

EAGLE EYES MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 19, 2009

ATTENDEES: Parents/Guardians: Amber Shafer; Chris Sonnier; Lazaro Arce, Jr.; Joe and Candi Latino; Wayne and Tonya DeHart; Karen Williams; Laura Gresham; Robin Patty; Carolyn Clark; Walker Estes
Staff: Maria Stephens, Joey Nipper, Robby Porter, Evelyn Castleberry, Lorraine Loup, Susan Blackwell, Trish Mann, Kevin Lemoine, Laurie Self

AGENDA:

OLD BUSINESS:

Approved minutes of last meeting on February 17, 2009.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **LSD-LSVI Sharing the Campus, brainstorming valued traditions:**

Kevin Lemoine, Liaison to the Board Special Schools – Asked attendees to set a goal to invite and bring at least one additional person to the next meeting to increase participation. Recognizes concern, uncertainty, and anxiety that are being felt by the proposed sharing of the campus between LSD & LSVI. Emphasized that it will not be a consolidation, but a merger where there will be two separate student bodies only sharing one facility. Emphasized that the proposal for LSVI to move to the LSD campus still needs to be approved by BESE and the Legislature. The present LSVI facility is very old, inefficient and unsafe. The LSD campus could provide separate facilities for education and housing for the two populations while maximizing the use of expenses like support services, transportation, maintenance and possibly other services. Has visited similar situations on campuses in other states. LCET (Educational Technology) will be moved off the campus and the Special School District Office will occupy their space. Proposal to create a school district here that would function like other districts with HR, transportation central office staff here on campus to maximize efficiency and create system of support for both schools. Presently working with LSVI to determine the best ways to: 1) Maintain the separate identities and traditions of each school, signage and directions around campus for both schools; 2) Maintain security; 3) Maximize utilization of the facility. Emphasized that for the school to continue for a long time, it needs to demonstrate that it has a proud tradition and is fiscally sound.

Attendees had questions for Mr. Lemoine: Q: What about the safety of combining blind with deaf populations? A: There will need to be changes in protocol; other states have done it successfully. The two populations are unique and will be separate. Each will keep their separate staff. There will be separate directors and principals for each school. Q: Can we have protections from more budget cuts – protect the education, quality personnel? The state could cut back so much that all quality education would be gone and mainstream might be the best option. A: Met with Pastorek and 3-4 board members last week. Need to show BESE and the Legislature that money can be saved. Will discuss options. Proposes to enhance programs such as opportunities for various career academies (certifications/vocational education), as well as college prep. Will not cut staff, may bring in additional instructors as necessary for specialties. Q: Regarding the money that will be saved. A: This is a proposed merger, not yet approved. Grim possibilities if this proposal does not happen. Q: How is LSVI handling this? A: Anxious and waiting to see ...

Lorraine Loup said that she worked at the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind and it was a successful operation. Discussion about other state's deaf schools being closed. Walker shared that the closure of South Dakota and Kansas is not final, as their legislatures are still meeting.

- **Setting a regular schedule for meetings, how best to communicate**

Regular meetings during school months will be on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. The next meeting will be in April. Trish suggested skipping meetings in December and May. Due to summer break, a communication will be sent out regarding the next meeting. Discussion about making sure that Eagle Eyes is represented at school registration in the fall.

Regular mail is the best way to communicate with parents for now. About 1/3 of the parents have email. Will include a check-off choice at registration for mail, email, text choices.

- **Developing a LSD/Eagle Eyes Directory for the 2009/10 year**

Will include a check-off on registration form for inclusion in an Eagle Eyes directory

- **Dash for Deaf Kids Foundation Event on May 9, 2009**

Encourage participation, hand out announcements and fliers.

- **Legislative contacts supporting the school**

Need to make regular contact with BESE and Legislature. Need to send letter announcing the formation of Eagle Eyes - formed for the children, encouraged about the future and growth of the school. Attendees interested in participating with this effort signed up.

- **Back to the Issue of LSD-LSVI Sharing the Campus, brainstorming valued traditions**

Discussion about maintaining the individual identity and traditions of the school. Should consult with students, alumni, and teachers to identify. Helps to boost morale and bring together. Discussion and listing of some of LSD's traditions: Colors, Mascot, Homecoming, Fair, Thanksgiving Program – Food Collection, Christmas Program, Mason Dixon Tournaments, Cajun Classic Track, ArtSign, Academic Bowl, Graduation, Pageant, Fun Fest, Empty Bowls.

Lorraine described a combined deaf/blind presentation done years ago with the deaf children signing as the blind students sang Christmas carols.

More Q&A: Q: Can sign classes be offered in New Orleans? A: Looking into it, polling parents, maybe send teacher or set up on-line course. Q: What's being done with the national search for a new director? A: Discussion about parent(s) being on this committee, staff involvement may be difficult as this person would be their boss, the Deaf Community should be represented. Chris Sonnier will contact Lemoine, Moore, and Pastorek regarding getting a parent and member of the Deaf Community on the committee.

- Meeting adjourned 7:15 pm
- The next meeting will be on **Tuesday, April 21, 2009 at 6:00 pm** in the Game Room of the Student Center. Child Care and interpreting will be provided.