

Red Clay Community Financial Review Committee
Wednesday, March 13, 2013

Meeting Minutes:

The Community Financial Review Committee met on Wednesday, March 13, 2013 at 6:30 PM in the Brandywine Springs School Teachers Lounge.

Members in Attendance:

Jane Rattenni – Committee Chair
Steven Fackenthall – RCEA Member
Jill Floore – Red Clay Chief Financial Officer
Lynn McIntosh – Community Member
Larry Miller – Community Member
Kenneth Rivera – Board Member

Others in Attendance

Amy Grundy – Red Clay Manager of Partnership Schools

I. Introduction and Opening Comments:

Ms. Rattenni opened the meeting welcoming everyone introducing our guest, Ms. Amy Grundy who will give a presentation on Partnership Zone Schools. Ms. Rattenni announced that Kim Williams was confirmed by the Board of Education as our newest Community Committee member. Unfortunately, Ms. Williams is unavailable to attend this evening.

II. Minutes

After a review of the February meeting minutes, Mr. Miller moved to accept them and Mr. Fackenthall seconded. The motion carried.

III. Presentation

Ms. Grundy distributed a packet on Partnership Zone Schools. She detailed her background as a teacher, dean of disciplinarian, assistant principal and principal throughout her career. She is now the Manager of School Turnaround. As a Partnership Zone (PZ) School Manager, she supports the low performing schools in RCCSD. She supports and monitors and works to create conditions for improved academic achievement. She sees herself accountable for academic achievement in the partnership zone schools alongside the teachers and administrators of those schools. She attended turnaround boot camp sponsored by Mass Insight, a partner of the RCCSD, detailing the 5 core functions of school turnaround offices. She is an office of one. As a liaison she coordinates school support with the other departments in the district. She hasn't done much fostering staffing high need schools as the staffing was already in place. She

manages the Partnership Zone and 1003 budgets. We don't have any PZ partners right now.

Ms. Grundy insures that the schools and administrative teams have the supports they need to improve teaching and learning in their schools. Stanton, Lewis and Marbrook are our identified as well as the focus schools: Baltz, A.I. DuPont Middle and Warner. She is in the schools weekly but typically more often. The walk throughs are taking data from the schools as well providing feedback to the teachers. DCAS also provides feedback for the teachers. She works with the principals and teams as well as evaluating the principals in those schools. She attends the staff meetings. The principals of those schools are new in their positions. It is a great opportunity to increase the productivity through leadership development.

We are in the spring round of DCAS looking at how the students have progressed. They are targeting extended day programs. Attendance, suspensions, etc. The professional development is planned side by side with the principals. Ms. Grundy attends the building leadership team and professional learning community groups.

Each school wrote a plan using the same 5 focus areas. First is curriculum, instruction and assessment; two is teacher leader effectiveness; third extended learning time; fourth is flexible operating conditions; and the fifth, family and community engagement and school climate.

She distributed her strategic goals aligning with the district strategic goals. Ms. Floore stated that when the schools were identified, the process was controversial on what is the lowest school and how are they identified. They weren't identified as the lowest performing but achieving the most significant losses in the shortest time. Marbrook is a Blue Ribbon school and is now a PZ school, due to the slope of the decline. The 3 Red Clay schools and 3 schools in Christina are the most in the combined districts. There is federal money received at the state level and dedicated it to these schools. They then submitted the application for the ESEA plan. The plan does not include the PZ schools but turning to focus schools came with significantly less money. Those schools identified prior to Red Clay received significantly more money than Red Clay. Then the focus schools divided up what was left.

Ms. Floore asked if a school was identified in a school what they would be called next year. Ms. Grundy stated that she doesn't believe they are identifying any new schools into this program. Also, if the schools meet AYP this year there are not consequences. But we do not know what the consequence of not meeting AYP next year.

Mr. Miller asked if there is a comparison of 5th grade students with 6th grade students Ms. Grundy explained that it wasn't a comparison but an analysis of the same group. It is very hard to measure. Ms. Floore explained that you had several models to choose from: PZ, shut down and make a charter, or replace ½ the staff. With the PZ the principal is replaced and you have more flexibility with the staffing and who would commit with the 2 year process. Ms. Floore explained that the rules were suspended with

staffing. With the bargaining process, it was very challenging. Ms. Grundy explained that if the district professional development doesn't align with the State plan, we have some autonomy to use our own plan.

