

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

**Board Room at the Education Center  
Tuesday, September 24, 2013  
4:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

**BOARD MEMBERS/SUPERINTENDENT PRESENT:**

Janie Gebhardt, Chair  
Jackie Cranor, Vice Chair  
Paul Vitale, Clerk

Jim Facer, Assistant Treasurer  
Dave Mattson, Member  
Mary M. Vagner, Superintendent

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jackie Hopper; Patti Mortensen; Bob Devine; Bart Reed; Carl Smart; Chuck Wegner; Pam Sanford; Kent Hobbs; Renae Johnson

**Purpose:** To frame discussion based on the District's Vision/Mission/Beliefs/Learner Goals Statement; Discuss Evidence of Board Beliefs identified for Actualization; 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 4:32 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 Jackie Hopper. Ms. Hopper said she was starting her second year with the ISBA and was a Trustee on her local School Board before that. She said she decided to become involved on her local School Board when her youngest child was three years old. She said it had been an amazing adventure. She said her career on the School Board was focused on children and providing opportunities. She said she was excited to have the opportunity to help School Board's become better at governance. She asked the group to state their name and position and name one thing they loved about the School District. Ms. Gebhardt said she loved that the District was continually pushing the cutting edge and nobody's work was ever done. She said the District recently started hate prevention training through Steve Wessler. Mr. Reed said he appreciated living in a community that was just the right size for close involvement in the work of the District. Dr. Mortensen said she enjoyed the collaborative spirit that had been built over time. She said she had great respect for the Board and the Cabinet and each member's commitment to serve and support children in the District and improve student achievement. She said education in the state was going through tough times but it was also an exciting time and everyone was being pushed to do better. She said it was a great feeling to know colleagues would help you learn and grow. Mr. Facer said he had learned so much since starting on the School Board and one thing that amazed him was the professionalism that was evident in the administrative team at the District. Mr. Vitale said he had a long history with the District as a social worker. He said it was a good School District and had maintained high quality. Mr. Devine said he had been with the District for almost nine years. He said it had been such a good experience because of the collective expertise of the leadership team. He said the feeling of cooperation and collaboration was more than any other place he had worked. Mr. Mattson said he was the newest Board member. He said he felt like he just jumped in a fast moving river and had to learn to swim. He said he was most impressed with the passion of the teachers. Mr. Smart said it was nice to have such an incredible amount of expertise at one table. He said a PERSI representative complimented the District for consistently turning in timely and accurate information. He said he attributed this to the expertise of the team. Ms. Cranor said was starting her fifth year as a Trustee. She said she was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Board and had been on the Board ever since. She said she originally started as a volunteer in the District on the PTA and as a teacher's aide, then got a degree and became a teacher and finally retired. She said her children had been through this District and the thing she admired most was how well the administration stayed on top of the continual changes and in planning ahead. She said she was really impressed with the operations of the District relative to the CIP process and implementation of a wellness plan. She said the District's work in those areas was a beacon for other Districts in the area. She said the District had a professional staff that helped and supported the whole. She said she was also impressed with how involved in the community all of the administrators were. Ms. Vagner said she was starting her eighth year as the Superintendent of this District and her twenty-sixth year as a

Superintendent. She said she was very proud to have a School Board that worked so well together and aligned its behavior with the Vision and Mission of the District. She said everything that the Board and administration did was to achieve those goals. She said the Board did not micro manage and allowed the administration to do its work. She said the District could not be a successful high performing District without the collaborative leadership that it had. She said the District was fortunate to have dedicated employees who were attentive to the Vision and Mission and did their jobs well. She said student achievement results showed that the District was making gains and closing the gap every year. Mr. Wegner said he would echo all of the comments but the one thing that struck him while working with teachers on the implementation of the ICS was that he had never seen a group of such dedicated and passionate teachers work so hard to lead their colleagues as he had seen that fall. He said the work was hard and pushed everyone to the edge but was exciting to see it all come together. He said principals were also taking initiative to support their teachers in their work. Mr. Hobbs said the District was not afraid to do hard things. He said the administration took on many challenges regardless of how difficult they were. He said the Board and administration did not hide from patrons but rather approached and resolved issues. He said the District worked hard to do the right thing and did it well. Ms. Sanford said she was starting her second year with the District. She said when she first started Ms. Vagner told her that the administration was going to take a chance on her and develop her as a new administrator because the District was a team. She said she took that to heart and had grown since starting at the District and agreed that this was a phenomenal team to work and collaborate with and the degree of respect from the top down was wonderful.

