



Classified Leadership Minutes
Tuesday, February 14, 2023; 1:30 p.m.
Professional Learning Lab

Present - Superintendent Dr. Marcus Lewton, Jennifer Wyckoff (Jefferson Elementary), Heidi Smith (Lincoln Elementary), Jo Erickson (Roosevelt Elementary), Tracy Lauf (Prairie Rose Elementary), Kristi Eckes (Dickinson Middle School), Kristi Burbank (Dickinson High School), and Twila Petersen (Central Administration Offices).

Absent – Business Manager Stephanie Hunter, Kayla Kennedy (Berg Elementary), Jeanette Wyckoff (Heart River Elementary), and Jeffrey Whitehead (Hagen Building).

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Superintendent Dr. Lewton at 1:30 p.m.

Review and Approval of January 10, 2023, Meeting Minutes – Mrs. Heidi Smith moved to approve the January 10, 2023, meeting minutes. Mrs. Jo Erickson seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken on the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Old Business – There was no old business.

New Business

Review of the February 14, 2023, School Board Meeting Agenda – A copy of the agenda was distributed to the committee members. Superintendent Dr. Lewton noted the recognitions posted on the school board’s BoardDocs website. These include Mrs. Audrey Kuntz receiving the Stark County Spirit of Excellence Award, DPS receiving a \$2.27 million grant for mental health, Mr. Pete Dobitz receiving the Western Edge Coach of the Year, West Dakota Family and Parent Resource Center receiving the Western Edge Best Parent Resources/Support, Mrs. Kathy Mavity receiving the World Changer Award from Evergreen for her and her class’s support to Evergreen, Dickinson High School Social Studies Instructor Trevor Conrad receiving the 2022-2023 Educator of the Year award, Early Childhood Program Paraprofessional Dana Turcotte receiving the 2022-2023 Classified Staff of the Year award, Marathon Oil providing \$15,000 in funds for curriculum material, three Dickinson High School seniors selected as Presidential Scholars, Heart River Elementary receiving recognition from the North Dakota Department of Instruction for their growth on accountability as a Title 1 school, and many more.

Dr. Lewton explained the Board will begin a conversation at tonight’s meeting to address the needed space at the elementary schools. Four of the six elementary schools are at or near student capacity. Berg Elementary and Prairie Rose Elementary are not at capacity. The Board will receive input regarding micro-adjusting the attendance boundary lines.

At tonight’s Board meeting, the Board will receive information on Dibels data on student fluency. Also tonight, Dickinson High School Principal Brandt will share information regarding the high school’s A/B schedule. He will propose a schedule for the Day A classes meeting on Mondays and Thursdays and the Day B classes meeting on Tuesdays and Fridays. The Wednesday late start schedule will remain the same and students will attend all classes in a condensed schedule. There are some advantages to the A/B schedule proposal that will be shared.

Dr. Lewton explained several other topics on the Board agenda for tonight include adding five positions funded by the mental health grant, adding three positions at the Southwest Area Career and Technical Education Academy, and a proposed school calendar for 2023-2024. The proposed calendar was distributed to the committee members.

Superintendent Lewton explained the Board will review revisions to a Board regulation and Board policy regarding classified employees being paid for any scheduled work time when there is an emergency closure. Copies of the Board policy were distributed to the committee members. Dr. Lewton read the language from the proposed Board policy DDBB-Holidays for Classified Employees. The revisions will provide the superintendent flexibility on virtual days to pay classified staff. There could be professional development for the classified employees on the storm days. The recommended revisions to the policy will also pay those essential workers one and a half times their normal pay for working on the storm days.

Effective March 1, paraprofessionals that substitute teach will be paid an additional \$4.00 per hour. This will not affect their benefits.

Ms. Kristi Eckes inquired when the Classified Salary and Benefits Package would be reviewed. Dr. Lewton responded it is typically brought to the Board for review in May or June. He asked committee members to look at the document and bring suggestions for revisions to the next meeting.

State of the District – Superintendent Dr. Lewton distributed a summary handout for his State of the District presentation.

