

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

**Board Room at the Education Center
Monday, November 30, 2015
4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

BOARD MEMBERS/SUPERINTENDENT PRESENT:

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

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

OTHERS PRESENT: *Legislators:* Senator Roy Lacey; Senator Jim Guthrie; Representative Elaine Smith; Representative Mark Nye; *Cabinet Members:* Chuck Orr; Jan Harwood; Lori Craney; Carl Smart; Dave Miner; Sue Pettit; *PEA/Teacher Representatives:* Thomas Vanderen; Susan Matsuura; *Community Representative:* Jim Johnston, Pocatello City Council.

Welcome, Introductions and Statement of Purpose

Chair Gebhardt called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. and conducted introductions. She said the purpose of the meeting was to inform the legislative delegation of the District's needs as it headed into the legislative session.

Curriculum: *Advanced Opportunities Professional development support: Unit development and implementation Leadership Premiums Classroom technology funds: Support and integration ISAT 2.0/SBAC testing challenges (ISBA Resolution No. 10)*

Ms. Harwood said the State Department of Education implemented the Advanced Opportunities program a year ago. She said students could take twelve college credits that were paid for by the state. She said the program was implemented in the District last year and was very successful. She said the state put more money into the program this year and the District had to reorganize how the information was tracked because the way it was set up caused counselors to become accountants. She said one of the greatest successes was the fact that Pocatello High School students had great participation in the program. She said Ms. Delonas had done a great job convincing parents and students that this was a great opportunity and they could be successful. She said the program was already making a huge difference for students and this was only the first trimester. She said the Fast Forward program allowed students to take three credits as a junior and six as a senior. She said the other program was the Dual Credit for Early Completers which allowed high school students to take twelve college credits per trimester. She said the District was working with ISU to help students complete their first 16 college credits while they were in high school. She the District collaborated with ISU to compare what courses were offered by the District that aligned to a student's first year of college at ISU. She said ISU had nine goals, and the District could offer dual credit courses that would help a student complete most of the University goals while they were still in high school. She said it wasn't possible to complete them all, but a student could get close. She said if a student signed up for the 8 in 6 program and switched to the Dual Credit for Early Completers, they could potentially have their first year of college credits completed, and could even get their Associates Degree. She said the information did not reflect PTE courses, but the District offered several career pathways through its PTE programs. Senator Guthrie asked what was done to identify aptitude or interest in students. Ms. Harwood said right now it was only based on student interest. She said this year the PTE Coordinator and herself hosted a parent meeting to present the information and all of the available Advanced Opportunities and PTE courses that were available. She said they explained the career pathways and the number of college credits that could potentially be earned in high school. She said it was a successful meeting and she hoped to expand it and hold two meetings next year. She said some parents wanted their child to earn high school credits in middle school, but student interest was critical. She said if the student was not self-directed or interested, it would not work. She said counselors were working on doing more academic planning with students before they reached high school, that way a schedule and plan could be laid out for students that were interested in going that route. Ms. Cranor said there were quite a few students using programs like the CNA course to go on to earn a four or eight year medical degree. Ms. Gebhardt said even students that did not go on to earn a degree left high school with skills that made them employable. Ms. Harwood said students could take a beginning course at any high schools and then change their mind instead of taking the full capstone course. She said ISU had a welding

