

**Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97,
970 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois
Special Meeting October 17, 2016**

President Gates called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

Present: Gates, Felton, Spatz, Spurlock (5:40 p.m.), Brisben, and Datta
Absent: O'Connor
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Facilitator Allan Alson, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier

ROLL CALL

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

RETREAT

Dr. Kelley introduced Dr. Allan Alson as the facilitator for the evening.

RETREAT

The agenda for the evening was reviewed. Dr. Alson recapped the last retreat, giving the Board a starting point for the evening.

Possible Parking Lot items for the next retreat were identified

- Review current evaluation instrument for the Superintendent

SUGGESTED NORMS

Dr. Alson reminded the Board members of the draft norms that were discussed at their earlier retreat.

NORMS

- Honor time
- No sidebars – including technology
- Check for understanding
- Assume positive intent
- Share diverse views
- Hard on ideas, easy on people
- No personal attacks

Vice President Felton reported that the Board had discussed these norms after the last retreat and modified them a bit. A brief discussion occurred and the Board agreed to the following norms.

- Be prepared and present
- Respect different opinions
- Be as concise as possible
- Enable all opinions to be heard
- Seek to understand and then to be understood
- Assume positive intent
- Hard on ideas, easy on people

It was suggested that the Board Reflections survey be modified to reference the new norms. Dr. Alson, President Gates and Vice President Felton will review the current survey and recommend changes.

It was agreed that once the norms and the goals have been approved, they should be included in the header of future Board agendas.

DISCUSSION “EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL BOARDS”

The article “Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards” was reviewed and discussed.

“EIGHT
CHARACTERISTICS
OF EFFECTIVE
SCHOOL BOARDS

3) Effective school boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.

Board comments;

- This statement requires some interpretation
- Board should not be focused on tactical issues. Policies that deal with student achievement could center on finance.

4) Effective school boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.

Board comments;

- Staff is off the table in how this Board operates. The Board avoids interaction with staff
- All Board members participate in the teacher negotiations and have two members sit on each of the other negotiation teams
- Should there be opportunities for staff to meet Board members?

7) Effective school boards lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.

Board comments;

- Challenging with Board turnover
 - Difficult getting Board members up to speed before speaking in one voice
 - After the April election, the Board dynamics could be very different

The Board discussed how questions raised by Board members are answered. It was noted that President Gates and member Spatz are working on modifying the Parking Lot and Long-Term calendars.

The Board discussed the possibility of a mentor for new Board members. It was noted that new Board members attend the New Board Member training along with a sitting Board member. The Board was asked to consider inviting potential Board members to observe a Board retreat.

The Board agreed that discussing the article was a good exercise, and it was suggested that the Board is doing about half of the items identified in the article. It was suggested that if the Board translates the first characteristic (Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision) into a 5-year vision, it covers characteristic seven (Effective school boards lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust). Some members expressed interest in further discussion of the article.

The Board was asked to review the article again and rank (1-5) each characteristic of effective school boards.

BOARD GOALS – MEASURES, ACTION STEPS AND PROGRESS MONITORING

BOARD GOALS

Alson noted that there are three things the Board should address with each goal;

- Measures of Success
- What are the action steps to accomplish goals?
- Progress monitoring of the goals
 - What is working well?
 - What is problematic?
 - What are you doing about the problematic items?

BOARD GOALS

Vice President Felton read the goals below and each was discussed.

2016-2017 Board Goals

All goals should be viewed through the lens of the community

1) Build deeper knowledge and understanding of the four terms framing the District Goals - Equity, Inclusive, Whole Child Focus and Positive Learning Environment through community engagement.

It was agreed that the audience for this goal would be the Board, community and staff, and over the next three months, the Board needs to share presentations with the staff. It was agreed that the interconnection with the big rocks, the four terms and the goals will be discussed during the work sessions with experts.

The conversation continued regarding the referendum, noting the need to explain where the money will be spent. It was suggested that the Board work with staff members and attend some of the community chats to ensure understanding. It was suggested that the district host community meetings with a professional speaker who can lead a discussion about the key terms. A short work session after the November 15, 2016 presentation of the goals, but before December 15, 2016 was suggested to engage the community about the plan in a consistent way. It was noted that this work is promoting actions that will help create the vision, promote better awareness, and communication. They will contain staff presentations and be led by expert speakers. President Gates and Vice President Felton will make up the team for this goal.

2) Develop strategies to further advance community awareness regarding the fiscal condition, needs of the district and the opportunities offered by the planned referendum.

- The need to explain the fiscal condition of the district was expressed. The following timeline was shared;
 - Determine referendum size – mid-December
 - Determine need to sell Capital Bonds – mid-December
 - Adopt formal referendum wording – January
 - Host community presentations – January through March

Members Brisben and Spatz will make up the team for this goal.

