

DAVENPORT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MAY 4, 2009

The Board of the Davenport Community School District in the Counties of Scott and Muscatine, State of Iowa, met for the Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, May 4, 2009, pursuant to law. The meeting was held in the IMC/Library at West High School, 3505 West Locust Street, Davenport, Iowa, in said District. President Zamora called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM following a closed evaluation session.

On roll call the following board members were present: President Patt Zamora; Directors Richard Clewell, Nikki De Fauw, Ralph Johanson, Ken Krumwiede, Larry Roberson, and Timothy Tupper. Superintendent Julio Almanza, and presenters Marsha Tangen, Scott Martin, Ethel Reynolds, and Dawn Anderson Rascher plus other administrators were present for the meeting. Director De Fauw left at 7:00 PM.

IOWA JOBS AFTER GRADUATION (IJAG) REPORT: The order of the agenda was changed to accommodate the schedules of students who attended. Nancy Jacobsen introduced Mike Ross from West, Becky Carlson from Central, and Laura Bragg from North who were staff members in charge of the IJAG (Iowa Jobs After Graduation) program. Ms. Carlson talked about what this program was and explained IJAG program originated 30 years ago, serves 600,000 students, and is in 30 states. Governor Vilsack brought IJAG to Iowa in 1999 and we have 23 programs in 12 communities in Iowa. There are 850 young people involved at this time. Four years ago, IJAG came to Davenport North High and has since expanded to Central and West high schools. The Board saw a public service video and learned about the grass roots program to help students learn marketable skills, keep them in school, learn core competencies, break cycles of dependency, and create a brighter tomorrow for everyone. The cost runs about \$1,500/participant and funding will be continued through the District, Department of Education, and private businesses supporting the internships and training.

Ms. Bragg was able to explain how IJAG helped students who wanted and needed help but were at risk of dropping out for a variety of reasons. It was not a dumping ground for students but a "hands up" opportunity where students learn the skills needed to achieve and be successful. They target about 35 to 40 students and there is a signed agreement set up for them to follow. The Board heard about the phases of the program dealing with introductory items, advanced employability skills, and career emphasis with internships and job shadowing. Ms. Bragg talked about the process used to find potential student candidates, the interviews, presentations, selection, and marketing aspects.

Mike Ross reported on core competencies, curriculum, skills, applications, assessments, and career strategies for the IJAG program. He shared examples of what students were learning and how they applied their skills to real-life situations. There was additional information on enrolling students, joint credit, core curriculum models, and follow up after graduation. Ms. Bragg added when students leave the program, they are not done with the IJAG staff. There is a follow-up element for 12 months where we keep in touch with them and reinforce positive outcomes in their schooling or job performance. They also talk with military recruiters and do other career planning with students. They have a very high graduation rate for the students and set high goals in the agreement contracts. There is data kept on outcomes and successes.

The staff thought it would be a positive thing for the Board to also hear about IJAG from the perspective of some students. A current West High student, Amanda Zanella, shared her thoughts about how this opportunity gave her direction and inspiration for the future. This was her second year in IJAG and she will graduate. Amanda talked about things which were causing her to have trouble with school and how the IJAG program offered her positive solutions for dealing with situations in her life. They worked together to come up with solutions and ways to deal with problem areas. She learned how to do a resume, improved communication skills, developed goals, and then made things happen. She has improved her grades again and when problems come up, the staff helps her find ways to fix things. She plans to go to Scott Community College and major in criminal justice. The IJAG got her life back together and she was very

thankful for this opportunity. Board members asked questions about how the program is marketed at school and learned 175 students signed up this year, but there was only room for 35 to 40 in the program. There is a waiting list to get into the program, so it is well received. Amanda said the course work they take isn't easy and they soon learn the value of studying. Director Clewell talked about the great sales person Amanda was for the program and how far she has come. Amanda said the students like to talk with other kids about what they are doing and encourage them to check it out with the counselors or take time to learn more about IJAG.

