

French and Montessori Education, Inc.
Board of Directors Meeting
Minutes of March 15, 2008

French and Montessori Education, Inc., the governing board of Audubon Charter School held its regular monthly meeting Saturday, March 15, 2008, at 428 Broadway St., in New Orleans.

The meeting, scheduled for 10 a.m., was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Chairman Carlos Zervigon. Board members in attendance were James Reiss, Ken Ducote, Sharon Nossiter, Teddi Locke, Olivier Brochenin and Edwin Shorty. Administrators in attendance were Janice Dupuy, Lynette Brice, Alisa Dupre, Ellen Selvidge, Marie-Claude Kellermann and Dawn Collins.

1. Approval of minutes:

Teddi Locke moved for approval of the February minutes. The vote was unanimously in favor, with no discussion.

2. Budget Committee report:

Lynette Brice gave the Budget Committee report. She and board member Laura Watts are working together on the Blackbaud system to provide monthly, rather than annual, information on teacher salaries, computer expense, workman's compensation and other categories. Board members with questions should e-mail Lynette or Laura. Alisa Dupre said a preliminary first draft of next year's budget was due to the New Orleans Public Schools by March 31. She said it would be submitted as an unapproved preliminary budget.

3. Administration update:

Principal Janice Dupuy reported that LEAP and iLEAP testing went well, with no make-up exams needed at Broadway, and only a few at Carrollton.

Audubon hosted the Final Four Louisiana Scholastic League Chess Tournament for the first time. ACS 2nd grade and Under team and the 6th grade and Under team competed, with both teams taking third place.

Many thanks to the hard-working parents and teachers who collaborated to make Springfest a success this year.

Volunteers from ACORN will be on the Carrollton Campus during ACS spring break next week to paint portables.

Re-registration and enrollment of new students takes place at the Carrollton Campus April 22-23. All students must register or lose their place in the school.

Ellen Selvidge gave the Montessori update. She and two teachers attended the recent AMS conference and participated in teacher and administrative workshops. Next year's conference will be in New Orleans Feb. 26-March 1, 2009, with roughly 500-800 people attending. The Conference Planning Committee is proposing a service project at Audubon on Feb. 26, which will be a professional development day.

All FAME members are invited to Montessori Board Observation Day on Friday, April 18, from 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Alisa Dupre gave the Admissions update. We are projecting 720 students next year. Current enrollment is 684. We received 559 completed applications, five were waiting on placement testing, 24 were incomplete and five were withdrawn because they lived out of district.

She discussed the potential need for an exception to maximum class size in the charter revision. State law limits pre-K to no more than 20 students, but Audubon is required to take all francophone applicants. A clarification is needed should a francophone student apply after the class is already filled.

Ken Ducote gave the Facilities update. Based on recent community input meetings concerning public schools, he anticipates a proposal to renovate both campuses, demolishing portables, building a gym, building additions to support programs. In the past, buildings have been renovated while students continued to attend, but ACS will probably have the option of moving students to another school while this one is renovated.

Initial funding for the renovation, probably about 50 percent, will be FEMA money, Ducote said. The expectation is that the public, with renewed inspiration to support public education, will address the inequities at schools that haven't been renovated. A draft physical report on the condition of the Broadway and Carrollton campuses is that it will require 60-70 percent of the cost of replacing the buildings to renovate them. Neither has had a total renovation in more than 50 years. Roofs, central air-conditioning and level floors are all needs. Ducote said a plan will start with standards and criteria, and point up what Audubon lacks to meet those standards.

The latest round of public input has ended, he said. A draft document incorporating recommendations and schedules should be available for public review around May 8. There will be a comments period, and the final report must be approved by the State Board of Education and Orleans Parish.

6. Approval of the 2008-2009 School Calendar:

Option 2 was approved unanimously on a motion by James Reiss. First day for teachers will be Aug. 7. First day for students 1st-8th is Aug. 13, first day for kindergarten is Aug. 18, first day for PK4 is Aug. 21 and first day for PK3 is Aug. 27. Last day for students will be May 29, 2009. Last day for teachers is June 2, 2009. This provides a 177-day school year.

7. Charter Revision committee:

Proposed changes in the charter must be submitted to OPSB by the third week in May, said Alisa Dupre. Carlos asked Janice to encourage faculty members to flag needed changes. One of the most important changes is class size, he said. Some changes need OPSB approval, others require only notification. Prioritize the changes so that the board-approved ones come first. Janice said she would talk to the teachers and come back with a timeline.

8. Nominations committee:

Carlos said he would call a committee meeting to discuss how to proceed: Whether to replace recently-resigned member Gary Allen Wood and the need to keep recruiting potential board members.

9. Discussion of French High School:

Board members received a document from the parents of the ACS French program who support creating a French high school.

French Consul Olivier Brochenin said there is clear interest among New Orleans French programs in proceeding with a high school. Audubon already has accreditation for its 1st through 5th grade programs. The question now, he said, is middle school, which in France, ends with 9th grade. State regulations in Louisiana for 9th grade programs are different than for lower grades, because it is considered the start of high school. He suggested that Janice seek a clarification as to whether Audubon could get an exception from the state for this.

He also said that in order to extend French government involvement with Audubon, he needed paperwork on the grant money, in the amount of \$97,000, which Audubon received in the wake of Katrina.

The first action toward establishing a high school would be for the boards of all interested schools to sit down together to discuss it. Carlos raised the issues of facilities and student numbers. The success of ACS is due to the French program's combination with Montessori; it couldn't stand alone. We must think of combining with other programs as a practical matter, which is where the charter movement is strongest. We need to think broadly. Does Audubon proceed by itself or combine forces? If we proceed alone, we must have a Montessori component to continue Audubon Charter School as it exists. After more discussion, Edwin Shorty moved that FAME formally express its strong interest in a French high school, explore the feasibility of a joint French-Montessori high school in the future, and form an exploratory committee for Audubon high school. This was approved unanimously.

Also discussed was the question of a full-time director for the French program, due to the difficulty of overseeing the program on two campuses while also teaching. Marie-Claude Kellermann, director and kindergarten teacher, said she would prefer to remain in the classroom next year. Carlos said next year's budget will try to fund a full-time director.

10. Executive session. Was postponed at the request of the student's mother.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 a.m., on a motion by Sharon Nossiter.