### **Warm up activity**

Ms. Hopper split the group into four teams and asked each team to write down each of their first and last names in the boxes on a sheet of paper until they were all filled in. She said the teams would work together to try and come up with as many words as possible from all of the letters in two minutes. She said any words with at least three letters were worth one point and each additional letter was worth one more point. The team scores were 12, 18, 19 and 25 points. Ms. Sanford, Mr. Hobbs and Mr. Facer were the winners. Ms. Hopper said she started a banner along the wall with one word to describe the group which was “synergy”. She said one plus one was always more than the sum of the parts and when the team was committed to the Vision and Mission statement. She said in order for that to happen each team member had to give the best of themselves. She said administrators brought it to work every day and Board Members to the community and Board Room 24/7. She asked the group to write one word to describe the team on their own piece of paper and add it to the banner she started.

### **District Vision, Mission, Beliefs, Learner Goals Drives the Work of the Board**

Ms. Hopper said one of the ways the District she served reminded itself of the Vision and Mission was to place individual key words throughout the building. She said it was their way to honor and share the work by reminding everyone daily. Ms. Cranor said the District’s Vision and Mission statement was displayed in almost every room in every building throughout the District and Ms. Vagner included the Mission statement in every presentation or speech she gave and doubted that anyone in the group did not have the Mission statement imbedded in their minds. Ms. Gebhardt said the Mission Statement was frequently used in the community as well. She said every time someone was recognized at a Board meeting it was related back to the Vision and Mission and one or more of the Beliefs. Dr. Mortensen said Ms. Vagner always emphasized that the administration and District actualized the Vision and Mission which meant they were living the Vision and Mission and putting those statements into action. Ms. Hopper asked everyone what they saw being actualized. Ms. Cranor said she constantly saw that students were not allowed to opt out of their learning. She said the Belief that children learn in different ways and at different rates was actualized by the many different options provided. Ms. Hopper asked what the Board was doing well. Mr. Reed said the Board visited various schools on a monthly basis which sent a message that the Board was directly involved in looking for evidence of what was being taught in schools. Ms. Gebhardt said visiting schools was one of the most positive things that the Board got to do and was a good way to see what was happening in schools. She said when she attended her first School Board training someone told her that she wasn’t allowed to visit schools and was relieved when Ms. Vagner told her that the Board was more than welcome to visit the schools. She said it was a good way to keep in touch with reality. She said it helped her to affirm the Belief that a safe, supportive and respectful environment was provided for students and staff. Mr. Hobbs said it was evident that the entire Board supported the goals and Beliefs. Ms. Vagner said another strong example of the Board actualizing its Beliefs was taking action to increase the Supplemental Levy in tough economic times because it was best for children. She said it was risky and scary not knowing if the community would turn on the District but the community stepped up and supported the District and children. Ms. Cranor said there was evidence of collaboration in all schools with the implementation of Infinite Campus and TIA, ICS and the SBAC.

