

**MINUTES OF THE APRIL 8, 2022  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

April 8, 2022

**1. Opening Items**

**1.01 CALL TO ORDER**

The special meeting of the Board of Trustees was called to order at 8:38 a.m. in the Board Room of the Central Administration Building, located at 425 East Ninth Street in Reno, Nevada.

**1.02 ROLL CALL**

President Angela Taylor and Board Members Jeff Church, Adam Mayberry, Ellen Minetto, Diane Nicolet, Joe Rodriguez, and Beth Smith were present.

**1.03 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Emily Ellison, Chief Human Resources Officer, led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**1.04 ACTION TO ADOPT THE AGENDA**

It was moved by Trustee Church and seconded by Trustee Smith that **the Board of Trustees approves the agenda as presented.** The result of the vote was Unanimous: (Yea: Jeff Church, Adam Mayberry, Ellen Minetto, Diane Nicolet, Joe Rodriguez, Beth Smith, and Angela Taylor.) Final Resolution: Motion Carries.

**2. Items for Presentation, Discussion, Information and/or Action**

**2.01 INTERVIEWS BY THE BRYAN GROUP AND THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE FINALISTS FOR THE POSITION OF SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS FOR THE WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT: MS. JHONE EBERT, DR. SUSAN ENFIELD, DR. SHERRELL HOBBS, DR. SHAWN LOESCHER, AND DR. CAPRICE YOUNG; THE BRYAN GROUP WILL FACILITATE THE INTERVIEWS, WHICH WILL BE CONDUCTED OVER ZOOM; THE BOARD MAY CONSIDER THE CHARACTER, COMPETENCE, OR ALLEGED MISCONDUCT OF MS. JHONE EBERT, DR. SUSAN ENFIELD, DR. SHERRELL HOBBS, DR. SHAWN LOESCHER, AND DR. CAPRICE YOUNG**

Dr. Bill Bryan, The Bryan Group, provided an overview of the process that would be used to conduct the guided storytelling. Each candidate would tell a positive/up story and a negative/down story that occurred during their career and what the candidates learned from those stories. The Trustees would be allowed an opportunity to ask clarifying questions regarding the stories. He would be conducting the guided storytelling. The candidates would be present via ZOOM video conferencing.

Dr. Caprice Young was the first candidate to participate in the process. She first told a down story related to a time where she was recruited to take over a group of schools facing a financial crisis. Part of the challenge for the schools was that she had requested everyone make a 50% reduction in their budget, which required systems changes because it was not asking for schools and departments to trim around the edges, but to make wholesale changes to how they operated. While she had turned the finances of the schools around, when she initially took the position, she had promised to remain for 1 year. After the year was complete, it was difficult to leave because she knew there was still more to be done.

Trustee Taylor requested additional information on how the cuts had the schools and departments look at how they operated differently. Dr. Young explained that with small cuts, people tended to just trim and essentially starve existing programs, but large cuts required creativity to find solutions. One of the more creative solutions was for the high schools to work together to share elective courses instead of eliminating the classes completely.

Trustee Smith asked how staff and families were involved in the process. Dr. Young explained she first worked with the principals on developing plans regarding cuts, then met with the individual school communities, including families and vendors. She noted that based on those meetings, the plans were changed to accommodate the desires of staff and families as much as possible.

Trustee Nicolet wondered why the 1-year commitment was made at the beginning. Dr. Young mentioned that since she was coming in to address major financial issues, she wanted to make it very clear to everyone that she was there to make the hard decisions and not advocate for a future position.

Trustee Mayberry inquired as to how the relationships she had established within the community had helped with turning the school finances around. Dr. Young remarked that she had developed the connections over the course of many years and had built trust by supporting the individuals in a variety of manners. She was highly interested in creating those same connections and relationships in Washoe County.

Dr. Young then told an up story about her work with Learn4Life Schools as National Superintendent. She explained how she transitioned the regional vice presidents into

area superintendent roles. A high-level overview of different ways she guided the individuals over the course of the year to transition into their new roles and responsibilities, including allowing people to make mistakes. She was proud of the work and how most individuals grew into the new positions, even with serious challenges occurring because of mistakes.

