

01 08 2019 School Board Round Table Discussion 6 00 PM

DISCUSSION ITEMS

INFORMATION ITEMS

BOARD AGENDA REVIEW

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

1. [School Board Members to Discuss Current Events in Education](#)

Minutes:

Mr. Wilson, Board Chair welcomes everyone to the special school board work session and thanks them for joining the meeting. He explains the format is a work in progress and this evening they will start with a roundtable discussion by the board members and then he will open the floor for comments from the audience.

Ms. Fortney, District 3 opens up the discussion:

Ms. Fortney would like to see a focus in the district's Strategic Plan to equip each school site with at least one social worker and a mental health professional. Home visits are important and without this resource on hand we are missing the connection from school to home in identifying the needs of our students.

She would like to see an Advisory Board comprised of teachers and students developed. This would allow us to tap into the integral resources that are immediately available to us. She includes this board could be comprised of stakeholders across the district with the goal being to gather information through monthly meetings.

Board members ask questions and have discussion for some clarification.

Mrs. Miller, District 7

In reviewing strategic plans from other counties, she was impressed by the plan for Miami Dade county which has four pillars with priorities inside each pillar:

Pillar four is Informed, Engaged and Empowered stakeholders.

Priorities:

Sustain strong lines of communication with students, families and employees

Strengthen awareness of District initiatives, activities and programs

Enhance parent engagement, access and advocacy

Build, strengthen and sustain relationships with stakeholders

She strongly believes that when we get to where our district addresses the strategic plan, we need to take into account these benchmarks.

Legislative Tracker: She encourages everyone to follow the legislative tracker.

The link will be sent out to the board so they may use this as a tool for tracking legislation. Today's presentation was by the Senate Education Committee: School Safety and Security Update.

Ms. Reynolds, District 4

Ms. Reynolds leads board discussion regarding other counties who have a citizen's academies. Ms. Reynolds draws attention to Leadership Orange (Orange County) which was presented at CFSBC. The team holds workshops where citizens from the community with interest in the school district can come and learn about the district through district led presentations and hands on workshops. The program promotes positives of the district and gives a hands on perspective for those that participate.

The PDF presentation information will be distributed to the board for review.

Ms. Reynolds requests that Leadership Polk be added to the next work session as a discussion item for the board.

In regards to the strategic plan initiatives she wants to ensure Polk's objectives/goals are measurable.

Mr. Townsend, District 1

In regards to the strategic plan, Mr. Townsend agrees with Mrs. Miller -the Miami Dade plan is a good sample model, and he also draws attention to the Osceola County format. Where they have five areas of emphasis that are ongoing. He believes the concepts in the current strategic plan for Polk County are narrowly focused on the numbers. In March (at the Strategic Planning Meeting) he does not believe a report solely focused on the numbers is advantageous to the district. He would like to see a change in the structure of the plan. Ex. Adjust Goal one to be:

Priority 1: Academic Success and have measurable goals flow into that priority.

Priority 2: Operational Excellence in which we hold people accountable for how programs are managed.

He believes we need to evaluate implementations as part of the plan. Ex. Board docs, the expense and lack of implementation should be evaluated. He finds it is important that Senior Leadership knows the board cares about these things as in how they are experienced on the ground. He explains 85% of the organization is not evaluated, and while some things are measured, it is narrow, he would like the plan to be more broad in

scope and more organizationally focused, one that formalizes oversight of things that are already happening. He would like the district to pay attention to things like a business would including giving attention to the work environment in a serious way. A lot of things are measurable in a yes or no sense, but there needs to be Key Point Indicators to really show the change and measure it.

The board discusses and clarifies some points.

Mr. Wilson draws attention to the fact that once a Strategic Plan is put in place, the team is moving towards these goals and to dramatically change the goals mid-course, can be disruptive to the organization attaining its long term goals. He agrees some adjustments can be made without the board getting too far down into the weeds.

Mrs. Miller shares the importance of implementing succession planning for the district as part of the plan.

The Polk County ESE Advisory- Mrs. Miller shares that the ESE Advisory Council is reorganizing and would like to be a committee under the School Board. Mr. Bridges indicates the board can establish any committee it wishes, there should be examples of that in other counties. The by-laws would be proposed to the board, and a determination made by the board.

Communications: Mrs. Miller presents a desire to have the board discuss communications as they relate to board and staff. There is policy in place and recently the policy has been communicated in ways that seems to discourage staff from communicating directly with board members. She believes communications should be open and free flowing and having spoken to several previous board members confirms this is how communications have previously been managed.

