

# Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Board of Education Meeting Minutes

March 15, 2004 – 7:30 p.m.  
Regular Meeting

Borough Administration Building  
148 N. Binkley, Soldotna, Alaska

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:**

Ms. Deborah Germano, President  
Mrs. Sammy Crawford, Vice President  
Dr. Nels Anderson, Clerk  
Mrs. Margaret Gilman, Treasurer  
Mrs. Debra Mullins  
Ms. Sandra Wassilie  
Ms. Debbie Holle  
Mr. Marty Anderson  
Mrs. Sunni Hilts  
Mr. Patrick Tilbury, Student Representative

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Dr. Donna Peterson, Superintendent of Schools  
Mrs. Melody Douglas, Chief Financial Officer  
Dr. Gary Whiteley, Assistant Superintendent  
Mr. Sam Stewart, Assistant Superintendent

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

|                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Mrs. Jenni Hammond | Mr. Mick Wykis         |
| Mr. Bob VanDerWege | Mr. John Pothast       |
| Mrs. Cyndi Romberg | Mrs. Patty Youngren    |
| Mrs. LaDawn Druce  | Miss Sarah Youngren    |
| Mr. Jim White      | Mr. Tim Peterson       |
| Miss Jenni Dillon  | Mrs. Paula Christensen |
| Mr. Steve Wright   | Dr. Roy Anderson       |
| Mr. Dave Larson    | Mr. Tony Azzara        |
| Mr. Jim Bennett    | Mrs. Rosie Reeder      |
| Mr. Glenn Haupt    | Ms. Terri Woodward     |
| Mrs. Kelly Bishop  | Ms. Carol Butler       |
| Ms. Gail Moore     | Mrs. Sara Hepner       |
| Mrs. Kelley Smith  | Mr. John Mills         |

Others present not identified.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

*(7:31:45 PM)*

Ms. Germano called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

*(7:31:50 PM)*

Ms. Germano invited Sears Elementary kindergarten students to lead those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL:**

*(7:32:25 PM)*

|                      |                |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Mrs. Sammy Crawford  | Present        |
| Ms. Deborah Germano  | Present        |
| Mrs. Margaret Gilman | Present        |
| Mrs. Debra Mullins   | Present        |
| Dr. Nels Anderson    | Present        |
| Ms. Sandra Wassilie  | Present        |
| Ms. Debbie Holle     | Present        |
| Mr. Marty Anderson   | Absent/Excused |
| Mrs. Sunni Hilts     | Present        |
| Mr. Patrick Tilbury  | Present        |

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

*(7:32:55 PM)*

The agenda was approved with a revision to Item 10a(3), Resignations.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

*(7:33:19 PM)*

The School Board Minutes of March 1, 2004, were approved with a revision.

**AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

*(7:33:51 PM)*

Mrs. Debbie Harris and Ms. Cathy Rolph, Alaska Art Alliance Board Representatives, in partnership with the Kennedy Center, presented an award to Mr. Mick Wykis, Sears Elementary principal, for outstanding achievements in integrated arts education.

The Board presented Golden Apple awards to Ms. Carol Butler, Skyview High Custodian, and Mrs. Kelly Bishop, Kenai Alternative High School special education aide, for their service to the District.

**SCHOOL REPORT:**

*(7:45:42 PM)*

Mr. Mick Wykis, Sears Elementary principal, provided written information to the Board regarding quality teaching and support for students, parent involvement and the extended school day. He explained that the school staff is trying to bring new students to the school through the magnet school, a strong instructional program, and quality staff. Mrs. Thomas, kindergarten teacher, explained the Zoophonics Program and gave a demonstration with the assistance of several kindergarten students (Miss Darian Saltenberger, Mr. Michael Hill, Miss Kali Bravo, Miss Courtney Shipps, Mr. Cameron Ramos, Miss Quaella Middaugh, Mr. Corbin Strieff) who recited the alphabet through action and sounds. Mrs. Atchley, Grades 1 and 2 teacher, explained how reading and writing is taught at Sears Elementary and introduced Mr. Ryan Holmes, Miss Cristina Hubler, Miss Ali Fitt, Miss Mariah Schloeman, Miss Becky Jo Dragseth, and Miss Courtney McCauley who read their own poems in a Coffee House-style format.

