

Board Special Meeting



2445 – 3rd Avenue South, Seattle WA 98134

Oversight Work Session: Executive Directors of Schools; Work Session: 24 Credit Graduation Requirement Implementation - Board Policy Review & Revision

Wednesday, September 28, 2016, 4:30-6:45pm

Auditorium, John Stanford Center

Minutes

Oversight Work Session: Executive Directors of Schools

The meeting was called to order at 4:30pm. Directors Blanford, Burke, Harris, Patu, Peters, and Pinkham were present. Director Geary arrived at 4:39 pm.

Staff Present: Superintendent Larry Nyland, Chief of Schools Michael Starosky, Associate Superintendent for Teaching & Learning Michael Tolley, and Executive Directors of Schools Jon Halfaker, Helen Joung, Sarah Pritchett, and Kim Whitworth.

Director Burke began by noting that the Executive Director of Schools (EDS) staff will lead following Superintendent Nyland's opening comments.

Dr. Nyland noted that Seattle has the highest quality of instruction in which he was pleased to have recently witnessed by the EDS staff. He noted that the EDS dedicate the majority of their time to supporting schools, and due to that dedication there can be tension between caring for instruction versus issues or problems that need to be resolved. Dr. Nyland noted that tonight's presentation is on how to navigate that system and how to help the EDS stay focused on that balance.

Dr. Starosky introduced the EDS to allow them their personal introductions. He noted that EDS Kelly Aramaki was absent from the session due to a family health emergency. He stated that he is excited to share the standards, job description, and focus from the EDS point of view; specifically, how the Teaching & Learning (T&L) team can better partner together and how everyone currently plays a role in student achievement. He noted the intention to answer the common questions: what do the EDS do, and what can Seattle Public Schools (SPS) rely on the EDS for. Dr. Starosky stated that the EDS role exists specifically to support principals as instructional leaders and referred to slide 5 of the presentation. He rhetorically asked why is school leadership important and followed this by stating that research suggests that school leadership is the 2nd most highly rated factor in impacting student achievement, and that there are no documented cases of grade schools showing academic achievement without strong leadership.

Director Geary arrived at 4:39 pm.

Dr. Starosky noted that he began his career with SPS at Whittier Elementary and continued his work at Whitman Middle School as a principal. He noted having taught at Ballard High School, and teaching for 8 years at Mercer Middle School. He stated that, prior to his current position, he was a Principal Leadership Coach. Dr. Starosky discussed obtaining credentials at Central

Washington University (CWU), also obtaining his Teaching and English Majors and in addition, he spoke about obtaining his Master's Degree at Western Washington University (WWU). He ended by noting that 2016 marks his 23rd year with SPS and that he recently obtained his doctorate in leadership for learning at the University of Washington (UW).

Ms. Joung introduced herself as the EDS for the Southwest (SW) Region. She noted being raised in Bellingham, WA and discussed how she obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at the UW and shortly after moved to the East Coast where she began a career in teaching. She noted having obtained her Master of Arts in Curriculum and Teaching and her principal credentials at Teachers College University along with her Masters in Educational Leadership. Ms. Joung stated that she moved back to the Seattle area and worked at Highline School District as a math coach, followed by serving as an Assistant Principal in the Everett School District. She noted 2016 as her 5th year in Seattle, beginning August 1, 2016 as an EDS. She noted currently attending the UW for a doctorate in Leadership for Learning (L4L) in 2018. Ms. Joung stated that she has served in education for 16 years, 5 of which have been in SPS. She expressed pride in serving in such a complex district, and that Dr. Starosky offered great support in her 1st year as a Principal at Olympic Hills Elementary, which was her role prior to becoming an EDS.

Ms. Whitworth introduced herself as the EDS for the Northeast (NE) region. She noted being born in Texas and graduating high school in Arrow, Alaska. She discussed obtaining her Science degree in Economics at the University of Oregon and having a plan to retire at the age of 40. She expressed that due to something missing in her life and the work she was previously doing, she began volunteering which taught her a passion for teaching and the importance of education. Ms. Whitworth noted that she pursued this passion by obtaining her Master's degree in Teaching, English Literature, Economics, Math, and English. She noted that she began her career with SPS as a teacher intern at Washington Middle School and began her full teaching career by instructing Math debate and drama classes. Ms. Whitworth continued to share her 7 years' experience of leading in the Lake Washington School District and teaching at Ballard High School. She also shared that she was a Principal at Eckstein Middle School for 3 years and continuing her education at Seattle University.

