Durham Public Schools Board of Education – March 24, 2017

BOE Regular Meeting Highlights from March 23, 2017

The Durham Public Schools Board of Education met at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 23, 2017, and considered an agenda that included the following highlights:

Board Chair Mike Lee extended a warm welcome to everyone present and to all the television viewers. He promised that the meeting would be rich in information that would support and enhance the vision statement of Durham Public Schools. The standing committees of the Board presented information and reports that keep the public informed on what the district is doing to ensure that the vision of success for every child is realized.

Celebrations:

- **Herald-Sun & Durham Public Schools Student of the Month for January** – Jaden Jules – Riverside High School
- **Be Our Guest** – Spring Valley, Hope Valley, Parkwood Elementary, Carrington Middle and Southern School of Energy and Sustainability
- **Special Recognition:**
  - Layke Jones – Modern Woodmen District Speech Contest
  - DPS Region 3A Science and Engineering Fair Winners – Clayson Good, Toby Turla, Lorenzo Shailewitz, Cal Nightingale, Albert Yuan, Akshay Mankad, Johnathan Reichart, Shaun Deardorff, Cyrus Porter, Betelihem Mebrahtu, Cale’f Mack, Angel Ankrom, Emily Simmons, Nathan Libutan, Lucy Ehmann, Anna Preston, Taylor Shumate, Faye Allen, John Cross, Kimaya Carpenter, Zakariya Kahouache, Brenna Hehman, Lenia Thorpe, Dylan Brain, Ana Martinez and Tatianna Gainey
  - Lara Brickhouse – Southern District Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year
  - Dr. Tekeisha Mitchell – NCMLE 2017 Administrator to Watch
  - Kecia Rogers – Rogers-Herr Middle School 2017 School to Watch
  - Magnet Schools of America Prestigious Designations
    - Renee Price – School for Creative Studies
    - Cynthia Webb – Morehead Montessori Elementary
    - Dr. Renee Carmon – Lakewood Elementary
- **Community Partners:**
  - Carolina Arbors Neighborhood Volunteer Partnership
    - Nicole Noon – Spring Valley Guidance Counselor
    - Robert Fogel and the Volunteers of Carolina Arbors
  - Durham’s Town & Country Garden Club
Robin Marin and Martha Pitchford Connor

Women and Math Mentoring (WAM) – 20 Years of Partnership

Laura B. Smith – Ph.D. Coordinator

Tina Ewing – Program Director

**Agenda:**

The agenda was approved with the addition of the Board authorizing Dr. L’Homme to send a letter to the Durham County Commissioners and City Council to ask for $1.5 million for the Whitted School so that DPS can start hiring for the positions. This was added after Reports of the Work Sessions, Academic and Support Services.

**General Public Comment:**

There were 19 who signed up for Public Comment.

**Reports of the Superintendent:**

I. **2016-2017 Superintendent’s Goals** - Information

**Reports of the Work Sessions:**

**Academic & Support Services Work Session**

I. **The Whitted School** - Information

**Operational Services and Policy Work Session**

I. **LED Light Fixtures** - Approved

  - All policies can be viewed on our website at [www.dpsnc.net](http://www.dpsnc.net).

**Superintendent’s Updates:**

Dr. Bert L’Homme shared the following:

Mr. Chair, members of the Board that was a great round of celebrations for our teachers, administrators, students and schools. I want to take a moment to recap. We have had tonight:

- An outstanding student of the month
- An eloquent middle school public speaker
- Students who took home regional honors in science and engineering
- The NATIONAL Adapted Physical Education teacher of the year
- One of the state’s best middle school administrators at Lowe’s Grove
- One of the nation’s best middle schools, Rogers-Herr
- Three nationally recognized magnet schools
• And outstanding community partners working with Spring Valley Elementary, The Hub Farm, and – for 20 years – our eighth-grade girls in math.

There are phenomenal things happening in Durham Public Schools every day, and this celebration is a wonderful reminder.

We have other things to brag about. Many of you joined me at the DPAC for “An Evening of Entertainment” and it was so magnificent. Such a powerful reminder of the importance of arts in our schools, and so many moving messages in song about how important it is to stand together as a community. I couldn’t be more proud of our student performers, and also of the hard work of Mary Casey, Linda Routh and the DPS Scholarship Foundation, and of our teachers. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Next month, if her schedule permits, I am sure that we are going to recognize on the red carpet Principal Carolyn Pugh and R.N. Harris Elementary. Not only is Harris one of only 27 schools across the nation to win the 2017 America’s Best Urban Schools Award, but they are also one of only 14 schools in contention to be named among the best of the best. The National Center for Urban School Transformation has recognized R.N. Harris for academic excellence based on curricular rigor, instructional effectiveness, relational quality, and continuous improvement efforts. Congratulations to everyone at R.N. Harris!

I want to thank Durham CAN for inviting me to speak and listen at their March 5 meeting affirming Durham as a City of Inclusion at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church. It was an excellent meeting and a good opportunity to emphasize that Durham Public Schools welcomes every student. We will be talking more about the subjects of due process and support for our immigrant students at the Board’s next work session on April 3.

March 8 was International Women’s Day. Many of our schools were proactive in offering special educational opportunities for our students. As you may recall from the media, there were calls for people to participate in “A Day Without a Woman,” and some of our employees chose to follow that call. Many, if not most, of our Central Services employees dropped what they were doing to mobilize in our schools to help maintain a normal school day for our students, and I want to thank them for everything they did to support our schools during a historic event.

Finally, although we are not scheduled to discuss the 2017-2018 budget tonight, I want to say a few words about it and then offer an item for amending the agenda when the time comes. As we shared in this month’s work session, we face a significant budget crisis for this coming school year. If the state Senate does not rescind its kindergarten through third grade class size unfunded mandate, we will be short $6 million that we currently use to fund arts, PE, music and other specialty teaching positions in our elementary schools. I fervently hope that the Senate changes its mind.

Our current planning just to balance the budget, even without the K-3 mandate or a living wage increase, involves $10 million or more in budget cuts to Central Offices and schools, and a request for $4.98 million in new money from the county—and we heard from county staff at our joint board meeting this week that even $4.98 million may be a challenging ask for them this year. As always, we will share more information with you and our community as we receive it.

But I think one thing we need to do, and I ask you to consider tonight, is to remove one of the sources of uncertainty. Our board and the county commissioners have pledged to work together
to grow pre-K education in Durham by opening The Whitted School. If we are going to open The Whitted School next year we need to start seeking out high quality pre-K teachers and staff now. In addition if the county offers us funding for The Whitted School as part of our annual allocation, we may be forced to share a portion of that funding with charter schools, EVEN THOUGH CHARTER SCHOOLS DO NOT OFFER PRE-K SERVICES. Neither, I believe, do we want to risk taking money from K-12 services to pay for pre-K services.

And so, Mr. Chair, when it is time to consider the agenda, I would like to ask that we add an item authorizing the superintendent to request from the county a special, separate allocation of funding, for a total of $1.5 million, for the operation of The Whitted School. This will help us ramp up this important project on time, and ensure that county pre-K funding is entirely put to use in pre-K classrooms.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and that completes my report.

**Personnel Report Announcement:**

The Personnel Reports dated March 23, 2017 for approval passed unanimously.

**Next Regular Board Meeting:**

The next regular monthly meeting of the Durham Public Schools Board of Education is set to be held Thursday, April 27, at 6:30 p.m., in Room 307, 511 Cleveland Street, Durham, NC, 27701.

To view all approved DPS Board of Education Meeting Minutes, please visit our website at [www.dpsnc.net](http://www.dpsnc.net).