

**DAVENPORT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
FEBRUARY 2, 2009**

The Board of the Davenport Community School District met for the Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, February 2, 2009, pursuant to law. The meeting was in the Jim Hester Board Room at the Administration Service Center, 1606 Brady Street, Davenport, Iowa, in said District. President Zamora called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM following an Exempt Negotiation Session held in the Executive Conference Room.

On roll call the following board members were present for the Committee of the Whole were: President Patt Zamora; Directors Richard Clewell, Nikki De Fauw, Ralph Johanson, Ken Krumwiede, Larry Roberson, and Tim Tupper. Other people present were Superintendent Julio Almanza; members of the administration including Dr. Leslie O'Melia, Ethel Reynolds, Marsha Tangen, Claudia Wood, Scott Martin and five intermediate school principals.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Budget Updates and Changes: Mrs. Tangen updated the Board with current news received at a recent ICN meeting with the Department of Management. She talked about the fiscal 2009 budget and reductions to the 2010 budgets. There are options for districts that include: 1) Do nothing and absorb the reduction in fund balance; 2) Make equal amounts of reductions; or 3) Levy cash reserve and make reductions. Each of the options was defined and clarified. The recommendation of the administration was for the Board to consider: 1) Budget Guarantee Resolution ensuring we receive 101% of last year's funding; and 2) No new initiatives implemented for 2010 unless funding was already identified from a categorical source. Mrs. Tangen will continue to monitor the news from the State and pass it along to the Board. She asked board members for their input and what priorities they wanted to continue.

There were questions about assessments and valuation of property; the commitment to the Davenport Promise initiative; city and county taxes; ability of the district to provide resources; and being able to certify our budget by April 15. Mrs. Tangen explained she would be presenting figures at the March board meetings, and we need to publish the budget so we can have a public hearing. The budget can be published higher and the Board can vote on lower numbers prior to April 15. The superintendent talked about developing contingencies. President Zamora reminded board members we can certify at a higher amount but spend less. Board members took time to talk about priorities and not changing class size. Vice President Roberson would like to see research on what would happen if one or two students were added to a class and if that really has an impact on learning. Other board members noted class size depended on subject areas, capacities at buildings, and the age of students.

There were concerns expressed about not having new initiatives and what about stimulus packages which will have specifics attached to their spending. They talked about restricting out-of-district travel unless it was already included in grants for categorical expenditures. Mr. Almanza talked about the importance of defining travel expenses and being sure we don't freeze all travel. He gave an example of how an organization created a new policy regarding travel and they ended up sending back grant dollars for travel because of their new rules. There were suggestions about considering teleconferences and using the ICN for meetings instead of people purchasing airline tickets and staying in hotels. They wanted the administration to look at using technology in different ways and upgrading our systems to save money. Mr. Almanza mentioned the training we were looking at for next year dealing with climate in our buildings. We will be looking at options to train our leaders in house and using them for staff development in district.

Monthly Financials: Claudia Wood and Marsha Tangen presented the monthly financial report prepared for December 2008 and talked about modified accrual accounting. The report covered increases and decreased in general fund areas, information about the investment portfolio; and a recap of the self-insurance fund financial statements. There was a section on food service which analyzed revenues and expenses for the period ending December 31. In addition Mrs. Tangen provided requested information on Policy #302.17 Investments which authorizes where our dollars can be invested. There was an article included about security of deposits and definitions from the State Treasurer's Office web site.

OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES

Initial Presentation of Buchanan Roof Project: Scott Martin, Donna Cooper, and Rob Kleinsmith went over details of replacing sections 1, 2, and 3 of the Buchanan roof with new white TPO materials and increased insulation. The roof was 26 years old roof and they talked about life cycles. Mr. Martin went through the details about the type of roof at the school, drainage, decay areas, insulation improvements, and mechanicals. There were pictures of the existing roof and patched areas. Questions were answered about the project for reroofing Buchanan and a public hearing on the project would be held February 9. The project date was projected for June 2009.

Preliminary HVAC Information: Mr. Martin provided data graphs outlining heating, ventilation, and air conditioning in all district buildings. The charts showed costs, completion dates, schools that have air conditioning and those without, mechanical renovations, upgrades, geothermal projects, feasibility, and traditional air conditioning systems. There was a lengthy discussion about air conditioning needs, costs involved, long-term plans, and funding streams. Tom Hunt talked about how the maintenance department worked as long as possible at maintaining equipment and keeping it in good operating condition. We have excellent contractors who work with the district and the equipment we are installing now is much more energy efficient and economical to operate and maintain. When new roofs are done, extra insulation is added to help make the buildings more efficient and comfortable. The specifications for projects ask for high efficiency levels. Director Johanson had questions about strategies and offsetting costs of equipment with energy savings over the years. Donna Cooper added information about rebates from companies so we can upgrade and get highly efficient projects.

