

# Akron Documenters

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## School Board Meeting

Documenter name: Britt Oliver

Agency: Akron Board of Education

Date: Feb. 26, 2024

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### Summary

- *Redistricting & Restructuring*
  - Akron Public Schools officials presented a revised redistricting and restructuring proposal. The plan includes details regarding closures of Essex, Stewart, and Firestone Park Elementary, relocation of STEM High School and Robinson CLC, and overcrowding relief for Harris-Jackson CLC. If students and families are interested in enrolling in a school outside of their designated zone, a special two-week open enrollment window will allow them to apply. Transportation safety is a primary concern during this process. Bus routes for K-8 students will be determined by attendance in each zone. However, students who open enroll will not be provided transportation.
- *Visitor Management System (Raptor)*
  - To enhance building safety, over the course of the 2024-2025 school year, a new visitor management system will be implemented. The system requires all visitors to sign in at a kiosk, scan their photo ID, print a full-color photo badge, and wear this during their visit to an APS building. Elementary schools will start the process this fall, and secondary schools will implement this process in winter 2025.
- *Chromebook procedures*
  - There will be a new process for the collection and disbursement of all APS-issued student Chromebooks. The process will start this summer. Chromebooks will be collected at the end of the school year. During the school year they will be collected at the end of the day and kept on carts to charge overnight. This process will save APS an estimated \$1 million over four years that has been spent replacing damaged and lost devices.

## Follow-Up Questions

- Is there a firm deadline for the Board of Education to vote on the final redistricting and restructuring proposal?
- Will Chromebook guidelines be available on the APS website for parents to review?
- Will there be a social media campaign to share information about the new visitor management process and the Chromebook guidelines?

## Notes

### Meeting Agenda ([here](#))

**Start time:** 5:39 p.m.

### Meeting attendees:

- Board Members: Job Perry, Barbara Sykes, Rene Molenaar, Carla Jackson, Diana Autry, Summer Hall and Bruce Alexander
- Superintendent Michael Robinson
- CFO Stephen Thompson
- Presenters
  - Redistricting and restructuring
    - Chief of Staff Angela Carter
    - Debra Foulk – executive director of BusinessAffairs
    - Wanda Lash – director of Student & Family Services
  - Business affairs
    - Zach Hanshaw – executive director Information and Technology
    - Don Zesiger – director of Safety and Security
    - Foulk
    - Community members in attendance: 24

### Community reflections

- Cochise Griffin shared a summary of his experience as a student board member
  - Said that coach [Marques Hayes](#) at East High School was influential in connecting him to post-secondary opportunities
  - He has committed to becoming a first-generation college student this fall at Central State University and plans to pledge Alpha Phi Alpha
  - Several BOE members acknowledged his achievements
    - Summer Hall: “Show the world you’re an example, keep shining.”
    - Bruce Alexander: “I commend you on what you’re doing.”
    - Carla Jackson: “You’re excellence in motion.”
- Jackson attended Choirs in the Round for the middle schools and said they did an excellent job.
- Perry attended the Jazz Festival for the middle schools and said it was a great night.
- Hall shared highlights from her visits to North High School

- She met with two high-achieving juniors. One has a medical internship and the other has a communications internship. Both were on honor roll.
- She acknowledged teacher Michael Lillie's commitment to excellence. He partners with Samsung in order to teach students how to leverage technology to start businesses
- She also shared that 22 sophomores have earned their CPR certification
- Alexander attended the National School Board conference
  - Topics covered included equity, board assessments, board governance and AI use
  - Learned to be grateful for the resources in Akron
  - He also shared that he visited North High School for a [Locker Room Experience](#) event
    - During the event he witnessed the impact of mentorship and personal training giving students the tools to diffuse conflict
- Molenaar attended several community events
  - Choir in the Round – she stated she could hear the joy in the performers' voices
  - Visited Resnik CLC – observed the gifted learning process and learned additional details about gifted testing
- Autry attended a ribbon cutting event at Hyre CLC
  - She also attended the winter concert at Miller South. She then recognized the several organizations that donate funds and instruments to the music program.

