

Minutes from March 20, 2017 Meeting of the Fernbank Elementary School Council
Prepared by School Council Secretary Brad Strawn

The Fernbank Elementary School Council met on March 20, 2017, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., in the administration conference room at the school, and with Brad Strawn attending via teleconference. All scheduled Council meetings are open to the public. Attendees at the meeting were: Principal Joan Ray; Simone Willingham; John Blackmon; Kortni Boyd; Amy Howell; Jennifer Knapp; Steve Langdon; Amanda Martin; Carol Reed; Charlie Rogers, Odette Diaz Schuler, and Brad Strawn. Topics discussed in the meeting included: (a) plans for school year 2017-2018; (b) AdvancED updates; (c) physical plant update; (d) ESPLOST technology update; and (e) the summer tech initiative.

The meeting began by addressing a proposal to change the start time for the school day from 7:45 a.m. to an earlier start time of 7:30 a.m. in order to create more time for instruction during the day. Many students have been arriving right at or after 7:45 a.m. It takes a few minutes for later arriving students to make it to their classrooms and get settled in, which disrupts and often delays the beginning of instruction time in the morning. Many students who ride buses already are present by 7:30. By adding more instructional time, it will be possible to have physical education (PE) and wiggle time every day. Studies show that a regular period for physical activity facilitates learning. The school also is considering combining band, chorus and general music and having daily classes for them along with PE for 4th and 5th graders. These schedule changes should help provide additional and consistent instruction and assist teachers with class planning. Members present at the council meeting approved these proposed changes.

The Council then discussed the fact that it appears Fernbank's student census will stay close to its present number for next year. Many families residing in the Terraces of Brookhaven community are renewing their leases, and the owner has not indicated any present plans to redevelop the property. This status quo is good news as it will avoid forcing the students from that community to change schools again or travel a possible even further distance to attend Fernbank.

Principal Ray then advised that DeKalb County schools had learned that it was renewed for a five-year accreditation by AdvanceED, a global leader in accreditation based on academic instruction and financial viability.

The discussion then turned to Physical Plant updates. Principal Ray advised the Lee Cain was installed as the new DeKalb Region II Project Manager. He is often present and very responsive to Fernbank, and he has been and will be a tremendous resource to the school in maintaining the building and its grounds and ensuring that any necessary repairs are promptly done. Further, the BashDash Fundraiser will be an opportunity to raise funds for the Katie Bashor Memorial Shade Structure by the playground, and provide a place for kids, staff and visitors to take a break and get some shade while outside.

Next, the Council discussed the arrival beginning this week of many technology tools provided by the ESPLOST funding. Fernbank will receive the following items:

- 127 Chromebooks
- 2 flat screen mobile carts
- 5 laptop carts
- 150 headsets
- 40 Lenovo student laptops
- 10 ELMO document cameras

Finally, and keeping with the technology theme, the Council discussed a Summer Technology initiative involving the Media Center and new software to track employees, students and visitors. The plan is to move desktops out of the Media Center and into smaller classrooms where testing can occur, which will keep the Media Center available during testing windows and minimize the impact of testing on instructional time. The new software to be acquired is Ident-A-Kid, which is intended to improve safety by allowing for the tracking of access to the school building by students, staff and visitors.

Upon a vote of those present, the meeting was then adjourned.