

Work Session: Board Self Evaluation;
Work Session: Board Code of Conduct
Thursday, April 7, 2016, 5:00-6:30pm
Auditorium, John Stanford Center

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 5:05pm.

Directors Blanford, Geary, Harris and Patu were present. Director Peters, Director Pinkham and Supt. Nyland were unable to attend. The meeting was staffed by Deputy Superintendent Stephen Nielsen, and Director of Policy, Board Relations and Special Projects Erinn Bennett. Dir. Burke arrived at 5:55pm.

Work Session: 2016 Board Self Evaluation

Erinn Bennett noted the topics for tonight's discussion, noted the focus of the tools, and that the goal is to get feedback from Directors. She noted the policies that were provided regarding the Board's annual self-evaluation. Ms. Bennett noted that this work session was originally scheduled in February, she noted the timeline for the evaluation process, and pointed out that there is a shorter amount of time to accomplish goals with the evaluation scheduled for November. Ms. Bennett is looking to identify leads, establish tools, and get feedback on the timing of the Board evaluation and whether they would like to adjust that timing to align with the Superintendent evaluation timeline. She noted sending out initial questions to the Board to get thoughts and feedback on this topic. Ms. Bennett noted that the feedback received was varying and broad. She discussed the items included in the packet: the action report, the instrument and narrative from last year, the SMART Goals from last year, and the rubric for each of the indicators. Ms. Bennett noted the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) questionnaire, which is free to use, but noted that data is collected by them in the process. Mr. Nielsen asked if the Board must use the entire WSSDA evaluation or can they use just a portion. Ms. Bennett noted she could ask WSSDA if they only wanted to use a portion. She noted the Boards of Distinction benchmark list for 2016. Ms. Bennett noted some feedback and suggestions that she received from Supt. Nyland.

Directors noted that given the small group of people here, how valuable will this conversation be, as a high level of buy in of all Board members is important. Ms. Bennett shared this feeling, but noted the February work session that was cancelled. She noted her concern about the timeframe with trying to reschedule this meeting, however, Ms. Bennett noted this is the Board's tools and the Board's evaluation. She discussed perhaps having some Directors take the lead on this to move it forward. Dir. Geary noted that she is comfortable with keeping the old rubric in place and going through the process of trying to evaluate in November on that rubric because that will help her understand how to better evaluate herself next year. She noted she feels she has no scaffolding for this process to have an idea of how this all works

together, and that she would establish a baseline by experiencing the process. Dir. Blanford noted part of the conversation with the new Board Directors coming on was to discuss if it makes sense to recreate, and noted that some wanted to change the process and some wanted to keep it. Ms. Bennett asked for clarification as to what it meant to keep the rubric, as that meant that they would also be keeping the same Goals of the previous Board. She reviewed the items within the rubric and the indicators to provide examples. Ms. Bennett noted the previous year's Board evaluation indicated room for more work in each area, and wanted to know what Directors' ideas were. Directors discussed wanting to have training on these areas before changing them to fully understand the implications. Dir. Patu noted that she and Dir. Blanford did a lot of work in the past to create these documents. Dir. Blanford noted an interest in continuing to use the evaluation from last year, as he felt that none of the SMART goals rose to the level of completion, and that there is still work to be done. He further noted that the Board is in midstream now and there is accountability that they continue the work on these areas of focus for those that were not completed. Dir. Harris noted they have too much work to do without recreating the wheel, and noted her desire to continue this current process and evaluate in November. Dir. Geary noted that she would appreciate it if the drafters of these documents go through the evaluation process to make the language come to life, as currently she does not know the context of the documents for evaluation.

Ms. Bennett noted that when she sent out the initial questions, there were yeses and nos for using these tools or to create a new one. She noted wanting to go through each goal area, and possibly key in on a few to narrow the focus before moving forward. She noted that Supt. Nyland is in favor of using the research based questions that WSSDA created, but to pick the ones that resonate with this Board, and narrow the focus. Ms. Bennett noted that Supt. Nyland likes the research based look at the evaluation process. The group read through the document with the SMART Goals, noted to change the dates to this year, and noted the last Board's evaluation for each goal area. Ms. Bennett noted the need to identify lead Directors on each of these goals, and asked if five goals were the right foci for now through November. Dir. Blanford noted five would be difficult in the best circumstances, and that some are inconsistent with the sense of the current Board on various topics. Dir. Geary noted that some align with certain committees, and asked if that was the theory of action. Dir. Blanford noted that it was not, but the theory of action was that an individual Director who was engaged in a specific topic would take that on and move it forward.

