

Official Minutes of the Oak Park Board of Education Elementary District 97, Cook County, Illinois

CLOSED MEETING MINUTES – September 19, 2017 TIME: 6:30 PM

The Board convened in closed session at 6:33 PM. Answering present and attending in person were President Spurlock, Vice President O'Connor, Members Spatz, Breymaier, Broy, Liebl and Member Datta by phone.

Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, IASB Representative Perry Hill and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier.

Summary discussion of the Board on all matters:

1) Board Self Evaluation

Perry Hill from IASB facilitated a Board Self-Evaluation session. He began by sharing a folder of handouts. He noted a list of closed meeting exceptions and recommended that the Board not go into closed session unless they can identify the topics to be discussed as being permitted by one or more exceptions. He shared the School Board Governance Basis Brochure which included the Foundational Principles of Effective Governance, the Code of Conduct, and the School Board Member Opportunities and Expectations. He also provided a table tent that encouraged the Board to consider if a topic is Board work or Staff work, and whether the Board has a policy on that specific topic. The reverse side of the table tent listed ground rules for the self-evaluation session.

Hill explained that the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) is a voluntary organization of local Boards of Education (currently made up on 6,000 individual Board members), dedicated to strengthening the public school system through local citizen control.

He suggested that the next steps identified as a result of this session be announced during the next public meeting.

Objectives

- A step in the process of creating a new board leadership team (identity)
- Consider and clarify Board/Superintendent roles and responsibilities
- Discuss working relationships and expectations for the team
- Identify next steps and Board development efforts

At Hill's request, each Board member shared his or her name, number of years of service, primary reason for running for the Board and one leisure activity participated in this summer.

Each Board member also expressed what he or she would like the community to say about this Board in April 2019.

Spurlock – The Board was trusted and relied upon to make good decisions for the children.

Broy – The Board focused on issues that mattered, focused on equity, excellence and nurturing the whole child.

Spatz – The Board set the district on the right trajectory.

Breymaier – The Board made significant improvement on making equitable outcomes.

Liebl – The Board enabled access to an education that all students could achieve.

O'Connor – The Board supported students who were further from the excellence starter.

Datta – The Board improved the community's ability to participate in the district's work to help every child reach his or her potential.

Kelley – The Board's structure supported the District's vision of a positive culture focused on universal goals.

Similarities identified on this list included

- Focus on kids
- Positive outcomes
- Equity
- Potential
- Reference to the vision
- Good community relations

- Board focus

The Board reviewed the “Eight Characteristics of an Effective School Board” document, along with the dozen danger signs of an ineffective Board.

Hill explained that after a Board has set a goal, Board members can align their work to move toward that goal and the Superintendent can adjust strategies to meet that goal. Hill recommended that in identifying the role of a school board, members keep in mind the letters BOE (**B**usiness-**O**riented **O**bjective and **E**nds-focused).

Primary Board responsibilities were identified as

- 1) Hiring and evaluating the Superintendent
- 2) Creating and ensuring compliance with Policy

The Board considered how its role differs from that of the superintendent.

- The Superintendent manages day-to-day activities, and the Board does not
- The Board
 - Clarifies the district’s purpose
 - Vision, mission, core beliefs, ends derive from the community.
 - The Board asks “who?”, “gets what benefits?” and “for what?”
 - The Board’s work is to govern the district, and to answer “what”, “why” and “how much”.
 - The Board’s work equals ENDS.
 - Policy is the Board’s voice.
 - The primary responsibility of the Board is policy, not management of district operations.
 - Connects with the community
 - Employs the Superintendent
 - Delegates authority
 - Monitors performance
 - Takes responsibility for itself

What is Policy?

- Written transaction of the community’s values
- Written guidelines set by the Board that chart a course or direction

Policy versus Procedures

- Procedures controlled by Superintendent.
- Detailed direction for staff by Superintendent.
- Administrative procedures provide detailed guidelines according to which the staff, students, and members of the public carry out the daily operations of the schools.

The basis function of Board policy is to;

- Ensure legal compliance
- Direct or authorize the Superintendent or staff members to perform certain functions or activities
- Establish Board processes
- Provide information

Requirements for Effective Policy

- Coaching
- Compliance
- Consistent review and revision
- Continuity in leadership

How does your Board coach policy?

- Hold regular review meetings
- Hold Board meetings

How are we coaching community and staff?

- Develop a Board member handbook. Select key areas of policy on which to educate the community.
- Expect compliance by all affected district stakeholders, so they all have the same expectations

Review and revision -- ask;

- Is this policy relevant?
- Is this policy still legally compliant?
- Does this policy reflect our Board/District ends and practices?
- Does this policy give adequate direction?

The Superintendent's work was defined as;

- Manage the school district
- Answer the questions "How, When, Where, and by whom?"
- Recommend and implement
- Lead staff

All focus of the Board should be on how each decision reflects a Board policy.