She said teachers were working together to align grading practices with the new standards. She said everything seemed to flow together. Ms. Gebhardt said another of the Board's Beliefs was that students could not opt out of their learning and when teachers and administrators saw a student falling behind there were supports in place to prevent failing grades because students were not allowed to opt out. Ms. Vagner said the Board also believed in providing a safe, supportive and respectful environment for students and staff which was evidenced in the data on student behavior. She said the Board made decisions on student behavior that contributed to a safe, supportive and respectful environment and was improving the climate in schools. She said the expectations were being actualized. She said for years the Board had focused on providing a safe, supportive and respectful environment but had evolved into a focus on high levels of achievement and students have a right and responsibility to learn. She said the emphasis had shifted as expectations were actualized. Ms. Hopper asked the Board what it really wanted to focus on and achieve this year. Ms. Cranor said it would be a difficult year trying to get people to think differently with all of the changes coming with the compare and contrast writing assignments and ICS. She said it would be a major transition for students, teachers and parents. Ms. Hopper asked if focusing on high levels of achievement felt risky with the implementation of the Common Core. Dr. Mortensen said she met with principals and talked for over an hour on the implementation of Common Core and how they planned to bring teachers together. Mr. Hobbs said there was a lot of anxiety. Dr. Mortensen said everyone involved was dealing with unknowns which made it hard to plan ahead. She said the administration kept emphasizing the need to communicate and bring staff together to provide support. Ms. Gebhardt said it would be even more challenging with the implementation of technology on top of all of the changes. She said it would be critical for the Board to affirm what teachers were doing on a regular basis to assure them the Board and administration were there to support them. Ms. Cranor said implementing the ICS was causing some longtime teachers to feel like it was their first year. Mr. Vitale said it would also be a challenge for patrons which could cause anxiety for them. Dr. Mortensen said the monthly Board school visits allowed staff to see the Board's active participation. She said staff looked forward to showcasing the accomplishments in the classroom for the Board. Dr. Mortensen suggested adding something about active participation on Committees to the actualization list. She said the varying perspectives of the Board were critical to the administration's work. Ms. Cranor said it was also helpful for Board members hear the perspectives of teachers, administrators, Cabinet members and patrons while serving on committees. Ms. Vagner said she would add it to the list of actualization of Board Beliefs. Ms. Gebhardt said she thought "Students must be challenged to think critically, problem solve and work in teams" seemed to be a good focus with the implementation of ICS. Mr. Mattson said he thought it would be critical to emphasize appreciation and support for teachers and staff. Ms. Vagner said the emphasis could be pulled into the Belief that a safe, supportive and respectful environment was critical. Mr. Hobbs said the Vision and Mission stated that Board supports staff. Ms. Gebhardt said another important focus was that students learn best through active engagement in their learning with highly qualified, professional staff. Ms. Vagner said she thought it would be important to retain education is a means to a quality of life which supported the emphasis on college and career ready. Ms. Vagner said that Mr. Vitale mentioned the public being tentative about the implementation of the Common Core and the Board benchmarking the Strategic Plan twice a year emphasized the Board's support of teachers and the community relative to implementation. Ms. Hopper asked if there were any other aspects of Board work that the Board had any questions about. Ms. Cranor said going in and out of open and closed session meetings could be confusing. Ms. Vagner said there were no motions and no action was taken during executive sessions which were for information and discussion only. She said if there was any likelihood that action was needed the Board would need to convene a special meeting for the purpose of action. She said the rules for open and executive session meetings were per Idaho Code. Ms. Gebhardt said special meetings for action and executive session meetings were required to be noticed. Ms. Vagner said the only instance that the Board could take action during an executive session meeting was to place an employee on probation. Mr. Facer asked if the Board could use names in open session. Ms. Vagner said no which is why staff and students were assigned docket numbers. Ms. Gebhardt said it could be difficult sometimes to take action in open session. She said one example of having to discuss decision making in open session was when the Board interviewed Trustee candidates which could be uncomfortable. She said the Board's protocol for electing Board officers made the public conversation a little easier. She said it was also difficult to make decisions that negatively impacted teachers with them present. Ms. Vagner said the District was once accused of violating the open meeting law but the Board declared a defect, deliberated and took action in open session. She said the Board always operates at 100% integrity.

### **Review Board of Trustees Operating Principles**

Ms. Hopper said the Board's Operating Principles outlined the Board's Code of Conduct and helped the Board decide how it would interact. She asked if the principle of avoiding surprises was being met. Ms. Gebhardt said

