

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING/WORK SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF A MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS

**Board Room at the Education Center
Monday, December 05, 2011
4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

BOARD MEMBERS/SUPERINTENDENT PRESENT:

Frank Rash, Chair
John Sargent, Vice Chair
Jackie Cranor, Clerk

Janie Gebhardt, Member
Nate Murphy, Member
Mary M. Vagner, Superintendent

OTHERS PRESENT:

Elaine Smith; Jim Guthrie; Maggie Calica; Teena Marley; Emily Smith; Luan Claussen; Debra Erlandson; Kris Wilkinson; Bart Reed; Doug Howell; Carl Smart; Bob Devine; Patti Mortensen; Kevin Weiche; Kent Hobbs; Chuck Wegner

Welcome and statement of purpose

Chair Rash welcomed everyone at 4:37 p.m. and said the purpose of the Special Meeting/Work Session was a discussion with local Legislators.

Preparation to Implement Common Core State Standards and SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

Ms. Vagner said Districts should be focused on the instructional program and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) but were instead focused on the Students Come First legislation. She said the Pocatello/Chubbuck School District is narrowing the achievement gap. She said student achievement for the District's ethnic groups and special education population had steadily increased over the last five years in math and reading. She said graduation rates had increased by 10% over the last five years through intentional partnership with local law enforcement, probation/parole and the court. She said the CCSS were being implemented by 40 states in the nation and they outlined the knowledge and skills students should have to be college and career ready. She said the CCSS content was more rigorous with a focus on higher level thinking skills. She said as an example what students used to be taught in 3rd grade may now be taught in 2nd grade. She said the skills identified in CCSS were benchmarked against top rated countries in the world. She said professional development was being done locally. She said the District would be prepared for full CCSS implementation in the 2013-14 school year. She said eventually 30 states would use the same assessments through the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium and Idaho students would be ranked and rated against those other states. She reviewed the English/Language Arts in CCSS which included key ideas and details; craft and structure; integration of knowledge and idea; range of reading and level of text complexity. She said each area was stretched over every grade level and the District was doing that through TIA. She said 486 teachers participated in the TIA summer conference this year. She said currently it was up to Districts to figure out what all of this will mean and where the focus should be as there was no direction from the state. She said reading and writing levels would be increased. She said understanding language arts and reading was critical to science, social studies, professional technical education and the changes to math and problem solving. She said math would have greater reasoning with abstract and quantitative thinking; students will need to be able to verbalize and critique the reasoning of others. She said the state needed to focus on getting ready to implement CCSS professionally and financially. She said the attention of the legislature should be on the implementation of CCSS but was focused on implementing SCF. She said salary apportionment was cut by \$14 million, \$35 million, \$55 million, \$57 million, \$55 million and then \$50 million every year from 2017 on. She said ADA was drastically reduced and protection was eliminated which altogether totaled \$74 million less unless the legislature did something to change it. She said SCF was set up to replace staff with laptops without any funding for a wireless infrastructure. She said some money had been allocated for laptop repairs and nothing for the implementation of CCSS or the SMARTER Balanced Assessments. She said the administration was preparing to submit its technology plan to the State Department of Education and Districts were given two months to develop the plan. She said the top quartile of teachers in the state would qualify for a pay for performance bonus which would be paid as a one-time stipend.

She said Districts could choose a local measure and the administration was working to determine what a reasonable measure would be and how it would be defined. She said certificated staff such as psychologists serviced more than one school. She said a school psychologist would have an equal share at every school that applied to them and would receive a percentage of any of those schools that qualified for pay for performance. She said pay for performance and other SCF initiatives had caused a lot of new work. She said the legislation cut the District's budget by 1.67% the first year, 4.05% the next, then 6.3% and finally 6.42%. She said the cuts would force the District to understaff. She said the legislation included a provision that allowed Districts to understaff by 7% this year, 9% the next year and finally at 11%. She said an 11% staff reduction equaled over 70 teachers for the District. She said all this is being done while rigor is being increased in all core content areas. She said the District was focused on the implementation of CCSS and the new SMARTER Balanced Assessments but had to refocus and spend time figuring out how to make pay for performance work for the District. She said District office staff were treated differently with pay for performance with 5% of their income tied to student achievement the first year, then 10% and finally 15%. She said this would negatively affect District level employees and the state could be left without them. She said another area the District had to spend time on was the sending and receiving of personnel files. She said the District sent over 7,000 letters to parents requesting input on their student's teachers and only received input from 22%. She said a lot of time was spent notifying every employee of their option for additional liability insurance and gathering proof of notification. She said the administration was currently in the process of working out what the technology piece will look like and had not even begun to look at asynchronous courses. She said the administration had considered a blended approach but the administration's definition of "blended" was different from the state's.