Trustee Taylor asked why it was important to allow people to fail. Dr. Young talked about the importance of leaders learning that making mistakes and failing was okay because it allowed you to learn how to succeed by correcting the mistakes.

Trustee Nicolet wondered if the story created any changes in how she viewed the process. Dr. Young stated she learned it was important to provide additional information and clarification on what the expectations were.

*President Taylor recessed the meeting for 20 minutes.*

Dr. Sherrell Hobbs began her conversation with an up story regarding the revitalization of an elementary school library that had been in disrepair for years. She was interested in the project because of her focus on improving literacy as a new principal and the desire of staff and families to have a functioning library in the school. She talked about her work with the school district's office of literacy on national grant opportunities and advocating for the project with those who did not believe in the project. She was proud of the new space because it became somewhere not only for students to work and learn, but also a place where staff and families could meet and collaborate.

Trustee Taylor asked if she had received any push back from those opposed to the project when she sought her own answers and how she overcame those challenges. Dr. Hobbs mentioned she had received a lot of push back from the school district's facilities department, but knew it was important to continue working collaboratively to make the project successful. Often she would meet with those against the project to explore different options or solutions and allow their voices to be heard.

Trustee Smith wondered if she continued to work with the office of literacy after the project was completed. Dr. Hobbs remarked that she continued to stress the importance of improving literacy for all students. Due to her efforts, two other elementary school libraries were revitalized.

Trustee Nicolet asked how she engaged staff during the process. Dr. Hobbs explained she began with conversations with long time staff members who were able to provide information on why and how the library had closed in the first place so she could ensure the same would not happen to the new space. She then collaborated with staff on what they wanted the library to look like in the future so staff would want to maintain the space.

Dr. Hobbs relayed a down story regarding to turning around seven schools to a commendable school status and increase enrollment during a 4-month period. She worked with the leadership teams of the schools on plans to demonstrate what it meant to be commendable and how everyone in the school fit into the plan to become commendable. She had to work with staff individually to get them to be honest about the challenges occurring in the schools and what needed to change to show improvement. She found it challenging to empower school leaders to fix the problems themselves and not contact her to solve the problems.

Trustee Nicolet wondered how she gained the trust of the principals to allow them to be open and honest. Dr. Hobbs remarked that she had to make it clear that she was there to help the students and school improve by providing resources and guidance, not call anyone out for mistakes.

*President Taylor recessed the meeting for 15 minutes.*

Jhone Ebert began with an up story regarding lifting student achievement by ensuring equitable access to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. She had led a team of representatives from school district departments and the community to develop a pilot program in a certain region of a large school district to create a CTE magnet school based on the desires and needs of that specific community. When the program proved successful, the team then created a plan to expand the program throughout the school district and increase the number of CTE magnet schools based on local community interest.

President Taylor wondered what it was about CTE programming that showed Ms. Ebert how important it was for students. Ms. Ebert noted she was concerned there were only 12 CTE magnet programs in a school district of over 300 schools, so initially there was an equity issue that had to be addressed. She also knew CTE programs kept students engaged in learning.

Trustee Mayberry inquired as to the goals of expanding CTE programming. Ms. Ebert highlighted the goals were to provide additional opportunities for students and improve graduation rates. The program was also used to increase community involvement in the schools because the higher the community involvement, the greater the success of the program.

Trustee Smith asked how stakeholder voices were pulled into the meetings. Ms. Ebert explained she had found conducting in-person meetings with people at their offices were some of the best ways to increase community involvement. It was also important to present a common goal and not a general idea since that allowed for a tangible outcome.

Ms. Ebert then told a down story of when she had been the director of K-12 science and math in a school district and a new superintendent set a goal of 100% of students participating in 8<sup>th</sup> grade algebra. She worked with her team to determine how the goal could be accomplished but discovered the school district needed to develop a better pipeline moving into middle school math to ensure students were prepared for algebra. While staff was interested in continuing the work based on improvements seen in a short timeframe, the goal ended when that superintendent left. Without the focus on continuing to emphasize having all students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade algebra, the program was shelved, and math achievement data reverted to where it had been prior to implementation of the goal.