What is the ideal way for a Board to create a new policy?

Present each proposed new policy to the Board policy committee to investigate, research, and make recommendations to the full Board to determine whether the policy should be adopted. Members noted that this is not the Board's current practice. Hill suggested that the Board first agree in concept on the need for or usefulness of a proposed policy before referring it to the policy committee. By reaching a preliminary consensus of this type, the Board can make more efficient use of the time of the administration and legal teams.

Next item for discussion was how a Board member can request that an item or subject be added to the Board agenda. Board members expressed the view that the "Parking Lot" procedure needs to be redeveloped. Requests for an addition to an upcoming agenda are usually made during the agenda preview section of the agenda. Board members agreed that going forward, they will contact the Board President to determine whether a requested item should be added to a future agenda.

Hill shared suggestions related to placing items on a Board agenda:

- 1) Some boards have members contact the president and superintendent with the rationale for the requested addition to the agenda. If the president and superintendent refuse the request, the member making the request can seek to enlist four other Board members to support the request.
- 2) Place the item under new business for discussion. The member proposing the item then comes prepared to explain the rationale for his or her request that the item be added to an upcoming agenda.
- 3) The item could go directly to Board committee, or sent it to the next meeting for action.

Discussion ensued about the meaning and purpose of "Board approved procedures", and the value of having Board-approved procedures become public documents.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Session participants agreed that Public Comment during meetings is not intended to be a form of community engagement. Hill recommended that public comments be invited as one-way communication from members of the public to the Board. Boards typically find that trying to respond to public comment from the Board table during a meeting is not successful. He suggested that if the Board engages with the public during a meeting, the Board should have a mechanism for limiting discussion and keeping control of the meeting for agenda items.

"Owner" and "Customer" concerns were identified as;

Owner concerns

- Community, general stakeholders, taxpayers
- Referendum
- Board concerns, more complicated

Customer concerns

- Kids, parents
- Support services for kids
- Board directs customer concerns to the superintendent and staff. This is not Board work.

The Public Participation Spectrum chart shared by Hill identified "deliberative polling" as sharing a survey with a selected group, educating the group with data that the Board received, and then polling the group again after it received the data.

WORK SESSIONS

President Spurlock explained the concept of work sessions as devoted to specific topics that would be shared publicly during Board meetings, so the Board learns about them at the same time as the community. .

Dr. Kelley shared the Vision 4ALL document, suggesting that expert presenters would share their information for the first 45 minutes of these meetings, after which the Board would ask questions. Then members of the public would be afforded an opportunity to ask questions.

RESPONDING TO THE PUBLIC

Several examples were shared about concerns brought up by the public and examples of how one Board member could respond to them.

- The elimination of Library Aides exemplified a "customer-driven" item.
 - Board members could use a situation like this to educate the parents on the chain of command.
- People who complain as a group
 - Get more specifics. What is the key component of the problem they have raised? Take their information and tell them you will look into their Concerns.
- Ask yourself if it is a matter of policy or procedure

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a tool for social interaction, using highly accessible communication techniques including web-based and mobile technologies to transform communication into interactive dialogue.

IASB REMINDERS

Each school board member "shall recognize that a board member has no legal authority as an individual and that decisions can only be made by a majority vote at a public board meeting."

OPEN MEETINGS ACT

The Foundational Principles and the Code of Conduct were reviewed. Hill reminded the Board members that they may not take individual action that might compromise the Board or District. He reminded the Board that a thread of communication about District business on social media may be considered a conversation that amounts to a meeting in violation of the Open Meetings Act and as such, should be discouraged.

BALCONY VERSUS DANCE FLOOR

(eyes in and hands out)

Hill suggested that the Superintendent supplies the objective data. As parents or District residents, Board members may go onto the "dance floor", but they need to be aware that other people there will always see them as Board members. Every Board member has an individual agenda, but the Board's collective will and actions should take priority.

NEXT STEPS (share a board self-evaluations section)

- Consider using an executive session (called for appropriate reasons) to denote the conclusion of the work session and start of the public Board meeting
- Identify specifically the objective and promise to the public for each work session topic

- Town Hall meetings (or public topics, per poll) to come with a Board presentation / leadership
- Revisit topic titles of work sessions to appeal to more people
- Assess owner-versus-customer concerns on the topics related to learning services
- Be more intentional of Board Remarks. Consider splitting Board comments / concerns
- Consider new business instead of parking lot (matters arising) at the beginning
- Study the practices of being disciplined and efficient
- Contemplate frankness in meetings
- Work on a Doodle for a second retreat.

CONCLUSION OF CLOSED MEETING

Broy moved, seconded by Spatz, that the Board of Education move into Open Session at 9:36 PM. All members of the Board were in agreement. The Board concluded the closed meeting and reconvened in open session at 9:36 PM.

Board President