

LINCOLN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Directors, Work Session (Retreat)
Monday, July 13, 2015 – 3:00 p.m.
Embarcadero- Commodore Room
Newport, Oregon

Minutes

PRESIDING: Liz Martin, Chairman

Present: Liz Martin, Chairman; Ron Beck, Kelley Ellis, Amanda Remund,
Directors

Also Present: Steve Boynton, Superintendent; Laurie Urquhart, Secretary

Excused: Karen Bondley, Vice Chairman

Call to Order- Establishment of a Quorum

Chairman Martin convened the meeting and called the session to order at 3:06 p.m. with a quorum of four board members present. She noted the Board sends its best to Director Bondley, who is not able to be present at this time. “This is an ambitious agenda; I want everyone to speak to subjects they wish to. It is important that we all feel comfortable doing so,” commented Ms. Martin.

The Year in Review (Steve Boynton)

STAR- Superintendent Boynton noted the Board hired him, in part, to improve student achievement. One of the avenues to reach this goal was the implementation of STAR testing in 2014-15. “Now we have a good collection system for grades 1-6 and have collected a year of data. Our teachers are still learning how to use it. Some are very good with it, others are still learning. We plan to continue using it and need three years of longitudinal data,” said Boynton.

He reminded the board that 2014-15 was the first year of using the Smarter Balanced test. “We had some idea of where we are; now we know. We struggle with student achievement,” said the Superintendent. Now, however, the district has a good collection of data from which to move forward.

“STAR allows us to compare results across our district, the state and the nation. The district started receiving preliminary Smarter Balanced data in late June.” He noted goals for 2014-15 were “soft goals” (one year’s growth for every student). Now, we have data so can set hard goals; we need to gain five points against the state average. There are pockets of excellence, but nothing district wide. “Five points is obtainable,” said Boynton.

Common Core state standards- Superintendent Boynton noted teams of staff worked on breaking down common core state standards in 2014-15. “The work we did was helpful; teachers are learning what they really need to be teaching.”

Developmentally some students are not where they need to be for common core standards. “We eventually need to do away with grade banding. We initiated the “walk to learn” program last school year, where students join the appropriate learning group for their achievement level,” said Boynton.

Chairman Martin noted the district is examining what worked and what did not. She asked how the new structure at the district office is working, with directors of elementary and secondary education. Mr. Boynton replied that Director of Elementary Education Susan Van Liew was also handling special education in 2014-15, which did not allow enough time to truly focus on student achievement. He said the district office is understaffed. "However, now that we have data, we can set some hard goals." District level administrators will share the information with principals to help them develop building-wide goals. "These will create the district goal at the end of the process," said Boynton. "Every building is different."

Director Ellis noted the importance of involving parents in the process. The Superintendent agreed, adding that we need to be thoughtful about how we do this; the information also needs to be embedded in technology. "There should be no gap when a child leaves one building to go to another in our district. If it were embedded in technology, this would not be a problem." He stated a full day of training has been set aside for teachers to meet and go over this, though it is only available in grades K-6 so far. "We will start 7-8 next year, and high school the following year. We may jump ahead in high school math as well. Common core means kids need to take algebra in grade 8."

"The idea is to assign each student a year's worth of work, based on where the child is, proficiency-wise," said the superintendent. Students' learning will be customized by having units in the learning management system. Part of how the system will work will depend upon how students are grouped. "We know where the kids are now; we use teacher discretion a lot too." He added that there are six levels of thinking in each unit; most kids fall into the first four levels. Those units with a standard become a mandatory activity. This could determine what the TAG kids do (levels five and six).

There are many structural barriers now; some are on the human side, and some fall on the historical side. "Kids have to understand that they own their own process. Each school can be different, but we need to consider every child, every day. There may be school wide programs but students cannot be "tracked" for all subjects all day. They can be together for their specific level in math, reading, etc."

Mr. Boynton reported schools are building home rooms that are homogeneous, with "walk to" programs. "There are different approaches between schools. Sam Case is going school wide; Crestview is using grade bands. Some are doing blends (grades 1&2, etc.)."

Director Ellis commented that "We will need to focus on sending our kids to school, not to a particular grade." Mr. Boynton responded that the district is probably five years out from what he hopes to achieve.

"Students need to see a practical use of what they are learning in the real world," said Boynton. "Some teachers may feel the new system takes away their ability to make decisions. But it does **not** do that; they can teach it however they want."

Director Beck stated diplomas should be equivalent between schools, states and the nation. The Superintendent responded that this is the desired outcome of common core state standards.

Chairman Martin asked about the new law in Oregon regarding students opting out of Smarter Balanced testing. The Superintendent said it is not clear what will happen, but the Federal government said they will reduce funding if enough students do not test.

Character Education- Superintendent Boynton said we must overtly teach kids how we expect them to behave. Every building is different, though offer the same lessons taught in different ways. Principal Tiana Tucker examined the different character education systems taught in the district to see how they

compare. There are different structures that achieve the same thing. “We will get there, but will take some time. Every school has character education, as do sports,” said the Superintendent.

