



Poudre School District Board of Education

2407 Laporte Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80521 • 970-490-3607

Meeting Minutes

Minutes from Special Business Meeting

June 15, 2017

SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING – 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT: President Cathy Kipp and Vice President David Trask; Directors Nate Donovan, Christophe Febvre, Susan Gutowsky, Carolyn Reed, and Rob Petterson; Superintendent Sandra Smyser; Legal and Policy Counsel Tom Crabb; Assistant Superintendents Jinger Haberer, Scott Nielsen and Todd Lambert

ABSENT: None

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

President Kipp called the special meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

2.0 WORK TOPICS

2.1 IEP Process

Director of Integrated Services Sarah Belleau presented information on PSD's Integrated Services department, specifically the entire IEP process.

Information reviewed during the presentation included:

- An explanation of IEPs (Individualized Education Programs), "504" (refers to a section of a federal law), MTSS (multi-tiered levels of support) and federal laws as they pertain to integrated services.
- Integrated Services worked with 2455 PSD students of December 1, 2017; that number increased to 3350 students by the end of the school year. This count includes every student who had some level of interaction with the department (who was evaluated, had an IEP at some point, etc.).
- PSD is seeing more special needs students in relation to the number of kids entering the school district; growth is 3.6%. PSD tends to follow national trends.

Board members had questions.

What percentage of students are evaluated by the department and then get an IEP? Director Belleau will get back to the Board with this information.

Are we addressing every student who needs supports? Are we limited in any way, resource-wise (staff, financial, etc.)? Is everyone getting what they need in our district? The department evaluates these very questions on a continuous basis.

Director Belleau continued the presentation and reviewed the following information:

- Every category has very specific criteria. Students who fit that criteria then get an IEP in that area. PSD looks at several potential disabilities for each student.
- PSD's Integrated Services department has programming at 52 PSD school sites. The district has transition programs, serves charter schools and provides a level of service to private schools. The district is obligated to provide service free of charge to private schools. There is a portion of the budget that covers this cost. PSD is not responsible for state-chartered schools. The district also works with home-schooled students with disabilities. We are not reimbursed for home-schooled or private school work. PSD is obligated to search and find students who need support for their disability.
- In general, district students have 88% mild to moderate disabilities. 12% have significant support needs in our district. This mirrors national numbers. Compared to the state, PSD numbers are high because we have a very strong program. Students with autism move into our district because of the quality of our program.
- When a student moves into the district with an IEP, the district reevaluates their current IEP.
- Most special education teachers in our school district have master's degrees and they are required to do 12 hours of training that is specific to what we do in PSD.
- Discussed the thirteen areas of disabilities in our district and the criteria district staff use to categorize students. There is a full page of eligibility determination consideration for each category that staff are trained to understand and complete for each student.
- Discussed the six basic principles of IDEA.
- Director Belleau explained the district's referral process. The district must provide free and appropriate level of education to all students (if parents do not give permission to proceed with an IEP for a student). The district will continue interventions with parents to get that permission.
- Director Belleau explained the educational document that is put together for each student with special needs; this is the IEP. Outlined each piece of information that goes into the IEP (their academic performance, needs, accommodations/modifications, etc.).
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) discussion about balancing this for the student and the classroom and how to serve both interests to provide the best education for everyone.

Board members had questions.

Do we know if special needs students leave charter schools after the October count date and transition into neighborhood schools? We do not have data on that. In general, integrated services has had to work with charter schools on accepting special needs children into their schools. At times, this is an issue.

There was a category change at some point, did that affect things? Some of the numbers shifted, but it is complicated. Since the change in identification categories, our number of special needs students has grown (at a rate higher than our population growth).

Does the recent court ruling affect our program? No, it does not affect our district. We do not aim to provide just the minimum level of education to special needs students. Our district continues to document and explain each process. We do what the state has asked us to do. We take it seriously. Our district is 100% compliant.

What kind of external or internal auditing do we have in the district? There are several levels of this; feedback internally, external audits and feedback from the state. It is a continuous cycle of improvement.

Why are our IEPs lower than the rest of the state? It could be because we are doing more intervention in our schools and identifying the right students who need IEPs. We have a strong system around the MTSS structure. Students have made growth. It could be due to demographics. There are a lot of factors. Early intervention could be making the difference.

The Community Connections building is a small building, is it sufficient? Next year the program will increase; the district will keep an eye on this to ensure the program has adequate space.

Director Belleau shared a video from the Integrated Services department.

The Board recessed at 6:29 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 6:40 p.m.

2.2 Innovation and Educational Alternatives

Directors Febvre and Petterson introduced this discussion on innovation and alternative education.

The Board discussed having a vibrant, diverse, cohesive district in 15 years and getting there by coming up with a pathway, a framework.

Some of the questions this topic prompted right away included:

- Do we consider new teaching and curriculum ideas from communities within or outside the district?
- Why are charter schools popular right now? Is it because they are more innovative, or because they give operators independence?
- What reasons do people have when they feel they need to start a charter school? It's important to know the reasons why before we innovate and invest district resources.
- What specifically are they looking for in a charter school? Is it a different culture? Could we get people to talk to the district first before they begin chartering a school?

- Could we incorporate charter school ideas into existing buildings/schools?
- Is our district flexible and open to innovative ideas?