There were additional questions and comments about ventilations improvements, class rooms being air conditioned, air quality, and use of buildings throughout the year. President Zamora shared her views about spending millions of dollars for air conditioning for a relatively short period of time it is used. Mr. Martin then talked about dehumidification, taking out humidity which breeds bacteria and mold, and improving comfort levels in buildings. There was continued conversation about operation costs, geothermal systems, energy usage, and the future goals of the Board. Mr. Almanza stated this was preliminary information requested by the Board. Director Johanson was concerned about the costs for installing air conditioning and suggested a dehumidification system would cost less to install and may make buildings just as comfortable. He also questioned the administration's decisions to have some buildings with operational windows and others with sealed windows and what was most efficient. Mr. Martin tried to explain there needs to be some flexibility with window installation and they fit the needs of the building as much as possible. Director Johanson thought there might be an associated cost when people could open windows and they might waste air conditioning or heating. Mr. Martin talked about the procedures in place with air conditioned buildings and the data shows the efficiency of the systems. There were additional concerns and questions shared with the administration about windows. Mr. Martin noted the cost estimates were from 2005-06 and needed to be adjusted for inflation. This was just information for the Board to use as they make decisions down the way about air conditioning and heating improvements.

Peanut Butter Recall: Donna Cooper talked to the Board about the recent recall of peanut butter based products. We are not at risk in the school lunch program and our supplies are safe. Due to the sensitivity of this topic, we will not be using any peanut butter products until further notice. We are currently using Sunbutter which is a sunflower seed product. **Apples:** On Friday we were notified about a problem with sliced apples from a company. We had apples pulled from our supply and they were not used.

SPECIAL REPORTS

Sixth Grade Transition: Vice President Roberson started the discussion on what things we could be doing with sixth graders to make their transition into middle schools more successful. He expressed his concerns with students who feel isolated or left out and asked what we could do to make them feel a part of our schools. He brought up questions about why students start off doing well and then at certain grades they seem to fall behind. He felt that some kids can't handle the stress but we move them forward anyway even if they are not ready. Some of the students can't identify with others in their grade level and there are too many adjustments for them to make from elementary school to middle school. He wondered if we gradually introduced them to changes a few at a time, maybe that would be better for all students. Mr. Roberson also talked about children who don't have exposure to pre-K services and how can they catch up with children who have had the advantages of preschool. Some people think we should isolate children in sixth grade while others say no to this idea. He worried about the kids at the bottom that get further behind with each level and eventually drop out.

There are a number of programs in place now such as the Jump Academy for sixth graders and having the fifth graders visit the intermediate schools ahead of time. Middle School is not broke, but there are a lot of kids who just don't thrive in sixth grade and we need to come up with answers. Director Clewell talked about job shadowing at Sudlow and how there is so much to learn when the children transition from elementary to intermediate school. He talked about transition opportunities but noted there are also costs involved with those programs. Helping kids maintain and develop new relationships has an impact on student achievement. Vice President Roberson felt there were different environments at each school and different models used. He felt if we have a school that is doing well, we should apply what they are doing to all the buildings.

President Zamora mentioned the Board was concerned about how the test scores seem to drop from fifth to sixth grades and also from eighth to ninth grades; but this seems to be a national trend. Mr. Almanza asked staff members and the principals to address the Board's concerns and explain what they are doing at their buildings. Mrs. Reynolds said there was a lot of individualized latitude from one building to another and apparently the Board wants to have more consistency. However, many of the things being done are similar and try to fit the needs to students in the neighborhood and those coming to the building. We know this is a serious discussion. Director Roberson said he wasn't pointing fingers but wanted to upgrade his knowledge so he could share with others.

Dr. O'Melia shared the transition activities being used and how buildings work at being student centered. These young people have social, emotional, and physical needs which are being met. We work with teams in buildings and help form new identities for students. We have advisory groups and we look at fostering relationships with students who seemed to be mismatched. There are various orientations for students and parents but parent involvement diminishes with the age of the children. We have discussed having a self-contained setting for sixth graders, but that would be difficult. We are happy to share things we are doing and we have many student programs and interventions. President Zamora shared her concerns with the drop in scores in sixth and ninth grades.

The principals shared their thoughts and comments about things happening in their building to help students transition. Sheri Simpson Schultz talked about making staff aware of the test score drops and asking the kids what happened. We are learning from their answers and making adjustments which help them do better. Director Tupper brought up the trouble he has had in getting test scores reported to the Board and how slow the process is. The principals talked about identifying students who show potential for drops in scores and having training for them to overcome some of the problems. The principals look at scores, attendance, classes enrolled in, solution focus, grade patterns, involvement with parents, and other things. We asked our teachers to make regular contact with parents and the kids. We have special meetings every two weeks to tract the students.