Relationship Between Students Come First Legislation and Common Core State Standards

Human Resources

Dr. Howell started with Pay for Performance. He said the biggest challenge would be explaining pay for performance to the staff. He said there was an inequity that existed. He said administrative staff would have two shares, one based on the state measure and the other on the local measure. He said pay for performance seemed to penalize District office staff rather than incentivizing them. He said their pay may be reduced if student achievement was not met. He said classified staff was not included in pay for performance. He said hard to fill positions would be determined by the state. He said everything the District had worked to build with its PLCs would be torn down as people compete for leadership opportunities. He said another challenge with the personnel file requirement was other states not responding to District's many requests for personnel files or being charged a processing fee for them. He said this requirement puts in-state applicants at a disadvantage. He said it was a double detriment for the District to attract and retain quality teachers. He said teachers were already leaving to pursue other interests or to get a higher paying teaching job out of state. He said it negatively impacted recruiting and retention. He said the administration created a Students Come First Committee and started with pay for performance over the summer. He said the next area the committee focused on was parent input "as a consideration" in teacher evaluations. He said the committee developed a model that was fair and equitable but some parents thought it was not thorough or comprehensive enough. He said the administration communicated that parents were providing input, not conducting an evaluation. He said the three areas of focus for the committee were parent input, the Danielson's model and student achievement. He said the District was so focused on the implementation of Students Come First that focus on the classroom had been lost. He said he did not want the District to lose focus on what makes classroom instruction the most effective.

Instructional

Mr. Wegner said teachers were supposed to receive mobile computing devices next year and then high school students the following year but so far the state had no timeline for installing a wireless infrastructure which was supposed to be completed by the IEN. He said we could potentially have hundreds of mobile computing devices in the schools with no infrastructure to support them. He said the state directed Districts to complete a technology plan and submit it by January. He said it was short notice to complete a comprehensive technology plan and do a good job. He said the District was more prepared than others already having a technology implementation timeline in preparation for the CCSS. He said the state touted the success of Oregon and Maine for their integration of technology into the classroom, but failed to mention that neither state replaced teachers with technology and in fact stated the integration would have been unsuccessful without qualified teachers to implement the technology.

Budget

Mr. Reed said before the implementation of SB1184 the School District was staffed at the state allowance, meaning the District kept staffing levels to the number it was funded for. He said many Districts overstaffed beyond funding. He said the District had fewer administrators than what the state allowed. He said implementation of the SCF legislation reduced salary apportionment by 1.67%. He said the District had over 200 new students enroll this year and did not hire teachers to meet this number. He said in the past the District would have hired 8 staff members to meet that need and was unable to hire even one this year. He said it was not an easy task to balance the budget and balancing the 2013 budget would be even more difficult. He said next year staff would be reduced at 4.05% on top of the loss of the Education Jobs Act money. He said another charter school would come on board in 2013 which would reduce the District's enrollment by another 300 children which equaled \$1 million so overall the District would be faced with a \$3.3 million reduction.

Employee Services

Mr. Smart said salary apportionment applied to all employee groups. He said money had been taken from all employee salaries to fund pay for performance but not all employees could participate. He said a Supplemental Levy was not a viable source of income. He said liability insurance notification letters went to every employee and not one person in the state bought additional insurance. He said another challenge over the past year was how to report student attendance in Infinite Campus. He said there were parents that wanted to take advantage of opportunities provided by the District without attending the minimum time required by the state for Districts to receive ADA. He said there currently is no mechanism for partial ADA. He said there was no way to divide ADA other than half day or full day. He said the District would have to identify the part time students in order to keep track of who to bill for the ADA. He said the District's attendance policies had been updated to address some of the issues. He said the state does not expect the Districts to offer its services free of charge.

Current Other Impacts

Ms. Vagner said the state had no plans to improve the teacher salary schedule for the next 5 years. She said the District was facing massive reductions in salary and apportionment with no improvement to base salary. She said the law allows for a 9% reduction in staffing levels while implementing new requirements. She said the District had cut over \$10 million dollars out of the budget over a three year period and had cut every non-personnel line item possible on top of substantial personnel cuts. She said the workload of many had fallen onto the shoulders of a few with no additional support. She asked the legislators to consider changes to SCF and to keep in mind depleted staff shouldering all the new requirements of SCF and the implementation of the CCSS and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium.

