

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING/WORK SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF A BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT RETREAT

Board Room at the Education Center
Tuesday, October 30, 2012
4:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS/SUPERINTENDENT PRESENT:

Janie Gebhardt, Chair
John Sargent, Vice Chair
Jackie Cranor, Clerk

Jim Facer, Member
Paul Vitale, Member
Mary M. Vagner, Superintendent

OTHERS PRESENT: Liz Killpack; Patti Mortensen; Bob Devine; Douglas Howell; Bart Reed; Carl Smart; Chuck Wegner; Pam Sanford; Kent Hobbs; Shelley Allen; Renae Johnson

Purpose: To frame discussion based on the District's Vision/Mission/Beliefs/Learner Goals Statement; discuss evidence of Board Beliefs identified for behavioral emphasis; Review Board of Trustees Operating Principles; Conduct Board self-evaluation; Review Roles and Responsibilities for Board of Trustees, and Superintendent; and Brainstorm Challenges for the Next Three Years.

Welcome and statement of purpose

Chair Gebhardt welcomed everyone at 4:59 p.m. and said the purpose of the Special Meeting/Work Session was a Board/Superintendent/Cabinet Retreat. She said the group would discuss the direction of the District, the Beliefs, Operating Principles and conduct the Board self-evaluation. She turned the meeting over to Liz Killpack.

Warm up activity

Ms. Killpack asked everyone to look at a graphic with random letters in the shape of a pyramid and recreate it from memory after looking at it for 30 seconds. She had each person try and memorize the whole graphic and individuals got anywhere from 3 to 9 letters in the correct order, groups of two got twice as many, and groups of five all got 100%. She said teamwork made the difference by having a plan, sharing the load and trusting each other to do their part. She said each team member was able to rely on a teammate's strengths. She said there were a lot of elements of the District that would not operate correctly without teamwork.

District Vision, Mission, Beliefs, Learner Goals drives the work of the Board

Ms. Killpack asked what the District's Vision was. Mr. Hobbs said it was "Maximizing Learning for ALL Students Through Rigor, Relevancy and Relationships – Whatever it Takes!" Ms. Killpack asked everyone if they believed it. Everyone said yes. Ms. Killpack asked what the Board and Cabinet did to make the Vision evident. Mr. Sargent said the Board asked and expected the Superintendent, Cabinet and Principals to take it seriously and everyone understood the expectation. Mr. Hobbs said there was an attitude shift when Albertson's started a program about meeting the needs of all children. He said it changed the way teachers taught children. Dr. Mortensen said it wasn't until Superintendent Vagner started at the District that the Vision was changed to include "all students" instead of just "students". Mr. Sargent said one of the evidences that there was buy in to the Vision were the recent efforts to decrease the number of students with D and F grades. He said one school had decreased that number from 400 to 40 in just one year. Ms. Gebhardt said Superintendent Vagner had also added "Whatever it Takes" to the Vision.

Ms. Killpack reviewed each of the District's Beliefs. Everyone agreed that all of them were evident in the District. Ms. Vagner reviewed the Beliefs selected by the Board the year before and asked the Board to select its Beliefs for the current year. Ms. Gebhardt said the Belief that students must be responsible for their own learning had really taken on new meaning with the implementation of the promotion policy. Ms. Cranor and Mr. Vitale agreed that "Students learn best through active engagement in their learning with highly qualified staff" was critical. Ms. Vagner suggested adding it as a sub bullet under the first Belief they selected last year which went hand in hand with the implementation of the CCSS. Ms. Cranor noted that teachers were already actualizing the Belief by preparing for CCSS with unit planning. Mr. Sargent said there was a lot going on this year and suggested limiting the focus to one or two Beliefs. Ms. Killpack said the Beliefs were all still in effect and choosing one main focus

