

**MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 12, 2013  
WORK SESSION OF THE  
WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

October 12, 2013

**1. Opening Items**

**1.01 CALL TO ORDER**

The Work Session of the Board of Trustees was called to order at 9:14 a.m. at the Best Western Airport Plaza Hotel, 1981 Terminal Way, Reno, Nevada.

**1.02 ROLL CALL**

Vice President David Aiazzi and Board Members John Mayer, Barbara McLaury, and Howard Rosenberg were present. President Barbara Clark and Trustee Lisa Ruggerio were not present at the time of Roll Call. Trustee Estela Gutierrez was absent from the meeting. Superintendent Pedro Martinez, Deputy Superintendent Traci Davis, and staff were also present.

**1.03 ACTION TO ADOPT THE AGENDA**

It was moved by Trustee Rosenberg and seconded by Trustee Mayer that **the Board of Trustees approves the agenda as presented.** The result of the vote was Unanimous: Pass (Yea: David Aiazzi, John Mayer, Barbara McLaury, and Howard Rosenberg.) Final Resolution: Motion Carries

**1.04 PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment at this time.

*President Barbara Clark and Trustee Lisa Ruggerio arrived at the meeting at 9:17 a.m.*

**2. Items for Presentation/Discussion/Information/Action**

**2.01 REVISIT OF AND POSSIBLE UPDATE TO THE DISTRICT'S STRATEGIC PLAN *ENVISION WCSD 2015* TO INCLUDE: PROCESS; DISCUSSION ON THE VISION, MISSION, AND CORE BELIEFS; GOALS AND INITIATIVES; AND THE PROJECT AND MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR THE COMMUNITY**

Dr. Jill Derby, Facilitator, began the discussion on the Strategic Plan by conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) exercise with the Board of Trustees and Superintendent Martinez. It was important to conduct such an analysis to look broadly at items in the SWOT exercise so the Board would know what would need to be focused on in the new Strategic Plan.

The Trustees listed the following items as Strengths for the District:

- Faculty and staff
  - Want the best for the students
- Strategic Plan
- District is on the way up
  - Higher graduation rates
  - Stronger planning
  - Good management of finances/budget
  - Strong on-going monitoring and assessment
- Engaged Board
- On path of education reform
- “Sweet” district in terms of size and demographics
- Strong relationships with higher education
- Unique aspects to District
  - Signature Academies
  - Preparing students for secondary education
- Good relationships with key community stakeholders
- Strong political relationships/partnerships
- Great students – Student Advisory Board
  - Willing to work together on common concerns, i.e. anti-bullying campaigns
- Parental engagement – cultural shift to openness
- Better relationship with media – willing to highlight positives in the District
- Good relationships with employee associations
- Systemic changes in schools and central administration to reflect accountability and transparency.

The Trustees listed the following items as Weaknesses for the District:

- Too bureaucratic
  - Slow-moving
  - Multiple layers to work through
  - “Traditions”
  - Perceived lack of efficiency/streamlining
- Public trust deficit
- Need more team focus
- External communication and outreach to those outside of the District
  - Those with no children in the schools

- District is more reactive to situations
- Critical communication to the Board needs to be better
  - Board does not know who to contact
  - Staff support for Board
  - Lack of internal communication
  - Lack of Board agreement on who to accomplish items

The Trustees listed the following items as Opportunities for the District:

- Work better with other local governments and boards
- Continue to forge strong relationships with other education entities in the area
- Use skill sets of Board members
- Leverage Assembly Bill (AB) 46 conversation and discussion – planted the seed of support for education in the community
- Leverage national connections and promote national engagement of the Board
- Leverage technology
  - Management of operations
  - Teacher dashboards
  - Talent in the classroom
  - Increased rigor because of Common Core
- Address culture and race issues
- Better Board of Trustees' constituent services
- Better financial transparency

President Clark opened the meeting to public comment.

Nancy Sorensen wanted the Board to be aware that technology was not very forgiving and should be used cautiously. She provided an example of a student answering a question correctly on a computer assessment, but the answer was marked incorrect because the computer did not think the answer was grammatically correct.