There was discussion about putting this topic on a future Board meeting agenda.

Assistant Superintendent Lambert discussed a school within a school charter school experience he has had (outside of PSD) and how that worked for the district. It did not achieve what it was meant to achieve. It was a difficult model to manage.

Assistant Superintendent Jinger Haberer spoke to other school in school charter school models and gave examples of current ideas within our own district and how Principals are introducing innovation in their schools. Perhaps we fuel ideas within our schools to help our staff explore innovation in the district.

Assistant Superintendent Scott Nielsen discussed charter schools; what we can learn from them and looking at ways to integrate some of the things they want into our existing schools.

There was a discussion about what drives people to charter a school.

In existing schools, are the student accountability groups meeting? Are parents giving feedback? It is important to get feedback and listen to that voice.

Should the district put information on its website about going down the charter school pathway and offer alternative options (on how to incorporate their ideas into existing buildings/schools)? How do we gauge interest from a teacher standpoint and a parent standpoint? We need avenues for them to express their interests. Include a spot on the district website to gauge the interest level of parents on a topic, get a certain number of signatures, etc. (an online petition spot).

Do we talk enough about the choices that are available in our district? The district offers a lot of school choice; need to ensure that parents know all the options and continue to stay on top of consumer trends and offer them what they want in their schools.

Can we have a common vision among our community's public schools, traditional and charter? Yes, but both groups need to want it.

Going forward, we need to develop a positive relationship with (future) charter schools from day one.

Are teachers looking for alternative - varying work days, waivers on the master agreement for teachers, etc. This might be another point of the interest for charter schools (gives teachers more independence/flexibility).

District administration (Superintendents) are going to get together and talk about an agenda item for this that the Board could look at - major points including, what is the pathway, how do

we gauge the community's wants, how do we change the culture/perception and marketing/advertising what we have as a district.

The Board has expressed its values and requests frequent updates on this topic from administrators.

2.3 Zoom Activity

The Board, Superintendent and Assistant Superintendents engaged in a group problem solving and communication exercise.

2.4 Board Norming

The Board discussed meeting formats.

Are meetings long enough or, just right?

Can we manage meeting discussions by taking a consensus at a certain point to find out where everyone is at and determine how much more discussion is needed?

Prior to meetings, note your questions and determine, will this provide information or benefit the audience? A lot of questions could be answered ahead of time.

Are presentations necessary when the Board and the public see them ahead of time? Do we need to look at policy publicly?

There was discussion about the monitoring report. Where is it online? Should we, at times, skip the presentation and focus on discussion instead? Some topics could still require reviewing the posted presentation in meeting.

What does the Board need to do their job? Focus topics on the agenda that are informational and actionable.

Superintendent noted that current meetings are technically different – the business meeting is meant to be for approving business things and the work sessions are for discussion items.

One suggestion is to post on the clock (for meeting presenters) only the minutes allowed to present and not include total minutes (for presentation, question and discussion).

In future dinner sessions, if the meeting is beginning to run overtime, President Kipp will ask the group how much extra time is needed or not. It is ok to run the dinner meeting approximately ten minutes late to wrap up an item.

If four Board members agree on something, do we move on from that topic, or is that not effective? If someone has topic questions, perhaps they submit those ahead of time explaining exactly what they want to know and why so staff can best address the topic.

During dinner sessions, address the meeting agenda so that there is more understanding about what everyone wants from a specific topic. It would be helpful to have the Superintendent talk to staff ahead of meetings and ask the Board questions at that point, so that we can get to the core of the topic at the official meeting. There is always a chance that dinner sessions require time for last minute executive sessions; keep this in mind.

Continue to have dinner sessions at 5:30 p.m. and if that time doesn't allow for agenda planning then we need to adjust the meeting start time.

Discussion about polling/online editing – the Board needs to be careful how things online are addressed. If members have suggestions, they can send them individually to the Superintendent and she can make the decision.

Regarding community emails the Board receives; procedurally, it would be nice to know that someone responded to a community email.

During the Board's fall retreat, let's talk about an agenda item on the community's perception of the Board and the Board's responses to the community.

2.5 Board Self-Monitoring

This will be discussed at the fall retreat.

2.6 Topics and Dates: 2017-2018 Meetings

The Board will continue to do community engagement meetings on the third Saturday of each month. These meetings will begin on August 19, 2017.

Informal Board lunch meetings for the 2017-2018 school year will be on the first Thursday after the first official Board meeting of each month.

The Board scheduled four Board retreats for 2017-2018 – September 19, 2017; December 1, 2017; February 20, 2018 and June 14, 2018.

There was discussion about assigning school visits differently in 2017-2018.

Topics for 2017-2018 Meeting

- Add Board self-monitoring to the September retreat agenda.

- The Superintendent will bring in appropriate staff to dinner sessions to discuss with the Board possible future meeting topics of interest to Board members. An initial topic of later secondary school start times will be scheduled for the early September dinner session. Staff from the transportation and athletic departments will be amongst the staff requested to join the board on this topic.
- September 19, 2017 retreat topic to include Board responses to the community/Board and community perception.
- Director Petterson is working on a topic regarding personalized learning; this will be added to a future agenda.

3.0 ADJOURNMENT

Meeting ended at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyla Davis
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Education