**RECESS**

*(8:04:06 PM)*

At 8:04 p.m. Ms. Germano called a recess.

**RECONVENE:**

*(8:10:19 PM)*

At 8:10 p.m., the Board reconvened in regular session.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:**

*(8:10:19 PM)*

Ms. Amy McVee, Quest parent, expressed concern for the current Quest Program budget reduction proposal because it will dismantle the program and added that the current model is extremely efficient and cost effective.

Mr. Patrick McVee, Quest student, told the Board that the Quest Program allows him to learn things that he would not learn in a regular classroom and asked the Board to continue the Quest Program.

Ms. Gail Moore, Quest teacher, clarified that early intervention for gifted students is critical and noted that the current proposal would mean that some students would not be identified until third grade or not at all and that the true identifier of gifted children is an IQ score.

Mrs. Patty Youngren, QUEST parent, stated that the continuation of the QUEST program is important for the success of gifted students because in a regular classroom teachers may have as many as 30 students with vast levels of abilities and asked the Board to listen to the recommendations of the Quest teachers.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:**

*(8:10:19 PM)*

**(Continued)**

Miss Sara Youngren, Quest student, stated that she has a 4.0 grade point average and loves school and explained that through the Quest Program, she has been given opportunities to challenge herself and to excel and asked the Board to offer the Program in the same format.

Ms. Jean Rigby, Quest parent, noted that one of the reasons her family chose to move to the Kenai Peninsula is because of the District's Quest Program and that the proposed changes to the program will not offer anything but a brief vacation from class with no enrichment.

Mrs. Jenni Hammond, asked the Board to consider allowing the public to ask for clarification during worksessions; she suggested that the Board take more input from teachers, parents and students regarding the Quest Program; she announced that on March 16 at 9:00 a.m. at the Kenai LIO Office the public can listen and testify to the Senate Finance Committee regarding HB 233. She noted that the Ways and Means Committee will hear HB 236 which enacts an employment tax for education. She suggested that the Board establish a Pupil Transportation Task Force to review District bus routes.

Mrs. Penny Vadla, Ninilchik Elementary/High teacher and Quest parent, stated that it would be a travesty to take the Quest Program away from students and asked the Board to fully fund the program and not cut the FTE from 13 to 6.

Ms. Holle asked for input regarding educational equity and asked Mrs. Vadla for suggestions of ways to reduce the budget. Mrs. Vadla suggested that school consolidation might be a way to reduce the budget and added that she would have a suggestion list for Ms. Holle by Friday, March 19.

Mrs. Cyndi Romberg, Quest teacher, stated that there are many gifted education plans available that would be cost effective and deliver a better program; she gave her objections to the gifted program model currently being proposed; and she reported that a gifted student identification matrix was developed a couple of years ago which is working well.

Mrs. Sara Hepner, Quest teacher, stated that the current Quest proposal is a great staff development model but is not cost effective, too demanding of the regular classroom teacher, and can be accomplished in other ways.

Mr. Rich Redmond, former teacher, reported that he was laid off last school year after 13 years in the District and asked the Board and administration to rehire him.

**COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS:** Dr. Peterson noted that communications regarding the Quest Program and District budget were included in the Board General Information Packet. She noted that the City of Soldotna forwarded a resolution supporting Proposition 1. She reminded Board members of the March 16 joint worksession with the Borough Assembly at 2:00 p.m. regarding Seward Middle School.  
(8:44:42 PM)

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:** Dr. Peterson reported that on Saturday, March 13, 104 students from 14 schools participated in the Districtwide Forensics Meet with the help of 50 volunteers. She reported that on Wednesday, March 10 she spoke to the Anchor Point Chamber of Commerce regarding school consolidation, budget, cocurricular activities, and the development of jobs. She announced that she will be a speaker at the April 2 Charter School Conference at the Challenger Learning Center. She noted that Commissioner Sampson will also be a speaker at the Conference. She reported that she will be in Juneau on March 16 and 17 to attend the Alaska Council of School Administrators Legislative Fly-in. She reported that she will be in Washington, D.C. March 27 through 31 to work on federal priorities and to look at an education model being considered by the state. She urged those present to submit ballots for Proposition 1 by the March 30 deadline.  
(8:45:43 PM)

Ms. Holle asked Dr. Peterson about the consolidation discussion at the Chamber meeting. Dr. Peterson replied that the first question from the audience was, "Are you going to close our school?" She stated that the residents view the school as the heart of the community and are willing to be staffed accordingly or do what is necessary to keep their school.