Ms. Pritchett introduced herself as the EDS for the Central Region. She began by discussing that she is currently in her 2nd year doctoral program at the UW with Helen Joung and Kelly Aramaki. She noted having obtained her teaching certificate at WWU and undergraduate degree at Washington State University (WSU). She expressed her passion to help others understand the importance of education. She noted having graduated from WSU and starting her career with SPS as an hourly Instructional Assistant in 1992. She noted formerly working with students in an alternative school teaching 7th and 8th grade students every subject except for Physical Education and Science. She discussed having followed her teaching by moving to Mercer Middle School as a House Administrator, being a Principal for 6 years at McClure Middle School, and being an EDS for 4 years. Ms. Pritchett shared that she graduated from Franklin High School and expressed pride in serving in a district who strives for academic excellence.

Mr. Halfaker introduced himself as the EDS for the Northwest (NW) region. He began by stating that he began his career at SPS in late 1969 or early 1970's. He noted having obtained his Bachelor's in History at the UW and Master's degree and classroom certification at Antioch University. He shared having been a STAR mentor in SPS for 2 years, a house administrator

at Eckstein, and a Principal at Washington Middle School. Mr. Halfaker expressed pride in coming from a family background that strives to lead and strengthen community.

Dr. Starosky shared that the EDS commitment to SPS runs deep. He noted that they're committed to supporting students, teachers, administrators, and school office staff, as well as the School Board of Directors. He then introduced Mr. Tolley, who is very knowledgeable on the history of the EDS role.

Mr. Tolley began by noting that his career with SPS began 9 years ago as a High school Director and that his job was to organize and support principals. He shared having worked alongside with 5 individuals who were responsible for supervising the principals and implementing new student assignment plans as well as establishing new feeder patterns. He described the process of reorganizing the level of leadership in the regions which led to the creation of the EDS role. He noted his former peers doing extensive research which gave them the vision of leading principal instruction and leadership. He stated that the current structure of the EDS role is built on that research.

Director Harris asked Mr. Tolley if he could provide her with 2 or 3 sentences of what the structures mean. Mr. Tolley answered the question by noting the EDS serve as a broker resource for schools. He noted the joint work with principals and their close partnership with schools. He also stated that the EDS are consistently relied upon to address HR and personnel issues in addition to ensuring the work at the school level is being done.

Director Peters noted that she would be interested in knowing the questions about EDS that the community, staff, and other Directors have. She stated that the EDS position was established in 2009 and asked if it has shown to have made a significant difference. She asked how the district would survive without it, and how do principals feel about the work the EDS do. She suggested that the EDS provide a survey about the EDS role for the principals and to make it anonymous to ensure honesty in order to truly assess the work being done. She noted that a common topic in the community is resource allocation, and stated that it is commonly perceived by the public that the district puts more resources into central office than in schools. She asked why there were 5 EDS positions and asked why there was a need for a Chief of Schools and 2 principal coaches. She expressed having the impression that there is an abundance of staff doing similar work. She stated that having heard the credentials that all of the EDS hold, that she finds it disappointing that they are not serving in the schools.

Dr. Starosky began answering Director Peters by stating that the majority of her questions will be answered in some of the upcoming slides. He stated having conducted a survey with 97 principals in the past which included 60 questions based on the District Leadership Design Lab (DL2) standards and the Danielson Framework that the EDS work is organized around. He stated having observed that the EDS are just now learning the standards. He noted being interested in the current reality vs the standards in place and how our principals have a different understanding. He stated that they also had the EDS take the survey provided to the principals to evaluate Principal lens vs. EDS lens. He stated that the feedback from these surveys brought them to assess the EDS relationship with principals, one on one coaching, how the EDS would work with principals in smaller groups, and how the EDS provide Professional Development to the Principals.

