



**Dickinson Education Association / Dickinson Public School Board  
Relationship Meeting  
Approved Minutes  
Wednesday, March 10, 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, and Director of Student Services Shawn Leiss.

**Call to Order** – School Board President Seaks called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**Review and Approve February 17, 2021, Meeting Minutes** – The minutes from the February 17, 2021, meeting had been reviewed and revisions were made at the February 24 meeting. The consensus was to approve the revised February 17, 2021, meeting minutes that were emailed to the team.

**Review and Approve February 24, 2021, Meeting Minutes** – Roosevelt Elementary Fifth Grade Instructor Abrahamson requested some minor revisions to the minutes. The consensus was to approve the modified February 24, 2021, meeting minutes.

**Continued Services When Specialists Take Time Off** – Superintendent Hocker reported he had visited with the building principals regarding specialists requesting leave and not requesting substitutes. He had also visited with the principals at great length regarding specialists participating in PLC during early release days and there is no coverage for the specialists. Dr. Hocker said that when an elementary specialist is requesting leave there was no concern from the principals with the specialists requesting substitutes.

In reference to specialists participating in PLC during the six or seven early release days, Dr. Hocker explained this was a more complex topic. He said the District wishes to be fair to all teachers, whether they are a classroom teacher or another teacher, including specialists. The principals shared with him that when they are working on the PLC process and putting the plan together for the PLC, there had been discussions about having the music teachers and the physical education teachers on a different day for their PLC. During the planning, it became evident that those teachers would be required to request a substitute teacher and prepare for a substitute teacher during their PLC time. That group of specialists would have to prepare for a substitute when other teachers do not have to prepare for a substitute. Dr. Hocker explained the dissimilarity of the PLC time between the specialists and other teachers. For all these reasons, the elementary principals' decision was made that during the early release days, specialists' PLC time would not require substitute teachers. This is a way of trying to treat that group of specialists as fairly as possible. Mrs. Abrahamson inquired if Dr. Hocker had brought up the

idea of the specialists possibly having a Seesaw lesson prepared when they are gone. Dr. Hocker responded that it went back to the idea that the specialists would feel it was unfair if they had to now prepare something for their PLC time when other teachers are not required.

There was some discussion to clarify the definition of a specialist. Dr. Hocker responded when he refers to a specialist, he was referring to the music and physical education teachers. Director of Instruction Kathrein added it would also include the EL teachers and the art teachers.

Mrs. Abrahamson said she was disappointed and Prairie Rose Elementary Third Grade Instructor Campbell concurred. Dr. Hocker said he was very amiable to ideas the school building leadership team might come up with for a solution. He added none of the planning time was driven by the Central Administration Offices.

Mrs. Abrahamson stated it was not their intent nor their wishes to take away the PLC time from the specialists, but to find a solution that works for all. Mrs. Abrahamson asked if a solution could be determined by a single building's leadership team, could that building implement it as long as the specialists were still able to attend the PLC time. Dr. Hocker responded that could of course be an option.

DEA President and Heart River Elementary Strategist Knipp shared an example at Heart River Elementary when a substitute is sometimes not able to be found for the physical education or music teacher, then the physical education teacher covers both physical education and music classes or the music teacher covers both the music and physical education classes. At Heart River Elementary, there is one music teacher and one physical education teacher. Director of Student Services Leiss noted this could require those specialists that are covering both classes to do double work or extra work. Dr. Hocker said that this could be a possible solution and he would take it back to a meeting with the principals for discussion.

**Building Leadership Team Members** – Assistant Superintendent Harris distributed information that contained the names of the building leadership team members at the school buildings. Mr. Seaks inquired if there were specialists that served on the leadership teams at the buildings. Mr. Harris responded some buildings had specialists on the leadership team.

There was discussion regarding formal meetings in the buildings with agendas and minutes. Some buildings have a formal meeting with the leadership team and other buildings may not.

### **Topics for Discussion**

**Work Overload** – Dr. Hocker referenced the letter distributed at the February 24, 2021, meeting by Mrs. Abrahamson. The letter was a list of ideas summarized by Mrs. Abrahamson over the summer for reducing work overload. He said he had reviewed the list of ideas and noted some of the suggestions had been implemented. As an example, there was a request to begin school after Labor Day. The District did do that this year and provided five extra days for professional development for teachers before the start of the school year.

Dr. Hocker explained there was a lot of conversation regarding the full-time online or full-time face-to-face instruction. Superintendent Hocker noted the building leadership teams got together over the summer and donated a lot of time for that discussion to prepare for the beginning of the school year. It was a team solution. Dr. Hocker commended the teams that worked over the summer in getting the Dickinson Public School District ready and prepared. There were other school districts across the country and in North Dakota that were not as prepared.

Due to time getting close to the top of the hour, President Seaks inquired if the team could talk about this topic at the next meeting. Dickinson High School Physics and Chemistry Instructor Heiser said this topic was important and outreaching. She noted the District's low morale not only at the elementary level but the high school level as well.

Mr. Seaks inquired if some homework could be done in preparation for the discussion of this topic at the next meeting. Dickinson Middle School Mathematics/Social Studies Instructor Stroud responded the next move needs to be made by the Board/Administration. She added Mrs. Abrahamson has put forth the information that their "plates are full." She felt that all that is being done (at the meetings) is rearranging the topics. They need to see something happen. Mrs. Stroud said that everyone's time is valuable and added that it feels like their time spent in these meetings was being wasted. She added if the team can't have the conversation that their plates are full, then they will need to move on. She pointed out the District was losing veteran teachers and new teachers that are in the District for one or two years. She also noted that it was a great District but it was losing employees because their plates are full. Mrs. Abrahamson commented that morale is low in the District and the District is losing great teachers because of the low morale.

Dr. Hocker said to identify responsibilities to cross off their plate, that was not something that could be done at this meeting. He felt the building leadership team needs to come up with ideas. He added there are a lot of teachers in the District that are very pleased with the direction of the District and pleased with HRS. He added when they get to the Level IV HRS, they will not want to go back. Dr. Hocker said the HRS is an easy target for negativity as it can be viewed as one more thing the new superintendent has implemented. He explained the HRS incorporates things they are doing and ultimately makes things easier. He used the one-to-one device technology initiative as an example. It was set to implement over a longer period of time but due to the pandemic, it was implemented sooner. This implementation had a learning curve and it is often more challenging to initially get going with the new technology, but it does eventually make their jobs easier.

Dr. Hocker referenced the request to take items off their list, he couldn't identify what those item(s) would be. He stated if there were some simple things that could be done then to talk about them and let's do them.

Mr. Harris referenced the idea in the letter that was distributed to hire someone to make copies at the building. He said the paraprofessionals in the building are assigned duties, and those duties have some flexibility and can be adjusted by the leadership team recommendations. Mrs. Kathrein explained when the Central Office had a large number of photocopies to be made and correlated, they reached out to parent volunteers who did a phenomenal job.

School Board Vice President Schwartz felt the team was making progress. Sometimes it takes time to make a decision that works for everyone. She recommended not getting discouraged. She added she feels better about this group because they are meeting and keep coming back for meetings and felt there has been progress. Mrs. Heiser felt that communicating in the open was helpful.

**Schedule Next Meeting and Agenda Topic** – The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. at the Professional Learning Lab. The meeting would be kept at or

under 1.25 hours to accommodate another meeting for the Board members. The topic of discussion will be Work Overload.

**Adjournment** – The meeting adjourned at 5:19 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Twila Petersen.