



# BOARD highlights

A QUICK LOOK AT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS OF PUTNAM CITY SCHOOLS

April 2, 2018

## Board Changes Leave Policy, Declares Emergency Leave Days

The board on Monday night approved a revision to Policy DI, the district policy regarding leave for employees.

The change in policy is in the section related to emergency leave. Before the board changed the policy language, it granted emergency days only for inclement weather. Monday night's board action expanded the definition of an emergency to include situations such as unsafe conditions of physical facilities, lack of proper supervision of students, unsafe conditions for students, and other unforeseen conditions.

Following the policy change, the board then approved three days of emergency leave for the current school year. Two days of school were missed earlier this year due to icy roads, and a third day was missed when the board declared the district closed today (April 2) as Advocacy Day.

At the time the board agenda for the April 2 board meeting was filed with the county clerk, it had not yet been determined that school would not be in session on Tuesday, April 3. Action would need to be taken at a future board meeting to declare emergency days beyond the three approved by the board at Monday's meeting.

Emergency leave is only available to employees if the board approves such leave for a given situation.

### SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT by Dr. Fred Rhodes

► This afternoon, I would like to first of all, thank the Board of Education for passing a resolution at the last board meeting in support of our teachers and expressing the need for our state leadership to increase funding for public education. Not only did you pass a resolution, you took action. Because of your wisdom and foresight, you also became the first district in the state to be proactive and declare today as an advocacy day at the Capitol. This has been a day when the district services were shut down, which has allowed everyone to go to the Capitol to thank those legislators who have supported public education and to encourage others to step up and do more. We thank you.

I would also like to thank the leadership of PCACT, Eric Winkle, Vicki Vaughan and others, for working cooperatively with our teachers, school leadership and district leadership to jointly make plans for all of this to happen.

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### COMMENTS by Public and Board Members

In a crowded meeting room Monday night, three district employees and one parent addressed the board during the meeting's public comment period.

Kristi Freeman, a counselor at Putnam City West High School, asked board members to allow employees to be at the Capitol as long as it takes to get the legislature to properly fund public education.

Cristi Gosset, a music teacher at Western Oaks Elementary, thanked board members for their support and asked for continued support and cancellation of school for however many days are necessary to prompt the legislature to act.

Tracy Carroll, a parent of district students, reiterated the request that the board support teachers, saying that now is the only chance to fix funding of public education.

Michelle Huddleston, an interpreter at Western Oaks Elementary, asked board members to allow support staff to advocate at the Capitol.

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Meeting Date:	Monday, April 2, 5 p.m.
Location:	Administration Building
Roll Call:	All five members of the board were present: Becky Gooch, president; Gail LoPresto, vice president; Cindy Gibbs; Jay Sherrill and Bill Wetmore. Also present were Dr. Fred Rhodes, superintendent; and Sandy Lemaster, board clerk.
Next Meeting:	Monday, April 16, 5 p.m.

*Putnam City Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, marital or veteran status, or disability.*

## Superintendent's Report (continued from page 1)

Literally, combining everyone's efforts, hundreds of hours have been spent working out the details to orchestrate this event.

To our teachers, saying thank you is just not enough. You have made incredible sacrifices to stay in the profession. You have done it because you care about your students. You did not want to walk out on your students, but felt you had to do that to make a statement, to make a difference. I believe someday, we will look back at this critical time in our history and have great pride (and perhaps even "bragging rights") to say, "I was there. I was a part of history. I helped make a difference in the call to action for public education in 2018."

While I know this has been a very tedious and stressful process to make this happen, I believe we can all say it has been a very positive experience that has caused us to realize what can happen when we all work together; when we are unified. I believe a united voice, from Putnam City and around the state, has been heard and I believe it has and will continue to make a difference.

To our parents and school community, I would like to say thank you. Thank you for your support, your patience and understanding. We know we have the common goal of increasing funding for public education, which frankly has been neglected for far too long.

To our state leaders, I would like to say thank you. Former board member and now Representative Tammy West, Senator David Holt (and soon to be Mayor Holt) and other elected officials who voted "yes," we truly and sincerely appreciate your boldness. We realize you have worked and will continue to work for public education. We know you have been under a lot of pressure from some colleagues and others. But you came through for us. We appreciate you.

► From the incredibly high number of emails I have received during the last two or three weeks, I would like to include one that I believe expresses the sentiment of many of our teachers, but the story does have an interesting twist. This is an email I received from Western Oaks Elementary School Music Teacher Cristy Gosset, and I have been given permission by her to share it.

*"I vividly remember April of 1990. I was a freshman at Central Junior High school in Putnam City and HB 1017 was all the buzz in the news. It was the first time that I became truly aware of state and local politics. Teachers were fighting for better working conditions as well as better pay.*

*There were picket lines and news of closed schools everywhere. Teachers were wearing red buttons with messages about being 'last no more.' I distinctly remember the sense of victory when HB 1017 was passed. The future of education in Oklahoma was bright and inspiration was in the air. Teachers were on fire and education was sparkling with life!*

*That is when the education spark first touched me. It took a while for that spark to catch fire and I didn't actually decide to be a public school music teacher until a few years later. I am so glad that I did! Being a teacher is a calling from God that I cherish every day. To paraphrase from a dear friend, 'a bad day in a music classroom is better than a good day anywhere else!' I love my students. Yes, all 700 of them. Yes, and the thousands of former students. Yes, even THAT one, and THAT one. I love them all! I can't imagine doing anything else.*

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## Board Comments (continued from page 1)

Board member Jay Sherrill told teachers at the meeting that he appreciated the passion and hard work they bring to their jobs and said that he wanted to make decisions that support them.