The Trustees listed the following items as Threats to the District:

- Unfunded mandates and sunset of taxes
- Negative public perception – primarily with spending and finances
- Tendency for the community to undervalue education
- Continued financial constraints during an improving economy
  - Lack of public awareness of the tax issue
- Piling too much on teachers
- Lack of community understanding of Common Core
- Consistent messaging

*President Clark recessed the meeting for 15 minutes.*

Dr. Derby moved the conversation to the Vision, Mission and Core Beliefs statement that had been developed by the Board in 2009. The current Board needed to review the language and items listed to make sure they were still applicable to the District prior to reviewing the Strategic Plan. Changes to the Vision, Mission and Core Beliefs could affect what was contained in the Strategic Plan. The Vision was listed as "As a courageous, innovative leader in education, Washoe County School District will be one of the nation's top performing school districts, graduating all students college and/or highly-skilled career ready." The Vision was intended to be a very broad statement of the aspirations of an organization. She asked the Board to consider if there should be changes to the statement.

Trustee Aiazzi wondered what "courageous" was defined as for the District. President Clark indicated the term was included to inform people the Board was willing to have conversations around difficult topics, such as race. Dr. Derby mentioned another way to say it would be "bold," which meant open to change or ready to step into a changing future.

Trustee Rosenberg was concerned with the phrase "highly-skilled career ready." He felt it might not be interpreted the way the Trustees intended. Not everyone had to go to college and he was concerned the phrase "highly-skilled" would be interpreted as computers and technology. Superintendent Martinez explained that there needed to be better definitions of both college and career ready. There were very few opportunities for children with only a high school diploma and options needed to be presented and available to all students. For example, directing students to the trade certificate programs at Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) for post-secondary educational opportunities. Post-secondary was critical now more than ever and students needed to realize that. He was interested in removing the "or" from "college and/or career ready."

Trustee Ruggerio wanted to see the statement shortened to "A leader in education, Washoe County School District will graduate all students college and highly-skilled career ready." The statement should be focused on what the District's ultimate goal was.

Trustee Aiazzi requested better definitions for the terms because they were not measurable. Superintendent Martinez agreed and the Board needed to be comfortable with the statement because they would be the ones "selling" the statement when people asked about the District.

*President Clark recessed the meeting for 15 minutes.*

Dr. Derby reminded the Board that the phrase "college and/or career ready" had been used in the public for a number of years, so it did mean something to people. Taken

together, the Vision, Mission and Core Beliefs was the primary communication tool for the District and the Board needed to be aware how changes in terms could affect the message.

Dr. Derby moved the conversation from the Vision to the Mission of the District which was "To create an education system where all students achieve academic success, develop personal and civic responsibility, and achieve career and college readiness for the 21<sup>st</sup> century." The Mission statement defined the purpose of an organization and what it was committed to fulfilling.

President Clark wanted to see something added that indicated the District was culturally responsive and met the needs of children and families in various ways, not just academically.

Trustee Aiazzi recommended not changing the statement because it had been mentioned to him that the District never really embraced a philosophy because it was changed every few years. He was interested in keeping the language to see if it would help to embrace the philosophy the Board wanted to achieve.

Dr. Derby moved the conversation to the Core Beliefs of the District. The core beliefs expressed the vision and mission and were from where the goals of the strategic plan would come from. The Core Beliefs for the District read:

We believe

- All students will learn and be successful.
- The achievement gap will be eliminated by ensuring every student is challenged to learn at, or above, grade level.
- Effective teachers and principals, dedicated support staff, rigorous curriculum, measurable outcomes, ongoing monitoring and assessment, collaboration, professional development, and a culture of continuous improvement will ensure classroom success for all students.
- Superior performance will be achieved through clear goals that set high expectations and standards for all students and employees.
- Family, school, and community engagement will be required for student academic success.
- Leadership and passion, together with accountability and transparency, will be keys to reform and success.

She requested feedback from the Board on if any of the statements should be revised or eliminated and if additional statements should be included.

