

# highlights



April 4, 2011

## Board Approves Virtual School Agreement

The Putnam City Schools Board of Education on Monday night approved an agreement with Pearson Virtual Learning powered by Florida Virtual School to provide online virtual instruction to selected middle school and high school students.

District officials foresee several immediate benefits of virtual classes.

One group of students the virtual classes will be available for are those students who in the past have transferred out of Putnam City because the district could not provide virtual education.

Another benefit of the virtual school is to be able to offer online classes to students who are at risk of not graduating because of struggles with specific classes and state end-of-instruction tests. The "learning recovery" piece of the virtual education will quiz students to find out their weaknesses in a given subject, then re-teach in those specific areas to help students be successful.

Another group of students who may benefit from Putnam City's virtual classes could be area homeschooled students who need one or more classes to round out their education.

At some point in the future, district officials hope to expand use of virtual school to allow district students to take classes they cannot fit into their schedule or classes the district doesn't offer.

The virtual classes conform to Oklahoma state curriculum standards. Certified teachers leading the instruction will schedule contact with students at least once a week. The teachers will also be available to answer questions, clarify materials and provide help between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. seven days a week.

The district is not yet ready for students to enroll. With board approval of the agreement last night, the district can now move ahead in creation of forms and processes for enrollment.

**Enrollment is expected to begin on Monday, May 9. Families who wish to enroll students at that time should contact the district's enrollment office at (405) 491-7631.**

Florida Virtual School is an established leader in developing and providing virtual K-12 education solutions to students all over the U.S. and the world. A nationally recognized e-Learning model and recipient of numerous awards, Florida Virtual was founded in 1997 and was the country's first statewide Internet-based public high school. Today, Florida Virtual serves students in grades K-12 with more than 100 courses, including core subjects, world languages, electives, honors and 14 Advanced Placement courses.

## COMMENTS by Public and Board Members

Board members thanked Christy Evans for her work over the years in creating and sustaining programs that have meant a great deal to many families. Board members told Evans, who is retiring, that she will be missed. Board members also said they attended great performances of *Annie* at Putnam City High.

Gail LoPresto thanked Kelly Suchy for her presentation. She also thanked the Foundation for all they do for the district and district students.

Cindy Gibbs said she is in the process of visiting each district school and is most impressed with the dedication of teachers, administrators and staff. She also congratulated high school baseball teams, and noted that Putnam City North's team is ranked fifth in state.

Tammy West said she attended a terrific art and talent show at Ralph Down Elementary and a literacy and math night at Wiley Post Elementary. She also

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Meeting Date: Monday, April 4, 6 p.m.  
Location: Administration Building  
Roll Call: All five members of the board were present: Mark Bledsoe, president; Becky Haliburton, vice president; Cindy Gibbs; Gail LoPresto; and Tammy West. Also present were Paul Hurst, superintendent; and Debbie Baldwin, board clerk.  
Next Meeting: Monday, April 18, 6 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** by Paul Hurst

▶ Putnam City West High School and Putnam City North High School have been named winners of 2011 Gold Council of Excellence Awards by the National Association of Student Councils. The award recognizes student councils' exemplary records of leadership, service and activities that improve the school and community. Putnam City West's student council has won the award three years in a row. Putnam City North's student council has earned the award three out of the last four years.

▶ Putnam City High School History Teacher Wayde Coleman has been named a Claes Nobel Educator of Distinction by the National Society of High School Scholars. The award recognizes teacher role models who have made a lasting difference in their classrooms by encouraging students to strive for excellence.

▶ The Oklahoma City Community Foundation recently named 15 district students as recipients of \$1,500 scholarships. From Putnam City High, Shaundra Hicks, Quang Nguyen and Marcela Varela Sisley were announced as scholarship recipients. From Putnam City North, Katelynn Smith, Sara Adams and Yan Tan were named as scholarship recipients. From Putnam City West, scholarship recipients were Gissel Herrera, Juan Vargas, Rosa Arias, Daquelia Smith, Eduardo Caballeros, Delmy Reyes, Sylvia Tran, Tricia Pamintuan and Armando Gallegos.

▶ The Putnam City High Youth in Government team won the award for Top Attorney Team during competition in mid-March. The mission of the program is to provide a unique learning experience and to enhance the development of the democratic process through the study of public issues, legislation and debate. The attorney team was comprised of Will Claybrook and Sabrin Abu Seir. The witnesses were Logan Wofford and Alyssa Crownover. The team's sponsor is Driskill Sawyer.