Bill Wetmore spoke about the value and importance of education.

Cindy Gibbs thanked teachers for their dedication and spirit. She also noted the excellence of instruction at Kirkland Elementary, where her granddaughter attends.

Gail LoPresto said she is proud of teachers and thanked them for all that they do. She noted that board members take a vow to uphold the laws of Oklahoma and the policies of the district, but that she and her colleagues will do whatever they can to get education funding where it needs to be. She thanked the PACT for their advocacy work during spring break. She also mentioned a well done Silver Strings program that made for a fun evening.

Becky Gooch thanked Charri Stratton and Jill Slay for their National School Library Month presentation about the value of school libraries, saying that libraries and librarians make a difference for students. She said it was exciting to see school personnel at the Capitol today, and thanked Putnam City employees for representing the district well in their interactions with legislators. She also thanked Putnam City West band director Edward Hudson for helping form a band to play at today's event.

*Board Highlights* is not a comprehensive review of every item that takes place at board of education meetings. Its purpose is merely to provide information about items that seem of most interest to district employees and patrons. Complete board meeting minutes may be found at <http://www.putnamcityschools.org/BoardofEducation/BoardMeetingMinutes/tabid/565/Default.aspx>

**Superintendent's Report (continued from page 2)**

*To say that the state of education in Oklahoma is frustrating is an understatement. Watching kids deal with the stress of testing is disheartening. Keeping my music room quiet during the month of April is limiting. To watch children bite their nails, pull out their hair, and feel nauseous on the day of a test is heartbreaking. Seeing my paycheck each September is sickening (Yes, I get a step increase, but by the time you include higher insurance premiums, I just pray that first check of the new school year is not lower than my last one). Hearing legislators call teachers 'extortionists' is just revolting. None of these frustrations come from the students, but I figured student challenges would come with the job.*

*Today, one of my daughters is a freshman at PC West. She is watching the state and local politics with an interest that reminds me of myself in the '90s. She is watching. Both of my children are watching and they have been for a long time. They have been watching as we pinch every penny, watching as I comb summer sales looking for bargains for my classroom, watching as I work my summer jobs but still spend time with family, watching as I sweat to set up my classroom before the AC is turned on, watching as I work on my laptop late into the night, watching as I cry for and over my students, watching as I stay late and work on the weekends, watching as I pray for my students and my coworkers, watching as I struggle to decide if walking out is the right thing to do.*

*Many people are watching – students, parents, the community, our legislators – are watching to see what we do. Do we walk out? Do we, along with our community, care for the needs of our students? Do our districts support one day, many days, or no days of a shut down? How do we respond to the decisions of our individual districts? How do we act if we do protest at the capitol? How do we show our support in the near and more distant future?*

*I feel fortunate that I work in Putnam City. Our district supports its teachers and always has. Putnam City supports the fine arts, which is neat and dear to my heart. When some districts have cut music and art programs, Putnam City has a strong fine arts program. When some districts have stopped step increases, Putnam City found ways to fund ours. When other districts have slashed individual budgets, Putnam City finds a way to give us something that will work. That support may not always look as I would like it to look, but I do feel supported. I know that 'this is a fluid time for education' and that the story has just begun.*

*I am and will continue to be a part of that story. I will raise my voice in protest, in song, in prayer, in strength, and in passion for my children and my students. I will hold a sign, stand on the capitol steps, and yes, walk out of my classroom if needed. It is my time to make a sacrifice for the future of the children of Oklahoma, just like my teachers did 28 years ago.*

*Legislators, it is your time to set things right for education in Oklahoma. You have the call to action. Do you hear our voices? Listen well! We are all watching how you respond. Your people are unhappy, frustrated and determined. Not only are the teachers calling out to you, but your community and your children. The children are our future. They are your future, too. Hear the cries for and from them and give them the support, funding and teachers they need to have an excellent education in Oklahoma!"*

**Board Hires New Principal for Hefner**

The board on Monday night appointed Holly McNutt as principal at Hefner Middle School for the 2018-2019 school year.

For the past two years McNutt has served as an assistant principal at Capps Middle School. Prior to her time at Capps she served two years as an administrative intern, one year splitting time between James L. Dennis Elementary and Harvest Hills Elementary and a second year only at Dennis Elementary. Before coming to Putnam City, she taught elementary school for 17 years for Moore Public Schools.

She holds a master's degree in educational leadership from Oklahoma State University and a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Oklahoma City University.

McNutt will replace Mark Lebsack, who has accepted a position in another district.

**Administrators Rehired**

The board on Monday night voted unanimously to rehire the district's certified administrators for the 2018-2019 school year.

The certified administrators are school principals and assistant principals plus the assistant director of Special Services, the Smart Start administrator, the District Enrollment Office administrator, the district attendance officer, the district Transportation Department director and the district athletic director.