Where are the resources coming from to support Common Core and SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium implementation, Schoolnet, ISEE

Mr. Smart said ISEE was a disaster last year and the state eventually gave up on resolving inaccurate unit data. He said other Districts still had not been able to submit data without errors, which was a credit to this District's staff. He said a considerable amount of employee hours had gone into making sure the data was accurate and submitted on time. Mr. Wegner said this side of the state had yet to see any presentation on Schoolnet. Ms. Vagner said the administration knew that Schoolnet was the state's longitudinal data system and Regions 5 & 6 had not had a presentation yet and grants were available only for a certain number of Districts in the state to connect to Schoolnet for two years with no plans to support the system after that. She said the state kept saying it was free but the administration has been unable to access any data up to this point. Ms. Vagner asked the legislators what their thoughts were as to how the CCSS and new assessments would be funded. Representative Jim Guthrie said he was not on the Education Committee and had not heard any discussions regarding funding for CCSS or the new assessments. He said he was concerned the administration didn't have anything positive to say about any of the legislation and did not feel this would help facilitate any changes. He said if the administration could offer any specific areas where the legislation could be tweaked or changed it would be helpful but being defensive was not. He said part of what was driving the changes was the economy. He said Medicaid was taking cuts, bridges and roads were taking cuts and the fact was education and Medicare take up the largest portion of the state's budget and the legislature needed to consider the changing educational environment.

How will school districts manage the mobile computing devices with less staff and the asynchronous online course

Mr. Wegner said the state reduced the number of online courses required from 8 to 2 one of which must be asynchronous. He said the average failure rate of asynchronous online courses was 20% or greater and students had to fail the course before remediation which was a waste of instructional time. He said there were many logistical questions left to be answered such as who would monitor students taking asynchronous online courses as teachers could not be present. He said the second online course could be blended which traditionally is defined as face to face in conjunction with online delivery. He said the state defined “blended” as having the instructor off campus rather than face to face, which was not a best practice.

Will districts be forced to add more online courses because of the loss of staff due to on-going reduction in salary and benefit apportionment

Ms. Vagner said another thing to consider is the expenditure of resources. She said District’s discretionary dollars were earmarked by the state and historically had not been sustained by the state. She said there was a pattern of non-sustainable initiatives implemented by the state including technology money, supply cards for teachers, textbooks and money for ISAT remediation none of which the state could sustain. She said Districts had to ask if this was another redirecting of funds that would not be sustained by the legislature. She said one important question was whether or not students would be forced to take eight online courses due to the state not backfilling the dollar amount cut from teacher salaries.

Impacts of Changes with Respect to School Improvement

Mr. Wegner said the District did not know whether or not it would be held accountable to AYP or to a new growth model. He said in the mean time any school in the process of restructuring had to develop and monitor a restructuring plan and complete a supplemental plan. He said all of the work would likely to go by the wayside once the state filed for the ESEA waiver and schools were caught between two systems.

Elimination of Charter School Cap/Funding for Charter School Buildings and Loss of Protection

Dr. Mortensen said a new charter school would be opening which was reviewed by the School Board in the spring. She said the Board did not approve the petition due to several areas of the petition having a very weak accountability plan as well as the burden to the District for the oversight of another charter school. She said the administration anticipated the Charter School Commission would approve the petition in December. She said there had been a total of 45 charters approved since 1999, 30 of which were approved by the State Charter School Commission. She said only one had been approved by this District due to the amount of time and effort required to manage a charter school while facing further staff reductions. She said five charters had been revoked and only one of those was by the commission. She said the State Charter School Commission was working to lift the cap on charters. She said if the state lifted the cap there would have to be additional oversight established. She said the State Charter School Commission had identified nine charter schools with deficiencies including financial discrepancies and hiring under-qualified staff. She cautioned the legislature to carefully consider lifting the cap without proper oversight of charters.

Future of pre-K-12 Public Education in Idaho

Ms. Vagner said some of the big questions that remained to be answered included: the future of education, funding and greater scarcity with the expectation of increased rigor. She said the District preferred that rigor be the only attention but knew that was not possible with such dramatic statutory changes. She said another question relative to the SCF legislation was whether or not there would be a reversal of the legislation or more statutory changes as Districts attempt to focus on the implementation of the CCSS. She said the technological changes were a massive undertaking without funding or professional development for implementation. She asked if the state would utilize local businesses or if it would contract with out of state vendors. She said children need teachers. She said teachers develop the social emotional and academic components of a child. She said they build brains, they build relationships. She said children learned social skills at home but many children did not have a home that provided the social skills needed to succeed. She said public education leveled the playing field. She said the District was hopeful that the legislature would not do anything to change the PERSI system which supported the District’s retirees. She said professional educators are hopeful that no changes will be made to retirement benefits.

