

To the Dickinson Public School Board
From Kris Fehr, board member *KF*
Date: February 16, 2016
RE: NDSBA Negotiations Seminar Report

Thank you for allowing me to attend the NDSBA Negotiations Seminar February 12, 2016 and the pre-seminar workshop on Superintendent Evaluation on February 11, 2016. Below are my thoughts and comments after attending both continuing education/professional development opportunities:

The **Superintendent Evaluation** session covered the ND Century Code (15.1-14-03) that specifies two evaluations each year by the board and the timeframe for each. There are four important areas that a school board is responsible for: Budget, Policy, Strategic Planning, and Hiring/Evaluating the Superintendent. (None is a negotiated item; they are board responsibilities.) We learned about revisions that have been made to NDSBA's superintendent evaluation form (DPS doesn't use NDSBA's form) and viewed a demonstration on an electronic evaluation tool, available for North Dakota school boards to use for a fee. The goal of an evaluation form, whether paper/printed version or online, is ease. An online format would save the board president a lot of time over the current method of evaluating the DPS superintendent. The evaluation tool that was demonstrated has the following values: 1) professional development for board members is built into the evaluation, 2) it's a guide for the board to focus its work, and 3) the superintendent's improvement plan is built into the evaluation. The particular tool may not be what the DPS board would select; however, the value of this session was to show how an electronic evaluation could be implemented and how it could work, including applications for comparisons to other superintendents. It was refreshing to learn about technological advances that could affect the work of the School Board and I am encouraged that the school board may look into an electronic evaluation tool in the near future.

Friday's session was about **teacher contract negotiations**. It opened with some thoughts by Jon Martinson, NDSBA Executive Director. I was very surprised to learn that the "Teachers Convention" break that gives a two-day school holiday every October may not be held next year. The attendance has dwindled from about 500 teachers six years ago to 100 last year and, apparently, teachers are not required to attend. The union is talking about joining with another entity to have a conference.

Topics covered at this year's Negotiations Seminar included the new timeframe for teachers to return signed contracts, alternatives to school board members serving as negotiators, the business manager's role in negotiations, preparing for negotiations (ground rules, contract considerations: the contract is for individual teachers and the negotiated agreement applies to the entire negotiating unit), lessons learned from impasse, and a question and answer session from a panel of experienced negotiators. Speakers included school attorneys, North Dakota school board members, school business and human resource managers and NDSBA staff. Of particular interest was the presentation and insights from Andy Sever of the Montana School Boards Association.

This year's seminar included practical information that should have been very helpful to new board members and new negotiators, as well as experienced negotiators.

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