The Board also heard from a 2007 student from North High, Xaveria Mayes. Ms. Mayes talked about her experiences at North and how it was a life saving experience for her. The first semester at school she was very shy and didn't socialize with others. In her second year, she met IJAG students and they told her to try out for the program. She shared her story and talked about not making the effort her senior year to do well at school. She wasn't worried about graduation because she thought teachers would just pass her along; but things caught up with her. She worked at a job she didn't like and her home situation wasn't good. IJAG opened up her eyes to the adult world and life after school. She learned everyone has to take their own initiative to be successful and IJAG program made her like school again. Xaveria said she developed wonderful relationships with people and improved her communication skills. When she interviewed for a job at the mall, her employer said he never had a student who did so well on an interview and she was hired. Xaveria said she learned how to pay attention and to take life seriously. IJAG has been such a benefit for her life.

Director Roberson asked about IJAG giving the students things that were missing in other classes. The students responded that in IJAG they are told to do things but they also learn how to do the work. They would recommend this to all students. The girls have talked with other students and encourage them to contact the counselors and learn more about the opportunities this program presents. Xaveria talked about becoming a high school counselor in the future and how she learned to like coming to classes. Board members praised the students and the remarkable stories they shared. They talked about the district vision and the importance of relationship building. This has been a remarkable report and certainly is moving in the right direction to improve graduation rates for all students.

Mr. Ross talked about the financial aspects of the program and about \$73,000/site to run the program. They receive funding from the district, the Department of Education, and private businesses. Salary and fees are covered by the program and they are looking at a position for 9th and 10th grade now. We are working with local businesses, and DavenportOne has expressed an interest to help. Director Clewell talked about Mr. Ross and his students going to Des Moines to talk with legislators this year. The Board learned that the program will be funded now although there was a time when they feared the budget would be cut. They are very appreciative of the work legislators did to make sure this program received the necessary funding to operate. Director Clewell talked about legislative advocacy and building relationships, plus using the 40 assets to engage students. This was an exemplary program and a good model for our district.

FINANCIAL REPORTS: Claudia Wood and Marsha Tangen went through the various parts of the March Monthly Financial Report with the Board. They highlighted areas of interest and explained the graphs, charts, and other notes to clarify the budget expenditures and revenue streams. They talked about trend lines, expenditures, tuition, budgets, special education, investment portfolios, and the self-insurance fund. There was additional information on the food and nutrition area showing revenues going up. Director Tupper asked for more information on special education revenue and expenditures at the detail level and by categories. He also would like information on professional development expenditures and how these are tracked. Maybe the Board could have details on funding sources and the uses of these dollars for professional development. There were additional questions and notes from board members regarding property taxes, SBRC, special education out of district students, and allocation of dollars. Superintendent Almanza answered some questions and talked about charges to other districts for services to special education students. There was additional information on bank card services, streamlining procedures for parents to make payments for fees, and offering convenience for parents.

OPERATIONS REPORT/FACILITIES: Scott Martin provided information on a number of facility projects and operations dealing with construction areas. He went over preliminary information on life expectancy for equipment. Mr. Martin talked about the cellular tower proposal at North High and parts of the proposal. The Board talked about disadvantages of the tower, grounding, eye appeal, guide wires, and location of the tower in either the athletic field or by the tennis courts to provide additional lighting. The contract details have to be worked through if the Board was interested in following through on the proposal. There were questions about easement, access to the area, and uses for the tower to help with lighting in the tennis courts. They will investigate this further and provide more information to the Board before any action needs to be taken.

Mr. Martin then talked about the GIS information system and how it hasn't been updated since 2005. They are working with the companies on GIS and the county is supposed to have upgrades by July or September. It is a very big job to go case by case and capture the information. He talked about some sample maps and showed Harrison School as an example. Mr. Almanza said they can look at the maps and learn about the area around schools and how boundaries might need to be altered down the way. For example Harrison is very crowded and they are looking at boundaries, transportation, balanced school enrollment, and other elementary schools. They can see what areas are growing and the space we have in buildings or expansion. Mr. Martin talked about the information we can get through GIS and this will affect decisions in the future. Director Roberson talked about how people love going to Harrison and the importance of neighborhood schools. Mr. Almanza also asked the Board how big they wanted the elementary schools to grow and what about going over 500 students. We want to accommodate people but we need to know the pros and cons.