#### **Requests to address the board**

- Chris Davis, a parent of a student who attends Central Hower
  - Made two requests-
    - Naming the STEM School – requested something simple
    - Transportation – Due to the Early College Credit Program in partnership with University of Akron, please make sure that the transportation plan allows students to connect the university and the high school.

#### **4.1 Redistricting & Restructuring Plan (see *attached images*)**

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- Carter presented plan highlights:
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  - Said the reason for the plan was an imbalance of enrollment, building openings and closures, and operating efficiency
  - Proposal was introduced in July 2023
  - Upon approval, the plan will be enacted
  - Early learning programs- one one classroom in each cluster
  - To ease the transition, letters will be sent to families, there will be activities to promote familiarity, and a summer program will be available at the new school. Any services the student is currently receiving will follow the child to their new assigned school.
  - Proposed closures

- Firestone Park –Students will attend Glover CLC, McBright CLC, and Voris CLC
    - Essex – Current Harris-Jackson CLC kindergarten students will remain/return to Harris-Jackson CLC and current Essex students will report to schools throughout the district
    - Stewart – Current early learning program Stewart students will report to schools throughout the district
  - Relocation
    - STEM High School — Current students will go to Robinson CLC
    - Robinson CLC – Current students will go to David Hill CLC or Mason CLC
  - Overcrowding relief for Harris-Jackson CLC
    - Barber CLC – Will receive some Harris-Jackson CLC students
    - Seiberling CLC – Will take some Barber students
    - Forrest Hill CLC – Some students will go to Harris-Jackson CLC
    - Harris-Jackson CLC – Will have some students returning from Essex and Harris-Jackson CLC kindergarteners as well as some Forest Hill students
  - Ott building will remain open till the end of the 2024/2025 school year
  - Essex and Stewart might be used for full-day pre-K depending upon enrollment
- Lash presented about open enrollment
    - “Clear communication will be sent to families” as a personalized letter.
    - Open enrollment will be an option for schools outside of the student’s zone
      - Special window –the time period outside of the typical window
      - K-5 students will be automatically re-assigned or they can apply to the special open enrollment window [here](#)
    - Continuity doesn’t apply unless the student relocates
  - Foulk presented about transportation
    - Grades 9-12 will continue to use the Akron Metro voucher system per state regulations [here](#)
    - New bus routes for students K-8 will be determined by attendance in each zone
    - Open enrollment students will not be provided transportation
    - Special needs and unhoused students will continue receiving transportation services as needed
  - Robinson addressed concerns
    - He is working with the National Inventors Hall of Fame and the state to decide on the name of the STEM School
      - After the name is decided, he will share details with STEM students and families
    - All details from the Feb. 26 meeting are available [here](#)
    - The redistricting and restructuring is at the proposal stage and he has taken into account feedback from families and constituents
    - The state has recognized the need to increase pre-K programming from half day to full day.

- Enrollment in full day pre-K will determine whether or not Essex and or Stewart will remain open to address this need
- Q&A for Redistricting & Restructuring
  - Hall asked if there is a conflict with the newly assigned school to address it.
    - Lash said that students can apply to the open enrollment program
  - Hall asked how students can work through transportation changes in the event the two-mile bus radius is no longer allowing the student to commute by school bus.
    - Foulk reviewed guidelines that will be used to determine new bus routes
    - Safety will also be a consideration during this process
  - Molenaar expressed concerns about the fact that items in the presentation were revised. Upon clarification of the revised items, she expressed confusion.
    - She said that a couple of months ago the board voted to close Essex and Stewart and she didn't understand why there is a possibility now that they will remain open.
    - Robinson said if space is needed for full-day pre-K the district may "keep one or two open. Not keeping the locations open might decrease space for pre-K students."
      - Enrollment for full day pre-K started Feb. 28. The number of enrolled students will determine the status of Essex and or Stewart remaining open.
      - Closing and then reopening buildings is not recommended because that would categorize the buildings under new standards.
    - Molenaar said they voted to close Essex and Stewart as part of an effort to cut \$15 million from the budget. She also requested additional time to consider whether Essex and Stewart should remain open.
    - Jackson requested additional details regarding the structural condition of Essex and Stewart to confirm they are fit for pre-K students
      - Foulk said Essex has a new roof and parking lot. At Stewart, the roof is being repaired along with the parking lot.
      - She also said that when the board voted to close Essex and Stewart, they weren't aware of possible state and federal funding students younger than the kindergarten level.
    - Autry asked about the length of the special open enrollment window
      - Lash said that, "A two-week period is anticipated. We want to be intentional so that our families can make the best informed decision."
    - Robinson said he would like to prevent delays that could impact the transportation planning and staffing.

