, the Zone's transportation costs exceeded the budget by \$2M.

The board discussed a potential policy change to align the Zone with the feeder school pattern set by the SBCSC facilities master plan, and which would save the Zone approximately \$750K in transportation costs. The board will vote on the proposed new policy in the May or June board meeting.

Calendar for the 2023-2024 school year

Following discussions of a potential balanced calendar in prior board meetings, the Zone proposed a traditional calendar aligned with SBCSC for the 2023-2024 school year. The sole change to the calendar was to increase professional development and preparation days for new and returning teachers. Teachers will be paid for the additional days, and discussions are in progress with the NEA.

The recommendation was based on two main reasons (1) the desire for input from more families and staff, and (2) insufficient time to implement a balanced calendar for the 2023-2024 school year.

Also recommended was a community Steering Committee to continue seeking input on a balanced calendar for the 2024-2025 school year, with a recommendation made in December 2023.

Motion to adopt the 2023-2024 calendar: Jeff Rea. Seconded: Ryan Matthys.
The board voted unanimously to adopt the proposed calendar.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Two individuals made public comments.

- Tome Roe: his granddaughter graduated from a South Bend high school in 2012 spoke because he wants to get more involved with community affairs. His comments and questions focused on two topics: (1) the broader movement in South Bend toward charter schools and the need to understand that phenomenon, (2) the need for greater data before voting on the future of the Zone.
- Cheryl Batteaste, a former principal at Wilson Elementary School
 - asked for the initial benchmarks set by IDOE when the Zone was created
 - discussed the need for more community involvement in decisions about the Zone's future.
 - asked for more academic data from iReady and ILearn.¹

¹ Note: iReady data was shared in the presentation materials. ILEARN data is not yet available due to the testing schedule.

IX. OTHER DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

Board member Jeff Rea discussed SBCSC's facilities master plan. He recognized that planning was a very challenging process based on numerous factors. Although everyone will not necessarily agree with the outcome, he noted that the process was well-managed by SBCSC and its consultants. He particularly noted that SBCSC's decision to close Warren Elementary School was incredibly difficult, and was unrelated to the school's students, teachers, and staff.

Board president Sam Centellas also discussed the facilities master plan and that the decision to close a facility is always challenging. He emphasized that the board wants to ensure positive educational outcomes for all students and will work to support Warren families and staff across the coming school year.

Motion to approve the SBCSC facilities master plan: Jeff Rea. Seconded: Duane Wilson. The board unanimously approved the motion.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: Ryan Matthys. Seconded: Duane Wilson. The board unanimously approved the motion to adjourn at 8:48 pm.