

The Grinnell-Newburg Board of Education met in Special Session on May 22, 2013, at 5:15 p.m. at The Peppertree, 1014 3rd Ave., Grinnell, Iowa 50112.

Members Present: Jeff Smith, Barbara Brown, Doug Cameron, Leo Lease, Carol Wilhelm, Claire Moisan, and Jeff Knobloch. Also in attendance at the table: Superintendent Todd Abrahamson, Business Manager Lisa Johnson, and Board Secretary Susan Kriegel

Members Absent:

Administrators Present: Sarah Seney, Jeff Kirby, Sara Hegg-Dunne, Kevin Seney, Chris Coffman, and Heidi Durbin

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

President Smith called the special meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Board Secretary Susan Kriegel called the roll. Seven members were in attendance.

2. Approval of Consent Agenda

3. Work Session

Intended outcomes: As a result of this work session the board and administrative team Will:

- 1) Have a common vision of the actions necessary to improve student learning for all
- 2) Review the work done at both the district and building levels to identify actions that will be taken to improve student learning outcomes
- 3) Develop guiding principles for the work of the board and administrators as a governance team in the context of education reform efforts, evidence-based practices, and second order change
- 4) Identified areas of potential “disconnects” between the board and the administrative team and strategies to eliminate those “disconnects”

Superintendent Abrahamson handed out pen and pencils set to the board members as a thank you for the service to the school district.

He explained the work that has been done since January 2013: teamwork, how to operate as a team, how can support be given to one another, accountability, rumblings, but need to focus on the work, must operate on a system, and not in silos.

He explained how he has re-focus his leadership, reached out to other administrators, what his schedule will be for the 2013-2014 school year. Mondays through Wednesdays he will be in the buildings, there will be one four hour monthly cabinet meeting. Fridays will be reserved for appointments, unless there is an emergency. He asked for board support and for the board to support the principals.

Superintendent Abrahamson gave a brief introduction on Troyce Fisher. She has

served in education for forty-two years beginning as a teacher, consultant, and was the Executive Director for the SAI.

Fisher explained the goals for the evening, the importance of a system in place to produce good results, the triangle, what does it take to improve student learning, the importance of rigor, need to engage students, make learning relevant, problem solving, accountability, lead with a PLC, and should have group quality not individual quality.

Some of the responses from the group were: treat teachers professionally, stabilize the school community, focus on the right drivers, there are pockets of success and failure, learn to how wisely use time, need to improve and make changes, use a systematic approach, change has to be done, there is too much on an educator's place, but need to know where going, need to do more with less, need a system wide culture, re-do some definitions, need to align some systems, and support the teachers, when there is change there is a grieving process.

Chris Coffman discussed his handout to the board and the administrative team: need to do more with less, assessments, for the triangle approach need ownership by the teachers, how can we assess programs, there has been a struggle with the Iowa Core, some changes have to be made, and there has to be accountability.

He discussed answers to the following questions: what are we doing to improve student quality, is it hard to assess teacher quality, how to move from A to B, how is time being managed, appears only interesting in reading, and how is this information going to be tracked? Coffman stated the math scores are higher then the reading scores. Kirby stated what is learned in reading is carried over to math.

Superintendent Abrahamson has meet with four different student groups, 9-12th graders. Their common theme was tired of memorization requests.

It is very important to support the teachers, they have high standards to address, need to support them.

The elementary and middle school teachers want more time to collaborate. The high school teachers have a planning time.

The board decided on six points:

1. Cohesive Decisions: Consensus among the administrative team
2. Data driven decisions
3. Educational Leaders: importance of educational training and develops cohesive visions for the buildings
4. Vision: (Uncomfortably /Comfortable) Always striving to better the system, develop cohesive visions for the buildings
5. There needs to an authentic openness from the bottom to the top
6. Data Wall: how are students transitioning

The administrators decided on

1. Instead of, I heard....., what are the actual facts

2. Make sure everyone follows the chain of command
3. Have good dialogue regarding data and students
4. Support the 2nd order of change
5. Have a clear vision
6. The roles need to be authentic
7. Would like the board members to attend an AIW or PLC meeting

Comments regarding the chain of command: not always followed, second hand information, problems need to be resolved if possible at original level, and some are fearful of consequences.

Teachers need support and also at times to be motivated. The 2012-2013 PD day's results are all over the map. There needs to be a district wide PD plan.

What if some teachers never change? There needs to be a basic plan and support for teachers. All teachers need to be at a high level of instruction. Very important that all staff know the administrators care about them. Feedback needs to be purposeful.

Fisher summarized the final important lists. Superintendent Abrahamson indicated there would be a board work session to filter down the six talking points.

Final comments were: how does the administration relates to the teachers, a sense that is where the work needs to be, per Fisher the administrators need to work on what do the teachers deserve from me?, the board needs to have accurate information, and the board does care about each staff person.

One of the administrators asked the board what were the expectations when Superintendent Abrahamson was hired? Everyone needs to be accountable for his or her actions. A change in Iowa for education takes a long time.

4. Adjournment

Motion by Cameron, seconded by Knobloch to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 7-0.
The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Board Calendar:

Regular Board Meeting

6:00 p.m., June 12, 2013