Directors discussed how full the committee calendars are right now, and that maybe in the future they could tie in with the committees. Directors discussed various topics that are a focus now and asked what could be a focus in November. Dir. Blanford noted that last winter, priorities were set and noted that later it became morphed into this topic. Ms. Bennett noted last year's SMART Goals were created in January 2015 and evaluated in November of 2015. She noted the original instrument was created in 2013. Dir. Patu noted previous evaluations that weren't as formal, and that they needed something more concrete that was aligned with the district. Dir. Blanford noted that the informal evaluation process in the past was splashed all over the newspaper in a negative way. Directors discussed the background as to why certain goal areas were chosen and noted that in identifying the priorities it became clear that those Directors who had an affinity in specific areas would come up with the goals, develop the pieces within the evaluation and that the entire Board agreed upon the Goal areas to then engage in the work. Ms. Bennett noted the narrative speaks to the process of picking indicators and the process the previous Board went through and the evaluation process. She noted that these were Board goals, and in terms of staff assistance, that is something to be

mindful of, as these are not Superintendent SMART Goals. Mr. Nielsen asked for the results of the assessment last year and wonders if the Board may be set up for failure as it is so delayed out of the box. He noted to set goals to push the Directors, but to also be realistic. Directors noted the challenge of setting goals either too low or too high. Ms. Bennett noted the rubric introduction states the instrument and rubric remained consistent from 2013, but the SMART Goals portion had been added. Ms. Bennett noted that within the narrative from last year's SMART Goals, only two were met, the rest were proficient minus or basic plus, and perhaps those would be appropriate to continue with.

Dir. Geary asked about indicator IV-A, on Goal 4, and why is public engagement referenced. Ms. Bennett noted page 19 of the rubric, IV-A-2, is public engagement. Ms. Bennett noted the coversheet which breaks down the goals (page 2, the rubric overview). Dir. Harris asked about Deborah Massachi, and asked for more background on the work with her. Ms. Bennett noted that Ms. Massachi was a consultant paid for through WSSDA, and that she stayed on to help with the Board evaluation work and noted that she has connections to the University of Washington.

Dir. Burke arrived at 5:55pm.

Dir. Geary noted that she would like to focus on Goal IV-A-2 on public engagement. Dir. Blanford noted the context on this goal, and that previous Board Director, Marty McLaren, was assigned to this one. He noted the findings that the people who come and talk to the Board most often are not necessarily representative of all of the parents and students as a whole. Dir. Blanford further noted that when the Board gets emails from a few, it can be restrictive to their collective understanding of the whole, and that for good decision-making the Directors need to reach out to underrepresented groups, and to those that don't engage or come to testify at the Board meetings. Ms. Bennett read Goal 4, noted the implementation plan, and asked for feedback if this is another area of foci to continue. Dir. Harris asked if the SMART Goals have been lined up next to the Superintendent SMART Goals, and noted challenges that have been brought up. Dir. Blanford noted the biggest impediment is the flow of work at the district; the documents are created with the thought that there is enough time, but that it's aspirational. He noted there are barriers to every one of these, but there is an obligation to improve the Board's performance and there is progress that can be made. Ms. Bennett suggested working together to mitigate the impediments that are present. Mr. Nielsen noted his appreciation for the seeking of alignment with the Superintendent SMART Goals with the Board SMART Goals. He noted that if the decision is made to go down that path that the numbering conventions don't overlap as it gets confusing. He noted to find what is realistic and simple, and to seek what aligns with student achievement. Mr. Nielsen noted that Goal 5 aligns with the first two Superintendent SMART Goals. Ms. Bennett noted that the evaluation narrative is focused on the SMART Goals, and to keep that document in mind when looking at what Directors want to focus on.

Dir. Blanford noted previous Board members came out of crisis and had to deal with certain situations from which these goals originated from at that time. He noted that they may be falling into the same traps that the previous Board Directors had. Dir. Patu noted the historical perspective with the audit. Directors discussed accountability and responsibility. Directors discussed possibilities for selection for the foci of the Board evaluation and discussed the pros and cons. Ms. Bennett noted that just because something isn't listed on the priority list doesn't mean that it's not being worked on, but that it's just not the focus for this year. Directors noted

that if they have the ability to influence the budget that they should have the understanding of the budget, and that individual Directors need to go out and gain that understanding from staff if they feel they do not have the level of understanding to make appropriate decisions.

Ms. Bennett noted the potential next steps, discussed refinement of the goals, and noted that this item is not ready for introduction to the full Board on April 20. She suggested moving it to the May 4 Board meeting. Ms. Bennett asked for volunteers to take the evaluation tools and modify, identify and select an implementation plan. The Directors discussed working on Goals 2, 4, and 5 for the remainder of this year. Directors discussed that in going through the evaluation process once; it will become more meaningful and noted that perhaps feedback isn't being received because the new Directors don't understand the context. Directors discussed that because it is late in the school year, there wouldn't be as much value added if the process is pushed through without scaling back.

Dir. Blanford left the meeting at 6:34pm.

The next steps were identified as focusing on Goals 2, 4, and 5, and to redraft specific areas for this school year, and ask the absent Directors for their feedback. Directors Patu and Geary volunteered to work on the language and discuss with the absent Directors. Directors and staff discussed matching up the timeline of the Superintendent's evaluation process with the Board's evaluation process.

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Ms. Bennett asked for feedback on this portion of the work session, as the work session is out of time, and asked if there is a preference on rescheduling. Mr. Nielsen asked what happens if this is not rescheduled. Ms. Bennett noted that there is not currently a 2016 Code of Conduct, and so the meeting would need to occur if Directors would like to have one. Directors discussed the pros and cons to needing another meeting, and that it was necessary to continue discussions.

The meeting adjourned at 6:47pm.