could be really effective. Ms. Vagner said the two that were already selected were critical areas of focus for the coming year with the Supplemental Levy and changing education laws which really needed the support of parents and the community right now. Mr. Sargent said the Belief that students may not opt out of their learning had really made a huge difference. Ms. Killpack said as long as the Board could articulate its Beliefs that was what mattered. Ms. Allen said the focus on professional staff and parent involvement were critical elements this year. Ms. Vagner said she would compile the Board's thoughts on the Beliefs and include it in the Board Work Session packet for November. Ms. Killpack asked Board members who they represented. Mr. Vitale said the Board represented students, parents and the community. Ms. Killpack said the Board was entrusted to make decisions for the benefit of all children and not just those in their zone. She said it was important to communicate that decisions were made for all children in the District but that input from their zones would be taken into consideration. She asked what the community expected from the Board. Ms. Gebhardt said sometimes the community expected the Board to be able to make certain decisions not realizing that some decisions were state-driven. Ms. Killpack said sometimes people had the misconception that a Board member was able to change which classroom their child attended. She said it was important for elected officials to discuss what was important to them and to take a unified stand. She said she had recently read the minutes from another School District's Board meeting and the Board Chair refused to vote because the topic was too controversial. She said she believed it was a Board Member's job to vote whether the decision was controversial or not. She said she appreciated that this Board did its job. She asked if posting Policies to the website was an acceptable format. Ms. Gebhardt said it helped people in the District and the community to know where Policies were kept and to have easy access to them. Mr. Sargent said the agendas and minutes for meetings were also posted on the website and felt it was a convenient place to find everything. Ms. Allen said posting everything on the website also showed that the Board was doing its work transparently. Ms. Gebhardt said it hadn't always been that way. Dr. Mortensen asked how many School Boards had televised meetings. Ms. Killpack said not many. She said she was only aware of Boise, Moscow and Coeur d'Alene. She asked how the public meetings were going. Mr. Sargent said the televised meetings were working well but appreciated when meetings didn't go on and on. Ms. Cranor said she agreed that some items from previous Work Sessions did not need to be repeated verbatim as long as the salient points were touched on. Ms. Killpack said it was not uncommon for a Chairperson to summarize previous discussions for the public's benefit. Mr. Sargent said Ms. Vagner was good about doing that. Ms. Cranor said she appreciated when Ms. Vagner clarified for the public that the Board was not able to respond to public comment so patrons would not feel brushed off. Ms. Killpack asked the Board what its follow up process was for public comment. Ms. Cranor said Ms. Vagner usually told patrons that the appropriate staff member would contact them after the meeting. Ms. Allen said most of the time administrators tried to intervene before patrons came to the Board with concerns because most of the time issues were able to be resolved without needing to go before the Board. Ms. Killpack said there were a lot of Boards that expected follow up to take place but never knew for sure what had happened. She said it was good that the Board stayed informed on follow up issues. Mr. Reed suggested adding language to the comment sheet about the Board not responding to public comment. Ms. Allen said she made sure it was communicated to patrons as they were filling out comment sheets. Ms. Killpack said she had seen it written on forms and some Boards that stated the expectation verbally prior to public comment.

Review Board of Trustees Operating Principles

Ms. Killpack reviewed the Board of Trustees Operating Principles. She said the Board had made a few changes over the last couple of years and asked if anyone had any further changes. Mr. Sargent said he thought the Board was working well together. He said members understood, especially recently, that when the Board made a decision everyone could put aside their individual wants and come to a compromise to support the decision of the Board in order to be a unified Board. Ms. Gebhardt said Ms. Vagner did a very good facilitating the conversation and listening to where each Board member stood on an issue to try and find an acceptable solution that everyone could agree to. Ms. Cranor said she didn't think it was necessary for Board Members to completely agree on every issue. Ms. Gebhardt said she appreciated Board Members being able to find a middle ground in order to reach a unanimous decision. She said she also liked the Board articles that were sent to the paper. Mr. Sargent said the most recent article communicated that there was a difference of opinion in a Board decision but were ultimately able to come to an agreement. Ms. Vagner said sometimes there are important issues that need unanimous decisions. Ms. Cranor said she appreciated Ms. Vagner's tactful way of communicating with the Board and dealing with their differing opinions. Ms. Killpack said some Board members had a very difficult time moving forward with a decision when they did not believe in it. She said she explained to them that it was more detrimental for a team to fight one another and individuals had to learn to move forward with what was best for the team. Ms. Cranor said she remembered feeling frustrated because she felt the administration was not listening

and Ms. Vagner was able to present a solution that helped her see that they do listen. Ms. Cranor asked if it was inappropriate for the Board Chair to make a motion. Mr. Reed said it was general practice for the Chairman to lead the business and the other members to make the motions. Ms. Vagner said it was standard practice to follow Robert's Rules of Order but if the Board Chair felt strongly about an issue it was acceptable for the Chair to pass the gavel and make a motion. Ms. Gebhardt said she did not feel constrained by the protocol. Ms. Killpack said some states did not allow a Board member to abstain from a vote but Idaho allowed it. She said she encouraged Board members not to abstain unless it was a new Board member who was absent from the previous discussion. She said if there was a conflict of interest the Board member had to leave for the whole discussion and the vote. Mr. Sargent asked if he should leave when the Board accepted the bills that included supplies purchased from his company. Ms. Killpack said yes. Ms. Vagner said any bill involving Mr. Sargent's company could be separated from the regular bills and he could be excused for that portion of Board action. Ms. Killpack reviewed the expectation for no surprises, executive session rules and dress code and asked if there was any input. Ms. Vagner said the Board was good about all of those things. Ms. Killpack asked the Board if it was in agreement with the Operating Principles. The Board said yes.

