

MINUTES  
MURFREESBORO CITY SCHOOL BOARD RETREAT

February 19, 2010—4:00 p.m.

February 20, 2010—8:00 a.m.

The Foundation House  
324 West Thompson Lane

ATTENDANCE

Board: Chair Mary Wade, Ray Butrum, Butch Campbell, Nancy Duggin, Nancy Phillips, Absent: Susan Andrews, David Hopper, and Council Liaison Ron Washington.

Staff: Director Linda Gilbert, Gary Anderson, and Linda Ridley

Others: City Staff Attorney Kelley Baker, DNJ reporter Chasity Gunn (Friday), and DNJ reporter Melinda Hudgens (Saturday) and others.

***Friday—February 19, 2010***

Chair Wade called the Murfreesboro City School Board retreat to order at approximately 4:03 p.m.

***Board Self-Assessment—Dr. Tammy Grissom, TSBA***

Dr. Tammy Grissom, Executive Director of the Tennessee School Boards Association, addressed the Board sharing the results of the Board Self-Assessment conducted by TSBA (included in official board minutes notebook). She pointed out ten areas that seemed to be of concern to the Board.

Discussion took place about the public's perception of how the Board interacts with each other. Board members noted there is room for improvement. Dr. Grissom stated that Board members must get along to move the system forward. She reminded the Board that they need to embrace a vision for the system. Board members noted that the vision would include such things as laying the basic foundation, infusion of technology, producing "productive" adolescents, providing greater literacy skills, etc. They discussed the need to work better together as a unit since their authority lies only as a unit through a majority vote. After a vote is taken, move on. An annual Board self-evaluation will take place. An annual evaluation of the Director will also take place using an instrument signed off on by the Board and by the Director of Schools.

Work sessions could prove to be beneficial when issues of great concern are being reviewed. Dr. Grissom stated that Board members should get answers to their questions prior to the Board meeting through contact with the Director who would then assign the appropriate staff person to gather information/data. Communication between the Board and the Director with the Board receiving adequate information is key to the Board's

ability to make informed decisions about matters that affect the district. Dr. Gilbert stated that the district is being re-cultured. She will provide as much information as possible with the objective and primary focus always on what better serves the children. There must be trust and honesty to achieve the system's goals.

Dr. Grissom stressed that board members should:

- 1) respect that the majority rules
- 2) focus on the issues—not the personalities
- 3) focus on what this will do to serve children
- 4) respect each other's knowledge and opinions
- 5) remember that the Board's primary role is policy
- 6) remember that the Board's only employee is the Director—all others answer to the Director

Expectations of the Director can include:

- 1) personal integrity under pressure
- 2) development, maintenance, and implementation of policies
- 3) no surprises
- 4) a long-term financial plan
- 5) the development of a positive relationship
- 6) briefing Board members on personnel issues
- 7) considering staff and all employees.

### ***Professional Learning Communities—Dr. Bob Eaker, MTSU***

Dr. Bob Eaker addressed the Board explaining that Professional Learning Communities (referred to as PLC's) form the foundation for everything that is done in a school district. Professionals should expect to operate under the latest research-based instructional programs. PLC's incorporate a common sense way of looking at education: Not focusing on what the student is being taught, but what is being learned. It is impossible today for the individual teacher to be successful so they have to work together and work with the community. The ultimate goal is that more kids learn more. Principals must be committed. It is the principals' responsibility to create a culture in which we switch from "getting it all covered" to a "focus on learning." Assessment should be done kid-by-kid, skill-by-skill, not on the averages. We should determine what is needed to help a student master a skill. Be aware that a straight-A student can be "under-learning" so we must enrich and extend that student's learning. Dr. Eaker stated that a child's socioeconomic background, ethnicity, and other variables cannot be changed; we must focus on what we can change and to address unlearned skills. Collaborative teams work together—collaboration is a systematic process in which people work interdependently to analyze and impact professional practices in order to improve our individual and collective

results. Professional Learning Communities are passionate and persistent in their focus on results. The challenges are changing school cultures and habits and providing sustained leadership. Dr. Gilbert stated that principals are committed to providing this leadership. The focus should go from isolation to collaborative teams and from a focus on intentions to a focus on results.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:35 p.m.

***Saturday—February 20, 2010***

Chair Wade called the retreat to order at approximately 8:05 a.m.

***Vision for Murfreesboro City Schools—Dr. Linda Gilbert***

Dr. Gilbert and Mr. Anderson provided the Board with the upside down triangle configuration of the delivery of services organizational chart. This approach places students, parents, and the community at the top outside of the triangle, as the customers of the district. Teachers and support staff come next, followed by principals, central office administration and support staff, and the Director of Schools with all being inside the triangle as the persons who get the job done. The School Board is at the bottom of the triangle, outside, as they speak through policies as a collective body. The key to success of the service delivery approach is communication.