President Taylor asked what staff's reaction was when the superintendent left and the program stopped. Ms. Ebert remarked there was a lot of frustration because staff had begun to see some successes. Staff was interested in continuing to analyze the data and see if they would be able to move forward with some of the changes.

Trustee Nicolet wondered what could have occurred after the superintendent left to continue the programming and not allow the backslide to happen. Ms. Ebert mentioned it would have been important to engage the community more and show the successes the schools were seeing so the community would become the ones advocating for the program, not staff.

*President Taylor recessed the meeting for 40 minutes.*

Dr. Shawn Loescher began with an up story related to increasing student outcomes and attendance that was intended to result in higher graduation rates, student engagement, and student internships in a school district's college and career and technical education (CCTE) program. He indicated the challenge when he had initially come onboard was that the CCTE department had to be restructured because of a 30% budget reduction. He worked with the department on being open to changes in how services and supports were provided to students and schools. He was able to increase the number of internship opportunities and improve programming throughout the restructuring.

President Taylor requested clarification on how he was able to implement the internship programs while at the same time cutting the department's budget. Dr. Loescher explained the team began by consolidating the community partnership program so schools were no longer competing over the same internship opportunities. The result was that the school district was able to increase the number of internships offered and provide additional opportunities for students who previously may have only been offered internships in one or two areas or businesses.

Trustee Nicolet asked if the program had been sustainable and what the positives were for the students. Dr. Loescher mentioned that while he remained in the position, the

program continued to show year-after-year improvement and his understanding was that for a few years after his leaving, the graduation rates within the program remained high. In terms of positive aspects for students, there were increased graduation rates for students the longer they remained engaged in the CCTE programming.

Dr. Loescher indicated his down story was currently occurring and was related to the state of education post-pandemic. He expressed some frustration that there were many people across the country interested in “getting back to where we were” instead of learning from what occurred and moving forward. He felt school districts had seen both challenges and successes during the pandemic, but many were not interested in using the innovation from the successes to create real systems changes because the conversations happening within local school districts were not occurring at the state level. It was important to note the conversations at the state level had to include discussions on funding models and what improvements could be made for funding as well.

Trustee Smith wondered how he was working with others to determine what processes and programs worked during the pandemic and that school systems should look at adopting and/or expanding. Dr. Loescher remarked it would be important to work with school districts to gather data from surveys and focus groups on what worked, but it was also important to understand what did not work and why. He believed it would be critical to have both quantitative and qualitative feedback to provide a full picture.

Trustee Nicolet asked how a superintendent and school board could work to shift the mindset of policymakers. Dr. Loescher mentioned the conversations would need to include various sides of the issues and look at different options when determining what program/process should be focused on. He would like to see a conversation around which processes/programs could be implemented quickly and which programs/processes would take longer.

President Taylor inquired as to what and how the conversations regarding funding models could occur with legislators. Dr. Loescher commented that the conversations would be difficult because they would involve changes that would directly impact children. He felt a school district could consider advocating for a pilot program for themselves or for specific schools to see if the proposed changes could have a positive impact on student and school performance.

*President Taylor recessed the meeting for 15 minutes.*

Dr. Susan Enfield began her conversation with a down story that had occurred over a 2-year period and involved changing the high number of suspensions and low graduation rates of student of color when she came into a superintendency position. She did not believe in the suspension or expulsion of any student and questioned what would happen if the school district were to eliminate them, except in critical cases of a danger to staff

and students. She believed she had provided the supports staff needed; however, she discovered that some principals were misrepresenting their data by creating an artificial picture of what was occurring in the schools and some staff push back became highly publicized and sensationalized because they were not comfortable with the changes to the discipline policy. The publicity resulted in a bond measure not being approved by voters. She learned that changing culture was extremely difficult and she should have begun with a focus on how to improve school cultures.