Dr. Starosky addressed Director Peters and referenced her question regarding multiple persons with similar jobs; he stated that there is a recognizable difference between the role of

a Leadership Coach and the role of an EDS. He stated that a Leadership coach works primarily in a peer to peer position with Principals in their first years, unevaluated. He continued by noting that the EDS serve the evaluative piece and have the authority to place them on plans of improvement. He stated that the Leadership Coaches also serve as a formal support to help Principals reach the improvement desired or to decide if another profession is more suitable to them. He began discussing the role of Chief of Schools by stating the purpose is to balance the operational side of leadership and instruction and that prior to the position, the two were out of balance. He continued by referencing slide 13 regarding operational balance.

Director Burke stated that the session was at slide 13 of 45 with 5 minutes left and suggested to Directors to add an additional 15 minutes to the discussion.

Dr. Starosky presented slide 16 regarding EDS focus priorities. He referenced slide 21 regarding EDS effectiveness and discussed the ability of principals to improve teaching and how he and the EDS take part in that. He then reviewed slide 27 and spoke briefly about Principal Association of Seattle Schools agreement issues when contacting a principal and what to bring them towards. He then shared the importance of understanding slide 28 titled Span of Control which showed the statistics for the amount of EDS to principal direct reports in various districts. He explained that SPS has a ratio of 1 EDS to 20 principals. He stated that if there were opportunities for smaller caseloads, the EDS would be able to visit schools more, work more strategically with principals, show less accountability issues, improve communication, and show strong intensive improvement in teaching.

Director Harris discussed vertical vs regional alignment and asked if there was a chart that existed describing building based decision making.

Director Blanford expressed that he found slide 28, regarding Span of Control, concerning due to the Apples to Apples comparison as the work differs from that of other districts. He asked what the district loses and gains by having a vertical orientation vs regional orientation. He expressed how important it is for clarity around the topic of principals being the CEO's of schools because he feels that there are still elements and expectations around it and sometimes the current model does not line up.

Dr. Starosky answered by noting how many principals the EDS in other districts evaluate. He continued by noting that with smaller caseloads, the role is primarily focused on instructional leadership which accounts for the majority of their time, and stated that Highline and Bellevue primarily reflect that.

Director Peters stated that she had difficulty making out slide 27's diagram due to its small size. Dr. Starosky followed by noting that it was to be used as an example to make a point.

Director Peters asked what role the EDS play in problem solving issues that are brought to their attention. Mr. Halfaker responded by noting that they strive to find a balance in communication by starting at the lowest level of connection. He discussed an example of a recent protest at Loyal Heights Elementary, in which he served as a mediator. He stated that they make every effort to recognize who the key people are in resolving the issues and noted that in some cases meeting with 3 or 4 people is more beneficial than meeting with the community. He stated that this is where they find the balance. He stated that there isn't always a perfect solution, but that it is their duty to figure out how to continue in the best way. He

noted that the EDS work closely with the Ombudsman for certain levels of frustration that arise in parents as well as other support staff.

Ms. Pritchett stated that there are 3 layers of communities which include student's issues, Staff concerns around leadership, and community meetings reacting to issues. She noted that the EDS proactively reach out in those situations and serve as community liaisons. Director Peters clarified, as in a liaison between principal and community.

Director Burke asked for Director questions, which were suggested to be responded to after the session. Dr. Starosky asked that they be sent his way for response in a Friday Memo.

Director Pinkham asked if we are asking for deliverables from the Continuous School Improvement Plans. He continued by asking what school levels we lose the majority of novice principals to. He asked further, what the role of EDS are in student learning. Dr. Starosky offered a quick answer that the majority of novice principals are being lost at the Elementary level and stated that he could later provide detailed data on the topic.

Director Burke stated that the ratio of 20-to-1 is not appropriate, but that it could be if the EDS were co-located. He noted that the ratio does not feel like it gives enough touch points to do an effective evaluation. He stated that only 50 percent of SPS buildings have Building Leadership Team by-laws and Decision Making Matrixes and that it is vital for the EDS to assure all buildings provide them. Dr. Starosky stated that he recently sent that data to the EDS who are double checking building by building that they exist and are accurate.

