

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

**Board Room at the Education Center
Wednesday, September 21, 2011
4:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

BOARD MEMBERS/SUPERINTENDENT PRESENT:

Frank Rash, Chair	Janie Gebhardt, Member
John Sargent, Vice Chair (Excused at 7:39 p.m.)	Nate Murphy, Member
Jackie Cranor, Clerk	Mary M. Vagner, Superintendent

OTHERS PRESENT:

Liz Killpack
Renae Johnson

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

Welcome and statement of purpose

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

Warm up activity

Ms. Killpack asked the Board members and Superintendent to take one end of a rope that was set up in a star. She said no one could let go of the rope during the exercise. She asked the team to create a knot in one minute. She asked the team what the activity had to do with teamwork. Ms. Gebhardt said it could represent a team getting tangled up by not working together. Ms. Vagner said the fact that each member had to hold on represented that the team was tied together. Ms. Killpack asked the team to untie the knot in one minute. She asked the team if anyone thought they could untie the knot by themselves. They all said no. Ms. Gebhardt said the team had to step back, look at the big picture and discuss how to get out of the tangle. Ms. Killpack said the exercise symbolized the work the team would do that night in reviewing goals and conducting the Board self-evaluation.

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

Ms. Killpack reviewed the Vision/Mission/Learner Goals document. She said Board members have a specific focus and reason for existing. Ms. Gebhardt said the Board was supposed to deliberate to ensure the District operated in a way that was best for all students and staff. Ms. Killpack asked the Board to review the goals. Ms. Cranor said it was important for a Board to believe in the goals that were selected. Mr. Sargent said it was important to speak up if there was a goal a member did not believe in. Ms. Killpack said the Board provided direction to the Superintendent who drove the bus. Ms. Killpack asked the Board to review the Beliefs and talk about what it hoped to accomplish. Ms. Vagner asked the Board to review the Actualization of Beliefs from 2010-11 and provide any changes. She asked the Board to identify the Beliefs it would focus on for the 2011-12 school year. Ms. Gebhardt asked that the development and adoption of a Strategic Plan be added to the actualization. Ms. Gebhardt said the increase in graduation rates was evidence of the Belief and asked that it be added to the Actualization. Ms. Cranor said Tyhee Elementary turning around achievement through community involvement in the attendance program was evidence and asked that it be added. Ms. Gebhardt said community involvement in Festival of Trees actualized that the community plays a vital role. Mr. Sargent said Judge Murray's program actualized that parents play a vital role. Ms. Vagner said the actualization would be expanded to include increased graduation rates, behavior is institutional and not staff dependent, Festival of Trees and Judge Murray's meetings play a vital role in a student's educational success. She said the changes would be brought for review at the October 11, 2011 Work Session and would be added to the benchmarking document. Ms. Killpack asked the

Board to select the Beliefs that it would focus on for 2011-12. Mr. Sargent said he would like to keep the current Beliefs to avoid shifting focus too much. Ms. Gebhardt said she would like to add something that showed the Board supported teachers in helping students. Ms. Vagner said the programs implemented supported the Belief that “students learn in different ways and at different rates”. The Board agreed.