Trustee Mayberry requested additional information on the re-engagement specialists related to the goal. Dr. Enfield provided information on the work and highlighted she wanted individuals in the positions who were interested in getting to know the students because that would be the only way to get the students back into the classroom and ready for graduation.

Trustee Smith inquired as to how Dr. Enfield was able to obtain unfiltered feedback from staff. Dr. Enfield noted it took time to build trust through relationships. One way she had worked to develop the relationships was through monthly lunches in the schools with staff to solicit feedback.

President Taylor asked how the community was informed of the change in the discipline policy and what the feedback was from the community. Dr. Enfield indicated that through the development of the new strategic plan, she was able to have many conversations about the new goals, including changes to discipline. She felt there had been numerous opportunities for the community to be engaged, but there was always room for more.

Trustee Nicolet wondered what she would do differently to change the cultural shift. Dr. Enfield clarified suspensions and expulsions were not eliminated, but the intent was to use the measures only as a last resort. In terms of what she would have done differently, she would have worked more closely with the principals and staff to provide talks with students on what the impacts of the suspensions had on them.

Dr. Enfield provided her up story which was the improvement of K-3 programs in the school district by providing full-day kindergarten for all children. She believed providing a solid start for children would reduce achievement gaps later. Because the state did not fully fund full-day kindergarten in all elementary schools, she worked with her board to ensure all kindergarten programs in the school district were full day, even if the state did not provide the additional funding. She provided information on how she worked with community organizations and where the program could go in the future with Pre-K.

Trustee Nicolet asked what role the school board played in Pre-K-3 programming and if there was a policy. Dr. Enfield stated the school boards she worked with also believed in the importance of Pre-K so they were strong advocates. Because of the commitment by the school board in developing the programming, there was not a need to create a policy.

Trustee Mayberry wondered how Dr. Enfield worked to develop trust with the school board and the community when she began her current position. Dr. Enfield remarked that when she first started, she worked on a number of high-profile changes, such as the discipline policy, which the school board was very supportive of. However, during her first evaluation, it was mentioned that the board had a difficult time keeping up with everything that was occurring. She learned at that time it was important to bring the board members along, so they knew what was occurring in the school district, which she did by creating quarterly board and leadership team retreats. In terms of the community, she would hold monthly office hours and invite anyone in the community to come and meet with the superintendent for 10-15+ minutes.

President Taylor asked about the role partnerships played with school districts. Dr. Enfield mentioned partnerships were critical because if people were willing to invest in the school district, that meant good things were happening in the schools. Additionally, when companies were interested in working with the schools, it showed the community they could trust what was happening. Building the relationships took time and she was interested in remaining in school districts a long time so those relationships could be built.

Dr. Bryan concluded the presentation with a reminder that it was important to work on evaluating candidates on specific criteria and not feelings. He urged the Board to review the standards to ensure they were evaluating the candidates on the same areas.

President Taylor opened the meeting to public comment.

The Board received emails from the following:

Joe Morabito

Bev Stenehjem

### **3. Closing Items**

#### **3.01 PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was received.

#### **3.02 ADJOURN MEETING**

There being no further business to come before the members of the Board, President Taylor declared the meeting adjourned at 2:59 p.m.

---

**Angela D. Taylor, President**

---

**Ellen Minetto, Clerk**



---

**From:** Morabito, Joe  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 5, 2022 8:47 AM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Questions For Superintendent Candidates

Since Conservatives were intentionally prohibited from being part of the Selection Committee, I keep submitting questions for Superintendent candidates. We need answers to those specific questions. JM

**Joseph Morabito**

---

**From:** Bev Stenehjem  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 7, 2022 5:53 PM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Superintendent Interviews

Hello Board Members,

Regarding Agenda Item 2.01 for tomorrow's meeting (superintendent interviews, April 8, 2022):

I don't believe you should make any decision or choose a new superintendent until the new board is in place starting in January 2023.

Also, the candidates should be made aware that with new board members, the board may very well change toward a more conservative direction- and so the candidates should be asked how they would respond to these changes.

Sincerely,  
Bev Stenehjem