

The Grinnell-Newburg Board of Education met in Special Session on October 27, 2011, at 6:00 p.m. in the Media Center, Grinnell High School, 1333 Sunset Street, Grinnell, Iowa 50112.

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

Members Absent: None

Administrators Present: Kevin Seney

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

President Smith called the special meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Board Secretary called the roll.

2. Hold Public Hearing on 2012-2013 Innovative Calendar Waiver Request

Superintendent Abrahamson indicated the waiver is a request for permission to pursue an innovative calendar. If the district does not submit the waiver for state approval, the district cannot explore options for changing the school's calendar. The state has until January 15, 2012, to approve the submitted waiver request.

Superintendent Abrahamson read the application for the waiver request.

The approval of this waiver allows the district to plan a schedule for professional development. The professional development schedule would remain the same every school year. The district is proposing to change instructional days from 180 to 173 in order to build in ten full days of professional development.

By Iowa law, schools must have ten days of professional development (PD). Currently the Grinnell-Newburg teachers have three full PD days prior to the start of the school year. The remaining PD hours occur during the scheduled early outs.

The superintendent has had informal discussions with staff and community members regarding PD days. The discussions have explored different approaches for PD days. Discussion possibilities for the school year include eliminating early outs, scheduling seven PD days, or a combination of full and half PD days. The Professional Learning Communities (PLC) would be built into the PD daily schedule.

With the existing format, the staff does not have enough time to review the student achievement data. There has also been a request for more time to work with the teachers on new technology applications.

For the remaining scheduled early outs for 2011-2012, two hours will be spent on PLC training. The teachers will have two additional hours for PLC collaboration outside of contract time. The district will pay for the additional two hours of collaboration time.

President Smith asked for comments from the audience:

- What will be the impact of Governor Branstad's education plan have on the PLC format?
- Can teachers stay later during the day? The current three-year contract will soon be up for negotiation. Hours are part of the union negotiation. The board and the superintendent will receive the proposed contract for review. There will be fourteen days to review the proposed contract. The master contract is not viewable for the general public.

- If there would be seven PD days, does the district receive the same dollar amount from the state? If the district receives the same funding, will the district help parents with child care and meals? How will this money be spent? There was a request this concern be part of future discussions. The concern is this time should be productive for students.

- The district will continue to work with the Galaxy.

- If the waiver request is approved by the state, future board agendas will include public hearings to discuss the proposed school calendar.

- Is the one-day a month PD proposal more beneficial than the existing monthly three hours early out? The PLC common sense approach suggests PLC's be built daily into the master schedule. There are many options for the board to carefully review.

- Superintendent Abrahamson explained a calendar committee has the responsibility of preparing the yearly school calendar for the board to review and approve. The committee consists of teachers and administrators. The proposed calendar will be an agenda item, which allows for public discussions. Superintendent Abrahamson will continue to add more documents to the Google site. A question was asked if community members can be on the calendar committee.

- Superintendent Abrahamson has almost finished a needs assessment survey for the district. One of the survey questions concerns PD hours. Should PD time be a full day, half day, a combination of, or continual early outs? The survey will be reviewable by a survey monkey on the district's website.

- There was a request to have the board information more accessible on the district's website.

- There was discussion regarding the concern of student volunteers from the college.

- There was discussion regarding the total contracted days for teachers and the daily contracted hours for teachers.

- A question was asked if the new system, AlertNow, could be used to announce board meeting dates. Communication from the board needs to be available to everyone, at every income level. Not every home has a computer. A request was made for notices and announcements from the board be mailed to every home.

3. New Business

A. Approve 2012-2013 Innovative Calendar Waiver Request

Motion by Cameron, seconded by Moisan to approve the 2012-2013 Innovative Calendar Waiver Request. Motion carried 7-0.

4. Adjournment

Motion by Cameron, seconded by Knobloch, to adjourn the meeting at 6:47 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.