Review Board of Trustees Operating Principles

Ms. Killpack said this District had the largest Operating Principles document she had seen and had used it as an example for other Boards. She reviewed the Operating Principles. Ms. Cranor said she knew it was not the Board’s position to get into a debate during public comment at a Board meeting, but felt patrons were owed some type of response either after the meeting or in a letter. Ms. Vagner offered that she could respond on a selective basis if the Board would allow some discretion. The Board discussed the pros and cons of public discussion. The Board agreed to allow discretion to the Superintendent to respond to selected comment. Ms. Killpack reviewed principles #1 - #6 and the Board was okay with all of them. Ms. Killpack reviewed #7 and asked Mr. Rash if he was comfortable being the spokesperson for the Board. Mr. Rash said if he was asked about a meeting that he had not attended could he talk to another Board member that had attended before responding. Ms. Vagner said yes. She said a trustee could not respond to a topic that had not been previously discussed by the Board. Ms. Killpack said even if a Trustee clarified that the response was individual and not on behalf of the Board the perception was that the Trustee was responding on behalf of the Board. Mr. Sargent said he appreciated that anything that went to the press from the Board was reviewed by all five members for input before being printed. Ms. Killpack reviewed principles #8 – #14. No changes were recommended. Ms. Killpack reviewed #15. Ms. Gebhardt said that all decisions should be deliberated in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and felt this had been violated by the Board. She said there was a phone call the night before the election to discuss nominations and those types of phone calls were a violation of the Open Meeting Law. She said Board Members could not discuss items that would be on an agenda outside of the meeting. She said at the time Board elections took place she felt thrown under the bus and was very upset. Mr. Rash, Mr. Sargent, Ms. Cranor and Mr. Murphy all said there was not any conversation between Board members regarding nominations. Ms. Gebhardt said she felt like her time served on the Board did not matter to the others and felt some discussion regarding criteria should have taken place. She said her sense was that communication and trust had been broken. Ms. Cranor said time served on a Board should not dictate the position a Trustee holds. Ms. Gebhardt said she agreed that it should not be the sole criteria but some discussion of criteria should take place and longevity should hold some value. Ms. Cranor said one of the factors in her nomination was who would have the most time to dedicate to meetings. Ms. Gebhardt said Board Members shouldn’t come to a decision on his/her own and assume that everyone else agreed. She said questions of bias had been raised about the nominations. She said whether or not that was true, there was a perception of bias because of the lack of discussion. Mr. Murphy said he was completely unaware of how elections were supposed to be handled and did not know that any discussion was necessary. Ms. Cranor said she had no idea where the perception of bias had come from as she did not even know what religion the other Board Members were. Ms. Gebhardt said there was religious bias in the schools and there was a public perception that the bias existed on the Board as well. Ms. Cranor said it was a public assumption and other Board Members should not assume the same just because it was out in the public. Mr. Sargent asked if it would be appropriate for the Board to have public discussion on nominations at the time of the elections. Ms. Killpack said it was best to discuss nominations at the time of the meeting. Mr. Sargent noted that if someone was opposed to a nomination he/she should have spoken up at the meeting. He said in the past discussion had taken place regarding Ms. Donnelly continuing as Chair outside of the meeting and had always been done that way. He said he did not understand why it was a problem this year. He said he agreed with changing the process for the future but did not think it was fair to claim any decision was made because of religious bias. Ms. Killpack said it was important to create a process where everyone felt respected and heard. She said the Board should identify qualifications for a Board officer prior to the election and discuss them at the meeting. Ms. Vagner suggested two Board members volunteer to create a committee that would outline a process for the selection of officers. Mr. Sargent and Ms. Gebhardt agreed to volunteer for the committee. Ms. Gebhardt suggested adding language to operating principle #15 to include deliberating on the election of officers. Ms. Vagner noted that casual conversations between Board members were okay, but discussion regarding items that could come up on an agenda should not take place. Ms. Gebhardt said Board members should be very careful in avoiding violation of the Open Meeting Law inclusive of telephone conversations. Ms. Killpack suggested a better way to handle questions or discussion was to call the Superintendent to communicate with the Board as a whole so every member gets the same information. She said phone conversations between individual Board members could vary greatly. Ms. Killpack said it was important to avoid conversations that might communicate how a Board member intended to vote. She said it was critical that

Board members never go into a meeting with their minds already made up. Mr. Sargent said he believed the Board did a good job with discussing agenda items in the open and even changed the decision on pay reductions due to the discussion. Ms. Killpack reviewed operating principle #16 and said it was crucial for Board members to support a vote once the decision was made. Ms. Cranor said she'd had a previous experience where two Board members would not speak to her after a vote did not go their way and did not appreciate that. Ms. Killpack said sometimes a cool down period was needed which was okay as long as the decision was supported in the end. She said she believed the Board did very well with operating principle #17 which was being practiced that night during the retreat. Ms. Killpack said the Board had discussed some concerns with operating principle #19 in talking about deliberating in an open, safe and supportive environment. Mr. Sargent said it appeared the Board needed to do a better job with that. Ms. Killpack said this Board had a unique meeting environment with meetings being televised which was not always comfortable. Ms. Vagner agreed it could be very difficult to interview candidates with the television crew present. Ms. Killpack said it made sense to have a process and qualification previously outlined which was critical. Ms. Gebhardt emphasized the need to deliberate publicly so there was not a perception that the Board made decisions without any discussion. Ms. Killpack said the Board did a good job with operating principles #20 – #22. She said with operating principle #23 it was very important to understand what it meant to not create a perception of bias. She reviewed operating principles #24 – #26. She reviewed operating principle #27. Mr. Sargent said during most committee meetings he felt it was appropriate to be a silent observer. Ms. Gebhardt said she never brought up anything during a committee meeting that hadn't been discussed as a Board. Ms. Cranor said she usually spoke up if there was a safety issue. Ms. Killpack reviewed operating principles #28 – #33. The Board recommended no changes and did not have any concerns with the operating principles.

Ms. Killpack said sometimes a Board member chose to abstain from voting because he/she did not have enough information. Mr. Sargent said in the past the Board had tabled an action item if further information was needed. Ms. Cranor asked if it was okay to abstain from voting during an expulsion hearing. Ms. Killpack said it was not good practice to abstain from voting as Board members are elected officials and are elected to vote on issues. Ms. Vagner said the public viewed Board members as advocates for children and not politicians and making decisions was a part of that. Ms. Vagner said the only conflict of interest for a Board member was financial. Ms. Killpack said if a conflict of interest arises the Board member should be excused before the discussion, not just for the vote. Ms. Vagner said the Operating Principles would be expanded to include deliberation before the election of officers and would be brought for Board consideration at the October 13, 2011 Work Session. She said the administration would work with Mr. Sargent and Ms. Gebhardt to create a protocol for the election of officers which would be brought for Board consideration at the December Work Session and reviewed in June before the July Reorganization Meeting. She said she would respond to public comment on a case by case basis and would create signage for public comment forms at Board meetings.