▶ The Business Professional Association of Putnam City High has qualified four students for national competition. Brooke Cose, the BPA president, will be representing the school. The other three potential competitors have conflicts with AP testing.

▶ Congratulations to Rebecca Schoeb, a student at Putnam City North High School. She has been awarded the Gold Award, the highest award given in Girl Scouts. The award is based upon outstanding accomplishments in areas of personal development, leadership, community service and career planning.

▶ Congratulations to Hefner's 7<sup>th</sup>-grade traveling Quiz Bowl team. They placed second in Saturday's state quiz bowl tournament. Team members were Shervin Tabatabai, Marissa Duckett, Kali Roberson, Jessica Whitfield, Matthew Moelling, Connor Brauer, Chris Lofton and James Haycraft. Congratulations to these students and their coaches, Barbara Fowler and Jacque Peschka.

▶ Fran Ruokangas, a PEAK teacher at Kirkland Elementary School, has been awarded a Fund for Teachers grant in the amount of \$9,918. Her grant will allow her to attend a workshop in Italy this summer that will focus on creative thinking techniques to enrich learning. Two Central Elementary School teachers, Carrie Lenhart and Lorna Munger, have also been awarded a Fund for Teachers grant. Ms. Lenhart and Ms. Munger will travel to Oaxaca, Mexico. The two teachers are raising money in order to purchase books for donation to the Oaxaca Lending Library.

▶ The teacher job fair to be conducted in this building on Tuesday, April 12. The fair will run from 2 until 7 p.m. and, if we have our normal numbers, will accommodate 300 to 400 applicants. We appreciate everyone who is involved in this activity.

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**E-rate Submissions Approved**

The board on Monday night approved submission of paperwork that will allow the district to apply for e-rate reimbursement for basic maintenance agreements the district holds for critical switches and routers as well as for network upgrades that would include replacement of district switches, voice routers, wireless access points, wireless controllers, cabling and installation at 14 schools.

E-rate is the discount that schools may receive for the acquisition of telecommunication services as a result of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The level of discount, between 20 and 90 percent, is based upon the district's level of eligibility in the federal free and reduced-price lunch program.

The application for reimbursement will be considered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). USAC, under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission, provides discounts to assist most schools and libraries in the United States to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access. If the district's application is approved by USAC, the district will save more than \$2 million.

It will be several months before the district is notified whether the application for e-rate reimbursement has been approved.

*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>

## Summer School Plans Approved

Summer school dates, times and locations were approved at Monday night's board meeting. The summer school schedule looks like this:

### High School

These sessions allow students the opportunity to take classes they need to meet graduation requirements.

*Location:* Putnam City West High School

*Dates:* June 1 – June 24

*Time:* 8 – 11:30 a.m., 12:30 – 4 p.m.

*Cost:* \$200 per session

### Middle School – 21st Century Learning Skills Camp

The 21st Century Learning Skills Camp provides a fun, technology-rich opportunity to enhance language arts and math skills.

*Locations:* Cooper Middle School, Western Oaks Middle School

*Dates:* June 1 – June 24

*Time:* 8 a.m. – noon

### Elementary Summer Camp

Elementary Summer Camp provides a fun environment for students in kindergarten through grade 5 with emphasis on literacy, math and science.

*Locations:* Apollo Elementary, Central Elementary, Overholser Elementary and Tulakes Elementary

*Dates:* June 1 – June 24

*Time:* 8 a.m. – noon

### Extended School Year (Special Education, Special Education Preschool)

*Location:* Putnam City West High School

*Dates:* June 13 – June 30 and July 11 – 28 (Monday-Thursday)

*Time:* 8 a.m. – noon

### Driver Education

*Location:* Putnam City West High School

*Session 1:* May 31 – June 28 (Monday-Thursday)

*Session 2:* June 29 – July 28 (Monday-Thursday, no class on July 4th)

*Time:* 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

*Cost:* \$225

### Counterpoint

This class provides opportunities for talented students in Putnam City schools to work with professionals in the performing arts areas.

*Location:* Capps Middle School

*Date:* June 6 – June 16

*Time:* 8:30 a.m. – noon

*Cost:* \$100

### Spectacular Summer Camp

These classes provide options for students in kindergarten through grade 6 to be involved in high interest, hands-on and creative endeavors.

*Location:* Northridge Elementary School

*Date:* June 6 – June 24

*Time:* 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

*Cost:* \$150

## Board Approves MAPS for Kids Funds for Putnam City West Gym

The board on Monday night approved the use of \$600,000 in MAPS for Kids funds for investigation and possible repair of the gym roof at Putnam City West High School.

