BOE Regular Monthly Meeting Highlights from September 28, 2017

The Durham Public Schools Board of Education met at 6.32 p.m. on Thursday, September 28, 2017, and considered an agenda that included the following highlights:

Celebrations:

- **Herald-Sun & Durham Schools Student of the Month for July**
  - Briana Benkin, 12th grade, The School for Creative Studies

- **Herald-Sun & Durham Public Schools Student of the Month for August**
  - Reem Salameh, 12th grade, City of Medicine Academy

- **Be Our Guest Schools**
  - Glenn Elementary
  - Oak Grove Elementary
  - Merrick-Moore Elementary
  - Sandy Ridge Elementary
  - Carrington Middle
  - Durham School of the Arts

- **Special Recognition**
  - Dr. Bert L’Homme, Superintendent
  - Kristen Thompson, Manager of Community Relations, Fidelity Investments
  - Tekeisha Mitchell, Principal, Lowe’s Grove Middle School
  - Sheen Boddie, Assistant Principal, Lowe’s Grove Middle School

- **Schools’ Achievements Based on NCDPI Academic Performance Date**
  - Karen Kellett, Principal, Mangum Elementary
  - Kimberly Ferrell, Principal, Burton Elementary
  - Donya Jones, Principal, Holt Elementary
  - Meg Goodhand, Principal, E.K. Power Elementary
  - Holly Emanuel, Principal, Carrington Middle
  - Crystal Ison, Principal, Githens Middle
  - Kecia Rogers, Principal, Roger-Herr Middle
  - Renee Price, Principal, School for Creative Arts
  - David Hawks, Principal, Durham School of the Arts
  - Tounya Wright, Principal, New Tech High
  - Marcia Navarro, Principal, Middle College High
  - Gloria Woods-Weeks, Principal, J.D. Clement Early College High
  - Jackie Tobias, Principal, City of Medicine Academy
Agenda:

The agenda was approved with the following added items below:

- 9b. Innovative School District Update

- Closed Session Agenda
  -- To consult with the board attorney to preserve the attorney-client privilege as provided in G.S. 143-318.11(a) (3) regarding matters pertaining to the Innovative School District

General Public Comment:

There were two people who signed up for Public Comment.

Report of the Superintendent:

Dr. Bert L’Homme gave his final report to the Board as follows:

“Board members, this month we learned that two of our schools, Glenn Elementary and Lakewood Elementary, are at risk of being taken over by the NC Innovative School District. It is the result of a law passed by the General Assembly and signed by a governor no longer in office. It is an experiment that could not begin to address the depths of need in schools across North Carolina that have suffered the effects of poverty and historic inequity.

This is my last board meeting. As of October 1, I will no longer be superintendent of Durham Public Schools. I personally have nothing to gain by insisting that our administration retain control of these schools. But control is not the point, and these are not my schools. Board members, they are not your schools. They are Durham’s schools. They exist to serve our children. They are accountable to our families and to our citizens, and I believe that they should remain so.

Our district administrators follow the law. We are sharing information and data with the Innovative School District as required as they make their decisions—and they are moving fast. But I have the freedom in these last few days to speak out against this potential removal of accountability to our citizens. Would these schools be permitted to support the rights and needs of every student, equitably and with due process, in the same way that our community has demanded and this board has required? What if parents living in those attendance areas do not want to participate in this experiment?

We have a plan to improve student achievement at Glenn and Lakewood. The State Board of Education approved our Restart Schools application which would give those schools, and others, almost charter-like flexibility but without losing their accountability to you. Glenn and Lakewood, both schools equally, deserve to remain part of Durham Public Schools.

I am aware that families, educators, members of our community, and members of this board, are already mobilizing to resist this effort. You have my personal enthusiastic support. Our district staff is not in a position to organize or lead a political response to this—their full-time job is to support our students and schools in achieving academic excellence. But we are happy to provide all the information we can. Our district staff is 100 percent in support of Glenn and Lakewood’s principals, teachers and staff, and especially students and families.”

Dr. L’Homme concluded by saying,
“I didn’t think I would need to talk about this at my last board meeting, but I would rather go out as an advocate for our students and a defender of our schools than to be talking about myself.

I have always challenged our staff to help Durham Public Schools be better the next day than the last, better the next year than the last, and always to place our students’ academic achievement ahead of everything else.

It has meant both celebrating our successes but never being satisfied with the status quo. That’s a difficult balancing act, and sometimes in my role I have been more focused on what more our students need than on being a cheerleader for our district.

But sometimes we have to cheer, especially when opponents of public education are restless and especially when we have good news to share. I have always wanted to see faster progress—quantum leaps in every classroom, for every student. But sustainable progress for all of our schools depends on making gains for every student at every level. It takes time.

It also takes an awareness of the bigger picture: the battle for equity amid the entrenched effects of poverty and racism, the explosive growth of alternatives to public schools, and the ongoing challenge of forging a consensus for how to gauge success in our schools.

This is a constant battle. It takes a lot of energy. But I have been fueled by our incredible teachers, our principal leaders, the finest central office staff I have ever worked with, the parents and guardians and grandparents who bring our children to school every day, and especially our students—the ones who will define the future of Durham. I am grateful to all of you.

The next superintendent, whoever he or she may be, will have the privilege of leading a strong school district in a progressive county, with a community and school board for whom the phrase “leaving no child behind” actually has meaning. We know our challenges and we face them head on. That is Durham. That is Durham Public Schools. And it has been an honor to serve all our public school students and families here in what is, now, my home town. Thank you.”

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**Report of the Board: Superintendent Search Update:**

Chair Mike Lee stated the new Superintendent search process is ongoing.

**Report of the Work Sessions**

**Academic and Student Services Work Session**

- **Innovative School District Update**

  Board members shared their disapproval of the takeover of two schools by the Innovative School District. It was mentioned that DPS Board of Education never supported the State’s takeover, which is stated in the Resolution on the website dated April 2016.

**Operational Services and Policy Work Session**

- **Bus Drive Pay Increases 2017-2018 – Information/Discussion**

  It was presented that the State budget includes a special appropriation to support the recruitment and retention of school bus drivers. There is $16.8 million dollars set aside in the budget for 2017-2018, and Durham Public Schools’ portion is $504,894. The start rate for bus drivers under all scenarios moves to $14.50 an hour from $14.04 an hour.
**Personnel Report Announcement**

The Personnel Reports dated September 28, 2017 approval passed unanimously.

To learn more about the reports presented, please visit our website under Board of Education Meetings and Minutes.

**Next BOE Regular Monthly Meeting:**

The next BOE Regular Monthly Meeting of the Durham Public Schools Board of Education is set to be held Thursday, October 26, 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).