the Board and Superintendent were very good about keeping each other informed. She said sharing information was absolutely crucial. Ms. Vagner said the Board could have been very surprised to have a group of upset parents show up at a recent Board Meeting, but the administration was able to get the relevant information to the Board about week before the meeting so the Board was prepared to deal with the complaint. She said the administration and the Board were committed to keeping each other informed. She said if there were any issues in the schools or departments she was usually aware of it. She said the administration provided annual reports on each of the departments throughout the year. Ms. Gebhardt said past reports had even included updating the Board on employees with serious health issues. Ms. Cranor said the administration sent cards to those employees on behalf of the District and Board of Trustees within the confines of HIPPA. Ms. Vagner said cards were sent as the administration became aware of a need. She said staff, parents and the community were also publicly thanked at monthly Board Meetings. Ms. Cranor said she appreciated that the Board did that. Ms. Vagner said Dr. Mortensen sent thank you notes to patrons and businesses that donated for student field trips. Ms. Hopper asked the group to identify an area each did really well in and an area that could use improvement. Mr. Wegner said he brought follow-through and organization to the team and the Board established clear goals and a Strategic Plan that outlined the work of the Board and District. Mr. Facer said he worked well with others and was willing to listen and see the big picture. He said one of the Board's strengths was making sure the interests of all students were met. Ms. Cranor said she brought a lot of questions which took a lot of the time and was not because she didn't know the answer but because she wanted to make sure an issue was clearly explained to the public. She said the Board was very good at recognizing that it took the majority to make a decision and each member was supportive of the decision once it was made regardless of whether or not each agreed. Mr. Devine said he brought resourcefulness and creativity. He said there were new and constant issues at the secondary level and it was critical to be flexible. He said the Board did a great job of setting direction and allowing the Superintendent and administration to execute their responsibilities without micromanaging. Mr. Vitale said he brought a willingness to work as a team member. He said one of the most important things the Board could do was to respect the majority. He said it was not always easy but was very important. Mr. Hobbs said he brought enthusiasm, compassion and caring for kids. He said one of the things the Board did very well was to commit so much of their time. Ms. Gebhardt said she brought dedication to the Board. She said the Board was very good at doing its background work and supported each other on decisions. Dr. Mortensen said she brought integrity and the ability to be a systems thinker. She said it was very important to her to tell the truth and honor her commitments. She said she appreciated the Board paying close attention to protocol to avoid getting the District into trouble. She said the Board was also good about not getting sidetracked or sucked into public issues. Ms. Vagner said she brought vision and perseverance. She said it took both qualities to function at high levels of performance and there was evidence that this District does that. She said the District had turned the corner on sustainability and was not person dependent, but rather, systems dependent. She said the Board set the Vision and Mission and operated within its role to set policy and allowed the administration to carry out its work. She said the Board was accountable to the public and the administration was accountable to the Board. Mr. Mattson said he brought compassion and honesty. He said the Board was a good steward of the tax dollar. He said before he started on the Board he had no idea what it took to make the District work. Mr. Smart said he brought data and analysis skills. He said the Board was good about attending their meetings and conducting their work in accordance with open meeting laws. He said he recently asked the Board what time commitment was required of a Board Member and all of them agreed they committed around 40 to 50 hours per month. Ms. Sanford said she brought humor and vision. She said she was forward thinking and wanted the best for students and programs. She said the Board was good at staying well informed, asking questions and looking at all sides of an issue. She said the Board kept the Vision and Mission in mind but looked at issues from the perspective of the community. Ms. Hopper said it was important to see the strengths of the team as a whole and realize that if anyone was missing the system would not work as well. She asked the group if there were any areas that needed improvement. Ms. Vagner said two members were unable to attend the meeting and she couldn't speak for them but she believed that most of the team would agree that Dr. Howell was insightful, highly consistent and had a great deal of empathy and worked with others to find solutions. She said Ms. Allen was a hard worker and was able to think like a teacher and then put herself in the community's shoes and see a situation from both perspectives. Mr. Wegner agreed Ms. Allen was very tuned-in to the opinions throughout the community. Dr. Mortensen said Ms. Allen was courageous and wasn't afraid to say the things that needed to be said even if some people did not want to hear it. Ms. Gebhardt said Ms. Allen's commitment to the Festival of Trees was above and beyond normal job duties and showed a tremendous amount of dedication. Ms. Cranor said Mr. Reed was not in attendance but wanted to communicate her appreciation for the safe environments for students and staff because of his dedication to stay ahead of any safety issues. Ms. Gebhardt said his dedication to safety was evident in the planning process for the New Horizon

Center and Alameda Middle School projects. Ms. Vagner said Ms. Johnson was smart and mature in dealing with the public and the Cabinet. She said she was capable, had a sense of humor and did not let the public ruffle her. Ms. Gebhardt said Ms. Johnson must have a filing cabinet stored in her head because she always knew where to find information and was very helpful. Ms. Vagner said it was important to compliment the secretarial team because they worked well together and were all a part of the administrative team. Ms. Hopper said good support was crucial to any team. Chair Gebhardt recessed the meeting at 6:44 p.m. and reconvened at 6:50 p.m.

