

**DAVENPORT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
AUGUST 4, 2008**

The Board of the Davenport Community School District met in open session for the Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, August 4, 2008, pursuant to law. The meeting was held 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 5:30 PM.

On roll call the following board members were present: President Patt Zamora; Directors Richard Clewell, Nikki De Fauw, Ralph Johanson, Ken Krumwiede, and Larry Roberson. Director Tim Tupper arrived at 5:35 PM. Director Johanson had to leave around 6:15 PM for another meeting. Others present were Superintendent Julio Almanza; and administrators Ethel Reynolds, Leslie O'Melia, Marsha Tangen, and Scott Martin. Several principals attended to talk about service learning.

OPERATIONS REPORT

Storm Damage: Scott Martin presented an update on facilities and operational matters. The Board received a written outline about storm damage from July 21. A debriefing meeting was held with staff and conclusions were made about designation of a command center that could be used to lead emergency operations in the event of a sustained power outage. He talked about generators, pumps, lights, phones, ventilation equipment, and crisis management. They are investigating the purchase of more 800 MGHZ radios for use by school personnel in the event of emergencies. Our current system covers most of Scott County but we may need to install repeater towers at outlying schools to ensure coverage. They also discussed response to the emergency situations and what we can do better.

Brady Street Stadium Turf: The Board received a report from Shive-Hattery Environmental Department on sampling the turf following the recent flood. Mr. Martin presented board members with a report dealing with concerns about lead in older fields due to dye. The report indicated there were no problems. We will know more in the fall after EPA testing results. We have been proactive in our testing and we are in good shape with the turf surface. There were questions about work being done on the field and plastic sheets. Mr. Martin explained the surface was being re-sprayed and there were a lot of plastic sheets used; the stripes on the field will be completed next week.

School Readiness: Mr. Martin talked about being ready for the first day of school and said work projects were on target. The McKinley chiller installation was finished, North High construction was concentrated in the north part of the gym, and the girl's locker room will be operational.

Board members asked about the 800 MGHZ radios, emergency preparedness, working with police and fire departments, evacuation plans, having a better system for emergency response and action. Mr. Almanza explained we did have a process in place for the emergency storm and had a priority list during the severe weather and power outage. We made sure children in schools were cared for first, handled problems with water in buildings, and then took care of food and perishable items. We didn't have a good way to find the status of each building because the phone and cell lines were out. Director Roberson expressed concern with not having a system in place to make sure all our people were accounted for and felt this needed improvements. Mr. Martin agreed and said buildings did have plans but having additional 800 MGHZ radios would help in the future. We should have one in each office, one on buses, and one for custodians. Director Clewell suggested there be a proposal worked up for purchasing the radios needed.

LINCOLN ACADEMY OF ART CHARTER

Mrs. Ethel Reynolds presented background on the charter for Lincoln Academy which was a three-year charter agreement. The funding stream was up with no more money coming from the State. The administration kept their advisory group informed on the progress for the school and Directors Krumwiede and Clewell were on this team. We are recommending the philosophy of the integrated arts continue at Lincoln even without the state funds this year. It was clarified Board action should be taken to formalize the dissolving of the charter agreement. Rachael Mullins presented some historical information about Lincoln Academy of Arts and the origin of the grant funding. Ms. Mullins spoke about charter legislation, vouchers, funding, integrated arts, and technical assistance. The State shifted their approach and last year Lincoln became self sustaining. Del Hoover visited and talked about professional development and how the self-sustaining model would work. He advised us the charter was not necessary and encouraged us to become self-sustaining. We just need to be sure there was Board action on this matter.

Principal Mary McMeekin talked about the future of integrated arts at Lincoln and what it would look like. She outlined details on curriculum, study trips, guest artists, continuing operation, having every teacher planning activities, differentiated instruction, and involvement in activities. There will continue to be galas and performances for the students and parents. She said she didn't have contact with Des Moines until May and the State people were never there to help. We funded this last year on our own. The Board was informed transportation was provided to families who wanted to attend the academy and there were no plans to change this service. Mrs. McMeekin felt this was working as a magnet school and they had 260 total students of which 45 were actually within the boundaries. She visited preschools and did other things to promote attendance at Lincoln Academy of Arts.