Director De Fauw wondered if test scores drop as children become more conscience about the consequences of doing well on the tests and that lower scores can be a barrier to their future. They become so anxious about taking tests that it actually has an affect on their scores. We need to have

better connections with families during the middle school years and at that level the conferences become optional so people don't attend them. One of our student board members mentioned earlier that extra curricular activities should be required in high school in order to keep kids interested in school and meeting new people. Director Krumwiede mentioned that 15 years ago we were concerned about seventh graders being new and needing transition and now with middle schools, we have changed to sixth grade as the level we see changes. Many of these interventions have been positive and they are helping with adjustments. Mr. Almanza talked about learning strategies changing and how staff members have "adopted" students to build relationships at school.

Bruce Potts noted they were working with teachers and the kids to identify how they take the tests. We are trying to give them ownership on the tests and helping them become more responsible. They also have shared different needs during the test process which can be accommodated. Director Krumwiede talked about how in the past the counselors would be the person to talk with kids for only one hour and how now everyone is involved with the transition process. However he felt a need to have more meetings between fifth and sixth grade teachers so they can help each other with teaching methods and communicate better. Dr. Goldstone talked about health concerns with many students including behavioral and emotional problems at this age. She also felt the next step to take is to provide opportunities for fifth and sixth grade teachers to talk about curriculum and how they can work together to improve test scores. We should do the same thing with eighth and ninth grade staff members and this is the next phase in our training. There has been a huge shift from where we were to where we are now in working with students. At Walcott the students prepare and present a Powerpoint program and give their classmates an honest assessment of intermediate school. We have many opportunities for students to get involved and the parents and teachers participate. We have parents shadow their children and come to lunch with them. Sixth grade teachers have specific focuses and help students with their study habits. We address myths about middle school and try ways to make them feel comfortable.

Director Tupper asked what specifically buildings were doing for the lower 15-20% of the students to help them improve. The principals talked about double dipping time in reading and math, targeting groups of students for help, using the "Power of I" to get work completed, teaming concepts, and having parent visits. We front load in the morning for extra help and teachers are available at the end of the day. We use learning labs and have even paid for an extra bus to help with transportation for students in order to allow them to stay longer at school. We individualize instruction and use many interventions depending on the child. The students are learning more organizational skills and the parent conferences are helpful. One principal talked about a student who refused to go to school and she finally came up with a food incentive which motivated the student to come to class. We work it out with individual kids but all of this takes extra time. We are spending more time talking with parents to enlist their support and helping them understand how important it is for the children to be in school every day. There is a huge correlation between good grades and school attendance. If they aren't in school, they don't learn.

People commented that many of the parents are just surviving themselves, and they don't seem to have the energy to be concerned about their own children. The principals also talked about the enormous problems with mental health issues and how funding has been cut which is a Scott County matter. Director Tupper agreed this was a problem at the county level and children struggle every day with substance abuse and mental health situations. We don't do enough for these young people. Mr. Almanza talked about partnering with Vera French and having to be upfront with the county when they cut funding for programs to help the students. Our staff members are not mental health specialists and we need these specialized programs for many students. Director Tupper wondered how we could provide those services for students and where could we get funding. The superintendent noted the costs would need to come out of the general fund, but the Board doesn't want to touch class size changes. Mrs. Reynolds commented they were meeting with Vera French next week and looking at Scott County Kids programs and how child mental health has not been funded. Director Krumwiede asked about the impact of the parent liaisons in the buildings and the principals unanimously agreed those people were helping. They are also working with literacy coaches and will move to having math coaches for identified children.

BOARD POLICY REVISIONS

Director Johanson led the discussion about changes being recommended in a number of board policies which had been reviewed by the committee. Each policy was discussed and some additional changes were requested. Several of the policies had been looked at by the nurses and updated with current practices being used for health related items. Director Johanson wanted to officially compliment and thank Rita Watts and the nurses for their extra work on these policies. The policies discussed were: 603.04 Outside Resource People; 604.06 Music Lessons; 605.06 Internet Appropriate Use; 501.04 Entrance and Immunization Requirements (back to committee); 501.09 Pregnant Students; 502.01 Physical Examination; 502.02 Vision Screening; 502.03 Annual Physical Examination for Athletes; 502.04 Communicable Diseases Students; 502.05 Injury or Illness at School; 502.11 Student Special Health Services; 502.06 Administration of Medication to Students; and 502.17 Wellness Policy. The policies would be coming to the Board for approval and #501.04 would go back to the committee for additional rewording.

ADJOURNMENT

President Zamora adjourned the meeting at 8:55 PM

Linda Smith Kortemeyer, Board Secretary