Trustee McLaury stated she continued to be concerned with volunteerism and community engagement. She was not sure the Core Beliefs were strong enough around the different aspects of volunteerism and community involvement in the schools and the District as a whole.

Trustee Rosenberg felt the Core Beliefs were fine but that anything included in the Core Beliefs needed to be measurable. He was not sure the language in all the Core Beliefs allowed for that and should be revised.

Trustee Ruggiero agreed and wanted to make sure the value of the importance of the volunteers, community and constituents was included to a greater extent. She did not think those involved in the community felt valued and that was part of the problem the District was having surrounding the conversations about Assembly Bill (AB) 46.

President Clark remarked that there seemed to be confusion about some of the terminology because she would consider community and constituents the same thing. The definitions of the terms needed to be clear about who or what was being referred to. She did not feel the "community" needed to be broken down further into different sub-groups.

Trustee McLaury indicated there were differences between different groups of volunteers but it was not necessarily something that would need to be addressed in the Core Beliefs or even the Goals in the Strategic Plan.

Trustee Ruggiero wanted to see the term constituent added to the list of Core Beliefs because it currently did not explain what the District could provide to them. The District needed to make sure it was responsive to the community. Dr. Derby felt appropriate wording would be that responsiveness to constituents was part of a well working school district. The wording could be played with but it was important to capture the intent that the Board and District needed to be responsive to the community.

Trustee Aiazzi felt it could be "leadership and passion, together with accountability and transparency to the public, will be keys to reform and success." The Trustees and Superintendent Martinez agreed.

Trustee McLaury wanted to make sure cultural responsiveness was also included somewhere in the Core Beliefs. Superintendent Martinez mentioned it would be important for the Board to send a message that they embraced diversity. It was important to make sure all students felt welcome and important.

Trustee Aiazzi indicated an additional bullet point should be added to state that diversity would be embraced. A discussion was held on how the bullet point should be worded and the importance of diversity. The Board directed staff to work on the wording and the intent was that diversity encouraged great communities.

Trustee Ruggerio remarked that language also needed to be included about the importance of education on the well-being of a community. A message needed to be sent to the entire community that education was critical and important not only to the District but the whole community.

President Clark opened the meeting to public comment.

Nancy Sorensen expressed appreciation to the Board on the discussion of including diversity and global awareness in the Core Beliefs.

Superintendent Martinez remarked that it was important for the community to recognize the shifts that had been occurring in Nevada and including recognition of diversity would show how important it was to the District. The District was now a minority majority district and not everyone in the area was aware of that.

Trustee Ruggerio clarified that diversity was not just color but included those with disabilities, gender and sexual identity.

Trustee Mayer expressed an interest in including character building with the family, school and community engagement bullet.

Dr. Derby moved the discussion to the strategic goals. The goals were the major objectives the Board established for the District. Objectives would be included within each goal and would be a way to measure the success of the goals. It was important for the Board to review the current goals to determine if they were still valid to what they wanted to accomplish and then prioritize them. The current goals were:

- To provide all students with extensive opportunities, challenges and support in achieving continuous academic success.
- Recruit, select, develop and retain highly effective personnel to promote the best educational opportunities and services for all students.
- To engage family and community members in strong relationships and meaningful opportunities to increase expertise, trust and shared responsibility for student success.
- To value and strengthen a positive, productive and self-renewing culture throughout the District with attention to safe, orderly and respectful learning and work environments focused on student achievement.
- Align and maintain efficient and effective performance management systems to sustain a cycle of continuous improvement in support of student learning.

The goals were established in 2009 and it was important to determine if they still worked.

Superintendent Martinez commented that overall the goals included in the current Strategic Plan had been very good for the District. In 2009, there were a lot of

problems in the District that needed to be addressed. For example, the graduation rates at the time had been flat at 56% for 5 years. The basic systems needed to be put in place to address the concerns. The District had now moved on and was at a higher level but that meant the work was a lot harder. He requested the Board look at the current Goals and Objectives to decide where the emphasis needed to be. One of the current challenges was that the District was outperforming the state and needed to decide where to go. The work left was working with that last 10-20% of students that needed the most help and get them to graduation or performing at grade level. He wanted to hear what the Trustees' thoughts were on the current goals.