- Recognitions – There were numerous national awards, state champions, sports activities, Educator of the Year, and Classified Staff of the Year listed.
- Achievement Data – Dickinson Public scores are at the state average in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. Dickinson Public did fairly well compared to other Districts in the nation on the effects of COVID on education. Dickinson Public did above average in comparison to other Districts in the state on the effects of COVID.
- Finances – To start up a new athletic program, such as the recent girls' wrestling, it will cost the District approximately \$50,000. Student activities traditionally operate in the red.
 - Capital Projects – There are 10 mills dedicated to capital projects. This is not sufficient to sustain the needs of the buildings in the District.
 - Food Services – This typically operates in the red. Last year it operated in the black. When food services operates in the red, funds are taken from the general fund and put into the food service fund. This leaves less money to pay staff.
 - Debt Services – There are approximately 25.7 mills for debt services. These funds are used to pay off the Dickinson Middle School construction loan.
- Revenue – There are 70 mills dedicated to the general fund. Funds are received from oil and gas production tax (3.1%), local tax (22.7%), state tax (56.9%), and federal taxes (17.3%). Dr. Lewton explained the federal tax of 17.3% is all in grants procured in the last few years. He noted that money to pay for salary increases for employees is generated through legislative action, not through the school board. The District anticipates operating slightly in the black at the end of this fiscal year.

Federal money is appearing high due to ESSER funds and grant monies. State money, or “new money”, is used for new programs, new positions, and raises. Last year, legislation provided 1% and 1%. There was 1% provided but the District spent more than 1% on salaries. It is not anticipated the District will know the funding for the next biennium sometime in April.

- General Fund History - Dr. Lewton said the general fund was operating in the red. Last year it was anticipated the District would end the fiscal year with \$1.9 million in the red. Due to cuts, the deficit amount was reduced to \$653,000. This year, the District hopes to have a balanced budget.
- District Focus – The District is focusing on High Reliability Schools (HRS), Professional Learning Communities (PLC), Response to Intervention (RTI), and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS).
- DPS Schools and Facilities – The average age of the school buildings in the District is 56 years old. The elementary schools are at or near student capacity. Dickinson Middle School and Heart River Elementary are the only two buildings that have not had additions to provide more available space. Dickinson High School is out of space. Six Dickinson High School classes have been moved to the Dickinson Middle School. It is anticipated Dickinson High School will increase by 70 students in the fall of 2023.
- Enrollment and Staffing – The chart on the handout displays the District was anticipating 4,077 students fall of 2020. In preparation for the anticipated increase in enrollment, 32 additional positions were filled. Due to COVID, the enrollment was reduced to 3,699 students. This, and the fact that oil prices dropped, put the District in a difficult situation.
- Southwest Area Career and Technical Education Academy (SWACTEA) or North Campus – Dr. Lewton reported building A should be opening in about two weeks. The funding for renovations to building C have just been provided to the District. The Board will consider three new positions at the SWACTEA at tonight’s Board meeting.
- Facility Needs – Dr. Lewton explained an outside contractor was hired to review the buildings in the District and provide an expert opinion on the cost to upkeep the buildings. The contractor estimates the cost at Dickinson High School to be approximately \$35 million for the needed repairs and upkeep. Some areas that need to be addressed soon are the recent water breaks at the high school. The boiler is the original 1968 steam system. It would cost approximately \$10-\$12 million to switch it to a hot water system. Many areas are outdated including the electrical panels, roofing, cabinetry, fire sprinklers, and security.
 - Dr. Lewton explained in April a survey will go out to every resident in the District. This survey will ask families what they are willing to support since the District has facility needs.
- Facility Space – The elementary buildings are in good shape. Roosevelt Elementary is 102 years old. It will cost approximately \$6 million to remodel Roosevelt. The Hagen Building is 88 years old. It will cost approximately \$800,000 to repair the Hagen roof. This amount will not cover improvements to the Hagen building to make it ADA compliant and address the needed repairs in the kitchen area.

The District receives \$1.6 million annually. With the approximate cost of \$60 million over the next 10 years, \$16 million is only providing a portion of the amount needed.

Adjournment – Superintendent Lewton declared the meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.