Ms. Grundy explained the finances of PZ schools. The one report depicts allocations of the schools divided into the 5 focus areas. As in Marbrook, Focus Activity 1 was funded with PZ funding or 1003G funds. We have more flexibility with PZ funds as long as they are spent on students within the plan. The plan can be amended. 1003G funds are allocated for very specific items and need to be spent that way. The second set of reports is what we are actually spending. Ms. Grundy works very closely with Debbie Roberts in the Business Office so that no monies are left on the table. We cannot overspend.

Mr. Fackenthall was looking at Lewis and reads that Scott Forseman and My Sidewalks is charged for \$70,000. He believes that is part of Curriculum. Ms. Grundy explained that money has been amended as those curriculum items were already part of the school through the District. Ms. Floore also explained that some schools have purchased supplemental curriculum items. The amendment was written and sent to the State to change to another focus. Ms. Grundy will follow up with the supporting documentation.

Mr. Fackenthall asked what is DTO? That is Amy Grundy's position. She is the grant funded position. Mr. Rivera asked about a master schedule consultant. Ms. Grundy explained that they moved to block scheduling and that was staff training on how to teach within the block. Mr. Fackenthall asked if we could have asked our other schools for help in this area. Ms. Grundy stated that is possible but was handled this way.

Ms. Rattenni asked about schools transitioning out within the one to three years. Ms. Grundy stated we have 3 years of funding. We are currently at the end of the first year funds. Ms. Rattenni asked about sustainability for the schools. Can the 3rd year be used to prepare them to go back to a traditional model? Ms. Grundy states that they haven't veered too far from the traditional model. We haven't spent money on people. We have spent it on training the current people and curricula.

Ms. Floore stated there are 2 strategies of training and supplies. Staff training consists of summer school or summer training. There is no way that the district could fund this in the future. This extended instruction does, however, make a big difference to the students taking advantage of the programs. Secondly, are the supplies. Laptops, white boards however do falter. The eMints grant is ended. The laptops are aging and we don't have the money or the staff to support it.

Mr. Fackenthall asked about Marbrook My Sidewalks being amended as well. Ms. Grundy explained that My Sidewalks are the intervention materials. Mr. Rivera asked if the Lewis professional development is mandated. Ms. Grundy explained that it was mandated as part of the 2 year commitment that the staff signed. We are now reviewing letters of conflict submitted by the staff. The professional development is 3 days after the school day 3 days after the school ends and 3 days prior to the next year.

Mr. Rivera asked about training on understanding cultures in our schools. Ms. Grundy explained that SIOP and TIOP are the initiatives at Lewis and they are returning this summer. They focus on strategies to read write speak and listen. Teachers in their planning are finding ways not only to have the students learn but to prove their knowledge in these focus groups.

Mr. Rivera asked about the end of the summer program for Marbrook. Ms. Grundy explained that there will be one definite team building day and another going over data. Lewis will have a similar format. Stanton has been working with dazzle, a UD program. We are still in the planning stages for summer. Mr. Rivera asked what was the thinking that we would mandate the staff extra time. Ms. Grundy explained that the template is a standard PZ template by the State. It falls under the Teacher and leader effectiveness focus. Ms. Floore added that the committees that developed the plans were teacher driven with very little district involvement. Ms. Grundy stated that through collaboration and professional development, we are trying to ensure that all students are receiving the same level of teaching. Mr. Fackenthall asked about the 2 year plan commitment if they submit a conflict letter, it may not be a legitimate reason as in vacations. Laura Rowe with the DSEA is working with the district on handling those issues. An IVT may be involved. The challenge is sending the correct message without punishment.

Ms. Grundy reviewed the funding with the Committee. The 1003G money was not loaded early enough so it was funded by local funding and PZ. Now we will realign the funding to where the money should be placed. Ms. Floore stated that this complexity of tracking is quite frustrating. The amount of reporting that needs to be done takes an extraordinary amount of time. Ms. Rattenni asked about the annual budget, can the funds be rolled to the next year or does it need to be spent within the year. Ms. Grundy stated that an extension can be requested but we want to most effectively use the money.

Mr. Miller explained that the district has a plan to create successful schools and teachers. We have made objectives and are detailed how to achieve this. Mr. Miller stated the other piece that concerns him is the shared responsibility of the parents and community for the success of the student. Focus number 5 is the family engagement. Cultures and issues that the students are confronted with. Ms. Grundy explained that Stanton teachers went to the homes of the incoming 6th grade students. Marbrook had community day and had a dance. Lewis had Saturday library hours. Certain events draw more families.

