



## **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING**

Wednesday, December 13, 2017; 4:00 p.m., CAO Board Room

### ***Minutes***

Members Present: Superintendent Douglas Sullivan, Mr. Ron Dockter, Mr. Brent Wolf, Mrs. Trista Fisher, Dr. Marcus Lewton, Mr. Mitchell Meier, Mrs. Melanie Kathrein, Captain David Wilkie, Mrs. Carla Schaeffer, Mrs. Michelle Kovash, Ms. Sherry Libis, Mrs. Rebecca Bautz, Mrs. Susan Cook, Mrs. Melanie Hanel, Mrs. Sara Streeter, Mrs. Amanda DeMorrett, Mrs. Sara Steier, Mrs. Tammy Peterson, Mrs. Amber Fridley, Mrs. Kate Rothschiller, Mr. Henry Mack, and Mrs. Jennifer Nokes.

Members Absent: Mr. Trevor Conrad, Mrs. Amber Berg, Mrs. Stacy Kilwein, and Mrs. Lindsey Southiseng.

**Call to Order** – Superintendent Sullivan called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**Meeting Norms** – The meeting norms were available for review on the agenda.

**Additions or Deletions to the Agenda** – There were no requests for additions or deletions to the agenda.

**Review and Approve the November 1, 2017, Meeting Minutes** – Mr. Wolf moved to approve the November 1 meeting minutes, as presented. Mrs. Fisher seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**AdvancED Engagement Review** – Superintendent Sullivan asked the principals from the buildings to report on the progress preparing for the engagement review scheduled for November 4-7, 2018. Some buildings reported they were still getting acquainted with the new standards due to the domain changes. Other buildings were focused on building goals or finishing up the Title I components before moving onto AdvancED.

Dr. Sullivan explained the review process will not be as difficult as it was five years ago. AdvancED has streamlined it more and the self-assessments are no longer required. If the team wanted to do the self-assessments, that was still an option.

Superintendent Sullivan distributed a copy of an email from Ms. Betsy Deal, Director of AdvancED. AdvancED recommends the systems quality factors assessment be submitted from the District and from each building. Dr. Sullivan noted that WorkSpace would not be available until approximately two months before the review. He recommended the buildings start gathering the information and save it in a central location so that it may be copied over to WorkSpace. AdvancED requires assurances which the principals already do on an annual basis. There will be an executive summary that principals will be required to prepare which the principals have done in the past.

Dr. Sullivan explained what AdvancED is hoping to accomplish with their revisions was to make greater strides in helping school systems and school buildings to understand that the engagement review is meant to be an ongoing process that the District reviews on an annual basis and work on

continuous improvement every school year. Dr. Sullivan felt DPS has gotten better at this as a District. Many of the things that are done in this District he thought aligned very well with the expectations of AdvancED.

Superintendent Sullivan noted he was on the engagement team last week for a review of Mandan Public Schools. He distributed a handout with a rubric that was used by the engagement team. The rubric reviews the District's procedures and practices in terms of looking at data and utilizing the data and applying the data in each one of the buildings. The ranking on the rubric was 1-4. Also within the handout was a bank of questions. The questions were not provided by AdvancED and may have been drafted by the lead evaluator. There were sample questions for school board members, for building administrators, for teachers, for students, for the Central Administration Office, for parents, and for community members. The questions will give the improvement team an idea what the conversations will look like and topics the engagement team might want to discuss so they may be more prepared and be able to answer some of the questions. He noted the conversation is not meant to be confrontational and there is not a checklist for the engagement team to try and find something wrong.

The final document Dr. Sullivan distributed was regarding eleot® (Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool). AdvancED is putting more emphasis on the eleot® tool. When Dr. Sullivan was on the Mandan Public engagement team, the team went to five different buildings and went into 57 different classrooms and conducted the exercises on the eleot® form. Dr. Sullivan explained it is important for the building administrators to share with their teachers that when an engagement team member goes into the classroom, they are not watching the teachers. Their purpose is to see how the students are engaged. They are observing the students and what the students are doing. The reviewer may be in the classroom for about 20 minutes. That could be during the beginning of a lesson, in the middle of a lesson, or the end of the lesson. He hoped when this information is shared with the teachers it will put the teacher at ease knowing the reviewer is not watching the teaching techniques or how the teacher is managing the classroom.

Superintendent Sullivan inquired what kind of information he could provide to help in preparation for the November engagement review or what guidance would be helpful. Mrs. Fisher noted that usually questions are asked during the School Improvement Camp regarding the upcoming visitation. Dr. Sullivan concurred. If individuals have questions before that, he encouraged them to let him know.