Dr. Gilbert shared a PowerPoint presentation stressing the need for truth, open communication, trust, and a focus on children. She reiterated the role that PLC's will play in focusing on learning kid-by-kid, skill-by-skill. Dr. Gilbert stated that she is writing a weekly letter to all employees and to the Board, visiting schools, and taking a teacher chosen at random to lunch. She added that Colleen Goss will be working with principals on disaggregating data.

Dr. Gilbert provided a list (contained with minutes) of some of the partnerships the system will be engaging in such as: The Discovery Center, the Guidance Center, MTMC, Franklin Heights Coalition, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Faith-based communities, MTSU, and the Rutherford County Schools.

Dr. Gloria Bonner, MTSU, joined the Board to assert that MTSU has many departments wishing to assist MCS with its goals, to help determine weaknesses and provide resources, and to assist in addressing them.

Dr. Gilbert asked that to address the needs of students, these questions be asked: 1) Why? 2) What evidence do we have that this positively impacts students? What is the impact on learning, what do we expect students to learn, how will we know they have learned it, how will we respond when students experience difficulty learning, and how do

we respond when students do learn? The keys are professional learning communities and partnerships. Initiatives to assist in the endeavor would be embedded professional development, time and study groups, technology-assisted collaboration, teacher mentoring, assistant principals' opportunities to develop leadership skills, new teacher cohort, and the leadership academy. Assessments will be reviewed to determine their effectiveness. A committee has been formed to review and rewrite the RTI plan. Jess Grayum, MCS Psychologist, is familiar with the RTI program and will work along with teachers and other lead people. The committee has entered into some very open and honest dialog about the program.

Discussion took place regarding the need to provide training for E.A.'s and MDA's. Assistant principals need the opportunity to develop leadership skills. Mentoring is very important, and new teachers are being provided the opportunity to visit the classrooms of Ritch Campbell, Karen Cook, Krista Hoekstra, and Kristin Maddux. Principals as instructional leaders need to be aware of the challenges confronting teachers; i.e., making sure difficult students are not "dumped" on one teacher who is perceived as being capable of handling unusual situations. Dr. Gilbert stated that field trips should occur before the teaching occurs for more concrete learning. Partnerships will help the system with its vision, as will the Professional Learning Communities. Mrs. Wade asked that the Board be given information identifying the central office staff and their responsibilities.

Dr. Gilbert reviewed the calendars that had been presented by MEA and two additional calendars that provided an opportunity to unify the system to one calendar. Reasons to go to one calendar include but are not limited to: twelve pay periods for all teachers as requested by MEA, confusion with starting dates/county calendar which might result in truancy, loss of instructional days by students who transfer from a traditional calendar to the alternative calendar, etc. The short summer break for the alternative calendar does not allow sufficient time for major capital projects to be completed. MEA has asked that the administration make sure that teachers see all calendar options before a vote is taken. Legislation mandates that no school system begin before August 1 although school systems may opt out of this if they have schools on alternative calendars. Dr. Gilbert stated that it is her job to make sure that whatever is decided is in the best interest of children.

***Resources—Mr. Gary Anderson***

Discussion regarding meals for the Board prior to board meetings took place. It was the consensus of the Board that some light snacks be made available in the event a Board member cannot eat before the meetings begin.

Mr. Anderson provided a notebook for the Board titled "Preparing the School Budget in Murfreesboro City Schools." He reviewed the budget development process, budgeting responsibilities, revenues and expenditures as well as other funding, and an in-depth

discussion of the MCS cash flow and fund balance cycle. He noted that school boards should develop system goals and long-range plans but should not specifically write, administer, or micro-manage the budget. Mr. Anderson noted that impending capital outlay projects will involve replacing the roofs of six schools that will have to be addressed over a period of time. Discussion ensued about the savings that would be realized if the system went to a paperless payroll system, if all employees had direct deposit, and if all employees went to twelve pay periods (which cannot be achieved with the alternative calendar.) Mr. Anderson discussed the savings that the system experienced due to the initiative to reduce energy consumption.

A form was provided to each Board member for input into the 2010-2011 general purpose budget. (The notebook provided the Board is kept with the official board minutes under separate cover.)

***Social Networking—Mrs. Nancy Phillips***

Board Member Nancy Phillips shared a video and discussed the importance of social networking and how it is affecting this generation of children and the continued impact it will have on future generations and how this will impact the education system.

There being no further business, Chair Mary Wade adjourned the special board meeting at approximately 2:15 p.m.

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Dr. Linda A. Gilbert, Director of Schools

*Mission Statement*  
*To assure academic and*  
*personal success for each child.*