Ms. Gilman asked for information regarding the April 2 Alaska State Charter School Conference.

Ms. Holle asked Dr. Peterson for more information regarding the Baldrige award. Dr. Peterson explained that the Baldrige award is an award for the business community which has been asked to look at school districts around the country. She stated that Chugach School District received the Baldrige Award last school year. She stated that a team of five educators will travel to Washington, D.C. to observe and bring back information from the school district who received the Baldrige Award this school year.

**Financial Report:**

*(8:50:43 PM)*

Mrs. Douglas presented the financial report of the District for the period ending February 29, 2004. She commented that natural gas bills have increased overall and that the corporate rate has increased 14%.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

*(8:51:53 PM)*

Items presented on the Consent Agenda were Approval of Long Term Substitute Teacher Contracts; Tentative Tenured Teacher Assignment; and Resignation.

**Long Term Substitute Teacher Contracts:**

Dr. Whiteley recommended the Board approve substitute teacher contracts for Gordon Pitzman, Generalist, Homer Flex; Dave DeRuwe, Math, Seward High School; and Allison Larson, Science, Skyview High School.

**Tentative Tenured Teacher Assignment:**

Dr. Whiteley recommended the Board approve a tentative tenure teacher assignment for the 2004-2005 school year for Janet Miller, Nikiski Middle/High School.

**Resignations:**

Dr. Whiteley recommended the Board approve resignations from Marc Swanson, 6th Grade, Seward Elementary; Dorothy Harness, Math, Homer High School; Dan Walker, Math/Language Arts/Social Studies, Seward High School; and Dianne Silva, Special Education/Resource, Skyview High School (all effective at the end of the 2003-2004 school year ).

At 8:49 p.m. Dr. Anderson left the meeting.

**MOTION**

Mrs. Crawford moved the Board approve Consent Agenda Items Numbers 1 through 3. Mrs. Gilman seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

At 8:54 p.m. Dr. Anderson returned to the meeting.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS/  
COMMENTS:**

*(8:53:04 PM)*

Bruce Vadla, Quest parent, expressed support for Quest Program services for middle school and high school students and noted that they are equally as important as elementary services.

Mr. Jim Bennett, Quest Program teacher, clarified inaccuracies in the Quest Program report to the Board, and added that Quest teachers are not afraid to take cuts but ask to be involved in the process.

Ms. Holle asked whether Quest Program students are only pulled out during critical instruction time. Mr. Bennett responded that students are usually pulled out during language arts time which includes reading. He stated that most students are proficient in language arts, and therefore, using that time to address their specific academic needs is convenient.

Ms. Germano stated that student needs are diverse and added that there is a problem with language arts pull-out instruction because it does not fulfill all students' needs. Mr. Bennett explained that Quest teachers work on math, science, and hands-on instruction during the regular classroom language arts period. Mrs. Hepner stated that she has gifted

math students pulled out during regular math.

Mrs. Dena Cunningham, Quest parent, stated that she wants her son to be challenged at school and expressed concern that without the Quest Program, it will not happen.

Mr. Brian Bailey, Quest teacher, explained that during the pull-out, period Quest teachers address the diversity of each gifted students' needs. He stated that he is a product of the District's Quest Program and added that the Program was invaluable to him.

Ms. Nora Ribbens, Quest parent, stated that her son wrote a letter to Board members regarding the Quest Program proposal. She asked the Board not to take away from the program but instead, provide more of it. She commended Mr. VanDerWege for his assistance to her as the Nikiski Middle/High School library aide.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS/  
COMMENTS:**

*(8:53:04 PM)*

**(Continued)**

Mrs. Penny Vadla stated that it is easy to cut the Quest Program because gifted students are bright and will excel but cautioned that without a gifted program, students may drop out of school because their needs are not being met.