Brainstorm Challenges for 2012-13 through 2015-16

Mr. Vitale said the biggest challenge was the lack of funding. Ms. Cranor said Pay for Performance was a big issue and anticipated it would have a negative impact on a lot of staff members. Mr. Sargent said all three of the Propositions had been a big challenge. Mr. Sargent said it was going to be a challenge to ask for an increase to the Supplemental Levy. Ms. Gebhardt said the District was on track for the implementation of the CCSS but not knowing whether or not Districts would have the resources to fully implement was a challenge. Ms. Vagner said it would take time and physical materials both of which required funding. Mr. Facer said his daughter was frustrated that Pay for Performance would just encourage teachers to teach to the test. Ms. Vagner noted that even if the Propositions were overturned some elements were in the waiver that was accepted by the federal government. Ms. Killpack said she had heard that if the Propositions failed the SDE planned to come up with new legislation to support the waiver. Ms. Vagner said there were a lot of things included in the laws that affected funding. She said the District was currently paying for math and science teachers and technology positions from funding that was allocated in Prop 3. Ms. Gebhardt said implementing Prop 1 was a challenge because it demoralized teachers. She said she had talked to several college students that had changed their major because of the instability Prop 1 placed on teachers. Mr. Reed said the District had to slim down on the instructional programs it offered and would most likely face further programmatic changes whether it was human or instructional. He said it was a challenge not knowing what resources would be allocated to Districts. Ms. Allen said it would be another challenge if the lawsuit against Districts charging fees prevailed. She said she did not think it would be long before there was a lawsuit filed against the state for not funding education. She said it happened in Washington and the Judge agreed that the state legislature could not cut funding to education based on the economy. Ms. Cranor said it had been a challenge for several years to not get any new textbooks. Mr. Wegner said the most current versions were for elementary math over three years ago. He said the District was still using science and social studies textbooks with a copyright from 1999. Ms. Gebhardt said it was huge challenge for the Board to not have the ability to make decisions about needs at a local level. She said everything from the state was earmarked regardless of individual District's needs. Ms. Cranor said another problem was the inequity of the funding across the state. Ms. Vagner said some potential program changes could include switching from trimesters to semesters, eliminating planning time and moving to a four day school week. Ms. Killpack asked if there was anything the Board could do to eliminate some of the challenges. Ms. Vagner said ongoing communication with community, staff and the legislature was critical to make sure they were aware of the decisions the Board would have to make in the near future. Dr. Mortensen said working with the ISBA to ensure that School Board voices were heard and to hold the legislature accountable at the state level would be critical. Ms. Cranor said she realized that the ISBA had to maintain its relationship with the legislature but did not agree with the ISBA always placating the legislature and believed it went too far with the give and take. She said she would like to see the ISBA stand up for School Boards and not worry so much about appeasing the legislature. She said School Boards needed someone with the guts to stand up and tell the legislature what School Districts needed. Ms. Gebhardt said the ISBA represented all School Boards and needed to make decisions based on what was best for all children and all teachers in every School District. Ms. Cranor said she understood that not every School District had the same opinion. Dr. Mortensen said the legislature had an attitude of "it knows best". She said all over the state most of the input was in opposition to the SCF legislation but the legislature completely ignored all of the input. She said recently it seemed that the ISBA Executive Board had some of that same attitude. Ms. Killpack said there was an opening on the ISBA Executive Board and was always good to have someone with convictions. Ms. Gebhardt said she did

not agree with the ISBA Executive Board making decisions without unanimous input from School Boards as a Board and not as individual Trustees. Ms. Cranor said the decision was even worse in her opinion because it had already publically stated it would not take a position on the legislation and then came out with a position in favor of the legislation without asking or informing anyone. Ms. Killpack said she understood the frustration because making decisions in that manner did not follow best practices recommended by the ISBA. She said she would deliver the input to the ISBA. Dr. Mortensen said in the past the IEA, ISBA and IASA had worked well together to get things done with the legislature and did not do that now. She said now the groups seemed to be working against each other and could no longer get things done. She said there was no common vision or direction. Mr. Sargent said the District staff did a good job working out solutions for every possible scenario and Ms. Vagner was good at keeping the District ahead of the curve. Ms. Gebhardt said there were a lot of Districts struggling to keep up with the changes. Ms. Vagner said the Board was reading the Six Secrets of Change and the book completely described the culture of this District. She said it was important to “walk the talk” especially in difficult times even if it was harder. Ms. Gebhardt said it was important to remember that all parts of the District made up a team. Ms. Killpack said the Board was on the right track and needed to keep making decisions based on the Board’s goals, Strategic Plan and the Vision/Mission.