Director Geary noted that some principals are comfortable navigating the ins and outs of the district, while other principals are not. She noted being concerned that this resource is unequally being used to support principals and asked how the EDS are measuring whether or not the principals are a good fit.

Director Harris noted not understanding Director Burke's reference to co-location and stated that it has been said that when we have problems with principals and they are counseled outside of the district, it does not reach EDS but instead stops at the principal or teacher level. She asked if this could be brought up in discussion. Dr. Starosky noted that the EDS job description was re-written to align more closely to the DL2 standards and that he needed time to think on her question.

Director Peters asked how the evaluative pieces of EDS compares to how principals evaluate teachers. She asked how it is more or less than what the EDS are doing.

Director Burke recessed the meeting at 5:34 pm and the meeting reconvened at 5:40 pm.

Work Session: 24 Credit Graduation Requirement Implementation - Board Policy Review & Revision

The session was staffed by Associate Superintendent of Teaching & Learning Michael Tolley, Director of College & Career Readiness Dan Gallagher and Principals Ruth Medsker and Jill Hudson.

Staff introduced themselves to the Board and Michael Tolley began the review of the meeting slides, noting there would be an opportunity to discuss community engagement in depth at an upcoming meeting. Director Burke noted the meeting had a hard stop at 7:15pm.

Dan Gallagher reviewed the purpose and agenda slides. Directors asked if Julie McCleery's work is connected with this and Mr. Gallagher noted there is not a current contract with Ms. McCleery at this moment.

Mr. Gallagher spoke to the 24 Credit Task Force Report and how it is foundational to the high school re-visioning effort. He then reviewed the requirements as called for in the 2014 law and the comparison of requirements currently in effect to those starting with the class of 2021.

While reviewing the slide for SPS Waiver & Task Force, Mr. Gallagher noted that Ms. McCleery had facilitated some of the work of this task force.

Ruth Medsker then reviewed the Continuing progress in transition to 24 credits slide, speaking about their first principals' meeting and describing the ideas behind high school re-visioning. When noting the Overarching Goals slide, she stated that the timing is urgent for this effort and that they are working to implement the recommendations of the 24 Credit Task Force.

Mr. Gallagher then summarized the work to date and indicated what is currently underway. Directors asked if the State Board of Education could be petitioned to extend the current waiver, due to this being an expensive and unfunded mandate, and Mr. Gallagher noted that the short answer is no, and then spoke to the specifics of the law. Directors asked about the length of the current waiver and Mr. Gallagher noted it was a two-year waiver.

Director Peters noted that this is exciting work but also that it conflicts with the fact that now there is a lack of counselors in schools. Mr. Gallagher noted that counselors, Naviance, and more are all part of high school re-visioning. He further pointed out that Career and Technical Education (CTE) is also called out in the 24 Credit Task Force implementation plan. Mr. Gallagher with some added comments by Superintendent Nyland, then spoke to the state law around CTE and career pathways.

Director Burke asked about the scope of work and how it fit with the timeline to implement the 24-credit graduation requirement. He also wanted to know what reference points exist in determining the differences between a 20th and 21st century education and who defines what a graduate truly needs. Ms. Medsker indicated that a variety of reference points and sources of input are being considered. She gave examples of looking at education systems in other countries; conversations with employers and parents. She also made mention of the need for graduates to be able to think critically and articulate their ideas. Mr. Gallagher added that there is a good deal of research to review along with gathering input from the community.

Director Geary expressed a hope that "citizenship" or civic responsibility be a component of education outcomes for high school graduate, while Director Burke highlighted the need for promoting "grit", or strength and determination. Director Harris expressed concern about the reliance on computers to fulfil the credit total.

Director Patu asked about certificates and how Skills Centers can help students get more credits. Mr. Gallagher responded that the 24-Credit Task Force posed the same question and

put forth recommendations for this. He also drew a distinction between academic credits and certificates, which are related to career paths and employer requirements.

Mr. Gallagher continued with the PowerPoint and discussed how State law affects board policy and what the timeline is to consider policy in light of the 24-credit requirement. He spoke of using Policy No. 0030 as the lens through which policy adjustments would be considered.

