

Superintendent Report

School Board Meeting

November 20, 2017

Our Mission

Empowering students with knowledge and skills to succeed.

Our Vision

To be the school district of choice, inspiring excellence in academics, arts, and activities.

The Superintendent Report summarizes the communication with the Board of Education (BOE) throughout the month including the weekly District Status Report. In addition, the Report includes the building administrator reports as well as other information believed to be beneficial to the work of the BOE and school district. Detailed information for the items listed under the District Status Report Summary can be found within each weekly Status Report from the District's website. I appreciate feedback as to how we can improve the report. Thank you.

1. Weekly District Status Report Summary from October 13, 20, 27, and November 3 & 10.

A. Information, Communication, and Correspondence

- **News from Around the State and Beyond**

Politics: U.S. education secretary outlines her vision for American education

Build your team by giving people opportunity and support

Study cites benefits of early-literacy lessons

Health: NRHEG Elementary School now a healthier place

Sports: Crunch time never ends for coaches

Referendum: Is your district asking for more money? Here's why

Survey: Teachers' mental health declining amid job stress

Data: Learning how bullying happens in order to prevent it

School buses with Wi-Fi aim to bridge "homework gap"

Report reveals persistent school-readiness gap

Pre-K: Benson schools takes on child care needs

Preschool: We're spending \$125 million a year to teacher 4-year-olds — here's why

- **Paraprofessional Negotiations**

- **Teacher Negotiations.**

- **Board Member Quarterly Check-ins with Dale**

- **MSBA Phase III and IV Workshops**

- **Board Work Session on Facility Planning**

- **Washington DC Student Field Trip**

- **MSBA Annual Leadership Conference**

- **Act of Kindness**

- **November 7, 2017, Referendum Results**

- **E. F. Johnson Foundation and Rosenua Funds Grant**

2. Elementary and Secondary Principal Reports

3. Curriculum and Instruction Report

4. Board & Administrator for Board Members Monthly Publication – October 2017 Reflection - I
have provided a brief reflection on a few of the articles from the October publication. I hope you have had an opportunity to read and reflect.

- President should end meeting digression? – The article offers three ways for the board chair to assist the board in remaining on task at a board meeting:
 1. Remind a board member or members of the subject being debated or discussed,
 2. Call on each board member for comment,
 3. Stick to the agenda and not allow new topics to be discussed that are unrelated to the agenda topic.
- Board member: Ask the right questions about school safety – The article offers appropriate “oversight” questions to ask regarding school safety including:
 - ✓ What are the policies and procedures in place and are they reviewed regularly?
 - ✓ Do individual schools have security policies and procedures?
 - ✓ Do board polices support training for staff and is it budgeted?
- All staff communication should make its way to the superintendent – The article reminds board members to make the superintendent aware of when an employee contacts them with a complaint. Board members are encouraged to first ask the employee if he or she has discussed their matter with the superintendent?
- Work at clarifying roles through discussion – The article encourages boards and superintendents to regularly discuss expectations and responsibilities for various tasks to ensure there is clarity and agreement as to the different roles.

5. Facility Assessment Board Work Session Follow-up – As a follow-up to the November 8 Board work session, I have attempted to summarize below the Board’s progress beginning with the June 2015 referendum vote up through the most recent work session as it continues its work on achieving the second of its three work goals for 2017-2018 focused on developing a facility plan for the next 5, 10, and 20 years.

June 2015 Referendum Vote

The BOE advanced a question to the voters in June 2015 for facility renovations and additions at a cost of about \$14.2 million. The voters rejected the question.

Community Survey

The BOE administered a community-wide survey in January 2016 in order to gather information from residents and staff to be used in developing a strategic plan for the School District including facility planning. The survey was also intended to provide the BOE insight into the unsuccessful June 2015 referendum vote. There was a high response rate to the survey that asked several questions about the facility needs of the School District as the BOE was interested in learning more about the response of voters that resulted in the unsuccessful referendum. The survey results showed:

- Majority of respondents believed the School District should explore a referendum to update and renovate the schools
- 77% of respondents felt the School District should address facility needs within the next one to five years
- Adding and remodeling classrooms including Science labs, improving school security, and improving air quality through dehumidification were identified as priorities

- Majority of respondents who were not in favor of the June 2015 referendum identified the proposal for a new gymnasium and the tax impact as important to their decision