Trustee Aiazzi requested clarification on if the goals should reflect the Core Beliefs. He was concerned that not all of the Core Beliefs were included in the goals. Dr. Derby noted the goals should reflect the Core Beliefs and be included in them. It was important to determine if some of the new items to be included in the Core Beliefs could be included in the current goals or if new goals should be developed.

President Clark mentioned that the goals were the pillars that the District's belief system was built on. The goals were some of the philosophies that would take the District from good to great. They were constants that should not be changed. Dr. Derby noted it was important to review the goals and make sure they continued to be relevant and change them, if needed.

Trustee Ruggiero expressed that she would like to see included in the goals, either in the current list or a new goal stating that the Board wanted to ensure the systemic value of education in the community, meaning that education was tied to the well-being of the community. She also wanted to see more in terms of the District's accountability to the public.

Trustee Aiazzi commented that the current Strategic Plan and Goals were based on learning in the classroom and how that occurred. The issues he and Trustee Ruggiero were interested in including were completely separate and how it should be communicated to the public. They were interested in seeing a goal related to responsibility and fostering relationships in the community and it should be separate. A new goal was needed but he wanted the list of goals to remain small so priorities would not be watered down.

Superintendent Martinez agreed that a piece was missing related to the community and needed to be included. He mentioned that the current Goals 4 and 5 could be reviewed and worked into the other 3 goals. He was interested in seeing that occur not to reduce the number of overall goals, but because the objectives in those 2 goals were systemic and should automatically be included in the work of the District.

Trustee Aiazzi added that it was important to remove goals that had been completed because if they were complete the District should maintain them and that did not need to be included in the Strategic Plan.

Trustee Mayer wanted to make sure completed items were included in some way because they could be dropped as people's focus changed. Superintendent Martinez agreed but cautioned that there were some items that the District had included in the work and there were no plans to change that because it was so important. For example, the schools were currently working on their school performance evaluations and they were required to include many aspects from the Strategic Plan. It was now part of the work and the District had moved beyond where the emphasis was when the Plan was first developed.

Trustee Mayer understood but wanted to make sure that aspects of the goals continued to be reviewed to determine their effectiveness and not ignored. Superintendent Martinez cautioned that if they were only included in the Strategic Plan it would be easier for the schools to ignore them because they would only be something for the schools to check off to show they were completed; whereas if it was included in the performance plans, the District would have the ability to measure the data and hold people accountable.

President Clark reminded the Board that the items included in the Strategic Plan would be included in the Superintendent's evaluation. She wanted to make sure that the current items were included and was concerned that the changes in the Strategic Plan would require changes in the evaluation.

Trustee McLaury noted that any changes would not be reflected in the current evaluation but in the subsequent evaluations.

Trustee Ruggerio commented that it would be important to hold a discussion on when the Board would expect items in the new Strategic Plan would be implemented because that would be the key. Superintendent Martinez remarked that changes in the Strategic Plan would not be able to be implemented until the 2014-15 School Year and the Board would need to look at how long the new Strategic Plan would take to fully implement. Staff would then look at the objectives and initiatives to determine the timeline of when those items would be able to move forward.

President Clark wanted to make sure the process was consistent because it would be difficult to conduct an evaluation if everything continued to change.

Trustee Rosenberg stated that it was important to remember that Superintendent Martinez was to be evaluated on items in the current Strategic Plan. If those items changed then those changes would be part of the evaluation the following year. He

would not expect the Superintendent to make immediate changes. He felt the current goals and objectives were relevant and did not necessarily need to be changed but added to.

Trustee Aiazzi remarked that the objectives were much clearer than the goals so it would be important to look at the wording in the goals and make changes.

President Clark was concerned that many of the items in the current Strategic Plan had not been completed and would be dropped from the evaluation. Dr. Derby noted it was the progress that would need to be noted on the evaluation and not necessarily that an objective had been accomplished because they were far reaching.

Dr. Derby moved the discussion to Goal 1 - To provide all students with extensive opportunities, challenges and support in achieving continuous academic success. She reviewed the objectives listed under Goal 1.