course that students could take to learn the basics, and if the student became really interested they could take a full year of welding and would have those skills after high school. She said Leadership Premiums were also implemented in the District successfully. She said one of the groups that were eligible for the Leadership Premiums were the ISAT test coordinators. She said it was time consuming and disruptive for a teacher to have to accommodate testing for over 500 students so the District was providing some of that compensation to the test coordinators. She said the Instructional Coaches were doing a lot to support fellow teachers in addition to their teaching job and were also eligible for a Leadership Premium stipend. She said the department chairs was another group that was enhancing teacher skills. Mr. Orr said the administration was ecstatic to be able offer \$1,000 Leadership Premium stipend to the unit developers this year. He said in the past the District was only able to afford to offer \$100 per day. He said the District was offering professional development camps this year. He said the camps were optional, but teachers were compensated \$25 per session and a \$100 bonus if they attend every session for a total of \$300. He said every teacher he talked with said how much they appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with their peers. He said the District was also working to deepen teacher content knowledge in writing and math. He said the District worked closely with Dr. Cory Bennett on the District's professional development plan and invested in training for writing and math teachers that needed to deepen their content knowledge. Ms. Harwood said Dr. Bennett and two of his coaches helped provide professional development directly and the District really appreciated their help. Mr. Orr said another great thing the District was able to do with Leadership Premiums was an event called "Pick Your Passion". He said teachers volunteered to present various topics and participants could pick three events to attend. He said there were a lot of courses to choose from. He said legislators had allocated technology funds over the last several years and the District utilized those funds to implement the wireless infrastructure in all schools, to add mobile labs and to provide keyboarding at the elementary level. He said some of the funding was used to install sound systems and Promethean Boards which had really helped move technology in the classroom forward. He said the District continued to increase the use and purchasing of Chromebooks. He said SBAC continued to create testing challenges. He reviewed ISBA Resolution 10 – Beyond the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. He said the District supported the elimination of high stakes testing and agreed that the state should not require more testing than the federal government. He said the administration and the Board agreed that the state should look into creating a new test that could be administered in a reasonable amount of time and still meet federal guidelines. Senator Guthrie asked what percentage of teachers received Leadership Premiums. Mr. Smart said he thought about 60% of teachers received a Leadership Premium stipend. Ms. Gebhardt said another issue that needed to be addressed was the timely dissemination of data from the state. Senator Lacey said it was his understanding that the SDE was working on that issue.

District Funding / Fund Balance History: *Balancing the Budget and Fund Balance History; Reliance on, and Increase of Supplemental Levy; Operational Needs (lack of operational funding vs. earmarked funding); Use it or Lose It Flexibility, Class Size, buying Teacher Prep Periods; State Distribution Factor History; Career Ladder*

Mr. Reed said even though the District's budget was increased by \$750,000, it still had to cut \$800,000 in order to balance. He said that was the case in spite of much better funding than in previous years. He said the District had a 5% reserve fund policy for many years which had saved the District from going broke some years. He said the District's fund balance was at its lowest point this year and he thought the District would go beyond the 5% reserve, but was lucky enough to have a mild winter and save on fuel costs. He said the District was now totally dependent on the Supplemental Levy. He said the Supplemental Levy used to only account for 2% of the District's budget and now amounted to 14% of the District's general fund revenue. He said it was very risky to rely on a public vote for 14% of your funding. He said one of the main reasons for the increase in Supplemental Levies across the state was the elimination of the M&O funding which was a stable source of funding for school districts. He said the District would love to see the M&O restored at some point, or some other source of stable funding. He said districts were able to run one, or two year levies, but having to run a levy every year was a drain on the community and the District. He said the only downside of running two year levy was being stuck at the same level of funding as the first year whether or not you needed more. He said if the District were to lose its Supplemental Levy it would mean the loss of 20% of the District's workforce. He said over 80% of districts now had Supplemental Levies because they did not receive enough funding from the state to operate. He said the highest level of funding from the state for operational funds was over seven years ago. He said the current funding level was the same as it was thirteen years ago. He said the administration would emphasize to legislators the importance for flexibility in district budgets. Mr. Smart said the little amount of operational funding that districts received from the state was usually completely used up to cover insurance cost increases and there was nothing left to actual continue to operate the district. Senator Guthrie said there were some that argued the reduction wasn't a true reflection because that money was allocated to other areas. Mr. Smart said some of those areas were great, but sometimes a district had different