Strategic Planning Process

Following the completion of the survey, the BOE facilitated a strategic planning process that involved a task force consisting of staff, students, parents, and residents from our four communities. The BOE approved the recommended plan in May 2016 that included six priority or focus areas including the **Facilities Focus Area** that ensures the *facilities and infrastructure of the school district are designed to optimize staff performance and student learning in a safe, sustainable, and attractive environment.*

Facility Assessment

In the fall of 2016, the BOE approved a 2016-2017 work goal to complete an assessment of all district facilities by September 2017, and use the information from the assessment to determine short- and long-term facility needs as the next step responding to the June 2015 referendum vote, Community Survey results, and the development of the Strategic Plan.

In January 2017, the BOE approved an agreement to partner with ISG, an architecture and engineering firm based out of Mankato, to conduct a thorough assessment of all District facilities. The purpose of the assessment was to assist the BOE with:

1. Planning for maintenance and improvement to school facilities
2. Informing residents of facility needs
3. Prioritizing long- and short-term projects
4. Identifying opportunities to enhance learning environments
5. Developing strategies for financial planning
6. Developing and enhancing a long- and short-term facilities maintenance plan

At a special BOE work session held on September 20, 2017, the BOE was presented with the findings of the facility study by ISG. The report provides a detailed summary of the physical conditions of our facilities and identifies suggested prioritized actions to address a number of maintenance-related improvements to our existing facilities.

Last week on November 8, the BOE held a second work session to begin the process of *developing a master plan to address the adequacy and capacity of the NRHEG School District facilities for the next 5, 10, and 20 years.* At the work session, the BOE determined to take the following next steps.

1. Have administration work with staff to identify and develop educational programming needs for the next 5, 10, and 20 years to ensure our students have the skills and knowledge to prepare them for success.
2. Begin to identify and prioritize maintenance-related issues or deficiencies from the Facility Assessment to be included in the District's 10-year Long Term Facility Maintenance (LTFM) plan.
3. Develop a sequence of events along with a potential timeline describing a plan that will assist the BOE in making decisions how to proceed in meeting its goal of developing a plan to address facility needs now and in the future.

The BOE is committed to providing our students, staff, and communities with quality educational facilities. At the same time, the BOE believes this process deserves a high level of scrutiny, examination, and review to ensure that maintenance-related deficiencies and improvements, along with facility improvements based on student learning needs will be beneficial for our students and

communities for many years into the future. I commend the BOE for taking a thoughtful and systematic approach to the facility planning process.

Educational Programming for the Future

In the coming weeks and months, staff will have the opportunity to meet with their principal to talk about educational programming for the future. This is a critical and perhaps most important step in the process of examining how our facilities may impact teaching and learning now and into the future.

Questions to be thinking about include but are not limited to:

1. What do we want our students to know, learn, experience, and do?
2. What does the research say about best practices at all grade levels?
3. What must we do to ensure our students are college and career ready?
4. What changes to our current facilities are necessary in order to implement that educational programming 5, 10, and 20 years into the future?

After school on Tuesday, November 28, I will join Doug Anderson and meet with the Elementary faculty to share more about next steps in getting input from staff. Before school on Wednesday, November 29, I will join Dave Bunn and meet with the Secondary faculty. From there, the principals will be scheduling time with staff throughout December and early January to have conversations that will assist with the process of examining our current facilities to determine how they not only meet our current teaching and learning needs, but more importantly, for the next 5, 10, and 20 years.

6. **MSBA Annual Leadership Conference** – The 97th Annual Leadership Conference of the Minnesota School Boards Association will be held January 11-12, 2018, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The Conference concludes at noon on Friday, January 12. Please contact Sue Kulseth or me if you have any questions regarding your registration or lodging arrangements. There is interest for the Board to meet for dinner Thursday evening. Reservations are being arranged.
7. **MREA Conference** -- Thank you again for your support in allowing me to attend the two professional conferences this fall. This week, I was in Brainerd for the MREA conference. It was a good conference and I have brought back information to share with appropriate staff including ACT related test prep ideas that are part of our WBWF action plan, as well as initiatives school districts are implementing in the area of enhancing their vocational programs.
8. **ACT Test Prep and April Exam** -- As part of our World's Best Workforce 2017-18 plan that will be presented to the Board Monday night, the Secondary School has identified student performance on the ACT to serve as a progress measure under the WBWF goal of preparing students to be career and college ready. As a result, we are moving forward with the decision to provide all juniors with the opportunity to take the exam in April at the District's expense even though the State is no longer reimbursing District's the cost for administering the exam for every student. In addition, we are offering for the first time the opportunity for any junior to take a practice ACT exam in December. We are working with a company (Cambridge) to provide an ACT Practice Test that Cambridge will analyze the results and provide our students and teachers with an item analysis that can be used to help prepare for the exam in April. I had brought this to my previous district and we experienced positive results. However, a key to seeing improvement will be dependent on what we do with the practice test results. We are also currently exploring options for an "ACT Prep Course" which I have had experience with as well. Both of my sons benefited from taking a "prep course" and credit their increased ACT scores to both the opportunity to take a