Dr. Sullivan explained he would anticipate team members having everything completed no later than the first week in October. Mrs. Streeter had noticed that they are no longer able to input information into ASSIST and Workspace will not be available until two months prior to the engagement review. She would like to know the framework and the timeline for that. She did not know what she should be preparing. Dr. Sullivan felt that was a great point and will start the discussion at the Cabinet level that way there is a discussion before information is compiled. He felt the District was doing many good things at the building level on using data. He added DPS should try to find a way to showcase and highlight areas.

Mr. Dockter inquired regarding the exit interview and if the team met with various groups. Dr. Sullivan responded that in Mandan they conducted it as part of the compilation. Each building had a couple of parents and some students. He suggested Dickinson Public not ask the student council to be the student representatives but instead have a good sampling of students. The parent meetings should be made as open as possible to many parents. At Mandan's engagement review, there were approximately 10-15 parents that represented each of the buildings.

Mrs. Cook inquired if there was a certain level of students in the student sampling. Fifth graders are more able to converse than a kindergartener. Dr. Sullivan responded that he did not wish to dictate that as a superintendent and would not recommend it be dictated at the Cabinet level.

Dr. Lewton served on the engagement team for Bismarck Public School's review. He remembered the review team did not want to see all the minutes and agendas and data as evidence. He asked Dr. Sullivan what evidence he saw at Mandan Public and the content of that evidence. Dr. Sullivan agreed that the review team does not wish to see every agenda. They would like to see a sampling of it. In Mandan, there were some copies of agendas from school board activities. That could be a list of times the School Improvement Team met. He added the process is significantly different than five years ago. It is more streamlined for the schools. Dr. Sullivan asked the school improvement team to have conversations with their leadership team to make sure a lot of work is not done that will not be used. If there was anything that the Central Administration Office could assist with in guiding them with their work, he asked the committee to contact him and let him know. Their time was too valuable and he wanted to make sure they were headed in the right direction and their time was utilized wisely.

**Strategic Plan** – Superintendent Sullivan explained there was a discussion at the school board level in November regarding the District's strategic plan. The discussion was regarding possibly adding in some measurable goals or SMART goals. As a follow up, there was a preliminary discussion at this week's Cabinet meeting. The Cabinet has reviewed a possible approach to addressing some SMART goals or measureable goals. Dr. Sullivan wanted to bring the conversation to the School Improvement Team for input and for the team to ask questions about what that means and about the work so that this group, since it developed the strategic plan, could weigh in on how that desire for measureable goals could be woven into the strategic plan and the thought process since it may help as a school district and help as a committee to more closely monitor progress that is being made on the strategic plan. Also, so that areas that may need additional work can be identified and the committee will be able to celebrate goals that are accomplished. This will assist with the team's work on the strategic plan and their efforts that have gone into it and that the District is moving in the direction the committee desires. Dr. Sullivan asked for input and thoughts about perhaps putting some measurable goals or SMART goals into the strategic plan to help the District do a better job of monitoring growth as a school district. He noted it was not unusual to have a measurable goal.

Mrs. Fridley explained at Lincoln Elementary when they review their SMART goals, they use the strategic plan as a guiding tool in what their SMART goals are. They make sure the academic and behavioral goals are tied back into the strategic plan. She added each of the buildings is different and may have different goals and the needs might be different amongst the buildings. Dr. Sullivan responded that was a good point.

Mrs. Kathrein provided an example of SMART goals related to the social-emotional learning needs addressed in the strategic plan. She suggested that a SMART goal could help measure the training that has been used and if the new ideas being implemented are making a difference for students. The goals may each be unique. Initially it may include measurements of just getting staff trained and then it may move to be a measurement on the results to see if it is working. If our actions are not working, the District may need to consider adding support or taking other steps to reach its goal.

Mrs. Kathrein agreed that the goals in the building would probably have behavioral goals included. A goal for the strategic plan might be to take the goal further away from that to the District level which would support the building.

Dr. Lewton said the conversation last April or May was focused around mental health and some of the things being done at the elementary schools, middle school, and high school. If that is part of the strategic plan, we would need to know if it is working. If it was not working, then the finite resources being allocated to that area should increase or decrease. Dr. Lewton felt from the conversation in April that we may not be aligned and it would help in that area as well. Mrs. Fridley explained if we have the tools to measure academics and if instructional practices are working but we do not have a social emotional tool that we are using right now, then we do not have a base line. If we were to go that route and look at mental health screening, that would be a dangerous door to open because we would need to provide those services. Mrs. Kathrein said she did not mean to imply that. She was thinking more about how it affects the Tier I type of behaviors. She was not sure we should conduct mental health screenings.

