

Milton/Alpharetta LSAC Cluster Meeting  
Milton Center  
September 26, 2007  
Minutes

Sue Derene called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Sue Derene and Dr. Vicki Denmark made introductions.

Special guest Katie Reeves joined the meeting at 10 a.m.

Cluster Update (Dr. Denmark)

Dr. Denmark shared that a potential LSAC Cluster budget meeting was tentatively set for April 15. Overall enrollment was down by 2,000 students compared to class projections for the year.

Manning Oaks Elementary has 11 Kindergarten Classes. Dr. Denmark commended MOE and Principal Sharon Reinig. A story on the subject by Candy Waylock will run in the Roswell Revue in the coming weeks.

Dr. Denmark recognized Alpharetta High School and Principal Buck Greene for winning the Governor's Cup for highest average SAT score increase in the state of Georgia. Greene expressed appreciation to the school system and other schools in the cluster for their contributions to Alpharetta High's success. Dr. Denmark reminded the group that the Fulton County school system has eight of the state's top 11 SAT scoring high schools, and the system ranks high nationally.

Dr. Denmark said that a new system position has been staffed. Mark Muma is the new Director of Safety for the system. He will coordinate school resources officers, school nurses, public safety and other issues of security for the system.

Dr. Denmark said that launch of the 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math curriculum is underway. There is also a new social studies curriculum for grades 6-12 this school year. Grades K-5 will have a new social studies curriculum next year.

Dr. Denmark commended the cluster on its leadership in the early release program last year. She said this year's first system-wide early release went well.

Dr. Denmark reminded the cluster members that the new Vertical Teaming science initiative is underway for this school year with staff training beginning over the summer. Benefits include standardized lab reports, common vocabulary and ease of transition from year to year for students in science.

Dr. Denmark provided two handouts. One entitled Textbook Adoption Timeline outlined the milestones for textbook adoption in middle and high school science, high school Math I, Math II and AP, and selected career and technical education high school courses. A meeting on the

textbook adoption will be held at the Milton Center on October 5. The public review phase will be conducted between October 29 and November 20, 2007.

The second handout entitled State Board Passes New Graduation Rule outlined the accelerated curriculum plans to lead to the new requirements for graduation which go into effect for the class of 2012. The adoption by the school board on September 13 means there will be only one type of diploma for all students in 2012. There will no longer be career or college track components. A new course design is underway. Milton High School Principal Ron Tesch pointed out that this change could have a significant impact on some students, particularly in relation to electives and extra curricular activity.

During questions to Dr. Denmark, clarification on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math credit was requested in light of the acceleration to match the new graduation requirements.

Dr. Denmark said there was a site meeting for the new Birmingham Elementary School. Board Member Katie Reeves chaired the meeting, which went very well. It included central office staff and the project architect.

Dr. Denmark asked principals for their assessment of the requirement for affidavit or residency. Cogburn Woods Elementary Principal John Anderson said that there had been some challenges, but that he had been able to obtain all but 62 affidavits for the school. He said that a few parents had been resistant to the process. At least two other principals still had more than 100 outstanding. Others said they had less. The question was asked if the system could adjust the process to allow for one affidavit per family, rather than one for each child, particularly at schools where siblings all attend. Dr. Denmark said that this would need to be reviewed. Tesch said the challenge was multiplied at the high school level because of the number of students involved. All agreed there could be improvements to the process and increased efficiency. The new process calls for dis-enrollment beginning October 1 for non-compliance. Without residency confirmation the escalation for compliance would go to a second letter to parents. It could later lead to a social worker's intervention, a residency validation officer's intervention and finally dis-enrollment.

Several questioned if there had been sufficient communication of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade math curriculum changes, particularly to parents. Several noted communication challenges with the state Department of Education. Some parents shared their frustrations. Some students and parents have reported that they like the new curriculum. A concern was voiced for students who transfer from out of state and how they will transition in to the math curriculum. While it was recognized that the Georgia DOE was meeting the legal requirements for meeting notices, it was suggested that perhaps they could improve their public communication and public relations.

Dr. Denmark shared that Andy Ross is available from the Fulton County school system to provide LSAC member training. Dr. Denmark shared a copy of School Councils, A Guide for Members 2007-2008. Those who had reported holding LSAC meeting said things were going well.

Carolyn Carson shared that a state bill was being introduced to shift funding of public schools in Georgia from property tax to sales tax (HR 900). She distributed a draft position paper from the

Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce in opposition to the bill. She also distributed an editorial by Sally FitzGerald on the subject from the Georgia PTA website. Members were asked to continue watching these developments. The North Fulton Council of PTAs will hold its Legislative Forum on October 23, 2007 at the Teaching Museum North in Roswell from 9am-11am.

Sue Derene shared that the cluster LSAC had two primary objectives this year. One is that schools in the cluster and system share a universal need for science labs and hands on delivery of science exploration. She said the cluster could aid schools by enhancing science curriculum that would excite students. Secondly, the cluster LSACs could focus on the Health and Wellness initiatives and find ways to complement what schools are already accomplishing. Derene asked that members give consideration to these ideas and e-mail suggestions and questions to her, Sally Hildebrant and Carolyn Carson to help influence the strategic plans for schools.

