

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

**Board Room at the Education Center
Tuesday, October 6, 2015
4:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

BOARD MEMBERS/SUPERINTENDENT PRESENT:

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

Dave Mattson, Assistant Treasurer
Jacob Gertsch, Member
Douglas Howell, Interim Superintendent

OTHERS PRESENT: Bryan Matsuoka; Lori Craney; Jan Harwood; Dave Miner; Bart Reed; Carl Smart; Susan Pettit; Shelley Allen; Kent Hobbs; Chuck Orr; Renae Johnson

Welcome and Statement of Purpose

Ms. Gebhardt called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m. She welcomed everyone and said the purpose of the meeting was for the Board to hold the annual retreat, review the Vision, Mission and Learner Goals, Operating Principles and to conduct its self-evaluation. She introduced Bryan Matsuoka from the ISBA and turned the meeting over to him. Cabinet introduced themselves. Mr. Matsuoka said he was an elementary and middle school teacher for years in the Meridian School District. He said he had been on the Twin Falls School Board since 1998 in various capacities and embraced the opportunity to be a Trustee. He said he recently became a facilitator for the ISBA and learned a lot more about how school districts operated.

Warm Up Activity

Mr. Matsuoka asked the group to discuss the issues and challenges that were facing the district. Ms. Gebhardt said the controversy surrounding the common core continued to be a challenge across the state. She said another concern was the challenge that some districts were having with electing board members that didn't have personal agendas. She said some trustees came onto a board with personal agendas and business interests. Mr. Matsuoka said a lot of districts were struggling to fill vacancies on the board. Ms. Gebhardt said it seemed like most people were not aware of the timeline or process. Ms. Cranor said a lot of people were not willing to deal with the turmoil in education. Ms. Gebhardt said funding was always a challenge, along with staffing shortages. Mr. Matsuoka said the Twin Falls School District had to fill quite a few teaching positions with paraprofessionals. Ms. Cranor said there were still some concerns in the community relative to trimesters versus semesters. Mr. Reed said another challenge for the district was the increasing number of charter schools in the community. He said the district had a sizeable loss in student enrollment due to charter schools. Mr. Matsuoka asked how the district could cooperate with charter schools to create the best opportunity for all students. Ms. Gebhardt said it became a little competitive and was especially difficult when a charter school refused to serve challenging children. Ms. Cranor said the way that the state funded charter schools compared to traditional public school was not equitable. Ms. Harwood said the charter school did not serve free or reduced lunch, or provide transportation, so families who could not afford to pay for lunch, or provide their own transportation were automatically excluded. She said the charter wouldn't accept students that came after the start of school, but school districts were not able to do the same thing. She said the inequity created some tension. Ms. Allen said another potential challenge was the fact that the legislature may not continue to fully fund the Career Ladder. She said it was already difficult for districts to fill positions and staff had been very patient with the lack of funding for too long. She said if the legislature did not follow through it could cause some major problems. Ms. Gebhardt said she felt bad for the staff members that were responsible for figuring out how to implement the career ladder, pay for performance and leadership premiums. She said it caused a lot of extra work without any compensation.

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

Mr. Matsuoka asked if the Vision, Mission, Beliefs and Learner Goals and Board Strategic Goals met the needs of the board. The board agreed that the vision and mission statement still met their needs. Mr. Matsuoka reviewed the draft Actualization of Beliefs for 2014-15. Ms. Gebhardt said respectful environments was actualized through the recognition and celebration of student successes. Ms. Cranor said she heard so many great stories during her school visits and thought there had to be a better way to get the word out about the successes that schools were