Mr. Hill confirms effective communications are always a work in progress. He understands this issue has been brought up on more than one occasion and believes bringing these concerns to the Superintendent to address would be advantageous for all. He agrees free flow of conversation is important and confirms for effective management of the organization, there is a chain of command and process to follow.

Ms. Fortney presents her concern that teachers feel micro-managed even down to their ability to communicate openly.

The board continues discussion regarding board staff communications, respecting the Superintendent, her office and staff time.

Live-streaming: Mr. Townsend gives kudos to having work session and board meetings on line, and would like to see public comments included in the broadcasts. Mrs. Miller would like the district to live- stream the meetings.

Mr. Wilson, District 6

His primary initiative this year, is related to finance. He is stunned that over the past ten years or so the district has seen annual revenues cut by over 110M dollars in different areas and different ways. It frustrates him to hear we spend 35M a year in busing and the state pays for only 25M, and a large portion of the mileage that we drive is simply because of state initiatives instead of focusing on the real core issue of how do we make our schools better. As many know, the board members meet with the legislators and talk with them regarding these issues. Mr. Wilson recommends the district have power brokers at the table. He has spoken with Commissioner George Lindsey and Superintendent Byrd

regarding establishing a blue ribbon panel of some of Polk County's most influential people to serve on this panel and give them access to the school district and what we are doing. This initiative would give them a look inside the district, and creates much more powerful advocates on behalf of the district to say you can't just keep adding these fixes and expect the school district to be able to fund. Very similar to Ms. Reynolds program recommendation.

The board discusses ideas for additional Round Table sessions, Mr. Townsend would like to open the meetings to bringing in speakers for different topic areas to talk to the board and open discussions.

The board discusses timelines for future Round Table sessions, Mr. Wilson provides that we could start the meetings in the afternoon, then allow for public comments at a time that meets scheduling to allow for public comments.

Mrs. Miller shares that she is receiving multiple communications from the work session earlier in the day on transportation. It is important to provide the public with explanation of why actions of this nature are taken, so they understand more clearly. Discussion continues in regards to communication to the public.

Mr. Wilson, Board Chair invites the public to come and speak.

He shares that while we welcome public comments, due to time restraints we ask they be limited to three minutes per speaker to allow all those who wish to speak, the opportunity. Currently we discourage board members from engaging in comment with the public during this time. We want to hear from the public in a way that is focused on the issues.

Ms. Michelle Montero- Polk County Teacher, she suggests if the board considers this meeting a public forum, and the public is limited to three minutes to speak, the board members may want to consider limiting their comments to ten minutes to allow additional time for the public. She recommends forming committees in each school in the district. The kids need to be invested in sharing their ideas, how they learn, how they can be engaged. Teachers need to form committees in each school where they can come to meetings like this and share ideas as well as information as to what is going on in the district, it may be beneficial to allow them to share ideas anonymously so they have no fear of retribution. She explains she teaches students who are at a level 1, the most at risk students in the county, she has access to only three or four bins of AR books which they have already been thru (needs access to more books). She is a fifteen year veteran of the district, her insurance just went up, she has an HR issue regarding her VAM scoring and she explains with some of the things going on and the frustration level they bring, it is out of control. She teaches because it is her passion and she loves it.

Marianne Capazello- President PEA, Some of the frustration the previous speaker shared is throughout the county, problems go up, solutions do not come down. We have made attempts to discuss workload, autonomy, student discipline, and we get some movement but not much.

Interdepartmental communications at the district are slow, departments act in a siloed manner. Every solution is very slow. We are losing teachers and if we do not become more fleet of foot in finding solutions and letting the solutions roll we will continue to lose teachers. She provides an example: hardened corners-when she became aware of some issues, she asked that an immediate communication go out, not several weeks later. Because staff is afraid, they are frustrated and they are stressed by this, they need to all understand what is happening.

We are going to need to organize as a district to fight some of the things coming out of Tallahassee as they are starving public school systems from the state level.

The fear factor some board members discussed earlier is real. She hears from people who are being mistreated who will not allow her to do anything because they fear it will get worse. Some people feel they can not speak truth to power, and many of the solutions would work well if they could flow up for resolution.

