

LINCOLN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Directors – Work Session
Tuesday, May 1, 2007 – 7:00 p.m.
Newport High School
Newport, Oregon

Minutes

Present: Sue Ryan, Chairman; Brenda Brown, Vice-Chairman; Jean Turner, Jana Cowan, Directors

Also Present: Tom Rinearson, Superintendent; Laurie Urquhart, Secretary; approximately 10 members of the staff, media and interested patrons

Excused: Ron Beck, Director

Call to Order- Establishment of a Quorum

Chairman Ryan convened the meeting and called the session to order at 7:10 p.m. with a quorum of four board members present. Director Beck was excused from the meeting.

Information on Texas Instruments Navigator

Newport High math teacher Brian Hanna demonstrated Texas Instruments Navigator graphing calculator system, made possible by the award of grant funds. Mr. Hanna showed Board members several features of the calculators, which are linked to a router, allowing the teacher to give and receive feedback to/from students. The system allows the work to be shown on a screen in real time.

Discussion on Insight Schools

School Operations Administrator Joe Novello reported the Oregon Department of Education was contacted by Insight Schools, a company developing state-wide virtual charter high schools in several states. An ODE representative suggested Brian Rose of Insight Schools contact LCSD, as the district is forward looking and innovative.

Mr. Rose, Vice President of School Development for Insight Schools, said Insight Schools is seeking partnerships with local districts to start a state-wide charter high school. The company is affiliated with the University of Phoenix; both are owned by the Apollo Group. He noted the University of Phoenix is the leader in online learning for college level students and professionals.

In Oregon, the Insight Schools effort is similar to the online school operated by the Scio School District. The company will identify a district sponsor and open a statewide virtual high school; they hope to open in fall, 2007 with a projected enrollment of 1800 students over the next few years. Schools opened in other areas serve home schooled students and professional athletes or actors, with a common denominator of the need for flexibility. Mr. Rose showed a short video of a similar school opened in Washington state; that school currently has approximately 650 students after opening last fall. The

school there is sponsored by a district in Forks, WA, with administrative offices in Bellevue, WA. It is a full-time school; a computer, printer and internet stipend are provided to each enrolled student. The school has 13 providers of curriculum, with the sponsoring district approving alignment.

“Our goal is to serve students across Oregon,” said Rose, with a goal of 2500 enrolled students after five years. Just like other charter schools, a portion of the ADM is shared with the district, with a portion going to the company. Insight Schools provides instructors and coursework. Instructors are certified and work part-time for Insight Schools. “Many times we hire teachers within the sponsoring district, and we do professional development for them. Teaching online is different from teaching in a classroom,” he said. He likened it to district teachers teaching courses for the local community college.

He stated the other schools opened by the company do not show an exodus of students from the sponsoring district to the online school. Online courses are offered by Insight to high school students of the sponsoring district. “40% of the students we serve were not in the public school system prior to their enrollment with us,” said Rose. Insight Schools would be responsible for hiring all of the instructors and administrators. “We take on all the costs to operate the school, and will lose money the first couple of years,” Rose commented.

The school is measured the same way any other public school is measured, with respect to Adequate Yearly Progress and requirements of No Child Left Behind. Students do not apply, they enroll and are enrolled on a first come, first served basis.

Students that drop out of the virtual high school are tracked by the company, in part so they can recover the computer and printer. Many students in this situation cite isolation from other students as a factor influencing their decision to stop their involvement with the online school and return to a traditional high school. “They usually return to school,” said Rose. The school will be accredited; students must meet LCSD graduation requirements.

Physical education credits may be earned in a variety of ways, including credit for extra-curricular activities and by using heart monitors and journaling findings. Students for whom faith based learning is important may also take advantage of online learning.

“We contract back to the district for certain services,” said Rose. Superintendent Tom Rinearson noted the resident district is always responsible for special education. “We can provide it for them, but they must pay us the additional weight,” said Rinearson. “Even if they do that, they have not given up their duty to ensure it happens.”

Brian Rose said Insight will hire an executive director, principal, operations manager, special education staff, counselor and enrollment specialist. The program is comprised of two components: a lead instructor and a mentor. The student/teacher ratio is 25 to one; a mentor is assigned to the student upon enrollment. “Everyone is full time, except the instructors...and we may have a few full time instructors,” said Rose. These employees may be housed in the sponsoring district, or not; “It is a virtual school, so teachers can be recruited throughout the state and country.”

Part of the attraction to online learning is flexibility, but students are contacted if they do not log in for three days. They are also bound by the semester.

Mr. Rose said the current state cap of virtual schools would prohibit them from operating effectively. There is pending legislation for a waiver for this requirement. "I would like to provide a draft application to you by the end of this week," said Rose. The usual governance structure is the formation of a 501C3 organization, and a different Board than the sponsoring district's Board.

Joe Novello noted he has checked Insight's references by speaking with representatives of schools operating in Washington and Wisconsin (which will open this fall). He said the school assesses the student's ability to be successful online. In addition to mentors, the school offers "Smart Thinking," a 24-hour, 365 day telephone service for math, English, science and some business courses.

Superintendent Rinearson asked Board members to send questions to Joe Novello as they think of them.

Pinellas County Trip

This agenda item was postponed to an upcoming meeting.

Long-Term Leases/Facilities Use

This agenda item was also postponed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Chairman

Superintendent