



AGENDA

Wisconsin Rapids Board of Education
Educational Services Committee

510 Peach Street · Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494 · (715) 424-6701

Anne Lee, Chairman
John Benbow, Jr.
Katie Bielski-Medina
Larry Davis
Sandra Hett
Mary Rayome
John Krings, President

April 4, 2016

LOCATION: Board of Education, 510 Peach Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI
Conference Room A/B

TIME: Immediately following the Business Services Committee and Personnel Services
Committee meetings, but not before 6:15 p.m.

- I. Call to Order
- II. Public Comment
- III. Actionable Items
 - A. THINK Academy
 - B. 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant
 - C. United Way of Inner Wisconsin Grant for Before and After School Club Mead
 - D. Financial Literacy Innovation Grant
- IV. Updates
 - A. Professional Development and 7.5 Hours
 - B. Academic Year Calendars
- V. Consent Agenda Items
- VI. Future Agenda Items/Information Requests

The Wisconsin open meetings law requires that the Board, or Board Committee, only take action on subject matter that is noticed on their respective agendas. Persons wishing to place items on the agenda should contact the District Office at 715-424-6701, at least seven working days prior to the meeting date for the item to be considered. The item may be referred to the appropriate committee or placed on the Board agenda as determined by the Superintendent and/or Board president.

With advance notice, efforts will be made to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities by providing a sign language interpreter or other auxiliary aids, by calling 715-424-6701.

School Board members may attend the above Committee meeting(s) for information gathering purposes. If a quorum of Board members should appear at any of the Committee meetings, a regular School Board meeting may take place for purposes of gathering information on an item listed on one of the Committee agendas. If such a meeting should occur, the date, time, and location of the Board meeting will be that of the particular Committee as listed on the Committee agenda.



BACKGROUND

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- I. Call to Order
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A. THINK Academy

Roxanne Filtz, Principal of THINK Academy, will be present to explain the status of the school's charter. Attachment A, a letter to THINK Academy parents, sets out the discussions that have taken place among the staff, Governance Council, and administration.

The administration recommends the dissolution of the THINK Academy Charter.

B. 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant

Mead Elementary Charter School is applying for renewal of the DPI 21st Century Community Learning Center grant for the 2016-17 school year. This grant funds the After-School Club Mead program that serves over 130 students each school day until 6:30 p.m. The program includes partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club, Mead School, and the YMCA. The grant funds will be used for staffing the program through a contract with the Boys and Girls Club, Learning Zone Tutoring, Ameri-Corps contracts and enrichment teachers. The grant also funds a part-time Parent Academic Partnership Coordinator who provides free preschool programs, monthly Family Activity Nights, volunteer coordination and data organization.

The administration recommends approval of the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant request for Mead Elementary Charter School in the amount of \$50,000.

C. United Way of Inner Wisconsin Grant for Before- and After- School Club Mead

Mead Elementary Charter School is requesting a \$62,000 grant from the United Way to fund the Before- and After- School Club Mead program. Club Mead is a partnership program with the Boys and Girls Club of the Wisconsin Rapids and YMCA Kids Clubhouse. The grant funds will be used to provide Boys and Girls Club staffing, staffing for enrichment classes, staffing for YMCA Kids Clubhouse, and compensation for an Academic Partnership Coordinator. The request is to close the gap in funding due to the reduction of both CLC and district funds. Over 130 students in grades 4K–5 participate in the Club Mead programs which take place every school day from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

The administration recommends approval of the United Way grant request for Mead Elementary Charter School in the amount of \$62,000.

D. Financial Literacy Innovation Grant

The Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI), along with the Governor's Council on Financial Literacy has created a fund for the purpose of promoting innovation in the teaching of personal financial literacy (PFL) in the classroom. Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools (WRPS) has been a leader in financial literacy instruction in that completion of a financial literacy curriculum through one of five classes became a graduation requirement in December 2009. With the implementation of Academic and Career Planning we recognize the need for more consistency within the five classes, as well as additional content including financial aid, student loan debt, and understanding this difference between technical, two-year and four-year colleges. The purpose in applying for this grant is to provide collaboration time and training for teachers to further develop the financial literacy curriculum and to plan for consistency in instruction. Funding will also be requested to help start a School Based Enterprise that will help students in real world business and financial situations.

The administration recommends approval of the Financial Literacy Innovation Grant in the amount of \$10,000.

IV. Updates

A. Professional Development and 7.5 Hours

Ongoing collaboration is taking place among administration and teacher leaders about how best to provide professional development to maximize teacher growth and student learning. Recent conversation has been held about the effectiveness of the 7.5 hour professional development requirement. In addition, discussion is taking place about the format of Professional Development Days. Kathi Stebbins-Hintz, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, will be present to share with the Board the origin of the 7.5 hour requirement and Professional Days, how they are currently being used by teachers, and options being discussed to improve the effectiveness of these requirements.