**BOARD COMMENTS:**

*(9:15:33 PM)*

Mrs. Hilts stated that the Board is passionate about the subject of gifted students but must think of Quest Program services in a different way. She stated that with 13 Quest teachers it is not possible to provide equitable services to 43 schools. She asked how the District can provide a pull-out program to students in a school where English is the second language, or in a remote school, or at a small school. She stated that the goal of the administrative team is to find the giftedness of every student and felt that the Board should have a conversation with parents, teachers, and administration about Quest Program services. She suggested that the group talk about how to provide a fulfilling and good education to all students with the money available. She recommended that parents take the passion for education and use it as a springboard to develop a plan to provide each student in the District (regardless of the school they attend) with an equitable education.

Dr. Anderson related a story about a group of Canadian students who were limited in abilities but were treated as gifted students and became very successful. He stated that this method of teaching has been replicated in many other places and is known as the Pygmalion Effect. He stated that his goal for all District students is that each student would be treated as gifted students. He stated that he recognizes the needs and problems of the Quest Program but does not feel that enough money will come from the legislature to retrieve the Program. He stated that the Quest Program discussion needs to be continued so that the Board can best deliver services to students. He agreed with Mrs. Hilts' comments that there are inequities in services to the District's small schools and added that there may not be a solution. He suggested the Board ask

middle school and high school gifted students how to best deliver services so that their needs can be met. He stated that if the District receives additional money from the legislature, it will provide some relief for the 2004-2005 school year but will not allow the Board to restore much of what has been cut from the budget. He expressed concern for the impact of the State House vote to increase educational funding on the local ballot proposition. He predicted that the public will assume that the District will have enough money and will vote against Proposition 1. He explained that the proposition will provide funding for cocurricular activities for the long term and added that he is not optimistic that the state will fund education at the necessary level in future years. He stated that he will not support the return of cocurricular funding in the District budget if Proposition 1 fails. He stated that he may consider funding cocurricular activities if the legislature provides the amount of money as proposed. He asked the public to vote for the proposition because it will allow the Borough to provide funds for cocurricular activities outside of the cap when it becomes necessary.

**BOARD COMMENTS:  
(Continued)**

Ms. Holle noted how deeply the love for the Quest Program was expressed in the parent and student testimonials. She explained that the reason the Quest Program is being cut is because the District is facing a \$5 million budget deficit. She stated that Proposition 1 is very important to the District and reminded the public that ballots are due to the Borough Clerk's Office before March 30. She explained that the passage of Proposition 1 will help somewhat but not entirely. She stated that the Quest Program is budgeted at \$1 million and as pointed out by administration is not required by law. She stated that she and other Board members are not proud of the fact that the Program may have to be cut. She stated that solutions to the District's budget crisis need to be found and added that after the legislature makes a decision on funding some adjustments can be made. She explained that the Board must present a balanced budget to the Borough Assembly which will require a final decision on the 2004-2005 budget at the next meeting. She encouraged those present to continue sending comments to legislators and the governor regarding educational funding. She noted that upon her return to the state last week she did not have any messages from anyone in her district regarding the budget and urged the public to provide suggestions to Board members regarding the budget. She suggested that the District pursue the recommendations in the area cost differential study with the State Senate.

Mrs. Gilman thanked Mr. Wykis and the students for the Sears Elementary School presentation. She expressed appreciation for the parent testimony regarding the Quest Program and added that the information was helpful for the Board and the public. She stated that the Quest Program proposal is a good start for staff development. She stated that differentiation in the classroom is very important and a good goal to strive for

but doesn't happen because teachers are spread too thin. She stated that she has not seen any data proving that pull-out programs hurt Quest students. She commented that it was heartening to hear parents begging for education for their children. She observed that the \$400,000 the District spends on school bus aides is just as important as money spent on Quest Program teachers.

**BOARD COMMENTS:  
(Continued)**

Mrs. Crawford thanked Mr. Wykis for the Sears Elementary School report. She stated that the Board needs as much public support as possible to pass Proposition 1 and to urge the senate to pass funding legislation. She acknowledged that the Quest Program has great teachers and added that the Board had an excellent discussion on the topic prior to the Board meeting. She stated that she visited Mr. Ray Vining who teaches online classes and observed an algebra class and an Advanced Placement English course. She explained that the students conduct online discussions and writings as well as other interaction. She stated that she judged the Forensics school-wide competition at K-Beach Elementary School. She suggested that the Board change the start times of the regular meetings to 7:00 pm and continue the worksessions in the same manner. She expressed appreciation for the Dine and Discuss meetings and asked to continue with them. She announced that on Wednesday, March 17 she will attend the Project GRAD meeting and the National School Board Association Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida.