Dr. Lewton felt there was a way to measure. He noted he was not a mental health expert. Other than screenings, they do a small survey at DMS on belonging. There is some baseline data where it is just a survey on how the students feel. Belonging is a huge part of learning. They collect data on that and make decisions based on that data.

Mrs. Streeter added that it also allows them to create the uniformity of being able to say they were all working towards the same thing and might do it a little bit different at Jefferson in the way they record or that they might look for a streamline way when they are looking at their PBIS data. For example, is the District using the SWISS system where behaviors are marked the same in every single building so that you can look to say, this is the problem at this school but it is also a problem at another school instead of being completely different everywhere. Maybe when the data begins to be recorded, there could be a baseline of information to move forward from because now there is not.

Mrs. Kathrein added that if there is an area where there are some issues meeting the goal, then it has to come back to what are we doing about it. Is there a way for us to allocate resources to those needs?

Dr. Sullivan asked for additional thoughts or comments on inserting some type of measureable objective or SMART goal into the strategic plan. He also inquired if it would be beneficial to receive a suggestion from Cabinet to help move the conversation. Many committee members felt this would be beneficial. Mrs. Fisher suggested examples from other schools as well.

Captain Wilkie gave an example of how the strategic plan is used. He referenced action plan #2: “The environment of all District property will be safe” and explained this states all schools are going to be safe or that the environment of all District property will be safe. He noted there is no way to measure this statement unless each school measures how safe it is. He suggested adding to the sentence something similar to “The environment of all district property will be safe *by the school year of 2020.*” That would set an end or a goal to be reached without dictating how to make the school environment safe. Captain Wilkie referenced #5, “All learners will effectively utilize technology for learning.” He gave an example where the District might set a timeline for completion, based on budget constraints, such as by the year 2024. Alternatively, it could be a timeline for completion of all infrastructure and one-to-one-technology for the students by the year 2024. If a particular school had this completed in 2022, they would be ahead of the strategic plan and that would be cause for celebration. He explained that is how the measurable goals work for the District. It gives timelines so that the District can look at their financials or they can look at individuals that they need to have in place. He added that in regards to the social emotional learning wording, the District is having difficulties finding social workers to work within the schools; therefore, it would not be plausible for

the District to set a goal for next year. However, to set a goal for three years might be attainable making a strong effort to find individuals.

Mrs. Fisher said she understood the timeline and noted all the items listed underneath and inquired how would those be measured. Mr. Wilkie responded that some things are measured just by completing them. Mrs. Fisher asked what happens when only some of the items underneath are completed. Mr. Wilkie suggested changing the goal for the remaining. Mrs. Kathrein felt it depended on the goal. If the goal is about something that deals with student achievement effectively by using technology, part of that is probably addressing if there are enough devices and if there is adequate infrastructure. The next part is what are the students doing with the technology. Mr. Wilkie responded that would be an opportunity to measure and ask why the goal maybe was not met and look at it as a team or from this committee to identify the reason for not meeting the goal. It could be because there are not enough people or is it because there are not enough finances to accomplish the goal.

Mrs. Streeter felt having the goals would help in establishing the allocations or resources. Mrs. Kathrein agreed that it would help prioritize the goals. If there is an area that has a closer timeline, the funds could be allocated to that area first.

Dr. Lewton felt there was good conversation last year regarding the CTE Center and the Center-based Elementary Classroom and then the conversation didn't go any further. If there was a goal to open a Center-based Elementary Classroom by 2019, if it isn't accomplished or no individual is found to fill the position, then what other resources could be allocated towards that to make it happen. He liked the fact that it wasn't always about simple data, sometimes it is about completing a task.

Superintendent Sullivan said he would go back to the Cabinet and get some input from them and also get some samples put together to share with the team to help move the conversation forward. He appreciated the input from the team members and their comments on the topic.

**Next Meeting Date** – Superintendent Sullivan noted the next meeting would typically be held on January 3. He did not think he would have the information available by that date and would not have met with the Cabinet members. Dr. Sullivan recommended the meeting be scheduled for **Thursday, January 11 at 4:00 p.m.** All but one team member would be available on that date. He noted the strategic plan would be a significant discussion at the January 11 meeting and they would try and get some measurable action plans into the framework of the strategic plan.

**Adjournment** –Dr. Sullivan thanked the school improvement members for attending the meeting, for their input from today's meeting, and for all they do for the school district. He wished them a Merry Christmas. The meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.