Director Harris wondered if the counseling handbook and superintendent procedures don't also require review/revision.

Director Blanford expressed appreciation for using Policy No. 0030 as an equity lens. He also expressed concern about changing policy, but not providing adequate supports for implementing the change, which could result in exacerbating the problem with opportunity gaps.

Ms. Medsker and Mr. Gallagher acknowledged the Director's concerns and reiterated that re-visioning high school is not looking at merely meeting the 24-credit graduation requirement, but rather how to create good learning opportunities and pathways for all students as part of eliminating opportunity gaps.

Director Blanford responded to an earlier comment about not relying on computers to meet the 24-credit requirement. He commented that computers could make things efficient for some students if employed in strategic ways, perhaps helping to address issues around Carnegie units. Mr. Gallagher responded by citing the 24-Credit Task Force recommendations about extended learning activities. He noted the task force cited online learning opportunities as one ingredient to a solution, and not a predominant solution. He stated there were a variety of options.

Jill Hudson noted that many students already graduate with more than 24 credits and that it was an example of failing to comply with Policy No. 0030; she said because the distribution of opportunities to earn so many credits is inequitable we needed, as the 24-Credit Task Force has done, to envision new ways for students to earn credit that are equitable.

Director Harris said she is wondering about trimester systems and noted the existence of positive community feedback on that possibility. She wondered how it might impact the International Baccalaureate or other programs and asked how SPS is tracking and weighing feedback. Mr. Gallagher responded by referring everyone to page 5 of the 24-Credit Task Force report on community engagement. He noted feedback to date has not been about a whole new vision and all its aspects but rather on singular, focused questions. He stated that more community engagement may be called for on various issues as guided by SPS's new community engagement rubric (shown on slide 23 entitled "SPS Community Engagement Tiers").

Mr. Gallagher advanced to the slide entitled "Examples of policies for review" and noted consensus among principals to abandon Policy No. 2420, but not on alternatives to 2420. Directors Burke and Harris both ask if other districts can serve as models for how to deal with abandoning Policy No. 2420. Mr. Gallagher and Ms. Hudson responded that a comparative analysis of other districts, domestic and international, was occurring.

Mr. Gallagher showed slides listing policies that could be reviewed as part of implementing the 24-credit requirement. He then asked Directors for feedback as to whether the criteria for policy review SPS is using (consistency with state law and consistency with Policy No. 0030) were appropriate or sufficient.

Director Blanford responded affirmatively and noted the existence of extensive research that looks at what constitutes a successful 21st century education. He also wondered what kind of feedback SPS would get from the community on important questions and whether or not it would be enough to act as a representative sample.

Director Harris asked if teachers would be given a chance to provide input to which Ms. Hudson stated that principals who attend each re-visioning meeting are asked to report back to their staff and carry the dialog forward at the building level and then return to future principal meetings informed by that dialog. Mr. Gallagher also reminded the group about the district's community engagement rubric.

Director Peters asked if there is a place for the district's instructional philosophy in the work of re-visioning. Director Burke indicated that there should be. Ms. Medsker noted that work was ongoing with Peer Assistance Review (PAR) around "what it means to be a teacher in Seattle," therefore the district's instructional philosophy was already playing a role.

Director Peters also stated a need to communicate outwardly and clearly what the goals for high school re-visioning are.

Mr. Gallagher advanced to the final slide and gave summarizing remarks.

Director Burke asked the group a question about community engagement which led Mr. Gallagher to refer the group to the 24-Credit Task Force report that calls for differing levels of engagement according to the purpose or nature of the situation. He stated that the district's new community engagement tool would be applied and has already been shown to principals. Director Pinkham asked if there would be feedback from English Language Learner (ELL) or Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) students; how it would be collected; and how they would be impacted by this new graduation requirement. He also asked if extracurricular activities would be explored for options to get credits.

Director Burke brought the meeting to a close by stating there are so many opportunities in re-visioning high school and that they should be thoroughly explored with the upside of options being explored or considered getting well communicated.

Director Harris noted that it was Director Burke's birthday and asked everyone to sing happy birthday.

This meeting adjourned at 6:52pm.