Director Beck asked if any thought was given to adding this to clubs (i.e., band, choir). Mr. Boynton replied that band and choir embed character education naturally by what they do. He added that “many of our coaches are not educators, so we had to teach them what to teach” regarding character (teamwork, discipline, etc).

He stated he would like to expand activities that give back to the community. “Some areas are already doing this, but we don’t do it district-wide. I would like to see school-wide activities.”

Reconfiguration- Mr. Boynton noted the reconfiguration of schools had gone well. “Now we are working to deliver on the promises we made (bus routes, etc.) Itinerant staff were moved to Toledo; Tech staff went to west campus of NHS. We are on pace to finish construction projects. We are very near capacity, even with this reconfiguration.”

Siletz schools are having difficulty finding staff. If they are not able to re-staff their building, it would mean more students in Toledo.

The superintendent noted the Yaquina View principal is denying new variances to Yaquina View, as the building is at capacity. “We are growing in population in the district, which could be a concern; the north could be a worry,” said Boynton. “We are keeping an eye on property.”

Financials. Activity at the state level resulted in the Chalkboard Project administering approximately \$150 million in ODE school improvement funding grants. This decision cost the district about \$1.4 million. The district will have to apply for these grants, which include third grade reading, attendance, on track to graduate and others. “We will be thoughtful about how we go about this,” said Boynton. “It may cost us more to administer than we get.”

The district budgeted for \$48.8 million, and ended up with \$49.3 million. Several positions have been filled, including help for Nick Lupo at Taft Elementary (who has 18 probationary teachers), a counselor at Oceanlake, a music teacher for the south area and a TOSA at Toledo Elementary. Newport High’s leadership decided not to hire a second counselor, but to restructure their counseling department. Middle school sports is off the table at this point.

Mr. Boynton reported the ending fund balance last year was approximately \$2 million. At present, it is approximately \$4.6million, but \$1.3million of that will have to be repaid to the state. “We have done away with some expensive programs and replaced them with more efficient ones,” said the Superintendent. He will be a member of the COSA ‘funding coalition steering committee’ this year.

Director Beck noted his appreciation for all Mr. Boynton has done. “You’ve brought some issues to light,” said Beck.

“You asked me to do some difficult things- which we accomplished,” said Mr. Boynton. “Now it is time to get the work done.”

Chairman Martin said team building should occur next, both at the D.O. and with principals. Director Beck asked if there a role for the board in team building, other than in supporting the superintendent. Mr. Boynton responded that the Board does have a supportive role, and encouraged them to have conversations with principals and teachers. “We want to hear from them- but things have to change,” said the Superintendent.

Mr. Beck said he hears from the supportive teachers, and asked how to help with those that are not. Mr. Boynton noted that “I think we have 80% in the supportive camp. We have a minority in the other- and they include the union leadership.”

Director Ellis said she has not broken the barrier of getting into schools. “I have never been invited to things,” said Ellis.

Chairman Martin stated she receives feedback from a large number of people. “Some are the 20% you are speaking of. I know my job is not the day-to-day running of the district, but I do listen.” Superintendent Boynton said it is important to listen carefully to what people are saying, and restate what they say back to them. “We have implemented some of the suggestions we have received,” he added.

He asked board members help him “stay ahead of the rumor mill. You being active in the community and listening to community members’ points of view will be very helpful,” said Boynton.

District Data:

•**Staff turnover from Human Resources.** Superintendent Boynton presented data compiled by (former) Human Resources Director Chelsi Sholty showing teacher turnover data over the last few years and the reasons why they left LCSD. The largest number of teachers left due to their desire to move to another community and/or family. “No one has told us they are leaving for money,” said Mr. Boynton. “We lose about the same number of teachers as other districts our size. We are known as a training district, with an excellent mentor program.” Director Beck said the social life for singles is limited, and housing in Lincoln County is expensive.

•**Graduation Summary-** The Superintendent presented a graduation summary for 2014-15 showing the number of graduates from each high school, and their future plans. The district will offer a community college program for returning fifth year seniors (there are 13 that meet the criteria for this program). LCSD is able to offer this due to availability of the advanced (IB) diploma at Newport High. Students participating in this fifth year program cannot take part in events on campus (prom, etc.).

Director Beck said it appears the dropout rate is still above 10%. Superintendent Boynton noted a change in a state law that will enable modified diplomas and alternative certificates to count as graduates. The fifth year students do not count in the graduation rate. “We will work to improve; we need to have students ready for high school when they get there,” Mr. Boynton noted.

Director Ellis wondered how many students successfully complete their first year of college.

•**Attendance/ADM.** Superintendent Boynton noted that schools with an attendance rate under 90% will need to have an attendance goal; “my bar is 90%”. The district’s overall attendance rate is 91%, which is 3% higher than last year.