Director Clewell said there wasn't a big difference with a charter or not and it was always under the Board's control. There was an emphasis on the arts and he wondered if we should continue with a strategic plan for where Lincoln students are going. The framework would be the same and they integrate the arts into the CSIP at the school. Ms. Mullins explained if we dissolve the charter, then the school would be like any other school as we treat the students. If we provide transportation outside the boundaries and have a focus on the arts, we need to look at if there is a link showing increases in student achievement. Can we demonstrate through history this is the right approach to help students succeed? Mrs. McMeekin said student achievement was imperative. Lincoln was once a fundamental school and then added the integrated arts curriculum. The Board learned about staff development, new curriculum in the district, and training. Of the 262 students who started, there were about 48 who had consistently been in attendance over the last three years. There are challenges to present student achievement data because of mobility of students. But we have seen increased in the engagement of students. Rachael Mullins talked about the role of arts and engaging students through this process. There was additional discussion about neighborhood schools, enrollment, parental choice, boundaries, and demographics.

Director Krumwiede said it has been a privilege to be on the advisory council and a learning experience. He felt there was a huge change in the philosophy at Lincoln and he witnessed this. He talked about positive changes at the school and challenges with the charter, integrating arts, and having a new math and reading curriculum at the same time. Over the last year he really saw a change in the attitude of the staff and behavior of the students. Every third grader is now playing violin and he was convinced we will see some higher achievement in the building. The principal leaders are very positive and he believed in an on-going plan involving the community, parents, children, and Board. He had concerns about how we were communicating the dissolution of the charter and this is not a negative change. He also had questions about the extra resource people involved and wondered if they would continue to be a part of the Lincoln Academy of Arts.

Director Roberson expressed his concerns about having too many changes but not seeing any academic improvements for student achievement. We go from one plan to another and say we are doing good things but what we have seen doesn't work. We have to track research that shows continued success for children of color. He talked about visiting a program in Virginia Beach three years ago where children of color were successful in school. He had hoped this would be implemented in Davenport but nothing was done. There have been a lot of excuses why children are not learning, but Virginia Beach had a good

program but we haven't followed up. We keep talking about why students don't perform and if these kids don't learn, the global economy will cause the children lots of trouble if they can't read. We need to have the students of color perform well and find a way to help them read better. We have too many kids falling through the cracks and this is about leadership from the Board in setting a new direction. The Board has to say this is what we want and how it will work. All kids can learn and are capable of learning. If we don't set our expectations higher, we will never be the district of choice.

Director Tupper appreciated the work at Lincoln but he hasn't seen the achievement performance data for growth. We need to support all our schools and we need the data to see what is or is not working. What resources do the buildings need to make the students successful? We need to understand the data to help with our decisions. Given time and attention to the arts focus, we could continue with this but is it successful in improving student achievement? Mrs. Reynolds offered to get achievement data for the students who have been involved with the charter program for the past three years. The superintendent promised board members they would have the test data by this Friday so they can see comparisons.

Director Johanson asked if any policy would need to be changed if the charter was dissolved. He had concerns about providing transportation for this school and if this was contrary to what was offered other schools. We wondered if we were being consistent throughout the district regarding bus transportation. The superintendent spoke about Lincoln being a target school and Mrs. Reynolds said when Lincoln was called a fundamental school it also offered transportation. Ms. Mullins said the dissolving of the partnership doesn't disrupt the programs at the school. Lincoln will remain an integrated arts program but the manifestation from the State will change. Director De Fauw agreed with concerns from Director Roberson regarding improvements in student achievement. Maybe the differentiated curriculum will address the subgroups better in the future. She was also concerned that we were losing generations of students and we need to do something to enhance the curriculum. The emphasis on arts hopefully will help engage more children in learning, but we need to see the data for the 45 students who have consistently attended Lincoln to see about their performance. Director Johanson left the meeting around 6:15 PM for another commitment.