seeing. Ms. Gebhardt said the community was good about recognizing scholar athletes, but not necessarily academic scholarships. Ms. Harwood said it was hard to get the word out when the Journal wouldn't run academic success stories. She said the 5A football championship made the paper, but not the national speech and debate championship. Mr. Reed said the district couldn't control what was published in the paper, but could bring those stories to board meetings. Ms. Cranor said the board recognized former students for going on to be successful and asked for that to be added to the list for actualization. Ms. Gebhardt said there were stories in the ISBA newsletter about former students going on to influence education across the state. Ms. Harwood said many of the administrators in the room were products of the district and were successful. Mr. Gertsch said he thought there needed to be a different way that the board could communicate the stories that were important to them to the community. He said the board should figure out a way to increase attendance at board meetings. Ms. Cranor said Ms. Allen did a great job of highlighting student and staff successes at meetings. Ms. Allen said the district had cautiously moved into utilizing social media to disseminate information. She said the district's Facebook page seemed like the best way to reach the greatest amount of people in the community. She said information and positive stories were regularly posted to the Facebook page. She said she was not sure how many people read the school related articles when the stories actually made it to the paper. Mr. Gertsch asked if the district had ever done a "Like us on Facebook" campaign. Ms. Allen said no, it had been a slow moving process. Mr. Gertsch said that a Facebook campaign really helped get his business off the ground. Ms. Allen said the administration had taken their time with promoting the Facebook page until it could get a handle on how to address some of the negative feedback. Mr. Gertsch said he understood how negativity on social media could become unmanageable. Ms. Harwood said most of the community did not have any idea about teacher achievements, student recognitions or any of the PTE programs or Advanced Opportunities available. Ms. Cranor said she recently heard someone talking about how their student was not being challenged in school, but had no idea that there were AP and dual enrollment courses available. Ms. Gebhardt said it was hard to communicate to all constituents. Ms. Allen said it was major challenge to figure out how to market the district with minimal funding. Ms. Gebhardt said the Idaho Transportation Department was able to run a successful campaign by applying for grants. She said the administration should look into applying for grants to help market the district. Ms. Cranor said she would like to add "marketing the district" to the board's New Stretch for 2015-16. Ms. Gebhardt suggested soliciting the help of the videography and graphic communications students to help market the district. Mr. Gertsch said that was a great idea since those students were so linked into social media. Ms. Gebhardt said the board had a hard time connecting with some of the parent groups. Mr. Matsuoka suggested involving students in school presentations to encourage parent participation. He said some districts held a parent celebration nights which always had good parent participation. He said involving high school parents was more of a challenge. Ms. Harwood said Highland High School held a back to school barbeque to encourage parent participation and was pretty well attended. She said elementary schools used Title I money for back to school nights to encourage participation. Ms. Craney said parent participation at the elementary schools was between 85% and 96%. Mr. Gertsch said he did not realize that the district had stopped holding parent teacher conferences at one point and was very excited that they were back and that he was able to attend the parent/teacher conference for his 6 year old. He said it was great to talk to his child's teacher and was time well spent. Ms. Harwood said the middle schools were using different approaches but were all having a positive impact on student success. Ms. Gebhardt said it was good to see the high schools creating a welcoming environment for students and parents. Ms. Cranor noted that the parent room at Pocatello High School had been very successful and thought it should be duplicated at every high school. Mr. Matsuoka asked cabinet if there was anything they could do to involve the board in their parent activity initiatives. Ms. Craney said the administration could provide a calendar of the parent/teacher conferences. Mr. Hobbs suggested holding a board meeting at one of the schools from time to time. Ms. Harwood said some patrons were disappointed to learn that board meetings were not interactive. Ms. Gebhardt said it could be difficult to explain that it was a meeting of the board held in public, and not a public meeting. Ms. Cranor said she had a hard time understanding that concept in the beginning. She said she did not like the thought that some people felt dismissed when the board did not respond during a meeting. Mr. Mattson said the administration did a great job responding to concerned parents and patrons during and after meetings. Ms. Allen said she had been able to intercept many concerns and resolve the issue before it ever reached the board. She said others were happy with five minutes to address the board and were followed up with after the meeting. She said she suggested last year that the board consider writing an editorial about board processes, meetings and how the board conducted its business. Mr. Gertsch said most people had no idea what board members do. He said he appreciated being able to attend the ISBA Leadership Institute and receive the new board member training or he would have never known how to respond to questions from friends and patrons. Ms. Allen said school boards were responsible for oversight and to set policy but the work happened through staff. Ms. Gebhardt said it could be daunting to keep up with the

