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**DAVENPORT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE CENTER  
JIM HESTER BOARD ROOM  
1606 BRADY STREET  
DAVENPORT, IOWA**

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2014  
SPECIAL CALL OPEN SESSION  
4:30PM**

***“LONG RANGE DISTRICT GOALS AND  
THEIR RELATION TO BOARD EXPECTATIONS”***

The Board of the Davenport Community School District in the Counties of Scott and Muscatine, State of Iowa, met for the Special Call Open Meeting on Monday, September 15, 2014 pursuant to law. The meeting was held in the Jim Hester Board Room, Achievement Service Center, 1606 Brady Street Davenport, Iowa, in said District. President Johanson called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. On roll call the following board members were present: Directors: Ralph Johanson, Ken Krumwiede, Rich Clewell, Maria Dickmann, Nikki DeFauw, Jamie Snyder and Bill Sherwood. Superintendent Art Tate was also present.

President Johanson opened up the discussion by explaining that he is encouraging a frank and open discussion by the board on the board's expectations and priorities and how these relate to the Superintendent's goals and direction for the district. He indicated the board needs to decide what are the board's main priorities, expectations, and when success is expected. Johanson said that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) says we are supposed to have reached 100% proficiency by now but we have not. Dawn Anderson-Rascher presented achievement data to the board recently and the district is clearly not where it should be regarding scores. Some board members say closing the achievement gap should be our main focus but we also have the board priorities that are a big focus right now, so what is expected of the Superintendent and what is the board's message to the Superintendent. The Superintendent has indicated there is a reading crisis in the district. Johanson asked Dr. Tate to share more about this topic.

Dr. Tate said we have all seen the report that indicated that on average 60% of our students are proficient but that can go from high in the 80's and down to the 30's and 40's for some of our schools and said he considers this a reading crisis. Students need reading so they can access the curriculum and learn what they need to learn in order to be successful. There is a state mandate starting next year that by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade a student must be reading at grade level. He stated we don't need to add anything more we just need to keep implementing the changes in curriculum that are taking place now with fidelity and close the achievement gap. Director Krumwiede added the AEA has emphasized the importance of making sure there are dollars that follow this state mandate regarding 3<sup>rd</sup> grade proficiency. Krumwiede agreed the district has a reading crisis and it should be top priority for the board. Krumwiede recalled how successful the summer reading academy was when he was a principal and hopes something like this can be done again with support dollars from the state. Dr. Tate has put researched-based initiatives into place so implementing the current curriculum with fidelity in all of the schools is Krumwiede's main concern and the board needs to have more conversations about academic issues and less conversations about construction projects.

Director Dickmann wants students to graduate and have the ability to read and communicate and be able to ask good questions and be good citizens. She doesn't believe the standards set in NCLB are attainable, and the board needs to look at the broader picture and not just satisfy state requirements. Director DeFauw said it seems conversations like this come about every couple of years. Board members are passionate about the students and families we serve so we can sometimes be impatient with administration and ourselves and want to achieve these goals yesterday. We are working within an environment with strong competing interests and limited funds and until the legislature is willing to fund us at a level that will allow us to sustain the education we need to provide we will continue to have competing priorities. We are given state mandates without additional dollars. Her goal is that students have an educational experience where they not only learn the core curriculum but also have enrichment opportunities that engage them and help them become lifelong learners.

Director Clewell commented that during the performance assessment for the Superintendent he did emphasize "getting it all now" so to speak. He always wants to see more and he wants 100% proficiency even though he realizes it is unrealistic and everyone is aware of this. On the other hand he appreciates everything Dr. Tate has put into place, but as a board member he should never be satisfied. Two things are driving what we are discussing and the first is adequate funding and the other is the importance of addressing test scores, but the board still needs to answer the question "What is student achievement?" His concern is that the district must meet the reading and math requirements and he knows the Superintendent is working on this and that we are bound by this, but as a board we need to identify what is student success. Clewell said the board needs to develop a strategic plan which would help build consensus on what the board wants and expects.

