



**Dickinson Education Association / Dickinson Public School Board
Relationship Meeting
Approved Minutes
Wednesday, March 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, and Dickinson High School Social Studies Instructor David Michaelson.

Call to Order – Mr. Seaks called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Reviewed and Approve the March 10, 2021, Meeting Minutes – The March 10, 2021, meeting minutes had been emailed to the team before the meeting. Mrs. Kathrein moved to approve the minutes as presented. Mrs. Heiser seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Topics for Discussion

Purpose of the Group – Mr. Seaks shared his thoughts on the purpose of this group and its meetings. His impression was for the meetings to take place to keep the line of communication open. It was important to come together as a group to have that communication. He was getting the impression there was frustration where these meetings were going. Mr. Seaks mentioned accountability, solutions to problems, and building trust. In his opinion, he felt some of the solutions could be resolved at the building level with the building leadership team and that was a big goal, but it appears the group was not there yet. Mr. Seaks added that he was understanding this group would be meeting periodically. Mr. Seaks asked Mrs. Abrahamson what she felt the key purpose was regarding this group.

Mrs. Abrahamson responded that she recalled contacting Mr. Seaks and sharing some frustrations. Previous to her making that contact, she had been chosen to be on a committee to represent the elementary teachers. She added her expectation was to open up the communication. She said she tried to categorize into four areas. Those four areas were work overload, behavior in the classroom, communication, and respect. Because Mrs. Abrahamson was nearing her retirement, she wants to leave the District better and feels the District was struggling for teachers.

Mr. Michaelson echoed Mrs. Abrahamson's comments. He said he has been in the District a long time and would hope it could become better.

Pre-identify Ideas for Work Overload – Dr. Hocker requested ideas for addressing the teacher work overload. He added there should be consistency in sharing those identified ideas back to the building leadership teams.

Mrs. Heiser requested clarification on the topic about specialists requesting leave. She inquired if the instances when the specialists are going to be gone, were the specialists expected to put in leave and attempt to get substitute teachers. Dr. Hocker responded that was correct, they were expected to attempt to get a substitute teacher. After discussion regarding the same scenario with a Title I teacher, the discussion lead to the question, If any certified teacher is going to be gone, whether for a short segment of time or several days, the certified teacher should make every attempt to have a lesson plan(s) prepared for their absence.

After discussion regarding Title I teachers making available something on Seesaw at different levels, Mrs. Abrahamson inquired if the reading coaches could put together something and have it prepared so the classroom teacher could utilize it. An example would be having a DPS Seesaw public library where lessons could be retrieved from and provided by the specialists. It could be a resource for the classroom teacher when there was an unanticipated absence of a specialist. Mr. Harris responded that he did not think that was an unreasonable expectation.

Mrs. Kathrein said the lesson does not necessarily need to be created by a reading coach. Mrs. Knipp suggested utilizing the Seesaw community library and organizing that so it would be easier to find the lesson the teacher was looking for. Mrs. Knipp added to be cautious and review the material as it may not be age appropriate. Mrs. Kathrein felt it would be good to organize the library in Seesaw around the essential standards. Committee members agreed.

Mrs. Heiser felt the team had come up with a solution. This solution would help build a bridge between the classroom teacher and the specialists.

Mr. Harris recapped the Central Administration Office will communicate with each building principal and let them know the expectation when a certified teacher will be absent, they shall have a plan for their absence.

Mrs. Kathrein felt it was important that if the teacher that was absent put together lesson plans that their time and effort be honored, and the plans be utilized.

Mrs. Schwartz inquired how will the team know when the goal has been met. Mrs. Stroud said it might take some time but because the expectation was set the process could work. Mr. Seaks suggested maybe checking with the building leadership teams and see if it was being done in the buildings. Mrs. Knipp and Mrs. Abrahamson concurred.

Mrs. Knipp suggested this summer the District might consider hiring a few individuals, maybe even teachers, to organize the DPS community library.

Other – Due to time available, Mr. Seaks inquired if the representatives from the middle school and high school would like to use this opportunity to provide some input.

Mr. Michaelson reported at the high school, there is an online committee that was addressing some of the issues. Included in that committee's conversation was work overload. Mr. Michaelson shared some possible solutions.

At the most current DHS staff meeting, teachers were asked where they want to place PLCs and where do they wish to place OP. He added those conversations were not taking place previously.

Mrs. Stroud reported on behalf of Dickinson Middle School. She said at the beginning of the school year, they were struggling with the new Schoology platform.

Mrs. Stroud noted it was different for teachers at the middle school than it was at the elementary level. The middle school teachers usually do not have a problem when someone was gone. Oftentimes they will cover for each other if there was no substitute found. The teacher might miss a team meeting but won't miss their preparation time.

Mrs. Abrahamson referenced the topic of the early outs and inquired if there was a way to resolve that concern. Mr. Seaks responded that he recalled that this topic was to be brought up with the building leadership teams to try and find some possible solutions.

Mr. Michaelson shared that he felt the climate at the high school regarding student respect and discipline seems to be a little better. The COVID hybrid and the additional assistant principal may have helped. He said there were still students that lash out at the teacher. There were instances when the student was sent to the office and the student was put back in the classroom within 20 minutes.

There was discussion regarding the Success Academy, distance learning option for students, trauma, and inward and outward migration.

Mrs. Heiser inquired if the District was finding ways to get more substitute teachers, such as paying them more and trying to retain the substitute teachers. Dr. Hocker responded the Teachers on Call were in charge of the marketing and paying the substitutes and paying them at market rate. There is also an advertisement on the district website advertising the need for substitutes.

During COVID, many individuals that substitute did not wish to be in the schools and have the added exposure. He added that he does look at the list of unfilled leaves where a substitute had not been found. Mrs. Heiser recognized that sometimes other teachers fill in at the high school. Those instances will not show up as unfilled.

Schedule Next Meeting and Agenda Topic – The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, April 14, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. at the Professional Learning Lab. A topic on the agenda could be feedback from the building leadership teams regarding work overload.

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

Minutes submitted by Twila Petersen.