3) Review and refine the norms, protocols and work plans needed for Board preparation and meetings that will yield greater Board and administration effectiveness and efficiency. Update district policy to communicate and advance district priorities.

It was suggested that the annual calendar for the Board's work (work plan) be populated with the district's goals and progress monitoring. It was agreed that the Board regularly reviews District policies, administrative procedures and the District calendar. It was agreed that Dr. Alson and Dr. Kelley will work on a detailed plan and Vice President Felton and member Datta will make up the team for this goal.

4) Review and refine the Superintendent's evaluation instrument.

It was agreed that the next step is for Dr. Kelley to send her goals with metrics to Members Spurlock and O'Connor, who will make up the team for this goal. It was also agreed that it is acceptable to use the evaluation instrument and goals. The protocols and time will be presented to the Board in late December. Members

DISTRICT GOALS (2016-2017)

- Equity
- Inclusion
- Whole child
- Positive learning environment

**DISTRICT
GOALS**

Dr. Kelley reported that the District goals will be presented to the Board during the November 15, 2016 Board meeting. Discussion occurred around the vision and the two big rocks, and it was noted that creating policies to support the goals is very important.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

President Gates shared a presentation introducing the draft Community Engagement plan. He shared that the district is moving from transactional to transitional. He noted that IASB's Foundational Principles of Effective Governance recommends that School Boards should connect with their community by engaging in an ongoing two-way conversation with the entire community. This conversation enables the Board to hear and understand the community's educational aspirations and desires, to serve effectively as an advocate for district improvement, and to inform the community of the district's performance? With that in mind, member Spurlock suggested that the Board create a format to nurture a dialogue between the Board and the community and taking the primary responsibility for preparing materials, organizing logistics, presenting the information and hosting public programs. These forums should limit administration support to;

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
PLAN**

- Review/edit/fact check Board prepared materials
- Identify potential public speakers; if needed, coordinate introductions
- As appropriate, provide District data that is both in form and substance already produced by the District, only requiring reorganization to be relevant to engagement programming.

It was explained that the goal of this initiative would be to share information on a variety of topics both via electronic distribution and in-person programs so that the community has an opportunity to engage in a dialogue that is authentic, meaningful, and informative, to help the community understand the “what, when, why, and how” of major Board decisions made in support of Administration’s recommendations. Additionally, these forums would establish a format for dialogue and a database of information to promote community knowledge, and understanding as well as to encourage continuous improvement of the Board’s decision-making processes.

To accomplish this task, the Board would present topics to the community electronically and engage in online solicitation of questions related to that topic so that the presentation can be framed around pertinent questions. In coordination with administration, the Board would identify an appropriate third party expert on the topic to make a “101” presentation to the community, and Board member(s) would review the questions presented and provide them to the speaker for incorporation into the speaker’s presentation content.

Board comments included suggesting that the Board consider holding such forums on a quarterly basis and it was noted that this process is a two-way engagement like the Board has never done before. It was suggested that it might be ambitious to assume that the Board could complete more than one topic in a year. It was suggested that the Board invite the entire community and consider a Webinar concept. It was suggested that the Board consider presenting at other organizational gatherings. A standing Board committee was suggested as it would seek the help of communications experts in the community.

Alson suggested that the Board start small and build from there. He suggested that the Board go into each one with the same questions in mind so they can improve as they go. He suggested that it might be advantageous to partner with the Superintendent on some topics and present jointly. Alson reminded the Board to always tie the issues back to the district goals.

BOARD MEETING AGENDA FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The draft agenda for the October 25, 2016 Board meeting was reviewed and modifications were recommended.

AGENDA
REVIEW

NEXT STEPS AND RETREAT EVALUATION

- Discussion of framework for new Board members
- Follow up on the “Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards” article.
- Consider holding the next meeting sometime between November 15, 2016 and Winter break. Alson noted that he will be in Illinois in February and March for another client and could meet with the Board during that time period. He will send possible dates to Dr. Kelley and the Board Secretary.

NEXT STEPS
AND RETREAT
EVALUATION

RETREAT FEEDBACK

The Board feedback on this retreat including the following;

- Good conversation
- Everyone does well with something to react to
- Better understanding
- Appreciate the Board being here; noting that it shows their commitment
- Acknowledge that some of this takes time to talk about before we can understand
- Excellent meeting
- Article was a good thought provoker
- Dr. Alson is an excellent facilitator
- Difficult work
- The Board needs to put in time to be successful
- Agenda was a bit ambitious

RETREAT
FEEDBACK

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to conduct, President Gates declared the meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Board President

Board Secretary