provisions of Idaho Code that the board needed to be aware of. Mr. Matsuoka asked if the board wanted to choose new beliefs for 2015-16, or maintain the current beliefs. Mr. Vitale said the current beliefs still applied and he was okay with continuing to focus on those. Ms. Gebhardt agreed, but said the board could definitely expand on the new stretches. Ms. Cranor said the district did a good job involving parents on the standing committees and special committees for issues like boundary changes. Ms. Gebhardt said staff members were doing a good job benchmarking progress and school visits were enlightening. She said visiting classrooms was a good opportunity to see student and teacher achievements. Ms. Cranor suggested putting a comment box at each of the schools. Mr. Matsuoka asked how the board would use the comments. Mr. Gertsch said his concern with a comment box was the anonymity and how that would be addressed. Mr. Matsuoka said it could communicate an open door to the board. He said high visibility was good for the board. Ms. Gebhardt said the district needed to work harder on getting the word out about the PTE programs and Advanced Opportunities. Ms. Harwood said she was planning on holding a meeting in the fall for the families of 7th and 10th graders to talk about choosing a career path or graduating early. She said it was really important for students and parents to know what opportunities were available. She said students could start taking advantage of Advanced Opportunities in 7th grade. She said a student that started Advanced Opportunities courses in the 7th grade could potentially graduate high school with 12 – 20 college credits. She said a lot of parents did not know how to pursue, apply for, and enroll their students in the courses. She said she and Ms. Naftz held a meeting for parents to show them what courses were available and how to apply, but not many attended. She said Ms. Naftz had great displays at the meeting and a lot of parents were surprised to learn how many courses were available. She said Ms. Naftz offered to meet with several parents to help them build a career path with their child. She said she wanted to increase parent participation in the future. Ms. Cranor suggested posting the displays on the website. Ms. Pettit said we should hang them up at the library. Mr. Gertsch said those were great ideas, but were a little passive. He suggested creating a mentor program for students where they could get all of the information firsthand. He said the district should look into applying for grants to support a mentor program. He said most students had no idea what classes were available when they chose their schedule. Ms. Gebhardt said cultural barriers could be challenging and the Board needed to work on overcoming those. Ms. Cranor asked about billboard space. Ms. Allen said she budgeted \$3,000 out of the Education Foundation fund for billboard space, but the ads were limited for that amount. Mr. Gertsch asked if juniors could go to the middle schools to present the PTE Course and Advanced Opportunities information. Ms. Harwood said transportation was too costly, and having students from a high school come to a middle school to present a program that was only at one particular school was recruiting. She said the administration just needed to get the information out to students and parents. Ms. Allen suggested creating a “You Could Be” campaign that would show middle school students all of the post-secondary and career paths that were available by hanging posters in the hallways and classrooms. Mr. Gertsch said that was a great idea, and the district could also post the information to its Facebook page. Ms. Allen said she could work on forming a Committee to come up with ideas and strategies. Mr. Howell said it would be a good focus for a Committee. Ms. Cranor said Board, Superintendent and administrator community engagement should be added to the actualization of beliefs. Ms. Gebhardt said the ISBA encouraged school board’s to affirm the School Board Code of Ethics and sign them. Ms. Cranor said she didn’t think it was necessary to sign and post them. Mr. Mattson said he thought it was a good idea to hang them in the Board Room. Mr. Gertsch said he understood some of the concern, but thought it would be a good reminder and would send a message that ethics were important to the board. Ms. Cranor said she was concerned about opening the board up to criticism. Mr. Smart said it was good boardsmanship and was recognized all over. Mr. Vitale said it was important for board members to review and be aware of the ethics but did not think it was critical to post them. Mr. Orr said most of the items listed in the Code of Ethics were already posted in the Board’s Operating Principles. Ms. Pettit said it might be nice for teachers to be aware that the school board also followed a Code of Ethics and they were not the only ones held accountable.