Ms. Rattenni asked if Amy was part of the spending focus for the RTTT or building budgets. No, Ms. Grundy is only involved in the PZ funding. Ms. Floore stated that she does get involved in the staffing of the PZ schools. She is an advocate for the schools in this regard as well.

Mr. Fackenthall questioned Focus 5 for Lewis as the committee of staff members created what parent involvement was held omitting parent communication or forums. Ms. Grundy explained that there was a last column not on the document distributed that listed parent involvement coming from building funds. There is funding for parent involvement and decisions will be made how to use that. Lewis also has ELL support.

Mr. Fackenthall asked if they were seeing more parental involvement. Ms. Grundy feels more families are attending events and the schools have a more positive culture. Lewis is a language immersion not a feeder. Families choice in. Lewis is the center of their community. Teachers from Spain came this summer; community members housed those teachers while they found their own housing. Ms. Floore explained another challenge of a charter school coming before our Board for an immersion school. That school wouldn't open next year. It will be a challenge to attract and keep the same target students.

Ms. Rattenni thanked Ms. Grundy for her presentation and invited her back next year for an update on the schools. Ms. Grundy explained any other questions can be emailed to her for answers.

IV. Updates

Ms. Floore announced the Board approved moving forward with the ESCO project. The financing was listed as bonds at the time of the decision. There was a major cap program at the same time the district took a look at this energy saving project. Sensors would turn on lights and cooling as to whether the rooms were occupied. Major capital is fixing what is needed. This project is fixing things that will save us money. ESCO is not part of major cap. The \$20 million for the project is paid for by the savings we don't pay to the utilities. Our savings will be measured in usage and not necessarily in amount paid as rates fluctuate over the 20 years. They went to RFP for underwriter on the bond, but we also received a proposal for a lease which is more feasible than the bond. With sequestration and the market, our bond is getting worse. We don't want to lose the savings to interest in the bonds. We will bring this to the Board for a vote next month.

Ms. Floore brought to the information regarding sequestration to the committee's attention. The latest information is 5% from Consolidated Grant which includes Title 1 and IDEA. This means roughly 5 positions within the district. Five \$100,000 positions (which includes salary, pension, OECs, etc.) within the district. This won't apply until next year as we have contract obligations. Mr. Miller asked if that meant October. Ms. Floore stated it is still unclear but we believe it may be earlier than that. There are many layers of discussions going on at this time. Mr. Fackenthall asked if Title 1 programs, how many positions would be taken. Ms. Floore explained that 5 is the total from all the grants. Also there are supplies as part of this. The grant is heavily people but not solely people. Ms. Rattenni asked if that could be absorbed through attrition. Ms. Floore stated no as these are within Title 1 and IDEA positions. Mr. Fackenthall asked if any would be district administration positions. It would have to be a position within the Title 1 and IDEA programs. Paraprofessionals are also included. Their RIF deadline is August where a teacher RIF is May. Ms. Rattenni asked if end of March would be the date of finding this information. Ms. Floore is not that optimistic on time.

Mr. Miller asked about after sequestration going through and the positions identified, and then do the grants need to be redone for changing goals and objectives based on those missing positions. Ms. Floore explained that the grants are opened up now to see what our focus should be. Mr. Fackenthall asked if the voluntary transfer list comes out after

what is opened. Ms. Floore explained that is the March 15th. Unfortunately, only positions we know for certain will be listed.

The Barbacane Thornton audit is still not complete. Barbacane had a balance that was \$9,000,000 higher than our balance. We explained this is impossible. Debbie Roberts has been finding double booking tuition funds and other errors. We have found \$8,000,000. They are saying it's the implementation of the new financial system. Barbacane wants to come to the CFRC to request doing a 2012 audit as well. Ms. Floore is uncomfortable of moving forward. Maybe we should go out to bid for a new firm. More information will follow.

V. Monthly Reports

Ms. Floore presented the monthly reports. At this time of the year, we should be at 66%. Local funds are 98.84 %, so we are almost complete. We received additional fees as spring rentals are picking up. The difference from last year last year is due to the state fully funded salaries then but they have not yet this year. They will fund it fully. The Governor's budget came out with no raises other than step increases for teachers. CFOs made a push for technology. It is a bare bones budget without adds, however no cuts either. Assuming everything holds, we have everything we had last year.