Trustee Rosenberg indicated that it needed to be explained who decided the "rigorous and relevant curriculum." It was clear who was responsible for what under the objectives so the Board and Superintendent would know who to go to if there were questions, but it was not clear who was responsible for the curriculum.

Trustee McLaury added that there would also need to be a change related to the new Common Core standards the State of Nevada had adopted.

Superintendent Martinez remarked that it would be important for the Board to look at overarching themes that should be included under the Goal. He felt Goal 1 was the most important because it related directly to what the District did, which was educate students. He wanted the Board to hold a discussion on the following areas to be included in the new goal: 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning, such as technology in the classroom and Signature Academies; rigor and Common Core; post-secondary objectives; and closing the achievement gap. He wanted to see the objectives more aspirational in nature so the District would have something to work toward.

Trustee Rosenberg wanted to make sure there was someone evaluating the content in the programs. It did not have to be the Board but the Board needed to know who to go to when they had questions regarding the broad themes. The accountability portion was just as important. Superintendent Martinez felt that the goals should be broader than one person and encompass various departments in the vision. It was critical to allow the individual programs to see where they wanted to go, let them figure out how to get there and then let the Board know what they needed to accomplish the task. A floor for standards was needed but the individual schools and teachers needed the ability to take the programs beyond the initial expectations.

Trustee Aiazzi requested clarity on his role as a Board Member in the process and how far down he needed to be involved in the objectives and initiatives. He was interested on formulating the objectives but wanted the Superintendent to bring back the plan on how those objectives would be accomplished in the initiatives. He also wanted to see additional information on what had been completed in the current Strategic Plan. The current Plan did not have the ability to fully measure if items had been done or to the extent to which they had been done. Superintendent Martinez acknowledged that had been a problem in the past and it would be important for the Board to continue to hold himself and staff accountable on what was included in the Plan. He admitted that he was disappointed when he returned to the District and saw that many items had not been completed to the original vision that was presented to the public.

Trustee Mayer stated it was important for the Board to see a list of items that had been completed because some items could be removed. The Board was provided information on which items had been completed; those items that were continuing; and items that had not been started. It was requested staff present the items in a different manner that made it easier for the Board to review.

Trustee Ruggerio felt it would be important for the Board to review the SWOT analysis they had conducted to see what was missing from the current Strategic Plan and add items from there. She was not interested in making final decisions at the current meeting but holding additional discussions on the topic.

Superintendent Martinez noted that many of the concerns raised during the SWOT analysis would fall under the current Goal 3. He moved the conversation to a review of the Goal with the Board. The wording in the current Goal 3 was similar to what the Board had discussed during the SWOT exercise.

Trustee Ruggerio responded that Goal 3 was more around community and parent engagement.

Trustee McLaury noted that the community communications aspect could be included under Goal 3 because it was already included. Strengthening volunteerism and civic engagement were also included.

Dr. Derby suggested the Board should look at providing staff with broad direction and allow them to bring a draft back to the Board instead of working on developing the objectives themselves. It would be beneficial for the Board to elaborate on what they want to see with regards to the items from the SWOT analysis.

Trustee Ruggerio stated a Board Constituent Services Department needed to be developed. Currently the Board did not have any support because there was only one person and that person was constantly receiving pushback from others. Additional staff

was fragmented and did not work together. It made the job of the Board difficult and she was unsure if District staff would be able to fully address the problems because they did not understand. Dr. Derby noted that should be included under the "weaknesses" regarding inadequate support for the Board in their constituent service role.

Trustee Mayer stated he would rather see the District establish an ombudsman position both the Board and the community would be able to utilize. It had been effective in other governments and would work with the District, as well.

Trustee Ruggerio commented the Board would require their own person because of the demands of the job. The Board needed someone to back up the work they wanted to accomplish. Supports needed to be put in place.

Superintendent Martinez recommended the Board review the objectives under Goal 3 to determine if some of the items in the SWOT could be included there. There were areas where weaknesses were present and it was important for staff to review the information as well to see if they could address the concerns.