needs and flexibility was critical. Senator Lacey said the new State Superintendent put different line items in the proposed budget and asked which ones the District could live without. Mr. Reed said none of the line items were bad, but if the District faced some kind of emergency, it would be nice to be able to use that money. He said those were the kind of problems that districts ran into with “earmarked” funding. Senator Lacey asked the administration to let him know which line items it could live without and he would work to have more of it reallocated to operational funding. Ms. Gebhardt said some districts were functioning far better than others and may make different choices that wouldn’t work for this District. She said it became a problem when the state dictated how money had to be spent regardless of whether or not it worked for a particular district. Mr. Reed said earmarking funding restricted districts from making budgeting decisions. Mr. Smart said the District was not underhired anywhere close to the state maximum and had only underhired by about 1% this year. He said the Resolution to compare like size districts when it came to class sizes was still a priority for the District. He said the District was being compared to districts that had high schools the size of one of the District’s high school band classes which really skewed the numbers and penalized districts for having a class that was too big, even though the two were not comparable. He said the District worked very hard to keep class sizes down and had even bought out prep periods from various teachers to create another class when there were too many students to just have one. He said if the legislature could do anything to fix the existing class size laws, he asked that they consider comparing like size districts when calculating the average class size. He said there were some things in the Career Ladder that did not make any sense to him and it appeared that most people at the State Department were completely unaware of parts the legislation. He said it was extremely complex. He said the District did its best to align the salary schedule to the new career ladder. He asked the legislators to support the continual funding of the Career Ladder. He said so far the District had been able to make it work for teachers. He said the ladder offered the District’s more experienced teachers at least some chance to improve their salary, but also helped new teachers. He said one of the problems that the District ran into with the implementation of the Career Ladder was the fact that the state froze teachers at the same level of experience as the previous year. He said there were a lot of teachers that thought they were going to move on the salary schedule that remained where they were the year before. He said language in the existing law should be cleaned up to fix those kinds of problems. He said it was hard to tell teachers that the credits they earned that year had no value. Senator Guthrie said he thought that issue had been resolved. Dr. Howell said the District did not receive the information or funding in enough time to correct the salary schedule and would have been extremely complicated to try and figure out how to correct the problem, so the District held the funds in an account to award those teachers for movement the following year. Mr. Smart said the District did receive an additional \$700 per FTE for eligible teachers but it was a tracking nightmare at the state and district level.

Human Resource Concerns: *Depletion of applicant pools for teachers, administrators and classified staff; 2015-16 staffing summary: Alternative Authorizations / Content Specialist; Condition of salaries/wages and advocacy for all employee groups; Teacher & principal evaluations (ISBA Resolution No. 8); Past job performance – IC 33-1210 (ISBA Resolution No. 12)*

Ms. Pettit said the District had seventy openings this year including five administrative positions. She said eleven of the candidates had to be hired without a credential due to the lack of applicants. She said District had to submit alternative authorizations for each of them. She said three more new hires were still students and were teaching as interns. She said the candidate pool was shrinking and she hoped it started to improve soon. She said part of the problem was the lack of adequate pay for teachers. She said a lot of students were graduating locally and moving to a neighboring state for a teaching job with better pay. She said another challenge had been created by the fact that the local economy and employment market was improving causing the District’s classified staff to other jobs with better pay, and the District was losing classified staff at an alarming rate. She said the District had an opening for a plumber for nearly eight months because the private sector was able to pay more than ten times what the District could afford. She said Resolution 8 addressed the discrepancy in the required timeline for the submission of teacher and principal evaluations. She said currently evaluations were due by May 1st, however, one section of the evaluation was dependent on test results and students were not tested until mid-May. She said the requirement that district send personnel files to the receiving district was a lot of work and was costly. She said it would be a lot easier and cheaper to fax over a checklist that explains whether or not there were any issues. Senator Guthrie said that was a really good idea.

ISBA Resolutions

Ms. Gebhardt reviewed the ISBA Resolutions. She said one of the Resolutions addressed the current requirement to run a notice in the paper and suggested changing that requirement to an online notice. She said the local option sales tax proposal did not pass. She said the next Resolution had to do with allowing districts to discuss the purchase

of property in executive session. She said the law currently required that the discussion be held in public. She said there was some debate about the parental rights resolution, but it passed with an amendment. She said the law made it harder to handle parent requests for selective curriculum for their student when the District was already bound to comply with current state and federal laws. Dr. Howell said the District already had one parent demand to remove his child from school even though he was not the child's custodial parent, based on the parental rights law. He said the District had to involve legal counsel and it costs time and money to resolve some of the issues that were created by this legislation. Ms. Gebhardt said the next resolution had to do with extra day contracts. She said the resolution requested that the extra day contracts not be tied to standard contracts. She said in the past the district had to eliminate some days from the extended-day contracts and had to go through a full Due Process Hearing because it was tied to the teacher's standard contract. She said the next resolution addressed a way to optimize the state based Medicaid reimbursement process. Mr. Miner said last year the District was reimbursed \$500,000 for specific services that were billed to Medicaid. He said Medicaid was billed through reported daily activity and was tracked and submitted by the District's Medicaid clerk. He said there was always the dark cloud of potential audits which was scary, especially for smaller districts that did not have the means to monitor and track the details without a Medicaid clerk. Ms. Gebhardt said next Resolution addressed the issue of changing the amount of testing that was currently required and exploring options for another test.

