



**Dickinson Education Association / Dickinson Public School Board  
Relationship Meeting  
Approved Minutes  
Wednesday, February 17, 2021; 4:00 p.m.  
Professional Learning Lab**

**Present:** Roosevelt Elementary Fifth Grade Teacher Donna Abrahamson, Dickinson High School Physics and Chemistry Instructor CaraLee Heiser, Dickinson Education Association President Shawna Knipp, Assistant Superintendent Keith Harris, Superintendent Shon Hocker, Director of Instruction Melanie Kathrein, Dickinson Middle School Mathematics/Social Studies Instructor Diana Stroud, School Board President Brent Seaks, Prairie Rose Elementary Third Grade Instructor Leah Campbell, School Board Vice President Kim Schwartz, Director of Student Services Shawn Leiss, and Board Member Jason Rodakowski.

**Introductions** – Team members introduced themselves and their representation.

**Background** – Elementary Instructor Abrahamson explained that a letter had been sent to the school board members with some of the concerns brought up at a Dickinson Education Association (DEA) meeting. There were six elementary buildings; Mrs. Abrahamson would be addressing concerns from three of the six buildings and Elementary Instructor Campbell would address concerns from the remaining three elementary buildings.

Mrs. Abrahamson outlined the concerns that were highlighted in a survey conducted by the DEA in 2019. Those concerns are behavior, overload, lack of communication, and respect.

The last Relationship Meeting was held during COVID. Mrs. Abrahamson said the meetings have been important ways of communicating and attempting to find common ground.

Board President Seaks shared his appreciation for the Relationship Meetings. He concurred that it was critical for there to be a way to communicate and try and find some solutions from both sides. He suggested a recap at the end of this meeting to attempt to have a uniform interpretation of the discussion. Mr. Seaks felt a key piece was having accountability measures.

**Minutes** – There was discussion regarding minutes being taken at the meeting and then shared out with the leaders of the team for accuracy.

**Topics for Discussion**

**Early Release Days** – Mrs. Abrahamson stated at the elementary schools when there is an early release day, there is no preparation time for some of the teachers. She clarified, for DMS and DHS teachers, it was a condensed preparation time. For K-5 teachers there was no time for preparation. She shared concerns with the specialists having all-day PLC on the early release days. With the specialists attending PLC, this leaves the elementary teachers to cover those classes, such as physical education and music. Elementary teachers tend to have their prep time while the students are in these specialized classes. The early release days have the elementary

teachers in the classroom, except for their 45 minutes for lunch, right up until 1:00 p.m. Students are released at 1:00 and then the early release professional development begins at 1:15 p.m. and ends at 3:30 or 3:45 p.m.

Assistant Superintendent Harris suggested the early release days begin at 1:30 instead of 1:15 and the paraprofessionals continue providing busing duties. This would give the elementary teachers a few minutes to do some things before the professional development begins. Mrs. Abrahamson responded that would help. She would like to try it and then revisit this topic.

Superintendent Hocker said he would visit with the administrators at Monday's Cabinet meeting and make the request suggested by Mr. Harris.

Elementary Parent/Teacher Conference Dates – Mrs. Abrahamson said it was evident at the elementary level when there are parent/teacher conferences via Zoom, the classroom teachers schedule Zoom meetings with the parents but there was not an opportunity for the parents to have a scheduled Zoom meeting with the specialists. The administration identified this might be unique to one elementary building. When the parent/teacher conferences return to face-to-face conferences, then all teachers and specialists will be providing opportunities for parent/teacher conferences. Mr. Harris felt moving forward, the expectation would be that if the conferences are held via Zoom, there would be two Zoom opportunities. One Zoom with the classroom teacher and one with the specialists. Mrs. Abrahamson liked this idea.

Mrs. Campbell inquired if the elementary parent/teacher conference dates could be on a different day than the middle school parent/teacher conference dates.

Currently, all the elementary buildings have their parent/teacher conferences on the same night. Mrs. Abrahamson inquired if each elementary building could schedule its own parent/teacher conference dates. Director of Instruction Kathrein responded the reason the elementary buildings changed their conferences to having them all on the same nights was due to scheduling. When many days are taken for the elementary buildings to have their conferences on different dates it makes it hard to schedule other meetings. Mr. Harris suggested the teachers reach out to their building leadership team and make this inquiry to determine the best time and the best night to hold parent/teacher conferences.

Mr. Seaks explained as a parent there are some pros to having parent/teacher conferences via Zoom. Because his wife is a teacher, she was able to attend the Zoom parent/teacher conference using her cell phone. He thought if one elementary school had their conferences via Zoom and another elementary school had theirs face-to-face, that would be acceptable. He inquired if it worked to have both, Zoom and face-to-face, at one building. Mr. Harris felt these were great points and thought they should be discussed with the building leadership team to find the best way to meet the needs of the students and what works best for the parents. Mrs. Campbell suggested having a week set aside for elementary conferences and a week set aside for middle school conferences.

Teachers shared their positive results of having the parent/teacher conferences via Zoom. The younger siblings were not present, the parents seemed to be in their comfort zone, and there wasn't a line of parents waiting in the hallway. Mr. Harris suggested sharing their requests with the building leadership team. He added part of the HRS is frequent surveys to the parents. This would be a great question on next fall's survey for the parents asking what was their preference.

A disadvantage to Zoom parent/teacher conferences is the parent does not have the opportunity to have an experience to see the school building and their child's surroundings.

Added Responsibilities/Removing Responsibilities – Mrs. Abrahamson had earlier explained there was a lot of work put on the plate of an elementary teacher. At the beginning of the school year, the pandemic had changed a lot of what the teacher does when teaching hybrid. There was also new curriculum to learn, learning the Promethean Board, and the continuation of the High Reliability Schools (HRS). She would like some things taken off their plate. Mr. Harris asked if she had any suggestions. Mrs. Abrahamson suggested the social emotional learning. She thought this was the responsibility of the social workers at the schools. She also suggested reducing all the professional development at the beginning of the school year.

Copy Machine Codes – Mrs. Abrahamson inquired the reason for the requirement of a code being entered in when using the copy machines. She said this was taking too much valuable time to enter the codes. Mrs. Campbell added this was something new, having to put in a code. This requirement was not only color copies but also black and white copies. Mr. Harris responded this would be a great question to ask the building administrators. President Seaks said some research could be done and then brought to the next meeting.

Next Meeting Date and Time – The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. at the Professional Learning Lab.

Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Twila Petersen.