B. Academic Year Calendars

Colleen Dickmann, Superintendent, will be present to share some preliminary proposals for calendars for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years. In addition, she will explain a proposal for one additional Professional Development Day for elementary schools for the 2016-17 school year.

V. Consent Agenda Items

Committee members will be asked to decide which items should be placed on the consent agenda for the regular Board of Education meeting.

VI. Future Agenda Items/Information Requests

Agenda items are determined by the Committee Chair after consultation with appropriate administration depending upon other agenda items, presentation information, and agenda availability.

Future agenda items/information requests include, but are not limited to:

- Elementary English/Language Arts Curriculum & Acquisition (May)
- District Professional Development Plan (May)
- Agenda Planners (May)
- Academic and Career Planning Pilot (June)
- AGR (Sage) Report (July)



Dear THINK Academy Families:

Five years ago, the elementary school in Rudolph went through the process of becoming recognized by the state as a Wisconsin Charter School. The Governance Council, staff and administration of THINK Academy created a vision and mission for the school based on the work of Eric Jensen as well as Dr. Becky A. Bailey. The school's four pillars are: Project Based Learning, Conscious Discipline/Responsive Classroom, Brain-Based Learning and Professional Learning Communities. THINK Academy was able to secure federal funding which allowed the staff and administration of THINK Academy to not only gain the professional development knowledge needed to implement these practices, but also buy supplies and equipment which would help to enhance the 21st century learning practices that THINK Academy believes in still today.

THINK Academy Charter School has an oversight committee known as the Governance Council. Part of what this council is charged with is disseminating any grant monies as well as any funds housed in a non-profit account coded as a 501(c)3. After five years, the federal funding source for maintaining charter schools in Wisconsin is currently not available to any Wisconsin Charter Schools through dissemination grants. The WRPS school district has been and will continue to financially support the activities at THINK Academy. Because of this, the Governance Council along with the administration and staff of THINK Academy has decided to dissolve the charter with the state of Wisconsin, pending Wisconsin Rapids Public School Board approval at the April 11, 2016 School Board meeting. THINK Academy will retain all of its educational beliefs and practices that were developed and learned during the years of the Charter. In place of the charter contract, a multi-year building plan will be crafted and will reflect the four pillars of the THINK Academy Charter. With the dissolution of the charter, there may be some questions from the Rudolph community and THINK Academy families. Following is some information that should help to answer those questions.

According to federal guidelines, the Department of Public Instruction requires a dissolved charter school to submit an inventory of all equipment with a current per-unit fair market value of \$5,000 or more purchased with any federal funds. Because all the purchases fell under the \$5,000 per unit value mark, THINK Academy will retain possession of that equipment. The professional development opportunities that were given to our teachers were priceless. They would not have received that education without the use of the charter school funds. The non-profit account will stay active and will be controlled by a body similar to the Governance Council. The main purpose will be to support professional development as it relates to the school's strategic plan. The Governance Council will continue to meet throughout the remainder of this school year to ensure an effective transition. The dates of those meetings are April 21 and May 19 at 5:00 p.m. The funds raised through the non-profit account stay with THINK Academy and have been earmarked for professional development. The Governance Council will need to re-organize and develop a process for amending the by-laws for the non-profit committee.

Another possible concern of the community could be in regard to THINK Academy being in danger of closing. THINK Academy is not in any danger of being closed at this point in time. We are running at near capacity levels, we have excellent standardized test scores, our building is efficient and sustainable without any major recurring costs and we have active parent and community involvement. Furthermore, having the charter in place never protected the actual physical building of THINK Academy. The district still had the option to shut down the building while retaining the actual charter school at a different location. Early Release will remain intact for the remainder of this school year. No decision has been made about Early Release for next year, but, if there are going to be changes to Early Release at THINK Academy, those changes will be announced before the end of the current school year.

This was a difficult decision for the Governance Council and staff. After the decision was made to dissolve the charter, the current staff worked together to develop a revised mission statement. Even though the draft of the new mission statement is not very different from the current mission statement, all the current teachers feel a sense of ownership in the process. The staff at THINK Academy is in the process of developing a multi-year strategic plan that will be presented to the WRPS School Board as an alternate to the charter document. The basis of the plan will be built around the 4 pillars of the charter. However, it will also take into account the changing face of education – looking at such practices as technology infused learning and the workshop model as best practice in classrooms among others. There will be no drastic visible differences that will be seen on an everyday basis at THINK Academy as we transition away from the charter designation.

As we move forward at THINK Academy, our families and community can rest assured knowing that the excellent education that is provided for the youth of our school will continue to grow and reflect the ever-changing face of education. We are excited for the future of THINK Academy in Rudolph!

Sincerely,

THINK Academy Governance Council
Roxanne Filtz, Principal
Staff of THINK Academy