

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARD WORKSHOP MEETING
March 22, 2007

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in workshop session duly called at 9:00 a.m. in Conference Room E, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Virginia S. Childs, chairman; Janie S. Williams, vice-chairman; Tina Pinkoson, Eileen F. Roy, and F. Wesley Eubank, members; and W. Daniel Boyd, Jr., superintendent

The meeting was called to order by Superintendent Boyd.

REVIEW OF
TECHNOLOGY

Dr. Boyd welcomed the group and discussed how important innovative technology is to our future as a school district.

Sandy Hollinger spoke about advanced technology vs. former technology such as one computer per classroom and that was considered “icing on the cake” at the time – amazing new technology is now available. Many kindergartners are computer ready when they enter school. Topics for the day will be “Where We Were”, “Where We Are Today”, and “Where We Need To Go.” Parents are always interested in advanced technology for their children.

Uma Shankar compared classrooms with the old technology and the technology of today. Technology IS infrastructure.

Sandy Hollinger and Dave Edwards shared that Carnegie algebra labs need to be used 100% of the time.

Uma Shankar stated that our district has 10,000 computers, 30% of which were purchased through QZAD monies. Computers are out-of-date in approximately 3-5 years, depending on use; administrative, classroom, various academies. The district currently employs four hardware specialists, two network specialists, and eight zone technicians – 24 employees would be ideal. Wireless should be a reality in 1-2 years and will increase the need for technical support. Also mentioned was that software is the key.

Dave Edwards indicated that most the new software is located “elsewhere” (company location) and this technology works well with regards to upgrades as they are done at the company site.

Keith Birkett stated that technology money used to be categorical and \$600,000 is what is being funded over and above the 9037 budget. Allocation breakdown was addressed with respect to salaries, repairs, supplies, etc.

Sandy Hollinger and Uma Shankar expressed concerns about renewing software licenses to schools as this is a very important legal issue and it is now more like a subscription than a one time purchase.

Sandi Medeiros stated that the future is now. We have microchip technology, robotics, cyborgs, cochlear implants – all advanced technology that children can multitask technologically. Teaching 21st century skills, critical thinking, creativity, debating skills, and the ability to communicate globally is a necessity as well as ethics and teaching to work in a team.

Sandy Hollinger remarked that “hypertext minds” is the catch phrase for multitasking children. Teachers need to be aware of the students’ focus and classrooms now need to be multisensory.

Sandi Medeiros and Dave Edwards gave a film presentation on Brevard County Schools on 21st century technology in the classroom. Cost for one model classroom would be \$6,300. There will be three different clusters across the district based on a high tech model (K-5, 6-8, 9-12).

Sandy Hollinger and Sandi Medeiros expressed the need for principals to seek support from SACs, PTAs, etc. to help with the purchases for advanced technology. This technology is necessary to keep students motivated.

The grant is \$1.2 million and the pilot schools are:

Western cluster-Newberry Elementary, Oak View Middle, NHS
Central cluster-Foster Elementary, Westwood Middle, GHS
Eastern cluster-Williams Elementary, Lincoln Middle, EHS

Teacher training is a major component. One full time technology teacher is recommended at BHS, EHS, GHS, SFHS, one half time technology teacher at HHS, Loften, NHS. With the cluster model, four schools share one full time technology teacher.

Wes Eubank, Ginger Childs, and Sandy Hollinger discussed summer technology staff development.

Janie Williams asked how many schools currently have technology teachers and how are they are paid.

Sandy Hollinger responded that none are formal positions and that PTA, SAC, and ADV monies currently cover the costs.

Tina Pinkoson added that when the district representatives go to

Tallahassee, a request for more technology funding will be a priority. Sandy Hollinger feels the district's plan should be a district initiated vision with input from the schools. The reason for this is support. For instance, principals attend FETC, see amazing technology which they would like to purchase for their school only to find out we are unable to support it. A district Technology Committee has been formed (Uma Shankar, Sandi Medeiros, et al) to be certain that purchases can be supported. If schools choose to purchase against the committee's recommendation, they may do so however, the product will not be supported.

Ginger Childs and Wes Eubank spoke in support of the district plan as it will be seamless and districtwide. They feel the money needs to be spent wisely and not on non-district supported equipment.

Sandy Hollinger discussed the need for technology labs and Tina Pinkoson asked if textbook monies could be used to purchase instructional software. Sandy replied that we are unable to at this point and that the legislature needs to look into this.

Ginger Childs questioned as to whether the one million dollar local tax windfall could go directly to technology. Middle schools probably need the most assistance as elementary schools have the financial backing of their PTAs.

Sandy Hollinger stated that principals want model classrooms. We need to be aggressive in pursuing grants. A percentage of ADV money should be for technology, especially BHS & EHS. Revising the distribution will be addressed. Ginger Childs feels the schools should not stockpile the money as the money is for current students.

There was a presentation of the Smart Board and Wireless Slate.

Mel Lucas stated there would be a great savings and immediate grading if FCAT was computerized.

Janie Williams asked if schools could write grants and several meeting members indicated that schools may write grants.

Dr. Boyd thanked everyone in attendance and the meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m.