practice test as well as a prep course. The prep course will take longer to put in place and will not happen this year.

9. **November 7, 2017, Referendum Results --** According to MSBA, 44 of 53 districts passed operating levy questions with all 20 levy renewal questions passing (83%). 28 of 41 districts pass bond or capital project levy questions (68%). Below is a summary from MREA regarding referendum results in Greater Minnesota school districts.

- **Bonds:** Voters in 13 Greater Minnesota school districts approved at least one bond question while voters in eleven other Greater Minnesota school districts rejected all questions. This 54 percent passage rate is a sizable improvement over the 36 percent passage rate from January-August this year, and last November's 44 percent passage rate. This is compared to the metro passage rate of 82 percent.
- **Operating:** Voters approved increases in Operating Referendums in 18 Greater Minnesota school districts. In nine districts, voters rejected the requested increases for an approval rate of 67 percent. Metro voters approved 93 percent of the increases
- **Renewals:** All thirteen renewals of existing Operating Referendums passed across the state.

10. **E.F. Johnson Foundation and Rosenua Funds Grant --** As we discussed programming for students as part of the November 8 Board work session, there was mention of work being done by Mr. Paula in our Business Education Department in the area of flexible learning spaces, and I wanted to acknowledge the E. F. Johnson Foundation grant and Rosenua Funds grant Mr. Paula has received in the amount of \$3,500 to assist in the development of the flexible learning space. As part of the grant application, Mr. Paula wrote:

As the working conditions and expectations continue to change in a competitive job market, our students need to be able to build the skills necessary to work collaboratively in a creative environment. Our intent is to build a flexible learning space that can be easily configured to meet the needs of the students in our building. Through shared workspaces, to small group collaboration stations, we want our students to be competitive in the 21st Century. This grant will provide a critical step in building this learning space and bring up-to-date technology to the hands of our students.

When describing the work settings for companies like Google, Facebook, or Apple, words that come to mind are relaxed, collaborative, and creative. As schools begin to transition towards customized learning for students, it is imperative to provide an adequate learning environment for this to take place. My students in Digital Media and Introduction to Business Marketing at NRHEG have designed a space in which they would want to learn. We aim to turn what was an old computer lab into a space designed specifically for collaborative, flexible learning. This space would provide an opportunity for students to work individually, collaboratively in groups, or allow for whole group instruction. Currently, the ability to work collaboratively is limited by desks and lack of space in my classroom. With this room, however, it will provide a space for all students to work throughout the day in an environment that will promote creativity and collaboration without the rigidity of a classroom setting.

To do this, we'd use these grant funds to buy furniture and technology that will create a welcoming, comfortable learning environment. This would include tables with hookups for screens, lounge seating that can be easily moved in addition to 2-32"TVs, 1-HDMI Projector, four new computers and a clear acrylic dry erase board.

Congratulations and thank you to Mr. Paula!

11. Assistant Director Special Education Position -- As you know, our school district presently contracts Special Education Director services through the Waseca Public Schools. Recently, I have been working with the superintendents of Waseca, J-W-P, and W-E-M to consider the addition of an Assistant Director of Special Education. I have given my support to the concept, and the four districts are moving forward with the posting of the position and interviewing qualified applicants. The estimated cost to our District will be approximately \$10,000 - \$13,000. The Assistant Director will provide needed support to the Director in order to enhance the level of service provided to our staff and students. Once an individual has been hired, we will receive a revised contract with Waseca and I will bring it to the Board for approval.

Thank you for all you do!

Dale N. Carlson, Ph.D.