Review Board of Trustees Operating Principles

Ms. Cranor said she thought it was good idea to let everyone on the board experience different offices. She said she liked the idea of having movement every year or every other year. She said the previous Board Chair was in that position for many years. She said everyone should have the opportunity to have different experiences. Ms. Gebhardt said she did not want to abandon the criteria that the board agreed on, like experience on the Board, or interest in serving. She said movement may work with the current board, but there was not always stability on the board, and instability could make constant movement more of a challenge. She said experience on the board was critical to some offices. Mr. Gertsch agreed that it was important to look ahead and anticipate the challenges. He said he liked the idea, but didn’t think it should be mandatory. Mr. Matsuoka said some districts had a rotation process for board offices and asked if the board would like him to look into it. Mr. Mattson said he would

appreciate that. Mr. Hobbs suggested that if the board went that direction, they should outline the required criteria for serving as Board Chair or Vice Chair. Dr. Howell asked what the board needed from the administration to do their work. Ms. Cranor said she didn't like surprises. She said sometimes she heard things in the community about changes in the district that she had no idea had taken place. She said she understood that the board was not directly over personnel, but she would like to know about any changes. Mr. Mattson said it would be helpful if communication was streamlined. Ms. Cranor said the board used to get a phone call every Friday and then that changed to emails. Mr. Smart said he completely understood about not wanting to be surprised. Ms. Cranor said she tried to make sure to ask any questions prior to board meetings to make sure that did not happen. Mr. Reed said he thought Dr. Howell would also like to streamline communication rather than calling every time something came up. Ms. Gebhardt said she thought it was helpful for the board to see all of the critical work that went on behind the scenes, like her visit to the transportation department. She encouraged the administration to invite the board to see what they do. She said most of the time the board only saw what happened on the surface. Mr. Orr said he appreciated the board participating on District Committees because it helped them get a sense for some of the complexity and passion. He said board members also had valuable things to contribute. Ms. Cranor said she wondered how much she should or shouldn't say during a committee meeting. Mr. Orr said he saw them as any other contributing committee member. He said it was good for the committee to hear things from a board member's perspective. Mr. Smart said the only thing that board members had to be conscious of was not involving themselves too deeply in a particular topic if the board had to take action on it later. He said it could be a fine line. Mr. Matsuoka agreed that if a board member was too heavily involved in the process prior to making a decision they would have to recuse themselves from taking action on the decision. He asked if the board if any changes were necessary for the Board Operating Principles. The Board had no changes.

Brainstorm Challenges for 2016 – 2020

Ms. Gebhardt asked if anyone had anything further regarding upcoming challenges. Ms. Harwood said long range planning for facilities would become a challenge in the near future. Ms. Cranor said the board was aware of the upcoming facility challenges, but had not had the resources to address it. Mr. Gertsch asked if the administration knew what it would cost to build and maintain a stadium compared to the cost of renting the Holt Arena. Mr. Reed said the ongoing costs for maintaining a stadium would far exceed what the district paid to rent Holt Arena. He said the district paid about \$50,000 in rent and utilities alone would come close to \$30,000 per year for a stadium. He said that did not include janitorial services, upkeep or repairs. Dr. Howell said long range facility planning would definitely be a part of the CIP discussion this year. He said the district would also form a subcommittee to discuss the long range athletic issues. Mr. Reed said one of the issues driving the discussion was the condition of the tracks at several schools. He said the district had six tracks that were nearing the end of their lifespan and would cost around \$600,000 to replace. He said the administration had to figure out what the community and the board was willing to invest in for the future of athletics. He said all the district had been able to do for the last several years was put a Band-Aid on the problem. Ms. Allen said another challenge moving forward was how to address the increase in school violence. She said she believed the district should make increased safety a focus over the next several years. She said social media had made school safety even more difficult to address. Mr. Matsuoka review the list of challenges that were addressed during the meeting: direction of ICS; process for the election of Board Members; timeliness of data from the State; funding/flexibility; depletion of candidate pools; trimesters vs. semesters; charter schools; continued funding of the Career Ladder; facilities/athletics; school safety; and social media. Cabinet Members were excused at 7:07 p.m.