Ms. Hopper asked the group to identify any potential weaknesses. She said if weaknesses were identified in advance they could be turned into strengths. Ms. Gebhardt, Ms. Cranor and Mr. Vitale agreed that the Board could do better with Principle #13: "Board members will keep abreast of educational trends, research, and best practices through individual study, and participate in programs which provide educational information". Ms. Gebhardt said the District was in the process of implementing the Common Core and wondered if the Board should be more aware of national trends around the Common Core. Ms. Vagner said the Board could be more informed about student response, teacher and principal experiences, and asking to see examples of implementation during the monthly school visits. She said she could build a Common Core progress report into the Work Session agenda. Ms. Cranor said it would be nice to get important highlights from some of the national news stories. Ms. Gebhardt said one of the Resolutions for the ISBA to consider was to leave decision making at the local level which made her wonder what was happening at the federal level. Ms. Cranor said it was also helpful to see what schools were doing in other places and not just the state of Idaho. Mr. Mattson said he needed to do a better job of communicating prior to a Board Meeting. Ms. Gebhardt said as a Board member gained experience it became easier to ask questions. Ms. Cranor said she found it helpful to call a Cabinet member with questions prior to Board Meetings which usually eliminated the need to bring an issue up during the meeting. Mr. Smart said by asking questions prior to the Board Meeting it helped the presenter not get caught off guard. Ms. Vagner said if she felt one of the team was being put on the spot she usually intervened and told the Board member that the administration would get back to them. She said the Cabinet and the Board were good about avoiding surprises or putting people on the spot. She said she called new Board members prior to meetings to see if they had any questions about the agenda. She said it was helpful to the administration to be prepared to answer questions during the presentation. Ms. Hopper asked if there were any questions or concerns with the format or receiving information for Board Meetings. Mr. Vitale said he thought the Board received agenda materials in plenty of time to be prepared for meetings. Ms. Vagner reviewed the dress code for meetings. She said the Board attended a variety of meetings and events with different dress expectations. Ms. Hopper said it was a good practice to dress up if a member was attending a meeting as a representative of the Board. Ms. Vagner said Work Sessions tended to be more casual than the Regular Board Meeting. She said school visits were also more casual and public events tended to be dressy. Ms. Cranor asked what the guidelines for being a silent observer were during Committee Meetings. Ms. Vagner said it usually depended on the purpose of the committee. She said when the District convened the Boundary Committee the Board members' role on the committee was as a silent observer to allow the committee to do its work while being informed about the process. Ms. Gebhardt said there were many times during the Curriculum Committee that she knew a specific topic should be handled by the instructional members compared to other times when she felt it was important to voice her opinion. Ms. Cranor said a lot of times on various committees, community or staff members would suggest solutions that were not feasible. Ms. Gebhardt said there were other committees like Judge Murray's Committee that it was important to speak up and communicate the needs of the District or what was working well. Ms. Vagner said Key Communicators was another committee that was a good one for active participation. She said sometimes just having a Board member present made an impact on the community. Ms. Hopper asked Board members if they felt confident about walking the talk and getting the word out to the community. Mr. Mattson said it would be helpful if there were a couple of bullet points or highlights that members could refer to when communicating with patrons. Ms. Cranor said the Board encouraged public comment during its meetings. She said Ms. Gebhardt did a good job reviewing the process for public comment and Ms. Vagner or Ms. Allen informed patrons that they needed to fill out the form requesting to speak and explained that the Board would not engage in dialogue. Ms. Gebhardt said if a response was necessary the Board or administration usually told the patron that someone would follow up with them after the meeting. Ms. Cranor said a lot of people believed that the Board was not listening when there was no response to their comment or question so it was important to explain beforehand that the Board was unable to engage in dialogue. Ms. Vagner said this Board was one of the few that allowed two opportunities for public comment on its agenda. She said if a person wanted to comment on an agenda item they had to stay through the whole meeting and hear the presentation on the topic before commenting. Ms. Hopper asked how the Board kept children in mind when making decisions. Ms. Gebhardt said the Board had been vigilant about student