Director Roberson talked about the 40 families sending children to Harrison who live outside the current boundaries for the elementary school and hoped there could be conversation about this. Mr. Martin talked about planning transportation routes and other issues involved with transporting students. The GIS will be helpful for the administration with these areas. The superintendent noted the "school finder" on our website was not the same as the GIS system. Director Clewell asked questions about the long-term use of the program and if the GIS would exist alone or with other groups in the community. Mr. Martin said this was the primary system in the county and we are working at the ties needed to work together.

The next part of the Facilities Report dealt with construction updates for items previously approved. Mr. Martin provided information on West High, Walcott School restrooms, Central High restrooms, and tuck-pointing at Walcott, Jefferson, Adams, and McKinley. President Zamora asked about progress on the band room at Walcott. Mr. Martin responded there have been meetings with Walcott and they talked about overall priorities. We are considering this with other priorities on the list. The move may create additional space issues so they will have to be creative. President Zamora asked when this would be coming forward and Mr. Martin thought in early summer they would have more discussion. Director Tupper asked about the timing for the administration to start considering projects and then giving the recommendations to the Board to decide. Mr. Martin said he would get more information to the Board to review. The Board saw a number of pictures from the construction projects at Williams, Eisenhower window replacement, West boilers, Harrison AC, Smart windows, Jackson doors and window replacement.

ITBS/ITED Preliminary Data Review and Analysis: Dawn Anderson Rascher presented the Board with a report on ITBS and ITED and explained how this building summary was used to look at student achievement. It was clearly stated the data was not verified for sub-groups, home school, or alternative test scores added. She talked about individual teachers using the data and how buildings looked at the information to figure ways to help students achieve. The scores will identify achievement gaps and students who need intervention strategies. The data is reviewed as teams so strategies can be developed plus other information was provided on how the numbers were used and what they meant. Charts and graphs were shown and detailed so the Board could see trends over the course of several years. Ms. Rascher also explained how the District was assisting buildings and teachers, how verification was being done, and how data would be cleaned up and reported in final form by the State. Many pages of the report showed trends for scores over a six-year period. Board members also received a CD with data so they could use it at home to answer some of their requests for detailed data.

During the presentation board members asked questions to help understand some of the scores and to better interpret what numbers actually meant. They talked about transition grades and what should be done to help during those times when test scores seem to go down. This is a trend nationally for the transition years and not just a problem for our district. Mrs. Reynolds noted there are significant gains this year and the administration was very happy with these initial results. There are areas which will also need to be reviewed and targeted for improvements. We are looking at trends and finding out answers to questions regarding the testing process. Board members asked what was being done to help with the transition years. Mrs. Reynolds said they are making reading and math a priority, offering after school activities, incorporating programs with integrity, and getting more parents involved with their children. We haven't found the exact key but we are making progress.

Director Clewell asked about "Making Middle Grades Work" and if this was helping. Mrs. Reynolds agreed it was having an effect and they are talking about rubrics and expectations. We are training teachers to teach differently and courses are changing. We are hiring more literacy coaches and providing support systems for students. Vice President Roberson commented about reading driving behavior and wondered what was going on with the ninth grade level that could make a difference. He was impressed with the results of the IJAG program and wondered how this enthusiasm could go into other classes to help kids connect better with school. He saw how the IJAG students responded to their teachers and felt this was a key element in student achievement. We are making progress but he was concerned about subgroups who were still struggling.

Mrs. Reynolds said they have some exciting news for the subgroups and we are seeing trends moving upward. We have information for 5 to 7 years now to make better comparisons and that is good. Vice President Roberson again talked about how the IJAG teachers were making a difference with students and they must be teaching in a different way that appeals to students. How can we incorporate what they do into other classes? Director Tupper brought up a report he read a few weeks ago and shared some of the information on how race and poverty are not factors in student achievement in many schools. There are things we can do to help students and we are improving in a number of areas. He went over things in the report that he noted about 9th and 10th grades and making up ground in 10th and 11th grades. He asked about teacher training and if this could help as teachers learn new techniques to reach children. Ms. Rascher talked about electives at schools and course offerings for students that keep them interested. Buildings are looking at courses and teaching patterns. They are asking different questions and looking at data from different perspectives. They have ownership of the data and believe they can make a difference. Additional comments and questions were discussed so people could have a better understanding of the materials they had been presented.

The meeting was adjourned by President Zamora at 9:50 PM.

Linda Smith Kortemeyer, Board Secretary