Director Sherwood noted that this is a complex issue and when we talk about reading it includes pre-school preparation, vocabulary acquisition, attendance, and many other things and not just a canned program that magically solves the reading problem. Dr. Tate has put many initiatives into place to help improve reading, but the district can do better with attendance. What he wants is a district that is evolving and constantly moving forward. He does not expect perfection but does expect constant improvement. He believes there should be more emphasis on helping students at the elementary level within a tight budget. We are all concerned about the opportunity and achievement gaps and we need to do more, but we should not expect overnight success. We have these issues on the front burner now and said he believes Dr. Tate's and the board's priorities are solid and these efforts will start paying off. Director Snyder said his goal is that students are given the tools they need to grow to be productive, successful, and happy members of society. Government mandates tell us to get it done but in no way provide us the assistance we need to reach their absurd unattainable goals that from the onset has us and most other school districts set up to fail.

Director Krumwiede commented that if he would have been in Dr. Tate's shoes during his evaluation he would have been totally confused as to what this board wants. He said if the board is really serious about closing the achievement gap and student achievement then the board needs to have more conversations about these topics. The board needs to be clear to Dr. Tate what this board wants and expects. We have excellent initiatives in place that are researched based such as data teams and professional learning communities, but we still need to implement all these initiatives with fidelity across the district and be more patient. We need to have more conversations about the progress being made. For example, if reading is a top priority then the board needs to make it a priority to be kept informed on the progress and what is going on at each of the schools regarding reading initiatives. Dickmann expressed concern that a laser focus on reading could result in students being able to read the text but not get anything out of it and may not have time for discovery learning.

Clewell said he also believes the building blocks are in place to achieve good test scores but he challenged the board not to be blindsided or under the thumb of legislators who insist that education is about test scores. He emphasized the importance of students learning to ask the right question. Krumwiede said we do teach life skills and team concepts and the soft skills that have been mentioned but his concern is teaching and implementing these building blocks with fidelity across

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the district.

Johanson asked the board for feedback and thoughts on how the community enters into this discussion and the importance of expectations of the community. Director DeFauw remarked that “community” needs to be defined. Unfortunately, for the majority of people as long as their child’s needs are met they are fine and that is all they are concerned about. The board has seen groups come forward to protest decisions made by the board. She believes we have been a reactionary board and allow too much influence by those times when a group comes together around a specific issue and we don’t stay the course because of the influence of a vocal minority. If the board believes something is in the educational best interest of students in this district then the board needs to be willing to stay the course in spite of external influences that try to convince us otherwise. How is the board going to make 3 million in sustainable cuts if those special interest groups drowned out the logic of how this has to happen? Clewell asked if there are some proactive measures that can be taken to inform the public. There was a discussion about the possibility of creating a strategic plan. It was pointed out that the board has great priorities but what metrics will be used to define success and are we using our time wisely.

Clewell noted a strategic plan provides a more intentional path to meeting our ultimate vision. Krumwiede suggested that administration take part in the process of setting goals together. Everyone in the district should know our goals. DeFauw said she liked the idea of collaborating with administration to define very specific action steps which creates more buy in from everyone. Clewell mentioned the strategic plan should belong to the board. DeFauw clarified she is not talking about administration helping the board define goals but believes involvement from administration on the action steps would be beneficial. Director Snyder mentioned the importance of getting feedback from the teachers. President Johanson asked Dr. Tate for his thoughts.

Dr. Tate said part of his frustration is to hear the board talk about doing things like character building, ethics, critical thinking, citizenship, lifelong learning, employment and job skills as if we aren’t teaching these things. We are teaching these skills and students are learning. The issue he is emphasizing is those students who can’t read get frustrated, sometimes become discipline problems and they drop out of school. So reading pre-school through 5<sup>th</sup> grade is what we have to concentrate on because many aren’t getting that equity of opportunity because they cannot read. He encouraged the board to stick with the board priorities and within each of these two priorities there are two subcommittees that are getting things done. We have a minority committee, a graduation advocacy committee, and the new achievement gap committee. The non-negotiables are out there and being implemented and cautioned the board not to change too many things. We have done the research and have the data and he doesn’t think we are at odds about where we are going. The board just needs to know that he cannot be diverted from the primary goal of reading, math, addressing the dropout rate, and implementing the curriculum with fidelity.

The meeting was adjourned by President Johanson at 6:16 PM.

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Mary Correthers, Recording Secretary