Director De Fauw also had questions on any financial impact on the district when the charter was gone. Ms. Mullins said the school had been self sustaining last year and the integrated academy arts was a part of their curriculum at Lincoln. There would be no additional cost to the district. Mrs. Reynolds said they did have one additional staff person to help support reading and respond to teachers, but it was only a one-year position. Director Roberson asked about the waiting list for Lincoln and why don't we have that anymore. Mrs. Reynolds answered that was due to the all-day kindergarten program originally and now the demographics also have changed. The fundamental approach at Lincoln was not producing the increases in test scores we expected. There were more questions about what type of programs did work and what was needed at the school. The superintendent talked about the reading program, parent groups, community involvement and contracts with parents being a positive for the schools.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

Marsha Tangen presented a suggested outline concerning a process that was developed to get input from the community and Board by the end of the year. We are looking at ideas and input from a variety of sources and will use several methods to work with people. She talked about specific categories, technology, calendars, and air conditioning as part of the discussion. The team was asking for ideas from the Board before continuing with the work. Director Roberson started by saying he wanted to see lists of what schools needed to have and things they wanted to have. There should be consistency between the buildings also. Director Tupper was frustrated with the process and felt there were not enough specific ideas with cost figures. He felt the process was backward and wanted the ideas to come from the administration and Board and then out to the public for more input. He had concerns about people understanding the general areas of "safety and security" and felt there needed to be specific items we would be considering under those topic areas. He also felt the administration should establish curriculum for elementary, intermediate, and high schools that say these are the things that are critical to the learning environment. He wanted the recommendations listed first and estimated costs so the Board could make better choices and know what they might have to give up.

President Zamora thought the Board had already received a book outlining specifics from the buildings. Director Tupper said they had gotten this but there is no criteria established to help decide what things really are necessary and what things are just on a "wish list". For example criteria could be show as: Children's Village sites should have an outside play area and then a reason why this was important. Director De Fauw appreciated wanting to engage input from the community and getting participation, but she also agreed with Director Tupper's concerns about creating false expectations. She felt the categories were vague and the process needs to be inverted. For example more details should show: All elementary schools need these items.....All intermediate schools need thisAll high schools need to have

The superintendent said there are established criteria for schools and we can work with them. Director Tupper talked about Dubuque School District and how they used criteria. There was information about ideal class size, technology, lighting, square footage, parking, and other things. It was an inventory of requirements which affected student performance. Mr. Martin said we can start the process and then move it forward for the Board. Mrs. Tangen appreciated knowing what the Board wanted and they will work on this process for getting long range planning together. There was additional conversation about establishing criteria and making clear expectations. There will be trade offs necessary and having costs listed will help with the conversations and decision making.

Mrs. Tangen answered questions about the economic impact from the one-cent sales tax and estimated we would have one more year around \$14 million and then about \$9.7 million/year after that to work on projects and facilities. President Zamora talked about the importance of keeping our word to the public and making specific promises which must be kept. Director Krumwiede suggested with this type of process it might take several years before we know what we should be doing. We don't have to do anything immediately and we need to know what is important before jumping into projects. Our decisions should be based on criteria and what helps with student achievement. Director Tupper also had concerns about equity between buildings and if we set criteria, this would eliminate those complaints. Director Roberson said not all schools need the same things however, and older schools might need things that newer schools don't need to have. The established criteria should be reasonable and criteria should fit each school's needs. Director Clewell felt having criteria against which we judge our decisions was a good idea, but we don't set buildings up against each other either. He also wondered about the issues of bussing and calendar schedules and how this fits into decisions especially with air conditioning. Mr. Almanza felt the community was saying a common calendar is what they want. Our parents talk about the trouble they have when children are on different calendars when they attend more than one school. The private schools also would like a common calendar to help them with planning.

President Zamora said she didn't believe the balanced calendar was showing a change in student achievement and it was more expensive. The superintendent wanted to know if board members were serious about discussing a calendar change or starting early because that could affect discussion around air conditioning needs. The Board wanted more data on the balanced calendar versus the traditional calendar schools' student achievement. Director De Fauw suggested in the fall when schools have their parent-teacher conference they conduct a survey about the calendar and whether people wanted the balanced calendar, traditional calendar or a common calendar. Director Krumwiede talked about how at Truman the PTA started the discussion about the balanced calendar not the staff. We need to listen to what the parents want for their children. Mrs. Reynolds felt the teachers and community might be split on the calendar issue. President Zamora noted if the data doesn't prove that balanced calendars improve student achievement, we need to look at this because they cost more to operate. There was additional time spent talking about calendar matters and also about establishing criteria for buildings so that long-range planning can be affective. The superintendent also reminded people that enrollment will drive many of these decisions and that mobility has to be considered in the mix.

