

**School District No. 1J, Multnomah County, Oregon
Board Retreat of July 30, 2015**

INFORMAL MINUTES

A Retreat of the Board of Directors came to order at 1:11pm at the call of Chair Tom Koehler in the Mt. Hood Room of the World Forestry Center, 4033 SW Canyon Road, Portland.

There were present:

Board of Directors:

Tom Koehler, Chair
Amy Kohnstamm, Vice-Chair
Paul Anthony
Steve Buel
Julie Esparza Brown
Pam Knowles
Mike Rosen
Katie Davidson, Student Representative

Staff:

Carole Smith, Superintendent
Amanda Whalen, Chief of Staff
Rosanne Powell, Board Office Manager
Trevor Cartwright, Facilitator
Caren Huson-Quiniones, Board Office

Chair Koehler informed the Board that the Retreat was the beginning of the Board's conversations and getting to know each other. The Board would be most effective if they could work together. Members need to listen to teach other and try to come to a shared vision.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Board to share how the first two Board meetings of the school year were for the members. Director Kohnstamm responded that she thought they both went well, but the second meeting felt messy with amendments to resolutions and the use of time. Everything unfolded very publicly, and her instinct is to improve upon that. She would like to flawlessly execute the Board's work. But then again, that is how the Board communicates; messiness is inherent to the process. However, Board members should be conscious of talking to each other before the meetings. Director Esparza Brown mentioned that part of the transparent process is to see the thought process of Board members as they make decisions. The Board is supposed to be open to everyone's ideas. Director Buel added that democracy was messy and that Board Members do not have strong relationships yet.

Mr. Cartwright mentioned the homework that the Board had been given: a copy of the Superintendent's latest evaluation and materials on Carver's Governance.

Mr. Cartwright asked each Board Member to tell him what has driven them to do this work. Director Buel responded that he had been a teacher for 43 years. He had been teaching government and wanted to get involved. Making improvements drives him. Ms. Davidson stated that she felt there were things she could do in her school to make transition for students better from middle school to high school. Director Rosen commented that his children had attended PPS schools and he values the system; public education was something that everyone had an equal opportunity in. Children were important investments in our future. He has advocated for schools and was motivated in trying to find ways that parents could feel more empowered in day-to-day issues. Director Esparza Brown stated that she has been an educator for 35 years,

currently training new teachers, and has worked with several school districts. She wants to see changes for students with disabilities and those of color. Chair Koehler saw the opportunity of serving on the Board in a civic perspective. PPS was one of the major determinants of the city, and he felt the District could be a lot better. He is focused on the challenges that face kids, both economically and environmentally. He does not want kids to be bored in school. Director Kohnstamm commented that she had three children attending PPS schools and believes that every child can achieve, but the District was not getting them all to a successful pathway. The District needs to do a better job in preparing students for success and linking them to pathways beyond high school. First of all, students need to graduate. Director Knowles stated that education was very important to her, and she had started out as a teacher. Caring adults can make a difference in a child's life. The District must be vigilant in the equity work, and there were huge policy issues that the Board needed to work on. Director Anthony was active in his community and with the equity issues at Jefferson High School. Everyone should have the same opportunities that his children have had.

Mr. Cartwright stated that a high functioning Board needs clarity in its role. Superintendent Smith added that if the Board functions optimally, then staff is able to work optimally. In reviewing possible areas of focus for the Board, Director Buel mentioned that he would like to see 100 areas of focus. Everything doesn't have to be done at once, it could take years. But things come up as you go along. Director Knowles commented that the Board works best when they ask staff to do things as a whole. When Board Members have their own agendas and want staff to do other work for them, it takes away what the Board as a whole has asked staff to do. Director Buel responded that sometimes the majority of the Board is wrong on something. Chair Koehler thought that for the last two years, the Board did not really listen to each other, and he did not want to see that happen again. Board Members all share the same values, and his hope was that the current Board would listen to each other.

At 2:30pm, the Board took a ten minute break.

Mr. Cartwright provided information on the Board's role, and referred to the Carver Governance handout. There was an altitude to observe as a Board, and an ends vs. means. "Means" are in the domain of management (how things get done); the "ends" are the results the Board is looking for. Director Buel read from the Oregon Revised Statutes that the Board has a responsibility for everything in the schools and was responsible for making the District work well. Mr. Cartwright began working on "the role" of the Board: 1) oversight of the Superintendent; 2) policy and priority setting; 3) accountability/monitoring; 4) strategic direction of the District; and, 5) fiduciary responsibility. Director Rosen commented that we need to define what "monitoring" means to the Board; perhaps quarterly reports on priorities and focus areas. The Board needs to figure out how long it might take for a priority to be accomplished. Director Knowles added that the Board needs to be informed and educated on District policies.

The Board began making a list of Working Agreements: treat each other with respect; listen; honor the perspectives of Board members; be a model for kids in their interactions; try hard to come to agreement with each other; keep an open mind with each other and be willing to look at things with varying lenses; keep in mind the Board role of dealing with education in the District; hold each other accountable; and, the addition of the five suggestions that Mr. Cartwright had suggested.

Mr. Cartwright listed the five dysfunctions of a team: 1) lack of trust; 2) avoiding conflict; 3) lack of commitment; 4) avoidance of accountability; and 5) inattention to results. Mr. Cartwright mentioned that the Board should bring together a collective vision for the District.

At 4:10pm, the Board took at ten minute break.

Superintendent Smith provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the six priorities from last year. Director Buel stated that the following focus areas were needed: principal effectiveness

and focus on what was taking place in the classroom (especially monetarily). Director Buel suggested removing focus area number 5 from last year, and that it needs to be spelled out what was being done for focus area number 1. Director Anthony stated his discomfort for last year's priority list as it seemed very political. He had reviewed the list and questioned if they were what was best for kids. In addition, focus area number 6 needed additional language. He was concerned that "on time" and "on budget" seems to set aside quality. Director Esparza Brown added that special education should be added to disproportionate discipline. Ms. Davidson commented that more money in the classroom was needed. Director Knowles concurred in regards to principal effectiveness, and that contract negotiations should be kept on the list as an area of focus. Director Kohnstamm stated that strong and robust programming across schools and grades should be an areas of focus. Director Buel mentioned that we need to also look at the effects of pulling teachers out of the classroom for 16.5 days of the school year.

Chair Koehler suggested that a second retreat should be scheduled in September.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lisa Davidson, PPS Third Grade teacher, stated that she hopes the 360 degree evaluation occurs for principals. She has had five principals in one year. Each school was unique and principal placement was very important. Also, she had written grants to receive digital devices for the classroom, and PPS staff had come through and slapped PPS ID's on them, even when they were not purchased by the District. She found that offensive.

Dave Porter stated that the Board needs to place educational context to the world as a whole, and needs to think about an education that will enhance our national security and economics.

ADJOURN

Chair Koehler adjourned the meeting at 6:02pm.

Submitted by:

Caren Huson-Quiniones, Senior Specialist
PPS Board of Education