Ms. Killpack handed out cards with pictures on them to each Board member. She asked them to choose a picture and describe how it related to the Board's work. She said she chose a picture of an owl because it represented her love of learning. Ms. Cranor chose a picture of a scale because it represented the Board balancing both sides of an issue before making a decision. Mr. Murphy chose a picture of scissors because it represented some of the cutting the Board would have to do over the next few years. Mr. Rash said he chose a picture of some lazy looking guys sitting on the world because it reminded him that if you were lazy you would not get far in this job. He said Board members had to lean on each other and not the world in order to be viewed as someone people could trust. Ms. Gebhardt said she chose a picture of an eyeball because it represented being able to see ahead and to see the big picture. Mr. Sargent said he chose a picture of a rabbit in a hat because it made him think of a magician and said he sometimes felt like people expected a Board member to be that magician. He said he also chose a picture of an ear because it represented the Board listening to each other, the public, students and parents. Ms. Vagner said she chose a picture of a bull's-eye because it represented the leader of the District staying focused on the Vision and Mission. She said she also chose a picture of comedy/tragedy masks because it represented the District coping with the comedy and tragedy of the legislature and the State Department of Education while maintaining a balance between the two and keeping the focus on the Vision and Mission which guided the direction of the District.

Items from the July ISBA Leadership Institute (New Board Member Training) that may not have been covered under another topic

Ms. Killpack said Board meeting minutes typically only required the agenda, the motion and the vote. She said it was helpful to have more information when referring back to the minutes for a record of what happened. Ms. Vagner said she submitted the question to legal counsel and agreed with Amy White that more detail is preferable

when the Board needs to defend a position or what was said. Ms. Cranor asked if the length of recognitions could be shortened. Ms. Vagner said it could. Ms. Cranor said she liked the idea of keeping a call log and tracking the follow up. Ms. Killpack asked what was being done to address the Students Come First legislation. Ms. Vagner said a committee had been pulled together to start working on pay for performance issues and would tackle parent input into teacher evaluations next. She said the input would be brought to the Board at the October Work Session. She said Amy White in conjunction with the ISBA developed a Students Come First timeline that documents each deadline and requirement for the Students Come First legislation. She said the administration would work through the timeline to determine what should be focused on first. She said the Board and administration would review the timeline with legislators in December. She said the next thing to focus on would be online courses. Ms. Cranor asked what process was in place to fund the components of the SCF legislation. Ms. Killpack said a process for funding would probably come as a resolution.

Brainstorm Challenges for 2011-12 through 2013-14

Ms. Cranor said a big challenge for the District would be implementing pay for performance. She said the District advocated working as a team and pay for performance had the opposite effect. Ms. Gebhardt said upcoming levies would be a challenge because the community was maxed out but the need was still there. She said there was anxiety in the community about the 6th grade move. She said another challenge was dealing with online courses, larger classrooms and fewer teachers. Ms. Cranor said funding for ADA would be a challenge. Ms. Vagner said the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium would be a challenge. Ms. Cranor said not knowing what was going to happen from one year to the next was very challenging.

Conduct Board Self-Evaluation

Ms. Killpack said a good way to go through the evaluation was to celebrate successes and identify areas that needed improvement. Ms. Cranor said she ranked question #7 as a 3 because she didn't feel the Board had many speaking opportunities. Ms. Gebhardt said the Board participated where it was able and appropriate such as levy meetings. Ms. Vagner noted that in a larger community speaking opportunities were more formalized and was usually part of committee work. She said had an expectation for every administrator to be involved in the community. Ms. Cranor said she ranked #8 as a 3. She said the Board was not very involved with the PTA. Ms. Vagner said the PTA was involved with Key Communicators. Mr. Murphy said he ranked section D – Finance at 3 across the board. He said he realized this was due to the State Department of Education and the legislature but still wished the Board was able to do more in that area. Ms. Gebhardt said the Board did the best it could with what was given. Ms. Killpack noted that this District did a good job at paying salaries to market than most other Districts in the state. Ms. Cranor said she ranked question F. #4 low because she did not know what process was in place for managing conflicts between the Board and Superintendent. Ms. Vagner said this was brought this up two years ago and the process is the Board and Superintendent annual evaluations. Ms. Cranor said she would change her rating because she remembered the discussion. Ms. Vagner said she believed the Board functioned well together as the District would not operate at this level if that was not the case. Ms. Killpack said that as a facilitator she agreed that this Board worked very well together and was committed and hard working.

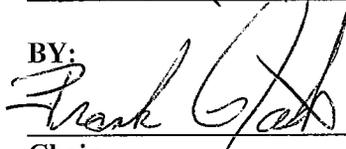
Adjourn as the Discussion Reached Closure

Chair Rash adjourned the Special Meeting/Work Session/Retreat at 8:26 p.m.

APPROVED ON:

NOVEMBER 15, 2011

BY:



Chair

MINUTES PREPARED BY:


Secretary, Board of Trustees

ATTESTED BY:



Clerk