Conduct Board Self-Evaluation

Mr. Matsuoka said he would go through each section of the Board's Self-Evaluation Tool. He reviewed section A – Community Leadership and asked how the board did on item number 1. Ms. Cranor said she liked the idea of having a comment box at each of the schools. Mr. Matsuoka asked about item 2. Ms. Gebhardt said most of the time community concerns were focused on hot issues like boundary changes. Mr. Matsuoka asked about item 3. Dr. Howell said districts that had immersion programs were big selling points at recruiting fairs. Mr. Matsuoka asked about the diversity of the district's staff. Dr. Howell said it was pretty representative of the community. Mr. Matsuoka asked about item 4. The board agreed it did a good job on items 4 through 7. Ms. Cranor said the only challenge with item 8 was communication with the PTA. She said the district used to have a good relationship with the PTA but had struggled with communication for the last couple of years. Mr. Matsuoka asked what the greatest successes and challenges had been in this area over the last year. Mr. Mattson said the greatest success was hiring Dr. Howell as the Superintendent. Dr. Howell said one of the biggest challenges was staffing. He said even hiring classified staff had become a major issue. He said it had become even more challenging since some

local businesses had raised their starting wages to \$15 per hour. Mr. Gertsch said it was challenging to find qualified people that could pass a drug test. Mr. Matsuoka reviewed section B – Policy Making. The board agreed it did well on items 1 through 4. Mr. Matsuoka asked about item 5. Ms. Cranor said there was a time that she did not see the value in the ISBA membership but had come to realize that all the work the ISBA did to help the board stay current with policy changes and advocating for important education issues was well worth it. Ms. Gebhardt said the ISBA did a good job weighing the impact on all school districts in the state when considering a decision. Ms. Cranor said she really had her eyes opened during the ISBA Convention that not all school districts had the same needs and not all school boards agreed with each other. She said it really surprised her that some Trustees did not support increased funding for education. Ms. Gebhardt said she also really appreciated the ISBA's support during the Superintendent Search. The board agreed it did a good job on item 6. Mr. Matsuoka asked about the successes and challenges in this area. Ms. Cranor said she thought one of the successes had to do with updating the district's Code of Conduct policy to include the abuse of prescription drugs and adopting a social media policy. Ms. Gebhardt said it was important to have policies in place, but it could be challenging to stay ahead of the curve. Mr. Matsuoka reviewed section C – Planning and Goal Setting. The board agreed it did a good job on items 1 through 5. Mr. Matsuoka asked about the successes and challenges with this section. Ms. Gebhardt said one of the challenges was caused by delay in getting data from the state. Dr. Howell said it made planning and goal setting very difficult for schools when the district didn't have data from the state in time for the annual Building Leadership Team Retreat. He said it also made it very difficult to meet the June evaluation deadline. Ms. Gebhardt said she thought one of the greatest successes in this area was how well the district stayed on top of its Strategic Plan. Ms. Cranor said another success was the amount of funding raised for classroom technology through the Festival of Trees. Dr. Howell said he was able to talk to legislators about the challenges with implementing the ICS and how to plan for all of the testing that was required. He said it was hard to plan ahead when the legislature kept changing directions without providing resources to districts to implement the changes. Mr. Matsuoka reviewed section D – Finance. The board agreed it did the best it could with the funding it was given. Mr. Matsuoka asked about successes and challenges in this area. The board agreed the passage of the Supplemental Levy was its greatest success. Dr. Howell agreed and said the community was very supportive of the district which was evidenced by passing the levy. Ms. Gebhardt said she had been to enough planning meetings to appreciate how great of a job the district did with