

The Grinnell-Newburg Board of Education met in a Work Session on January 6, 2016, at 6:00 p.m. at the Grinnell-Newburg Community High School in the Board Room, 1333 Sunset Street, Grinnell, Iowa 50112.

Members Present: Barbara Brown, Meg Jones Bair, Jeff Knobloch, Jonathan Nance, Helen Redmond, Dustin Smith, and Jeff Smith.

Members Absent: None.

Also in attendance at the table: Superintendent Todd Abrahamson and Board Treasurer/Secretary Lisa Johnson.

Administrators Present: Principals Brian Conway, Sara Hegg-Dunne, Jeff Kirby, Kevin Seney, Sarah Seney, Dean of Students Heidi Durbin, Director of Instruction and Curriculum Kym Stein, Activities Director Chris Coffman.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

President Brown called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m. Board Secretary Johnson called the roll. Seven members were in attendance.

2. Board Discussion

A. Roles and responsibilities during the transitional period between superintendents

Board President Brown stated the purpose of the meeting is to provide direction on priorities for the next six months.

She continued on, explaining the budget is one continued priority. Superintendent Abrahamson noted the cabinet is coming up with two plans to bring to the board. Abrahamson is working with Board Treasurer Johnson on negotiations planning for the FY17 certified budget. Brown asked for the Principals to participate as much as possible.

Infinite Campus is also a continued priority. Abrahamson stated the front work has been completed and could be passed on to a Principal at this point. There is training for various employee groups (Admin Assistants, Administrators and Teachers) that will happen later this spring.

Regarding the TLC process for replacing employees, Abrahamson stated the

cabinet team will be discussing which positions to refill later this week during budget discussions. Brown asked about training. Director of Instruction Kym Stein stated there are numerous trainings state-wide. She is coordinating these trainings. Dean of Students Durbin stated she will work on training the mentor teachers once it is identified how many the district will need.

Brown asked about how the second year of this program will work. Durbin stated employees will have to reapply each year. She explained administrators are hopeful there will not be turnover every year, so new training is not required. The funding is currently guaranteed for 3 years. She noted the Principals each in each building will be the supervisors.

Durbin stated the most timely task is determining if replacements will be hired as well as the TLC training. Brown requested if new positions are hired that the Principals take over for Abrahamson. Principal Kevin Seney asked about how to handle internal transfers. Abrahamson stated that process should still stay the same, interviews should still be done, as internal transfers are not an automatic.

Brown asked about building/grade configurations. Abrahamson explained this part of the budget discussion would be happening the following week. Principal Sarah Seney voiced concern about the timing of making configuration changes. She believes next year may be too soon to properly communicate said changes to both staff, parents and the community. Principal Conway, being new to the district, voiced concern over this as well. Principal Kirby stated he believes parents and even staff would feel the district is “dropping” this on them. Principal Hegg-Dunne stated that during the bond campaign the district stated having all of one grade in a building was a positive. She isn’t sure how the community may view this. Board Vice-President Knobloch asked about the possibility of moving forward with the reduction without grade reconfiguration. Board member Redmond stated the configuration would help with the disparity of free and reduced between Fairview and Bailey Park. Sarah Seney wants to be sure it is known that this segment of the population does not necessarily perform at a lower level. Kirby stated the changes being discussed would impact four of the five buildings, and that alone will cause a number of issues. Kevin Seney asked if this is something the board wanted to set in a new leader’s lap. Board member Dustin Smith agreed this could be hard for a new leader to implement.

Knobloch stated he isn’t sure we need to push the change, but it is necessary to start having open conversations about it so that when changes become necessary

the community will already be well aware the situation and plan.

Stein asked what the board would support. Knobloch stated he would consider reducing sections without reconfiguration. Brown noted there are educational reasons for doing grade configuration, as well as budgetary reasons. Knobloch stated the more the public hears that message over the next 18 months, the better in helping to relieve people's fears.

Brown asked the question, if the board is planning a larger building restructuring in the not so distant future, does it make sense to undertake this large of a change? Knobloch noted that just because we are having the discussions does not mean the configurations will happen immediately.

Facilities wise Abrahamson stated he plans to bring one last bigger project to the board, the HS window and panel replacement. Otherwise he leaving the prioritized list of projects to his replacement.

Abrahamson stated the updated computer lease will be another agenda item coming yet this year. This could include the current computers pushed down to the lower grade levels. Board member Redmond asked why this Macbook product was chosen. Abrahamson stated the Macbook Air is cheaper, but less durable. The cabinet team has discussed, but believes the long term cost is better with the Pro than the Air.

Kirby stated the contract for the website allows for an overhaul this summer. He and Becky Nance are working with the representative, but he recommends waiting for the new Superintendent before the overhaul, in order for them to make recommendations.

Brown asked what other issues the Administrators are facing. Kirby stated a plan for professional development is one of his concerns. Brown asked about standards based grading. Kevin Seney stated the plan was originally to push it up grade levels at a time in order for parents to be comfortable with it. Stein agreed it is a long process to implement. Board member Jeff Smith asked about how the process would work. Conway explained a version of it is already implemented in the elementary buildings.

Kirby stated standards based grading retains students until they meet the standards. Standards referenced grading doesn't actually retain a student due to

not meeting a standard. Most districts are working on transferring to standards referenced grading. Stein stated the benefit is it shows the parents and students exactly what is expected of the students.

3. Adjournment

Motion by D. Smith, seconded by Nance to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 7-0.
Meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Board Calendar:

Regular Board Meeting	6:00 p.m., January 13, 2016
Policy Committee Work Session	2:00 p.m., January 20, 2016
SIAC Work Session	5:00 p.m., January 20, 2016
Regular Board Meeting	6:00 p.m., January 27, 2016