Other: *All-day Kindergarten*

Ms. Cranor said during the ISBA Convention the topic of all-day kindergarten came up several times. She said she believed it was an issue that a lot of people were concerned about. She said people wondered why the legislature had not done anything to address kindergarten funding in the state. She said she had heard rumors that there was a group of legislators that thought kids should be home with their parents at the kindergarten age which had stopped any progress on addressing kindergarten funding. She said some states charged for full day kindergarten. Ms. Gebhardt said there were a number of studies that confirmed that children with a firm foundation in kindergarten do better throughout all the years of their education. Ms. Cranor said she thought kindergarten was more critical than ever with increased rigor and higher expectations of students at such young ages. She said middle school students were taking high school courses, and high school students taking college courses, and yet the state did nothing to help prepare students on the starting end. Ms. Craney said if the District were to ever implement all-day kindergarten it would need to address the lack of space before moving forward.

Trustee/Legislators' Comments

Ms. Gebhardt asked if there were any more questions or comments. Senator Lacey asked if the District was prepared to file for matching funds for broadband. Mr. Reed said it was done. Senator Lacey asked if student enrollment was going up or down. Dr. Howell said the District originally anticipated that it would see a decrease due to Charter School expansions in the area, and there was a decrease, but more students returned and the District also experienced some unanticipated growth. He said overall student enrollment was up, even with the lost enrollment from the Charters. Ms. Gebhardt said the District had seen a dramatic increase in the number of special education students coming to the District from out of the area. Mr. Miner said he suspected that some of the increase was due to the good reputation the District had for providing a strong special needs program. He said the District's ERR and DLP programs were filling up exponentially and many of the students were aggressive and required high levels of one on one support. He said a good number were coming to the District specifically for these services. Senator Guthrie said it was incumbent upon school districts to take preventative action before they faced any parental rights lawsuits. He said another concern dealt with changes to personal property tax, but he got the sense that the legislature was becoming more positive about education. He asked the group about their opinion of Superintendent Ybarra. He said it seemed to him that she was more open minded and open to various interest groups. Ms. Gebhardt said a lot of school districts were stunned so badly by the direction taken by Superintendent Luna that it was hard to jump right into creating a relationship with the new State Superintendent. She said the school board and administration were still in the process of creating relationships. Ms. Cranor said she talked to people that were skeptical at first, but had been impressed with her so far. She said most people she talked to had a positive outlook. Ms. Harwood said she had already noticed a positive difference in the administrative group. She said they were responsive and worked hard to make things right, or figure out a solution. Dr. Howell said there had been better communication from the SDE. He said Superintendent Ybarra's delegate attended the monthly Region V Superintendent's meetings. He said last year she inherited a budget and plan that had been set, but this year she had more experience and leeway to move in her own direction. He said she talked a lot about local control which was what school districts need. Ms. Cranor said the career ladder was a good step in improving teacher salaries, but asked the legislators to not stop there. Representative Smith asked if Grace Lutheran building a high school would have a great impact on the district.

Ms. Gebhardt said she was not entirely sure. She said it looked like Grace planned to enroll 20 new students at this point. Dr. Howell said the administration was focused on being proactive to market the District's strengths and inform people of the many opportunities that were available in the district that the charter schools and private schools could not provide. He said another plus for families was that the District did not charge tuition. Ms. Cranor said marketing a school district had become critical with all of the competition. She said the District had recently increased its use of social media to promote the positive things that were happening in schools, and it was having a positive effect. Ms. Gebhardt said the Board implemented board school visits several years ago and had become one of the biggest insights for board members as to what was taking place in each of the schools. She said a lot of legislators thought they knew what was happening with education in their area, but the only way to know for sure was to visit the schools and see for themselves. She said any of the schools would be more than happy to show the legislators around. Senator Lacey said he was aware of a lot of the good things happening in the District and it was absolutely amazing what each of the schools were able to accomplish.

Summarize and Take-Aways

Ms. Gebhardt said the only take-away that she would stress to the legislature was flexibility, whether it was financial, or educational. She said local school boards knew what was best for their District.

Adjourn

Chair Gebhardt adjourned the special meeting at 6:34 p.m.

APPROVED ON:

19 January 2016

BY:

Jenie A Gebhardt
Chair

ATTESTED BY:

Paul M. Vitell
Clerk

MINUTES PREPARED BY:

[Signature]
Secretary, Board of Trustees