Discussion of the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent and continued growth as an effective leadership team

Ms. Killpack asked about communication between the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent. Ms. Gebhardt said Ms. Vagner and the cabinet members set the agenda which was reviewed by the Chair and Vice Chair prior to being posted. Ms. Cranor said the communication protocols in place were working great. Ms. Killpack asked what some of the expectations were. Ms. Gebhardt said Ms. Vagner expected input in an upfront manner. Ms. Vagner said the Board knew it was a team and each member leaned on each other’s strengths. Ms. Gebhardt said it was helpful to see the various strengths of cabinet members. Ms. Vagner said the District did not operate on end-runs which was a credit to the professional capabilities of the team. Mr. Reed said the Board was good about calling the appropriate cabinet member if there was something on the agenda that they did not understand which helped to avoid any surprises. Ms. Cranor said one of her expectations was honesty and knew she could count on that from Ms. Vagner and that Ms. Vagner expected the same. She said Ms. Vagner had done a really good job fostering morale and building relationships through the Festival of Trees and frequent “Making it Possible” emails. Ms. Gebhardt said Ms. Vagner was good about keeping the Board informed of important issues, both good and bad and appreciated that she did not try to soft sell bad news. Ms. Killpack said frequently Board members asked her how to build trust and she told them it was a difficult process because it was built over time based on the actions of each member. Ms. Vagner said the Board’s Operating Principles really defined the expectations. She said they were lengthy but were focused on directly supporting the Vision/Mission and Goals of the Board. She said it addressed members being direct, open communication, operating without surprises, trusting the administration to do its work without micromanaging and holding the administration accountable for its work. Ms. Killpack noted that the Superintendent’s Evaluation really expressed each of those areas. Ms. Vagner said there was humor in their relationships which was an important part of the team. Ms. Killpack said the difference between the Board and Superintendent is that one did the work and the other governed. She said she appreciated the cabinet coming which was not very common but was a good way to develop relationships. Mr. Sargent said he agreed that it was easier to be open and ask questions and get clarification because those relationships had been built through this type of activity. He said all of the cabinet members were great and were always willing to take a call to answer questions. Ms. Killpack said it was definitely helpful to know each of the administrators on a personal level. Dr. Mortensen said the Board put in a lot of time and did their homework which increased the administration’s respect for their input. She said each member made sure they knew what was going on and had good insight and input. Ms. Allen said the best thing about this Board was that each Board member was here for the right reason; because they cared about and understood the importance of educating children and did not bring individual agendas. She said it made it easy to be here and to work with them.

Conduct Board Self-Evaluation

Ms. Killpack asked the Board to review each section of the evaluation and rank where they stood as a Board on a scale from 1 to 5. She reviewed Section A – Community Leadership. Ms. Cranor said she would rank items 1 – 3 as a 5. Ms. Gebhardt said the Board allowed for public comment at the Work Sessions and Regular Meetings. Mr. Sargent said Board editorials were sent to each Board member for input before being published. Ms. Gebhardt said as the spokesperson for the Board she never said anything publically or to the press unless it had already been discussed or agreed to by the Board. Ms. Cranor said she had seen some School Boards that were not advocates