discipline and the number of expulsions had decreased over the last few years because of the increased expectations. Ms. Hopper said teachers helped make the Board's work possible. She said she was worried but hopeful about teachers. She said with the implementation of the Common Core there would be test results out in the community that most people would not understand. She said most people would think that teachers were not teaching children. She said the Board's role would be to educate the public so teachers would not be criticized. Ms. Vagner said the Board just passed an Emergency Levy to help support the implementation of the Common Core and would purchase more laptops at the secondary. She said the Board would be involved in the CIP process which would involve a redirection of money because for the last three years CIP money had been directed to the New Horizon Center and Alameda Middle School projects. She said all of the CIP money would now be able to be used for improvements to existing buildings that had been delayed for the last three years. Ms. Cranor said the Board gradually increased the Supplemental Levy and she was hearing from some of the community that they had given enough and the increased levy should have been enough to support the District's needs. She said Districts needed relief from the state but until that happened the Board needed to communicate that this was an ongoing process. Ms. Gebhardt said the Board kept trying to boost the District's resources but were never able to catch up. She said School Boards needed to start asking how they were holding the state accountable and hold the legislators' feet to the fire. Ms. Cranor said the legislature had put the money raising process on School Boards and the School Boards kept raising the money which was perpetuating the problem. She said at some point the School Boards had to say they were not going to raise the money anymore and that the legislature had to do its job. She said it was not right for the burden to fall on School Boards when it was the legislature's job to fund education. Ms. Hopper said years ago a Trustee did not have to be educated in the political process but that was no longer the case. She said School Boards were very involved in the legislative process and their voices were crucial in decisions that were coming down the pike. Ms. Cranor said right now there was too much give and take with the ISBA and the legislature and at some point the ISBA had to stand up and not compromise. Mr. Vitale said it was important for Trustees to encourage patrons to take an active role in the legislative process and act on decisions being made. Ms. Cranor said part of the challenge in Idaho was the smaller rural Districts that had a completely different perspective on what should be happening. She said School Districts needs were so different across the state.

### **Brainstorm Challenges for 2013-14 through 2016-17**

Ms. Hopper asked the Board what some of the challenges were for the next several years. Mr. Wegner said the Board was already aware of a couple of the challenges it was facing with the implementation of ICS and SBAC and the resources that were needed to support the implementation. Mr. Devine said it was always a challenge for the Board to communicate to the community that it was part of the process and solution. Mr. Mattson said communication was critical. Ms. Gebhardt said communication was a challenge. She said the Board communicated through articles in the newspaper but not everyone read the newspaper. Ms. Vagner said another challenge that School Districts were facing was living in a more violent society. She said kids were seeing and learning violence from an early age and the opposite was expected of them at school. Dr. Mortensen said the special education population grew by 80 students this year. She said the support required for that kind of increase would be a challenge. Ms. Vagner said the District's autistic population had increased significantly and it took a lot of resources to support those students. She said another challenge for the District was its ability to hire qualified people. She said Districts could not hope for salary increases and would have to find other ways to attract qualified candidates. She said the District had several PTE positions open but there was not enough incentive for a qualified person to come from the private sector to teach students for such a decrease in pay. Dr. Mortensen said there seemed to be a decline in respect for educators in general, especially from the state and fewer people were going into the profession. Ms. Vagner said Districts would continue to see the erosion of public schools and the advancement of private education. Mr. Hobbs said the District had over 40 students returning from online schools and most were so far behind that the District was forced to place them in an alternative setting until they could catch up on credits. Ms. Hopper said asked the group to describe in one word what was exciting about the coming year now that some of the challenges had been outlined. She said it was important for educators to stay connected to their passion. She said the School Board she used to serve on used to tell teachers to eat lunch with the students, or play with them on the playground in order to reconnect to their passion. Ms. Gebhardt said one of her favorite sayings was "He who says it can't be done is often interrupted by someone doing it." Dr. Mortensen said one word that summed up excitement for the coming year was "possibilities". She said the District had focused on making it possible for the last several years and had come a long way, piece by piece with pressure relentlessly applied. She said educators were who they were because they were learners. Mr. Wegner said one word to sum up the coming year for him was perseverance which had been

his mantra this year. He said the District implemented the Virtues program and during one of the first professional development days he shared the Virtue “perseverance” with the teachers to remind them that they would be faced with challenges but would need to learn to ride the waves and keep moving forward. He said it led to the District’s theme for the current school year which was “Making it possible, one step at a time”. Mr. Mattson said he was glad to be a part of this team and to help fight the good fight.