•**Alt Ed-** The Superintendent reported data shows that more credits were earned by alternative education students in 14/15 than in the past. Courses are being added for the coming year. “Our hope was to expand alt ed to offer to home school students, but we lost the person who was particularly skilled at that. I am not sure at this point if we will continue on that path, or not.”

•Data- Smarter Balanced. The Superintendent said the data he was discussing the evening of the board meeting was very preliminary and will change. He said the district has gaps in test scores for second language students.

“We are totally changing our ESL program. We’ve hired new people and have some bilingual teachers. We allow the kids to speak Spanish to their tutors. We will do some dual language immersion at Sam Case, and hope to expand this. Newport and Taft have high numbers of second language learners. If there are students in other areas that need these services, the district may bus them to where those services are offered.

Mr. Boynton shared preliminary Smarter Balanced results by school, but emphasized that the results are not final yet. “Our achievement across the district is 10 to 15% below the state average.” He reminded board members that the Smarter Balanced test was new in 2014/15, and said Oregon is achieving at the 43 percentile as a state. Smarter balanced is an application test.

He noted there are bright spots, including language arts at the high school level. Taft and Toledo high schools are substantially out-performing the state average. Mr. Boynton said he would share the test results once they are finalized.

LCSD students’ scores will be compared to the national average; this will be used to determine growth.

Board members next examined STAR reading test results and the accompanying growth reports. “We got three quarters of a year’s growth from our kindergartners; the target was a year’s growth. As we get better at the system, we would expect the numbers to go up,” said Boynton.

In STAR math, Kindergartners at Crestview achieved a year’s growth. “But compared to the national average, they only half grew a year. So much is developmental in grades K-2,” said Boynton. He added that results depend in part on the cohort of students, and part on instructional strategies. “We did not get a year’s growth district-wide last year, but now we have data. It is not the whole story, but a piece of information. There are many questions, but it starts a conversation. There are several bright spots around the district,” said Boynton.

Chairman Martin asked how to help the teachers improve who are not reaching desired outcomes. Mr. Boynton said there are processes for them to learn, like Balanced Math. This made a big difference in some schools.

All schools are developing improvement plans. “The goal is to be proactive and efficient,” said Mr. Boynton. Elementary principals have been working on their plans for a few months. In May, they presented them to All Administrators. They received feedback and will present their respective plans to their staff, and then again to All Administrators.

As data has come in, Mr. Boynton has shared it with principals to enable them to focus on particular areas of concern in their school (i.e., attendance). Chairman Martin noted her involvement as a site council member in several improvement plans. She said some schools may choose to involve the community in the development of school improvement plans. Mr. Boynton commented that each principal approached writing a school improvement plan based on their perspective. “Those focusing on student achievement may not have used their community as much.”

The Superintendent noted that STAR tests have to be given four times a year in 2015-16, rather than every three weeks as occurred in 2014/15. "But they have to have other tools to gather the data within their intervals," he added.

"The principals need to use data, of whatever sort, to develop their goals- so they can be measured. I have made it clear the plans have nothing to do with me, but on making their building better," said Boynton.

Board Goals and Working Agreements.

Director Beck noted the board would do well to develop goals that you don't have 'autopsy' at the end of the year, but rather have goals that can be visited during the year.

Mr. Boynton pondered if one of the goals may be to better educate the public. Director Ellis said "We should all have the same message too."

School Board Image/Communication. Chairman Martin commented that, "We need to do a better job of getting our message across." Mr. Boynton noted that board members "do all their homework, so when you come to the meeting, the decision is made and no discussion happens. I am encouraging you to have conversations at the board meeting. Dissenting votes are okay. We usually gather a great deal of information about the items well before they come to you."

The Superintendent said he, the board and administrators need to be proactive, not reactive. "We have talked about having a monthly meeting with our media, and are exploring that." He added that he may send a weekly email to staff letting them know of the events of the week. Director Ellis said perhaps a communication from the Chair once per month could also be helpful.

Board Goals. Director Ellis asked to set a time limit of 20 minutes for this discussion. Director Beck stated he would prefer measureable goals that can be periodically discussed during the year.

Chairman Boynton suggested the board consider having a three year goal. An example could be, "In three years, all of our schools will perform at or above the state level."

Director Beck asked how the board could help that occur. Mr. Boynton suggested that, in place of the "area reports" at board meetings, principals could share where they are with regard to their school improvement goal.

Current board goals 1 and 2 could be subordinate goals to the three year one.

Director Ellis stated her preference to use the year (2018) rather than saying "three years."

Working Agreements- Director Beck said he is satisfied with the Board/Superintendent Working Agreements as they are.

Chairman Martin noted the importance of communication, and suggested the Superintendent more regularly share with staff regarding the good job they are doing.

She let the Superintendent know she "really appreciates the equity piece" he brought to the district. "You did it in a graceful way as well," she added.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Chairman

Superintendent