#### **Approval of previous meeting minutes**

- Moved to approve, motion carried 7-0

#### **Personnel recommendations**

- Hall asked if someone retires or resigns, are they replaced?
  - Robinson said it depends and some are replaced

- Perry asked about the recommendation of Larry Johnson Jr. for the Supervisor, Secondary Principals, asking if it was a new position.
  - Robinson said the position involves recruitment and development of future principals. He said this was formerly Chief of Staff Carter's position.
- Perry asked about the MTSS coordinator position
  - Robinson said the position will serve as a coordinator across the district and is funded by Title funds rather than General funds, and the position duties include reviewing data regarding attendance.

### **Business Affairs – two presentations**

- Hanshaw presented details regarding new Chromebook procedures
  - His team gathered facts and figures regarding cost-saving measures with Chromebooks for APS students
    - They found that lost and damaged Chromebooks cost the district \$2.8 million.
    - His goal has been to reduce the number of lost and/or damaged Chromebooks going forward
    - He proposed a docking process where Chromebooks will remain at school rather than going home with the student
    - All Chromebooks will be docked on carts to charge overnight and over the summer
    - At the beginning of the school year, the Chromebooks will be redistributed
    - Funding for the carts was allocated from technical funds
    - He has created guidelines for this process
      - BOE members had several questions regarding COVID procedures for disbursement, summer learning gaps, lack of alternate devices available for use in many students' homes
        - Hanshaw said he has talked to administrators regarding these topics and they will be factored into the guidelines.
- Hanshaw, Foulk and Zesiger presented the Visitor Management System ([Raptor](#))
  - Zesiger reviewed current safety processes in use
    - X-ray scans, metal detectors, badge systems, bullet-resistant glass, door alarms
    - "The goal is to transition from paper to digital to make secretaries more efficient."
  - Foulk shared details about the proposal process
    - They decided to work with Raptor because:
      - They have a 98% client retention rate
      - They support 5,000 K-12 school districts

- The system provides automated sex offender checks
  - The new visitor process
    - A kiosk in each school vestibule, where the visitor's ID will be scanned or information will be manually entered
      - The system provides real-time monitoring
      - Prints visitor badges with photos
      - Provides enhanced reporting
      - Pairs well with current tech platforms
  - Zesiger said the system is NOT:
    - A background check system
    - Exclusionary
    - A replacement for vigilance
  - Implementation plan
    - Summer 2024 – install kiosks
    - Fall 2024 – roll out for elementary schools
    - Spring 2025 – roll out to secondary schools (*this may happen winter 2025 based on roll out process at elementary schools*)
  - Funding- ESSR funds ([website](#))
    - Cost for first year is \$124,000(to be covered by ESSR funds and a state grant)
    - Cost for second and third years (software renewal only) \$40,000 from security budget
  - Board member questions
    - Questions regarding the ability to set parameters around scanning rather than manually entering a visitor's name due to safety concerns were addressed. Policy guidelines may address that concern.
    - Additional questions regarding badge image quality were also addressed. The visitor badges will be printed with high quality color photos.
    - Finally, parents with sex offender backgrounds were also a concern. Zesiger said that if a parent has an issue, it will either be discussed prior to their visit or they will enter the premises with an escort.
- Subcommittee updates
  - Legal Committee met to discuss the policy regarding advertising and commercial activity (item 9700.01)
    - The board voted 5/0 to approve 9700.01
  - The Financial and Capital Committee
    - Perry said, "The numbers looked good"
    - Future meetings will cover levy and vouchers (next meeting March 18 at 4:30 p.m.)

- Ad Hoc Committee
  - Last meeting was well attended
  - Focus was on pee-wee sports organizations
  - Carter will conduct the next two meetings

**At 8:36 p.m. the board went into executive session.**

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**Notes to reader:** Unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at [documenters@signalakron.org](mailto:documenters@signalakron.org) with "Correction Request" in the subject line.