Some expenditures are over 66% encumbered. We are concerned and working with the schools. Our lowest encumbered is North Star at 21%. North Star contacted us with a plan for this spring. The Board hired a policy and procedures person. They have gone over budget and other expenses may be moved to the superintendent's budget.

Red Clay now has a live TV station 24/7. Public Communications is over budget due to supporting the TV station at McKean. Expenditures will be reallocated to the departments actually using this time and station usage.

Special Services is still over encumbered. 50% has been spent at this time. Copy center is still over budget. The bill backs are going back to the schools at this time.

Next month begins the last quarter. The whole intent of this report to make sure we have enough to carry us through the fiscal year and we are on track.

State salaries Line 64, we are 65.4%, and Local Salaries, Line 66 we are at 58.9%. Mr. Fackenthall asked if teachers at special schools come from Division 1 salaries. No, Ms. Floore stated they are their own divisions on page 7 and 8.

Nothing new on the federals. We are just starting the FY2013 grants. Debbie Roberts comes next month to report on the federals grants and close outs.

Tuition programs are on track expenditures, however encumbered is 120% of budget due to an over encumbrance which includes summer programs.

Minor cap is 2 year funding. They are preparing for summer projects.

VI. Audits

There was an audit finding for Red Clay in the Debt Service Audit. Red Clay was included in the chart because we have to have sufficient balance to cover our payments through October. We needed to have \$3 million in the bank. We get at least \$500,000 leading up to October. We were in the audit as we were \$31,000 short of \$3 million. No response was necessary. Ms. Floore will bring the audit report next month.

There were no findings for Red Clay in the school construction audit.

Rcpac is parent advisory council we could report to them on this committee and the work that's done.

VII. Public Comments

Mr. Fackenthall commented on the news regarding special education students being housed in mainstream schools. At this time, RPLC and RPES are in one building. They were informed recently that ELL and special education students could be placed back in their feeder schools. The teachers were told that Central School, Meadowood and RPLC may be dismantled placing the students into their home schools. Mr. Fackenthall had concerns that the students disabilities were so severe that they would fall through the cracks in the regular schools. His concerns are also for the paraprofessional jobs. Ms. Floore stated there was a Board workshop where they were informed of this plan and that there is nothing driven by a financial perspective. The special funds used for the students are taken from a protected tuition fund. There was a large (state level) committee looking at the issues of ELL and Special Ed. This proposed plan is the finding of the committee. But nothing has been discussed on a financial perspective of this plan.

Meadowood and RPLC are their own divisions. Within those divisions, Meadowood has a virtual school, existing only on paper. The money exists but the students are housed at HBMS or Forest Oak. Those funds are strictly classified as tuition and the Board has discretion to change the tax to support those students. A referendum is needed for funding raised on regular students. Mr. Fackenthall asked if the Learning Center broke up, those funds would follow those students. Ms. Floore agreed and explained that we do have Meadowood students who are in a program like this right now.

Ms. Floore stated that this transition will not be easy or instant. A dialog is needed before moves will be made. Mr. Fackenthall stated that the teachers are RPLC did not know about the State committee as none were invited to join.

Ms. Palombo informed the Committee that there was an email regarding the advertised position on the Committee for a community member. We responded to the email with information on the meeting times and responsibilities of the position. We have not heard back. Mr. Fackenthall asked how it was advertised. Ms. Floore explained that it was on

the Red Clay web page. Mr. Fackenthal explained that the Title 1 parents may not have that access. He asked that a flyer be sent to the schools if another position comes open. Ms. Floore explained that in the past, it was advertised in the Red Clay Record. That paper only goes out 4 times a year now, so timing would be an issue. Ms. Rattenni stated that we could do both in the future. Ms. Floore explained that there is a Red Clay Parent Advisory Council (RCPAC). We should inform them of our committee and the work that we do. Mr. Fackenthal suggested inviting them to our meetings; however, Ms. Floore stated that RCPAC's meetings are held during the day. We can submit a report to RCPAC to be read at their meeting.

VIII. Announcements

The next CFRC meeting will be held Wednesday, April 10, 2013 in the Brandywine Springs Teachers' Lounge at 6:30 PM. Curriculum as well as the federal grant close-out report will be presented.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.
Respectfully Submitted,
Laura Palombo
Recording Secretary