### **Conduct Board Self-Evaluation**

Ms. Hopper reviewed the Board’s Self-Evaluation form. She asked how the Board felt it was doing with Section A. Ms. Gebhardt said the area she marked the lowest was the relationship with the PTA. Ms. Cranor said she agreed. She said it would be good for the Board to be more aware of what was going on with parent groups. She said the parent groups were doing a lot of good things and it would be good for the Board to be aware. Ms. Gebhardt said some of the parent groups that were the more effective right now were the ones organized by the CRWs. She said Board members could find out when those groups were meeting and attend. Ms. Cranor said she was concerned that the local PTA groups were not connecting with the Board at all. Mr. Vitale said he didn’t know how strong the PTA groups were anymore. Ms. Cranor said the PTA was still fairly strong at the elementary level. Ms. Hopper said she had heard there was a general decline of active PTAs across the state. Ms. Vagner said one regular interaction the District had with parents and the community was through the Key Communicators group. Ms. Cranor said Ms. Vagner did an excellent job of providing leadership to the community in helping education with all of the events she contributed to and it was very visible. Ms. Vagner said she expected each administrator to have at least one community connection. She said Ms. Allen tracked their participation and the list would be provided to the Board at the next Regular Board Meeting. Ms. Cranor asked if Board members were supposed to attend Chamber of Commerce events. Ms. Vagner said the District was represented through herself and Ms. Allen but Board members were more than welcome to attend Business After Hours events or trainings offered through the Chamber. Ms. Hopper asked where the Board thought it stood on Section B. Ms. Cranor said her lowest score was on #2. She said she thought the Board could do more to involve students and the community. Ms. Vagner said students were involved when there were policy changes that affected them. She said changes were developed with teacher input and at the grass roots level before any proposal was brought to the Board. Ms. Hopper asked what areas the Board thought it was doing well. Ms. Gebhardt said there was a constant need to stay abreast of legislative changes and current practices and the Board did a great job of staying informed and keeping its policies up to date. Ms. Vagner said the administration recently learned of two State Board rule changes that would affect Districts. She said one of them was that the state had mandated one of three options for administrator evaluations, and the other was that the state had set levels of proficiency for passing the PSAT as a viable alternate route to graduation and the District had to revise its plan in order to stay compliant. She said the District did not learn that this year’s sophomores that did not pass the ISAT in their freshman year would have to take the alternate route until after they had already taken the test. Mr. Facer asked if a student had good grades but never passed the ISAT if they could graduate. Ms. Vagner said not without completing an alternate route. She suggested that Mr. Facer ask to see a PLATO course during his next school visit. Ms. Hopper asked the Board about Section C. The Board agreed that all areas were strong. Ms. Cranor said overall the schools in the District all had good Star Ratings. She said Century High School was recognized as one of the most challenging schools in the nation and Gate City, Jefferson and Tyhee Elementary Schools all received major awards over the last two years which were indicative of the successes across the District. She said all of the schools had impressive programs. Ms. Gebhardt said Jefferson and Tyhee Elementary were still doing very well but because they did not have enough growth from one year to the next, Star Ratings were lowered. Ms. Cranor said there were real flaws with the system but overall the District had done very well. Ms. Gebhardt said the Star Ratings were very reflective of the socioeconomic status in the schools. She said she did not want to minimize the accomplishments of any of the schools but the system shouldn’t be set up to only award schools with a better socioeconomic status. Ms. Hopper asked about Section D. Ms. Cranor said her only comment was that it was getting harder and harder to compete with private businesses and other states. She said the District was seeing more teachers retire or not come into the profession because the work was getting harder and the pay was less. Ms. Gebhardt said year after year the District’s finance department received prestigious awards for accurate and transparent accounting processes. She said she applauded the District’s Business Operations department for keeping the District out of the predicament that some other Districts were in due to poor accounting processes. Mr. Vitale said another thing to compliment the District on was the opening of a 4<sup>th</sup> middle school during extremely challenging financial times. Ms. Hopper asked about Section E. Ms. Gebhardt said she commented that #4 could be improved as funds allowed. She said the District’s staff, particularly coaches were more aware of policies than ever before. She said she thought the Board was doing #2 and #3 very well. Ms. Vagner said the