Trustee Rosenberg stated that it was important to note that the concerns, especially related to academics, were not quick fixes and the Board needed to let the public know that changes would take time. It was something that he was just beginning to realize so it would be critical for the public to understand as well.

Trustee Ruggerio remarked that the Board should look at the information contained in the SWOT and develop goals and objectives around that. She wanted to see it completed by the Board so it would serve as a guide to staff.

Trustee Aiazzi noted that some of the concerns raised by the Board were included in the current Strategic Plan but had never been done. It was important for the Board to receive an update on what items had been completed and if an item had not been complete an explanation why.

A discussion was held on if an additional meeting on the Strategic Plan should be held that explained what had happened with the initiatives. It was important for the new Board members to learn why some items were included in the Strategic Plan. Superintendent Martinez observed that it would be important to show the Trustees what items in the Strategic Plan were still in progress and what items had dropped off. There were items where more needed to be done because there had been shifts in the District and items had gotten lost. He noted that part of the problem was that there were too many objectives and initiatives contained under Goal 3 and they needed to be refined.

Trustee Aiazzi agreed and requested if objectives and initiatives were removed a reason was provided so the Board would understand if there were problems with implementation, execution or the initiative was completed.

Trustee Ruggerio stated there needed to be a record of what had occurred with respect to the Strategic Plan and why any transitions were made.

Trustee Mayer observed that if additional goals were added or removed there could be an outcry from the public because it would not emphasize what the District felt was critically important. Items in the SWOT needed to be looked at and determine if they would be able to fit into current goals before new goals needed to be added. It would also be important to have the community review any update because they were involved in the development of the current Plan.

*President Clark recessed the meeting for 20 minutes.*

Dr. Derby wrapped up the discussion on the Strategic Plan. She reviewed the "next steps" for the Board. Another work session would be scheduled in November so the Board would be able to review the current Strategic Plan and see what items had been completed. Staff would include items from the SWOT analysis in another version of the Strategic Plan to show how those items would be included.

A discussion was held on how the process of receiving input from the public and key stakeholders should be completed. It was decided that the Board would review an additional draft of the goals prior to anything going out to the community for their input. It would be important for the public to know when updates to the Strategic Plan occurred.

Irene Payne, Chief Communications and Community Engagement Officer, remarked that it would be important to add the Strategic Plan to the website. She explained that on the new website the Strategic Plan would be more interactive and a person would be able to get as much information on an objective as they wanted, including if additional committees or groups were meeting on the objective and their agendas. Staff would also be able to provide updates to the Strategic Plan so the public would be able to continually check progress. Additionally, staff would be able to provide the financial information related to objectives and initiatives.

Trustee Aiazzi cautioned that it would be important to make sure the language on the goals, objectives and initiatives did not change and any changes to documents needed to be noted so the public would know when something had been changed.

President Clark opened the meeting to public comment.

Nancy Sorensen mentioned all the goals in the Strategic Plan furthered student growth and showed the potential of the students in the community. She recommended Goal 4 remain intact because it articulated the beliefs behind certain documents such as "The Culture of Respect." She wanted to see that remain because it helped to remind people to assist the undervalued groups in the District, such as special education students.

## **2.02 BOARD OF TRUSTEES DISCUSSION REGARDING POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE DAY, TIME AND LOCATION OF THE REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The Board of Trustees held a discussion on possible changes to the day, time and location of the Regular meetings of the Board. It was determined that meetings would continue to be held on Tuesday in the Board Room at the Central Administration Building. The start time of meetings would be moved to 2 p.m. so the Board could get some business out of the way prior to items the public would be interested in hearing and commenting on. Recognitions would continue to be held after 4 p.m. so students and staff would be able to attend.

Trustee Ruggerio requested a better process be put in place regarding those with hearing impairments.

Trustee Aiazzi requested staff look into more parking for the public who wanted to attend meetings.

## **3. Closing Items**

### **3.01 PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment at this time.

### **3.02 ADJOURN MEETING**

There being no further business to come before the members of the Board, President Clark declared the meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

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**Barbara Clark, President**

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**Lisa Ruggerio, Clerk**