Patricia- parent of an ESE child in the district. The problem she faces as a parent is with administration at the school and the lack of communication with ESE families. She serves on the PTO and SAC committees. She has tried to build a community within the ESE family at school, she has been denied and received pushback by administration at the school. Issues with LEA, communications with the families, getting back to them on time sensitive evaluations, it's just not happening. She has emailed Dr. Steinke so she is aware of these concerns as well. She shares she has had to request an advocate come to IEP/case conferences for her child due to these concerns. She expresses understanding of the administration's workload, their schedules etc. She would like principals/administration to receive retraining in working with ESE families. We need to be welcoming to incoming ESE families to make their transition easier.

Holly Rayburn- (teacher and parent) After looking at Senate Bill 1108, which went into place in 2013, she learned that the law requires every three years each school in the district must complete a BPIE Assessment (Best Practices for Inclusive Evaluation). After contacting a few schools, 2 out of 3 did not know what a BPIE assessment. She would like to know what the School Board will do to ensure these bills are communicated to the schools and who is responsible for holding schools accountable?

Mrs. Miller explains a BPIE stands for Best Practices for Inclusive Evaluation. There is discussion among the panel as to the details and requirements. She clarifies the administrators at the school should be aware of this requirement, however they may not have been given the information and tools for this standard.

Mr. Townsend ties back public comments and several of the issues presented to the changes needed in the Strategic Plan and guidance of the district as a whole. We address issues individually as they come up, but as a whole, they are not addressed or prioritized as they should be in the Strategic Plan.

Sandy Doyle-Elementary PE Teacher, she is concerned about the student to teacher ratio placed on her as a PE teacher with a 45-1 ratio. She shares the same mandates as other teachers and while she understands it may be expensive to lower the ratio, she would appreciate some help in this area.

Beth-Polk County Teacher – 23 years, she says 'thank you' because tonight has been very informative to her. She has switched from school to school trying to find a home school. She loves the place she has landed. She suggests one way to gain some continuity throughout the county might be to have the schools share best practices with each other. She shares an additional concern about the lack of communication regarding the hard corners.

Ms. Fortney reiterates the need for a staff/student advisory council.

Mr. Boyd- Polk County School Psychologist since 1986, He has seen a lot of things come and go throughout his time at the district. He shares that historically communication has been one of the biggest problems for the district. He agrees with a previous speaker that we operate in siloes and he has found it at times to be even futile between departments. He shares his thoughts regarding the need for changes in the HR and Purchasing departments specifically. One of his major roles in the district is to evaluate students and identify those that are in need of exceptional education. He explains their team has had problems for years because there are not have enough people to

do the job effectively. An example: eight school psychologists were cut, which creates an inordinate amount of work on others to maintain state required timelines for their duties. He explains for this position, salaries and workload are not in competition with surrounding counties. He knows of three staff who went to work at Osceola County and experienced an immediate increase in salary with a better staff ratio. He is concerned with the timelines that are not currently being met. He performs an initial evaluation within 60 days, once the evaluation is complete and uploaded, the information is not acted upon timely. Some students he tested last March have not yet been staffed into ESE classes. He reiterates, there are not enough staff to handle the workload.

Regarding communications, it has been articulated they were to bring any concerns through their Regional Superintendent, and not to communicate directly to a board member. He believes there is a great potential for this district, there have been changes and improvement during his time at the district but a lot of things need attention.

Holly Rayburn- asks if the board does decide to format these discussions to bring in speakers, would they consider bringing in agencies (vocational rehabilitation or trade schools) to assist and advise for students who are not on a college bound path.

The board members agree this is a great suggestion and topic.

Mr. Wilson thanks everyone for coming out and shares how much the board appreciates their comments.

Mrs. Miller reiterates her appreciation of those who came out and shared specific information about issues we can work on as a district. Without their willingness to come out and speak, we may not have this awareness.

Sandy Harper- Polk County Teacher-24 years, Her son came through the ESE program at the district and had a lot of issues. In regards to accountability, she shares we do need to be more accountable to the kids and the services they need. She is excited to see a board that seems to be more cognizant of the needs in the ESE community.

Mr. Townsend shares his belief that these meetings should continue to balance public comments with the opportunity for the board members to interact.

Ms. Fortney reminds everyone of the list of concerns Ms. Capozziello distributed after the November PEA meeting. The topics of conversation tonight, were all discussed at the meeting of the PEA by seasoned teachers in November.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM. Minutes were approved and attested this 26th day of February, 2019.

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Lynn Wilson, Board Chair

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Jacqueline M. Byrd, Superintendent