

# MCALLEN AFT EYES ON THE BOARD

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A Union of Professionals

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### MCALLEN ISD SPECIAL BOARD MEETING, MARCH 1, 2016 AT 3 P.M.

The meeting consisted of a discussion of the future academics in McAllen ISD:

1. The Interim Superintendent Dr. Gonzalez lead the discussion--he mentioned re-organization of IB.
2. A MISD Elementary and Middle School proposed IB feeder illustration was passed out for 2016 and onward. No school names were on the illustration. Projected costs were shown on the illustration. If a teacher wants to teach IB, they will have to move to the elementaries or middle schools that are chosen to offer this program. Staff will use the transfer process to be at a IB elementary or middle school.
3. A very healthy discussion was done between I. Superintendent (and staff) with Board. Every point has been out in the public--both pros and cons. Roughly 20 parents were in attendance.
4. AP was also discussed. This program has been growing steadily with excellent results.
5. McAllen AFT was the only professional organization present.
6. Of course, there was much more detail. There will be more on Monday, March 7, 2016--Regular Board meeting.

### MCALLEN ISD SPECIAL BOARD MEETING, MARCH 1, 2016 AT 4:30 P.M.

1. Discussion and possible direction regarding selection of firms for interviews for request for interviews for request for proposal No. 2015-112 Superintendent Search. The Board selected three (3) firms to interview as search firms. Interviews will be on March 10.
2. Approval of amendment to the agreement for request for qualifications No. 2015-056 comprehensive audit of McAllen ISD Facilities, Maintenance, and Operations. Board approved amendment 6-0.
3. Approval of Lease-Purchase agreement and resolution for Apple Equipment and Services for elementary schools--approved 6-0. Details were not given to me--they came rapid fire from Vega.

### MARCH 7, 2016 - MCALLEN ISD REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Sandra Herrera Walker (Social Studies teacher at DeLeon Middle School) is attending most meetings with me.

Mario Reyna presented a review of the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC). Mario received congratulations from the Board.

There was no action on pending or potential litigation but Steve Crain, School Attorney, was told to proceed as directed. We are not sure of what "directed" means.

#### ITEMS APPROVED:

- A Data Sharing Agreement with South Texas College was approved 7-0.
- Musical Instrument Repair Services were approved 7-0.
- Sign Language Interpreter Services were approved 7-0.
- There was a discussion of the MISD FFA (Local) and FFA Regulation Wellness Policy (First Reading).
- There was approval of District February Budget Amendment 7-0.
- There was approval of office supplies and equipment bid 7-0.
- There was approval of school and office furniture catalog bid and installation

### MCALLEN ISD SPECIAL BOARD MEETING--BUDGET--MARCH 28, 2016

The budget meeting ran from 2 p.m.-4:30 p.m. The Action Plan for budget planning was Communicate the message, Maximize revenues, Seek opportunities for effectiveness, and Seek opportunities for effectiveness that decrease expenditures.

Attendance is the one of the biggest problems. An error was made in the counting of attendance (last fall) by administration under Ponce. It seems that the enrollment is lower by 210 students. Thus, money is lower. It is

difficult to tell how short the monies will be. It is important that we maximize student attendance. In addition, it is important that employees attendance be the best possible to save on subs.

Todd Miller, Asst. Superintendent (for HR), said there will be some cutting of staff. He believes that people leaving for one reason or another will take care of the problem.

I have told you that Edinburg and La Joya will be difficult employment wise as they have lost oil and gas money. Finally lists of charter school enrollments appeared at the meeting showing how badly they have hurt enrollments in public schools in the Rio Grande Valley. For six (6) years I have talked privately to administrators about charters draining enrollments and nothing was being done.

Charters are for profit. Teachers have no contract, poor salaries, works longer hours, and must constantly raise money for the charter. They may give you a cell phone and a computer, but you must answer parents till 9 p.m. at night and all work must be in by 9 p.m. every night. In addition, you must work Saturdays and some Sundays.

Interim Superintendent Gonzalez is hoping to win a new PK grant. The grant will be due shortly, and there may be additional jobs available in this opportunity.

There was a brief discussion of a Buy Out. I have had a large number of calls from Tea Party people saying they will fight this proposal.

## **MCALLEN ISD REGULAR MEETING MARCH 28, 2016 6 P.M.**

Stan Crouse was named as a Director for Human Resources.

A large number of parents were at the meeting to see what the decision about IB was to be.

The result was IB at Lamar will continue. De Leon Middle School will be the middle school for IB. The campus can hold 1,100. The elementary campuses will be Alvarez, Perez, and Roosevelt. The discussion lasted about 1 1/2 hours. Parents left very angry. If you want to be at an IB campus, you must use the transfer process. The transfer process is open. If there is a great need for more IB, Dr. Gonzalez will evaluate carefully. Dr. Gonzalez felt that most of staff did not buy into IB.

The McAllen Veterans Memorial Stadium scoreboard was approved 7-0. The final cost \$925,000. Cost will be paid for with sponsorships and advertising.

The McAllen ISD Employee Engagement Survey Results was released yesterday. We did not see it on the ISD website

this morning.

The report regarding Synthetic Use: Prevention, Identification, and Intervention Plan was very well done. This process is moving along very well.

## **The Digital Divide in Texas Public Schools**

The potential benefits of online access for Texas schoolchildren are widely acknowledged. But those benefits cannot be realized for many students because they lack access to the Internet. Now there's increasing talk of doing something to rectify that inequity. The question is whether the talk will lead to meaningful action.

At the state level, Gov. Greg Abbott recently announced a goal of broadband Internet access for all 5.2 million Texas schoolchildren by 2018. According to an analysis cited by Education Superhighway, the private partner Abbott has enlisted to come up with options for achieving this goal, currently two million Texas school kids "do not have broadband they need for today's digital learning needs."

Internet connections at home are simply non-existent for many Texas students. Nationwide, the estimate is that fully one-third of K-12 students have no ability to go online from home even as homework assignments requiring web access proliferate. In the Rio Grande Valley, that percentage goes as high as 40 percent in some communities.

A recent New York Times article told the story of students in McAllen standing outside their schools after hours to connect to the schools' wireless "hot spots" so they could complete their homework. McAllen ISD runs wireless hot spots 24 hours a day to help fill the gap in access at home. Other children in Valley school districts depend on Wi-Fi access provided on their school buses to try to get their homework finished.

Local resources to fund such stopgaps will only go so far. To address the problem more comprehensively, a new effort proposed by members of the Federal Communications Commission would reallocate a current federal phone-subsidy program called Lifeline to include subsidies for broadband services in low-income homes. The Lifeline program can provide up to \$2 billion a year for subsidies. The FCC will vote March 31 on a plan that would allow a monthly subsidy of \$9.25 to be used for fixed or mobile Internet service.

Meanwhile, Gov. Abbott says the Texas effort will bring his office, the Texas Education Agency, regional education service centers, and private service providers together to create an action plan "that ensures scalable, robust, and affordable access to high-speed broadband for all Texas school districts.

Gov. Abbott said the state will partner with the San Francisco based nonprofit Education SuperHighway which is funded by several foundations, including Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Startup: Education founded by Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg to help the state reach its goal. ~ *Texas AFT Hotline—March 14, 2016*