SERVICE LEARNING

Dr. O'Melia noted the matter involving Service Learning came up in the Policy Committee as we were examining the graduation policy requirements. She said there have been many discussions by staff about service learning and principals were present to talk about this matter. Rachael Mullins talked about refining the intent of service learning to our mission statement. She talked about challenges and time commitments for staff. There was a thorough discussion about levels of service learning and community service for students. They talked about experiential learning and how students journal data to make the service learning experience meaningful. This type of program is labor intensive and we have found out there is teacher burn-out with service learning. It is a good experience but because of the labor intensive work needed, it is costly to run the program effectively. Cathy Bosco talked about having 25 students in a service learning setting with two teachers. If we need this as part of a graduation requirement, it will take a lot of teachers to run the program. Nancy Jacobson talked about all the volunteer hours they had with the academy at West High and the work involved in running this program.

Dr. O'Melia talked about having a clear definition of service learning versus community service as we look at graduation requirements. The Board heard stories about other school district who have small numbers of students involve with actual service learning and they may have up to 50 students where our District could have 1200 students involved. There is a significant amount of reflection involved with actual service learning and finding appropriate projects which include service to people in the community has challenges when you are dealing with large numbers of students. We have to fulfill a need by the service project and there are a magnitude of elements involved in the process in order to track students, record hours, evaluate, and manage transportation and schedules. There is training involved for staff and other hidden costs in order to operate it well. It is possible if the Davenport Promise is accepted, there may be a component to this program for service learning in order for students to qualify.

President Zamora didn't see how this would fit into the block schedule because it would take hours out of instruction time just for students to do the service activities. Dr. O'Melia also talked about the increased number of credits students will need – 26 credits this year. Director De Fauw clarified that it wasn't the Policy Committee or Board who was asking that service learning be added to the graduation requirements, but that recommendation was coming from the curriculum department. This was discussed over two years ago and we don't know how we could institute this type of intense service learning into our requirements for graduation. We certainly encourage students taking opportunities to give back to our community and it is rewarding. They should give back some hours to the community during high school and it is good for them to have this experience. Dr. O'Melia added that changes in graduation requirements are always on the table and sometimes the requirements come to us through the State.

Director Krumwiede said he remembered a time when the Department of Education wanted to have service learning as part of graduation. He believed some districts were doing this type of program but they are smaller districts like Pleasant Valley. The State hasn't mandated this yet and it is possible community service will be different from service learning. Board members talked about their thoughts and feelings regarding service learning. There were comments about expense, vision, type of projects, reflections, journals, and opportunities available for students. They also mentioned hours of work, transportation issues, and mobility and tracking progress. Director Clewell felt it was important for students to develop an understanding of civic responsibility but a comprehensive program would be costly for the number of students we have.

Director Tupper appreciated the passion for the service activities but was concerned with the use of resources we have and the real impact on student achievement. He mentioned that some of his clients do "community service" in lieu of paying fines and this is different. They also talked about mandating community service and whether this was a good idea and served the right purpose. Mr. Almanza said if service learning is mandated, there has to be an element of instruction time that goes along with the work. There also has to be a demand for the service from the community.

Director Roberson agreed that community service should be encouraged but the money could be spent on better learning tools. Director Zamora felt community service was important but resources had to be used wisely for other needs in our district. Director Krumwiede felt our life skills are related to community service and encourage volunteering in our cities. We shouldn't mandate this but encourage involvement. Director De Fauw didn't feel service learning should be mandated as part of graduation. We should have opportunities for students to give back to the community. Maybe during advisory time at the high schools there could be sessions with volunteers who could talk about their work and encourage students to join in with service to the community. Maybe each Wednesday for 30 minutes the teachers or other staff could look at opportunities to share with students. Maybe the upcoming freshmen could have a service day and spend time helping some organization or group. Director Zamora said students learn to be a part of the community by volunteering in some way.

Superintendent Almanza said on August 12 he would be hearing more about the Davenport Promise. He will keep the Board informed about where this is going and if community service would be a part of the promise proposal. Director Tupper also noted that it needs to be clear that community service is different from service learning so everyone understands the terms.

ADJOURNMENT

President Zamora adjourned the meeting at 8:00 PM.

Linda Smith Kortemeyer, Board Secretary