the upkeep and maintenance of its facilities. Ms. Cranor said the biggest concern in this area was how the district would replace the tracks at the schools. She said purchasing textbooks was always a challenge. Mr. Matsuoka reviewed section E – Personnel. The board agreed it did a good job with the items in section E. Mr. Matsuoka asked about successes and challenges. Mr. Gertsch said everyone he talked during his school visit at Ellis Elementary raved about the Pick Your Passion event. He said it was probably the greatest success with staff this year. Mr. Matsuoka reviewed section F – Working with the Superintendent. Dr. Howell said he would work harder to ensure there were no surprises. The board agreed that the superintendent and board did a good job in this area. Ms. Cranor asked about conducting the evaluation one time per year. Ms. Gebhardt said she thought the mini-evaluation mid-year was a good process and a good opportunity to check in. The board agreed the greatest success in this area was hiring Dr. Howell. Ms. Gebhardt said one of the challenges was all of the administrative changes and trying to find highly qualified candidates to fill vacancies. Dr. Howell said it would be helpful for him to know what the board needed to know right away and what could be communicated through an email at the end of the week. Ms. Gebhardt asked if Dr. Howell was comfortable with the board communicating through Ms. Johnson. Dr. Howell said absolutely. Mr. Matsuoka reviewed section G – Board Meetings. He said if the board ever inadvertently violated the open meeting law it just had to declare a defect and go through the correct process to correct it. The board agreed it did a good job in this area. Mr. Matsuoka asked about the successes and challenges. Ms. Cranor said she thought one of the successes was that even though the board did not agree at one point during the Superintendent Search they decided that a decision that big should be unanimous. She said it was a good thing that the board decided to keep looking and were able to come to a unanimous decision. Mr. Matsuoka reviewed section H – Legislative/Political Involvement. Ms. Gebhardt said the board had a good relationship with its local legislative delegation and was able to communicate the concerns and hopes of the district. Dr. Howell agreed. He said one of Senator Risch's representatives attended the district's Key Communicators Committee. The board agreed it did a good job in this area. Mr. Matsuoka asked about successes and challenges. Ms. Gebhardt said she thought the Board's annual Work Session with legislators and Day on the Hill in Boise were the greatest successes in this area. She said it was important for the board to build a rapport with local legislators. She said Senator Guthrie really listened to the district's concerns and tried to figure out what could be done to help. Dr. Howell said he had already started having conversations with legislators and was making headway. He said the biggest challenge was uncertainty in funding. Ms. Cranor said the restoration of funds continued to be a huge challenge.

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

Ms. Gebhardt said the board had a good discussion about the roles, responsibilities and working as an effective leadership team during the self-evaluation. Ms. Cranor said she understood that surprises happened, and was glad that everyone agreed they were the exception and not the rule.

Summary Agreements and any Direction; Set Follow-up Retreat Date and Time if Needed

The board agreed there was no need for a follow-up retreat. Dr. Howell reviewed the new Strategic Plan diagram and said the focus changed slightly this year to summarize all of the district's programs and framework. Mr. Matsuoka said it was kind of a storyboard of the district's strategies. Ms. Gebhardt said it was helpful to see how everything fit and supported the district's vision and mission. Ms. Cranor said she heard positive things from teachers regarding the new focus and direction of the district. Mr. Matsuoka said it was always good to see a group of people that were sincerely interested in the education of all students.

Adjourn

Chair Gebhardt adjourned the Special Meeting/Work Session at 8:42 p.m.

APPROVED ON:

17 November 2015

BY:

Jenie Gebhardt
Chair

MINUTES PREPARED BY:

[Signature]
Secretary, Board of Trustees

ATTESTED BY:

[Signature]
Clerk