Last week the gym was closed after a routine inspection found concrete broken off of beams that support the roof. A full structural analysis of the roof and roof supports has been ordered. The funds are expected to cover costs of the structural analysis, plus, if necessary, replacement of the gym roof and floor.

Use of MAPS for Kids funds for the project must now be considered by the MAPS Trust.

## Contract Days Restored

The board on Monday night voted to restore for next school year the two days cut from employee contracts as a cost-saving measure.

At their April 19 meeting last year, board members voted to reduce two contract days for all employees except teachers and other employees represented by the Putnam City Association of Classroom Teachers.

Cost savings from the action saved the district about \$200,000 this school year.

## Board Comments (continued from page 1)

said the parent and community support at a recent Putnam City West track meet was impressive.

Becky Haliburton said it was good to see Dale and Carolyn Knowles involved in district activities. She also thanked Cory Boggs for his work.

## Board Updated on Parents as Teachers, Early Birds and More

Putnam City board members Monday night heard updates on the district Smart Start programs designed to help young children and families with young children.

Smart Start Administrator Christy Evans talked to board members about the Parents as Teachers program, off-site pre-kindergarten classes and the Even Start program.

The Oklahoma Parents as Teachers Program, now in its 13th year in the district, includes home visits, child development screening, play groups, educational meetings and a resource center stocked with toys, children's books and parenting books for parents to check out. The program is voluntary and free for all families living in the Putnam City Schools district who have children under age 3. Evans said that in Fall 2010, 75 percent of students who had been part of the Parents as Teachers program met literacy benchmarks.

Another program, Even Start, is a free literacy effort that integrates early childhood education, adult literacy and parenting education into a single program. The federally funded program is open to Putnam City residents who are adults with an educational need and have a child under the age of 8. The adult education element of Even Start includes recent immigrants working to learn English and teen parents working toward their high school degree. While adults or teen parents attend class, children 4 and younger have spots in developmentally appropriate early childhood rooms at the Putnam City Center. Evans said that at this time Even Start has been removed from the federal budget for next year, but that alternative funding will be sought.

Evans also mentioned the district's 4-year-old programs that are held in area daycare centers. Currently the district has highly qualified teachers in 4-year-old classes at eight daycare sites. The district provides the teacher and curriculum while daycare centers provide space, a teacher assistant and some supplies.

Kelly Suchy, coordinator for the district's Early Birds program, told board members the program is on track to serve parents of 2,000 children during the 2010-2011 school year compared to 953 in 2008-2009.

The Early Birds program gives hands-on help to parents of children ages birth to 5. The intent is to help parents learn how and what they can teach their infants, toddlers and young children at home. Early Birds classes cover areas such as social and emotional development, reading with the children and math activities, all in order to help children be prepared for kindergarten and a lifetime of learning beyond. There are free books, toys and classes for Putnam City parents who take part in Early Birds classes, and free childcare for children up to 10 years of age is provided during the classes. Eighty-eight percent of district kindergarten students whose parents attended Early Birds classes met spring literacy benchmarks in 2010, Suchy told board members.

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

▶ The Putnam City Schools Foundation will receive the 2011 Outstanding Local Education Foundation Program Award at the upcoming Fall Forum. The foundation is being recognized for its critical support of the Early Birds early childhood school readiness program. This program is a cooperative venture with Putnam City Schools and Smart Start of Central Oklahoma and is supported by the Inasmuch Foundation. Congratulations to Caroline Gist and all those involved with the foundation.

## Board Hears Information on Alternative Program

The board on Monday night heard from a representative of Ombudsman Educational Services, a company that partners with school districts to provide an alternate route to graduation for students who are at-risk of dropping out.

Lisa Chitty, a senior vice president at Ombudsman, says the company's approach works with students who are not succeeding in a traditional middle or high school setting.

Ombudsman works with students who have been chronically absent or truant, need credit recovery, are at risk of dropping out, have suspensions, are often disruptive in class, or have personal challenges or medical issues that make traditional school settings problematic.

Chitty said 85 percent of Ombudsman students graduate, successfully return to their district or complete their enrollment period with Ombudsman.

"We give them hope by showing them there is light at the end of the tunnel."

Ombudsman, based in Nashville, currently operates two programs in Oklahoma school districts, one in Tulsa and one in Ponca City.

## Special Board Meeting Set

A special board meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Monday, April 11, for the purpose of conducting a work session.