Mrs. Mullins thanked the students from Sears Elementary for the school report. She reported that she attended the Administrator Meeting and listened to a wonderful update on school law. She announced that she was invited to visit Nikiski Middle/High School and was escorted around the school by two very capable students who provided good feedback regarding their favorite teachers and what classes they were taking. She reported that the Board had a great worksession on the Quest Program which allowed time to share concerns and have questions answered. She recommended that parents give the Board some more feedback regarding Quest Program services. She stated that she has received phone calls on the issue and expressed appreciation for the great questions. She stated that the Board needs the public's help to contact the legislature in a show of support for adequate funding for education. She showed a picture of her grandchild and added that she looks at it when she needs to keep smiling.

Mr. Tilbury stated that the Board heard a great school presentation from the students at Sears Elementary and added that he was impressed with their public speaking skills.

Ms. Wassilie thanked the public for speaking to the Board regarding the Quest Program. She stated that it is good to hear about what is being taught in the Quest Program and



what is working and what can be improved. She stated that as a former GED teacher, the District has highly gifted students who have become disconnected from the school system and are not productive. She echoed comments made regarding the passage of Proposition 1. She stated that she saw a draft resolution from the Seward City Council supporting Proposition 1. She reported that she has been telling constituents that even if additional money is provided by the legislature, the District will still be considering budget cuts for the 2005-2006 school year. She stated that passage of the Proposition will give the Borough the flexibility to fund cocurricular activities outside of the cap. She stated that she visited Cooper Landing

**BOARD COMMENTS:  
(Continued)**

Elementary School which is a model for multi-age classrooms. She stated that Ms. Catherine Baber does an outstanding job of meeting the students' needs with two aides and a number of parent volunteers. She stated that she visited the Connections Program and noted that in addition to the tremendous number of students, the program provides enrichment courses to 150 students who also attend regular schools. She stated that she accepted an invitation to observe the music program at Soldotna Elementary in observance of Music Appreciation Month. She noted that Ms. Erin Southwick, music teacher, is enthusiastic about teaching music and uses music to teach reading. She stated that she was a humorous poetry judge at the Borough Forensics meet and commented on the student talent.

Ms. Germano summarized the Board's earlier worksessions. She stated that conclusions were reached on some topics but not all and expressed appreciation for the good discussions. She stated that for many years she has been a Quest Program parent advocate and was involved when the State decided not to include gifted programs in special education. She stated that cutting the Quest Program funding is not easy to do. She noted that there are many ways that gifted students can be served. She asked whether the District is including all gifted students in the Quest Program or if they must be self-motivated or fit a certain mold. She stated that if the District is not providing Quest Program services for all gifted students then the program delivery of service should be reviewed. She stated that there are 13.5 teachers for 43 school sites with the majority of the students located in the Central Peninsula area. She announced that Ms. Shelly Eidsness from the Alaska Faith Communities for Children, sent a letter announcing that March 18 is Incredible Kids Day. She reported that Ms. Eidsness encourages everyone to write a note to a child telling them they are incredible. She commended the Soldotna High School students who webcasted the state hockey tournament and the student who announced the play-by-play. She reported that Mr. Mark Robinson, Mr. Lance Peterson, Ms. Lynn Roth, and Ms. Jill Berryman produced *West Side Story* with 130 students. She congratulated the Homer High School

girls' basketball team for placing third in the region tournament and the opportunity to compete at the upcoming state tournament. She urged those present to keep the pressure on the state senate to compromise and work towards additional education funding.

She appointed herself (as an ex officio member), Mrs. Crawford, Mrs. Mullins, and Ms. Wassilie to the Board Policy Subcommittee.

**ADJOURN:**  
(9:55:45 PM)

At 9:55 p.m., Mrs. Crawford moved the School Board Meeting be adjourned. Mrs. Mullins seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Ms. Deborah Germano, President

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Dr. Nels Anderson, Clerk

The Minutes of March 15, 2004,  
were approved on April 5, 2004  
as written.