ISBA Resolutions

Ms. Vagner said legislation removed protection after the current school year, so the first resolution was to maintain protection. She said the next resolution was to allow Districts to reemploy retired teachers without having to offer benefits. She said the District requested the legislation be permanent. She said the next Resolution supported the addition of another election date in February or April including March and August. She said the next was to restore funding lost in SB1108, 1110 and 1184. She said the next was to identify an ongoing revenue source to fund Pay for Performance. She said the next was to eliminate the requirement for Districts to offer and track liability insurance. She said the next was to eliminate the tracking of personnel files. She said if the law could be amended to provide information to another District on a single sheet identifying any performance issues rather than copying the entire file, having to remove other names and spend time reading, it would provide the same information in a more efficient manner. She said the next Resolution was to remove the asynchronous requirement from the two online courses and to amend the definition of the blended model to include an onsite teacher rather than requiring them to teach from another site.

Communication with Legislative Delegation throughout the Session

Ms. Vagner said the District had representation through the Chamber of Commerce. She said the administration was readily available to legislators and hoped legislators would make themselves available as well through emails or phone calls. She said the administration was there to provide whatever information the legislature needed in order to make decisions. She said Senator Malepeai sat on the Education Committee but others legislators also made long term decisions that affect education.

Trustee/Legislators' Comments

Mr. Rash said the Board of Trustees would appreciate the legislators taking the Resolutions to their colleagues. Mr. Guthrie said changes, if changes were to happen, should happen now. He asked if there were resolutions drafted that could be given to someone to introduce changes. He said if the District's intent was to overturn the legislation it would limit the opportunity for changes. He said if the intent was to offer suggestions to improve the SCF legislation it would improve the chances of changes taking place. He said some of the changes suggested in the Resolutions made sense to him. Ms. Vagner said the administration would contact the ISBA to see if anyone was lined up to introduce a bill draft. She said the District had offered improvement to pay for performance, online courses, personnel files and liability insurance. Ms. Vagner said fractional ADA had to be addressed by the legislature in order for School Districts to move forward productively. Ms. Cranor said the intent was to inform legislators of the frustration Districts were feeling across the state at the level of drastic cuts and mandated initiatives while requiring School Boards to do the dirty work of laying teachers off. She said if the legislature would consider changing some of the technology requirements and let School Boards manage the budget at the local level it would be helpful. She said the technology component was not a bad thing as long as it was not implemented at the expense of teachers. She said if the legislature would offer some flexibility as to how funds were spent Districts could plan for technology, teachers and CCSS. She said Districts had already made massive cuts because of the state of the economy and were now being forced to implement technology in the wake of these drastic cuts. Mr. Devine said the online courses were reduced from 8 to 2 so the need for every single grade to have a mobile computing device could be reduced which could free up a lot of the money to be redirected towards other needs but the loss in resources had not been backfilled. Representative Elaine Smith said she was hearing the frustration is how legislators dealt with the SCF legislation. She noted that no one had brought up the referendums. Ms. Gebhardt said the referendums did not help Districts when School Boards had to make decisions about the budget right now. Mr. Sargent said his frustration as a Trustee was not having any ability to run the District the appropriate way, at the local level. He said in all actuality School Boards had control of only about 10% of the budget which came from local funding. He said it was very frustrating to have someone in Boise telling the Board how to run things when they don't have any idea how it needs to be done on an individual basis. He said he agreed with certain aspects of implementing technology and had children taking college courses online, but being told what to spend and how it had to be spent without any say in the matter was frustrating. Ms. Cranor said the state made these mandates without funding or sustaining funding and eventually it becomes impossible to continue. She said the state should not direct the mandates if it did not want to fund them. She said if it was that important then the state needed to find a way to fund it. She said at some point there is only so much that could be done without funding and there had to be some compromise.

Summarize

Ms. Vagner said the District appreciated the legislators attending the meeting and hoped they would inform their colleagues of some of the concerns and proposed changes. She thanked them for their dedication and support of education. She said the District was proud to deliver a public school system that improves the lives of children. Mr. Rash said he hoped the legislators took away the more salient points.

Adjourn

Chair Rash adjourned the Special Meeting/Work Session at 6:40 p.m.

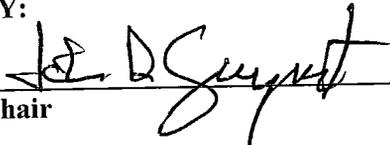
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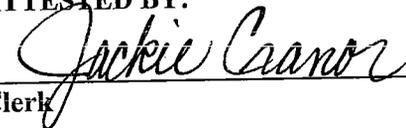
MINUTES PREPARED BY:


Secretary, Board of Trustees

BY:


Chair

ATTESTED BY:


Clerk