for education and said this Board had always advocated for education and did not make decisions unless they were for the benefit of all children. Mr. Facer said the boundary decision was a prime example. He said the Board went over and above to find solutions for patrons that were upset about the changes. Ms. Gebhardt said setting goals prior to making any decisions was a critical component of items 4 – 8. She said she would rank those items at a 5 but thought the fifth item, “Board provides leadership to communicate the importance of public education to the community’s economic development” could use some work. Ms. Vagner said she and Ms. Allen shared a seat on the Bannock Development Corporation Board and had a voice advocating for education every time any development took place in the community. She said the School District had a place in the economic development of the community and always had representation at BDC events. She said she did not solicit Board attendance at the Economic Symposium this year due to the cost and the event had become more of a political rally in recent years. She said the focus at BDC was on the energy and health industries right now. Ms. Gebhardt said the fact that there were local businesses that believed reducing business tax further would benefit them communicated to her that the Board needed to get its voice in the community more. Ms. Killpack reviewed Section B – Policy Making. The Board ranked items 1 – 6 at a 5. Ms. Killpack reviewed Section C – Planning and Setting Goals. The Board ranked items 1 – 5 at a 5. Ms. Killpack reviewed Section D – Finance. The Board ranked items 1 – 6 at a 5. Ms. Gebhardt said the Board did the best it could with what it had relative to salary and benefits. Ms. Cranor said the District lost a lot of good teachers because of lack of funding from the state. Mr. Sargent said he thought the Board had done a tremendous job with long range financial planning for building sites and school buildings. He said the fact that the District was able to build a new school at a quarter of the cost without having to go for a bond was astounding. He said Ms. Vagner and Mr. Reed conducted a presentation at Rotary on the new facility and the community members were impressed and said they had no idea how much planning it took to build the new facility at such a savings. Ms. Cranor said the forefront planning also helped to open up space at the elementary and middle schools. Ms. Gebhardt said a lot of planning went into the upkeep of current facilities which saved the District from having to rebuild or replace as often. Ms. Killpack reviewed Section E – Personnel. Mr. Sargent said recently there were some issues with employees that had been with the District for years saying they were unaware of the District’s policies and there was no evidence of the policies being reviewed. He said the administration implemented a new process to ensure policies were being reviewed with the documentation being kept for each review. Ms. Cranor said there were issues every now and again but every time the administration or Board became aware it took action to correct the problem. Ms. Killpack reviewed Section F – Working with the Superintendent. The Board ranked items 1 – 5 at a 5. Ms. Vagner said the process for dealing with conflict was the evaluation process itself. Ms. Cranor said she always tries to provide feedback that gives the Superintendent something to work on. Ms. Killpack said it was a good thing to always strive to do something better. She reviewed Section G – Board Meetings. The Board ranked items 1 – 5 at a 5. Ms. Killpack reviewed Section H – Legislative/Political. She said she viewed the Pocatello/Chubbuck School District as one of the leaders in this area. Ms. Cranor said the Board tried its best but sometimes felt ignored by the legislature. She said she had seen one of the local legislators change his opinion about funding for education which was cause for hope. Ms. Gebhardt said the District had been blessed with pro-education legislators in the local community but the state did not appear to be going in the same direction. She said several people from the Pocatello area went to the legislative hearings in Boise and were not even allowed to give input. She said it caused a lot of people to lose respect for the integrity of the process. She said the Board could do more to become knowledgeable about educational issues nationwide. Ms. Killpack said it could be difficult to determine how a national change affected a District and if the Board ever had a question, the ISBA was a good resource. Mr. Sargent said the administration was really good about staying on top of national agendas that could affect the District, like Obama Care and Pay for Performance. Ms. Gebhardt asked if membership with the National School Board Association was worth the cost. Ms. Killpack said there were quite a few Districts that sent one or two Board Members and had found it very beneficial. Ms. Vagner said the National Conventions were of value but due to the funding reductions from the state the District had to cut its travel budget which eliminated the ability to attend. She said any travel for the Board came out of TQ for training purposes but the TQ budget was also limited. Ms. Killpack said the NSBA had recently started posting key note speaker presentations to their website that could be viewed at any time after the convention. Ms. Killpack asked the Board what they did the very best and which area could use improvement. Mr. Sargent said he thought the area that the Board did the best in was Section F. Working with the Superintendent. He said the area he thought could use the most work was Section H. Legislative/Political. Ms. Cranor said she thought the Board could improve on Section A. Community Leadership. Ms. Gebhardt said she thought Board did very well in that area and were very involved in several community events. Ms. Killpack noted this Board was the most actively involved in the community that she had seen across the state. She said the most

effective way to improve was to know and to have a Vision and Mission and Beliefs to guide you. She said it was a good way to start the retreat and good reminder to end with it.

Summary Agreements and any Direction; Set Follow-up Retreat Date and time if needed

Ms. Vagner said items for follow up from the Retreat would be included in the November 13, 2012 Work Session packet for further discussion and consideration for action at the November 20, 2012 Regular Board Meeting.

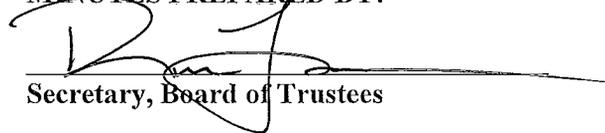
Adjourn

Chair Gebhardt adjourned the Special Meeting/Work Session/Retreat at 7:58 p.m.

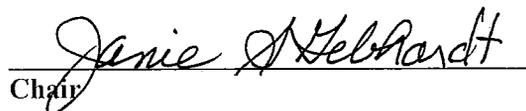
APPROVED ON:

18 December 2012

MINUTES PREPARED BY:


Secretary, Board of Trustees

BY:


Chair

ATTESTED BY:


Clerk