

## Unapproved School Board Workshop Minutes

Dickinson Public Schools  
Board Workshop

November 12, 2013; After Board Meeting  
Board Room, Central Office

The Dickinson Public School Board held a workshop on November 12, 2013, at the Central Administration Office. Board members present were: President Kris Fehr, Vice President Jason Hanson, Ms. Leslie Ross, and Mrs. Tanya Rude. Board member absent was Dr. Morton Krieg. Administrators present were: Superintendent Douglas Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent Vince Reep, Mr. Ron Dockter, Mr. Jay Hepperle, Mr. Guy Fridley, Mr. Calvin Dean, Dr. Marcus Lewton, Dr. Becky Pitkin, Mrs. Susan Cook, Ms. Tamara Praus, Ms. Sherry Libis, Mr. Shawn Leiss, Mrs. Dorothy Martinson, and Mr. Henry Mack. Others present were: Mrs. Twila Petersen.

Board President Fehr called the workshop to order at 6:05 p.m.

**Strategic Plan** – Superintendent Sullivan distributed draft copies of the strategic plan. He explained over the past 18 months, the School Improvement Leadership Team had put a lot of work and discussion into the document. When Superintendent Sullivan took the position in 2009, the strategic plan was already out of date. The approach for creating the document was done through a hybrid approach. The draft is a work in progress. It will need to be reviewed on an annual basis. The most significant changes noted by Superintendent Sullivan were the belief statements. He gave an example where a previous statement “Parents and guardians of students are responsible for preparing their children to come to school ready to learn and the school is responsible for educating all students.” Due to the change in the school district dynamics, the School Improvement Leadership Team has changed the focus to read “It is the responsibility of the school district to prepare the learners for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” The School Improvement Leadership team felt that it is not the responsibility of the district to decide if the parents have prepared their child or children to learn but the district will receive the children without exceptions. Dr. Sullivan requested the school board members review the document and email him with any questions or concerns within the next few weeks. He anticipates the school board’s adoption within the next couple of months. Mrs. Rude said that she felt that the draft plan did not take in all of the stakeholders input, such as parents, students, and business leaders. Dr. Sullivan responded that it did not have specific stakeholder input but it had been discussed with the District-wide PAC members for an opportunity for them to provide some information. Now that there is some assessment survey and data being completed, parent input will be incorporated in the future. Dr. Lewton explained that the information from the perception surveys completed by the students and parents was utilized when some of the sections of the strategic plan were written. Ms. Ross inquired what percentage of the parents and students completed the survey. Dr. Sullivan responded the survey was administered twice within a short time frame due to the low parent participation. Over 90% of the grade 2-6 students completed the survey. Ms. Ross asked how many questions were on the survey. There were comments that the survey was long and redundant. Dr. Sullivan explained that the survey was created by AdvancED and had been tested, to a degree, for validity.

**Disadvantaged Students** – President Fehr said she had read an article in the American School Board Journal regarding connecting the disadvantaged students to schools. Ms. Libis shared her experience with mentoring of the students. Mr. Dockter explained how students are matched up with a teacher or a counselor. The students that are new to the community seem to be doing okay to a certain degree. It is a whole new culture. There was a discussion regarding resources available and how those resources are not always the solution. Dr. Pitkin said it is important that the students are getting not only their meals covered but the snacks and milk. It is imperative the students are in attendance at school.

At 6:45 p.m., there was a 15 minute break for a meal.

**How do we respond when students already know it?** –Dr. Pitkin shared her experience with students that have the knowledge for the content and how the students may still be challenged. Ms. Libis shared information regarding a differentiation guide and using the opportunity time to be creative. Mr. Dockter explained different projects being implemented at the high school to provide more student enrichment for life skills, social skills, volunteering and involvement in the community. Other principals shared their experiences including intra-curricular and extra-curricular activities. There was discussion regarding the gifted and talented program which brought further discussion into the definition of gifted and talented. The limitation of facilities and resources was discussed. Superintendent Sullivan said this is one area which the district still has room for growth. Several buildings are doing a variety of things in attempting to challenge the students; there is no uniform response.

**Staffing in a Growing School District** – Dr. Sullivan distributed a handout with information regarding the enrollment history for DPS in the last 30 years. The highest enrollment in the district was in 1985-86 where 3,271 students were served. After 1986, there was a gradual decline in enrollment. In 2008-2009 the enrollment began to increase. There has been an increase of 724 students in the past five years. This presents challenges to the employees within the district. Not only has the district been hiring additional staff members, it has hired a lot of replacement staff, especially with the large number of retirements. Over the past few years, 100 licensed staff members have been hired. The district has strong hiring practices. Administrators are aware that there will be some specialty areas where the district will be losing teachers. It is estimated 12 new faculty will need to be hired for the next school year. This will be a cost to the district of approximately \$640,000. Assistant Superintendent Reep suggested beginning the hiring process after Christmas and hiring some of the teachers as early as January 2014. The 12 positions do not include retirees. The number of teachers that will be retiring is unknown. The DLR Group will be looking at administrative services. During the upcoming North Dakota Administrators mid-winter conference, Dr. Sullivan and Mr. Reep will be visiting with administrators from West Fargo to ask for some guidance in a growing school district. There was discussion regarding the current kindergarten class being large with many new kindergarteners enrolling since the start of school.

President Fehr inquired if there had been research done that indicates there should be an “X” amount of administrators in a school building for every “X” amount of students. Dr. Sullivan said this was done in Montana but in North Dakota it is left up to the school boards to look at the totality. Dr. Lewton suggested the district review other school districts in the state and look at the class sizes and the number of teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, etc. Collecting information on teachers and the effectiveness on classroom sizes would be beneficial. Assistant Superintendent Reep suggested keeping in mind the super block schedule, band, physical education, art, etc. when discussing classrooms. Hiring staff early for next school year will be a key aspect to preparing for the future.

President Fehr thanked the administrators for participating and providing current data. The information at the community forum on December 9 will be valuable as the district looks at the future.

**Adjournment** - At 7:40 p.m., the workshop was adjourned.

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Kris Fehr, Board President

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Vince Reep, Business Manager

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Twila Petersen, Secretary