One idea Derene shared was the concept of a Bio Bus, a mobile lab, housed in a bus that carried hands-on experiments, as well as staff to each campus on a rotating basis. The idea has potential for business partners who could possibly sponsor the bus, and even advertise on the side of the bus. The concept has had success in other areas. Derene described the Georgia State University program already in existence and used previously by some of our Cluster schools. She encouraged members to pass along ideas/initiatives to the Cluster chairpersons.

Katie Reeves joined the meeting after a brief break at 10 a.m. Reeves shared that the early release was not a totally universal success. Parents in some areas within the system had challenges balancing the needs of their children and their work obligations. She said some clusters might have to make adjustments for early release days next year.

Reeves said that a future meeting with elementary principals concerning the new curriculum would be set soon. She said she has heard from parents who have issues with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade math curriculum. She said some are concerned about advanced students who may be bored with grade-level curriculum, but who are not ready to move to a full year ahead. She said that the former system allowed students to move up in increments, rather than jumping an entire year.

Reeves shared that some parents had voiced concerns about reviewing Check Points Tests. She said those concerns had been addressed and that some miscommunication had led some schools to not allow parents to view Check Points results. She said that was corrected at the Thursday school board meeting. She said there was never any intent or directive to keep parents from reviewing Check Points. It was noted that Check Points is a diagnostic test, not a placement test, and assists the faculty in determining the information our students know, and what remains to be taught.

Reeves shared about the Birmingham Elementary site meeting. She said two concerns addressed at the meeting included parents' desire for a larger play field and the need for a traffic light on Birmingham Highway. She said these issues, and other concerns, would be addressed. She believed the meeting was constructive. Another site meeting will be set at a later date. Reeves reviewed the site selection process for new schools.

Reeves said the school board has released no statement in regard to the state sales tax legislation proposed to fund school systems. She said the board would wait and respond to the final draft of the bill, addressing specific concerns within the proposed legislation. She said that the board was, of course, in favor of local control of schools.

Reeves said that the board is working on its overall communication and that a planned global calendar would be released soon. The calendar would allow parents and taxpayers the ability to see big picture issues as they cycle through the school year and give them the ability to see when major issues would be addressed on specific agendas. She said that the board would much prefer the ability to devote more time to educational matters, rather than the business of the system, that must also be administered.

Derene asked Reeves what the primary focus of the school board is this year. Reeves said the board is attempting to achieve its Balanced Scorecard initiative while providing a framework for the best education possible in a fiscally responsible manner. Reeves said one area she would like to see improved is the monitoring of students who move from one grade to the next on grade level with support to advanced and vice versa to measure how well curriculum and programs are actually working. She said the board would watch indicators to see what the new curriculum is actually accomplishing.

Reeves said that she also wanted to focus on teacher retention and see a renewed emphasis on staff development. She also would like to see a renewal of training new principals from within the system.

Sally Hildebrant asked what progress was being made on updating the Balanced Scorecard Web site. Reeves said the site is being updated with a shift from waiting until all grades and evaluations are tabulated to updating the site as results become available over time. Reeves invited input into the Balanced Scorecard system. She said she welcomed input and that this was the perfect time of year to provide input and feedback. She requested e-mail inquiries from the LSAC members.

Candy Waylock asked if Balanced Scorecard issues are solely academic. Reeves said other issues could be included, and that some non-academic issues had been included in past Balanced Scorecard reporting. She said that system is reviewed each year.

John Anderson asked if there would be a review of the system changes implemented in regard to the warehouse and other services. Reeves said those would be under review and that she would like to hear from the principals about their reactions to, and thoughts on, the changes.

Hildebrant reminded members that they could watch the school board meetings on live stream on the Web site and on public television. She reminded the members about the Board link on the FCSS website, and in particular, the Board Briefs feature. On a question about results on the special education vouchers, Reeves responded that it was too early to have meaningful feedback. On a question about South Fulton high school construction, Reeves conceded that the system is facing challenges on the progress with the South Fulton high school construction. Derene thanked Reeves for her attendance and participation.

Hildebrant reminded members that the next Cluster LSAC meeting would be on Wednesday, November 14, 2007 at 9 a.m. at the Milton Center.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Respectively submitted,

Joe Conway, MOE LSAC Chair  
October 2, 2007

Attendance

Pat Reed, Foncia Fralin, Candy Waylock (Alpharetta ES); Buck Greene, Dave Aton (Alpharetta HS); John Anderson, Gaynell Power-O'Neil (Cogburn Woods ES); Sonia Terry, Kim Dickinson (Crabapple Crossing ES); Tracy Trussell, Nan Bodeep (Creek View ES); Cathi Barlow, Tina D'Aversa (Hopewell MS); Marcy Messina, Aileen Horton (Lake Windward ES); Sharon Reinig, Joe Conway (Manning Oaks ES); Ron Tesch, Susan Campbell (Milton HS); Charlia Faulkner, Lisa Pinkerton (New Prospect ES); Bruce Fraser (Northwestern MS); Nancy Murphy, Pam Kipniss (Summit Hill ES); Elizabeth Fogartie, Susan Andes (Webb Bridge MS); Carolyn Carson, Alpharetta Cluster Chair; Sue Derene and Sally Hildebrant, Milton Cluster Co-Chairs; Dr. Vicki Denmark, Alpharetta and Milton Area Superintendent. Invited Guest: Katie Reeves, Fulton County Board of Education member.