District was in its second year of intensive policy review. She said the list was more comprehensive the year before because there was a need to ensure that employees were aware of all of the District's policies and were responsible to sign off that they understood. She said the administration only had to write letters to a few employees stating that they had not finished the policy review and the letter would be kept in their personnel files. Ms. Hopper said Board policy was the backbone of the District and was crucial for staff to know what those were. She asked about Section F. Ms. Gebhardt said she did not see any conflict and a great deal of that was due to the level of respect and communication. Ms. Hopper asked if the protocol for dealing with conflict had been outlined. She said most of the time people did not think a policy was necessary until they were in the middle of dealing with conflict. Ms. Vagner said the Board's process for managing conflict with the Superintendent was to refer to its evaluation process or by communicating with the Board Chair. Ms. Hopper said most Boards only conducted the Superintendent's evaluation annually and it was important to have a process in place so issues were not saved up over the whole year until the evaluation. Mr. Vitale said there should be an opportunity to review the evaluation prior to the annually scheduled time if necessary. Ms. Gebhardt said the Board conducted a mini-evaluation mid-year. Ms. Cranor said it would be good to have a process in place if there was a serious conflict that occurred. Ms. Hopper asked about Section G. Ms. Cranor said she wasn't sure the Board actively encouraged the public to attend. Ms. Hopper asked about Section H. Ms. Gebhardt said she marked #2 with a lower score. She said the District worked with local legislators but could improve its involvement at the federal level. Ms. Hopper said one of her goals at the ISBA was to improve communication and information at the federal level. Ms. Cranor complimented Ms. Vagner on #3 because she regularly communicated with the local legislators. Ms. Gebhardt said she had noticed that the legislative delegation had become more empathetic. Ms. Vagner said she recently met with Senator Guthrie and reviewed the Governor's Task Force recommendations for over an hour and a half. She said he had definitely become more receptive to the District's concerns.

#### **Discussion of the Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent and Continued Growth as an Effective Leadership Team**

Ms. Hopper said the topic was addressed during the Board's Self-Evaluation.

#### **Is There Evidence that the Board's Work Meets the Indicators set Forth in the Draft Idaho School Board Standards?**

Ms. Hopper asked if the Board believed the indicators outlined in the ISBA Standards were addressed. Ms. Cranor said she believed the Board did all of those things very well. Ms. Hopper asked if there were any components missing that could be added for others. Ms. Cranor said she believed one of the biggest problems for other School Boards was that they only met once a month. She said it was critical to be involved in what was going on at the District and school level. Ms. Gebhardt said some School Boards did not understand the Open Meeting Law. Ms. Hopper said Open Meeting Law and fiscal accountability were the most difficult areas for most School Boards. Ms. Gebhardt agreed that understanding education finance was very difficult and was not comparable to a household checkbook. Ms. Cranor said she encouraged people that had questions about the District's budget to review the annual budget report that was posted on the District's website.

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

Ms. Vagner said the Board would approve the Beliefs selected for 2013-14, the benchmarking of Beliefs from 2012-13, affirm its Operating Principles and adopt the talking points for Board members to utilize when addressing the public. Ms. Cranor asked about the relationship with the PTA. Ms. Vagner said she would contact the PTA president and arrange a presentation for the Board. She said she would follow up with legal counsel on conflict protocol. Ms. Gebhardt reminded the Board to make sure that the Region 5 ISBA Meeting was on their calendars for October 10<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Gebhardt, Ms. Cranor, Mr. Facer and Mr. Mattson said they would attend. She said the ISBA Executive Board reviewed the proposed Resolutions and had a do not pass recommendation on three of them. She said one of the Resolutions with a do not pass recommendation was a Resolution to offer POST training for School Board members. She said POST training was the same training that police officers underwent to handle combat situations. She said the training was lengthy and cost prohibitive. She said she did not believe it was the School Boards or the legislators place to mandate any kind of weapons training. Mr. Facer said some Districts were letting teachers carry guns but people needed to realize that they needed to be able to live with the consequences of possibly having to use a weapon. Ms. Cranor said School Districts needed to practice their safety plans and be prepared. Ms. Vagner thanked Ms. Hopper for facilitating the meeting. She said the items for follow up would be included in the October 8, 2013 Work Session packet for further discussion and for action at the October 15, 2013 Regular Board Meeting.

**Adjourn**

Chair Gebhardt adjourned the Special Meeting/Work Session/Retreat at 8:39 p.m.

**APPROVED ON:**

19 November 2013

**BY:**

Janie Gebhardt  
Chair

**MINUTES PREPARED BY:**

[Signature]  
Secretary, Board of Trustees

**ATTESTED BY:**

[Signature]  
Clerk