

**Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District**  
**Board Retreat Minutes**  
**August 14, 2017**

**Members Present:** Belvidere: Angie Evans; Eden: David Whitcomb (Chair), Jeffrey Hunsberger; Hyde Park: Andrew Beaupre, Patti Hayford, Chasity Fagnant, Lisa Barry; Johnson: Angela Lamell; Mark Nielsen; Cambridge: Bill Sander, Jan Sander, Laura Miller, Mark Stebbins, Sue Prescott.

**Members Absent:** Johnson: Katie Orost, Bobbie Moulton, Heather Rodriguez; Waterville: Amanda Tilton-Martin

**Others Present:** Cat Gallagher, Michele Aumand, Brian Pena

**Minute Taker:** Sue Trainor

The Board Retreat began at 6:35 p.m. Gallagher began by explaining what had taken place over the summer. The Administrative Council, which consisted of LNSU principals, vice principals, the Tech Director, and assistants, had a meeting that dovetailed with the Killington Vermont Principals Association Retreat. Marzano Research, which specialized in best practices and how to move systems forward, came in to discuss proficiencies with the Administrative Council. This was important as the elementary, middle and high schools currently were in very different places with proficiencies. Also, at that meeting, a schedule of monthly presentations was developed by the administrators. These presentations would be in addition to informal discussions placed on the agenda under Administrator Input at all Board meetings. These informal discussions would include celebrations, challenges, learning opportunities, etc.

Gallagher noted she was working on ensuring that the MUUSD Board was kept abreast of activities within the schools. She had asked each building administrator to provide her with a calendar of events for the following week. This information will then be e-mailed to the Board each week.

Gallagher then informed the Board that Denise Maurice, Vice Principal for the Middle School, had developed a brochure on bullying, harassment and hazing for parents of middle school students. Gallagher said there was a huge misunderstanding about misconduct and what constituted bullying, harassment, and hazing. Gallagher would tailor the brochure to the entire SU and distribute it to all parents. Gallagher reported that the website now had been updated to include Board members contact information, Board policies, and the listing of LNSD schools and Cambridge Elementary School.

Gallagher then discussed how to handle negative editorials. She explained that she tried to handle inflammatory comments with grace and dignity. She asked Board members to think about what the Board was trying to demonstrate to the students. If people used name-calling or mistruths, the response wasn't to fight fire with fire. What Gallagher advocated was inviting that person to come in and become educated. She explained that Central Office personnel had invited people to come in and have conversations. Unfortunately, the person who liked to disparage what the schools were doing had not accepted her invitation to come in to speak with her. Gallagher said she encouraged people to come to Board meetings and express their opinion. Gallagher reminded Board members that when they spoke to someone about the schools, they were not speaking for the Board. They were speaking for themselves.

Gallagher was proud of what the Board was trying to accomplish and stated that the growth over the past year spoke volumes. She encouraged the Board to continue to espouse those celebrations.

#### **Review of Board Binders/Training**

Gallagher then discussed the Board Binder that had been distributed to all Board members. She asked that these books be brought to all meetings so that new and updated policies could be added.

Gallagher explained that a mission statement was present tense: what did the Board want, what was being done, and what was the Board's purpose. A vision statement was about how to get there. The current mission statement was: "The mission of Lamoille North was to work together with the community, to inspire a passion for learning and to empower all students to become responsible, productive and engaged citizens." Equity, access and opportunity were the ways to accomplish the mission. Gallagher encouraged the Board to work together to espouse these values.

Gallagher said that teachers had asked how this all tied into proficiencies. Gallagher explained that proficiencies allowed the staff to assess student growth using the student's voice in multiple ways. The student defined how they would accomplish this in the form of their personal learning plans. Proficiencies couldn't be used as an isolated component, with personal learning plans being another component. There had to be a fluid PreK-12 system.

Gallagher continued reviewing the Board Binder. She noted that issues with quorums with smaller boards didn't exist with this Board. However, she felt it was important that Board members stay in touch with their town's school administrator. The calendar of Board meetings was included in the binder, except for Cambridge. They met the first Wednesday of the month. Any and all Board members were welcome to attend. The schedule of Board presentations was included in the binder, with Diane Reilly of Hyde Park presenting in September. Gallagher then noted there were biographies in the binder of all the school administrators. She suggested that Board members provide biographies as well. She believed this was something that community members would appreciate.

Gallagher discussed confidentiality with the Board members. She explained that if someone approached a Board member in a grocery store with concerns about their child's teacher, the Board member should encourage the parent to speak with the teacher. If they were dissatisfied after that meeting, they could go to the building principal and then, finally, to Central Office. Gallagher explained that she had many conversations with parents and while she listened to them all, she also told them she needed to discuss the situation with the building principal. This had caused some issues with administration, but they understood her position. She wanted to be welcoming to all. Gallagher asked the Board to be careful about conversations about their individual role within their school. Because they were Board members, parents often thought they could get something done by speaking with them. Board members were citizens and only took action when they were at a legally called Board meeting. Following this discussion, Board members each signed the confidentiality agreement.

Gallagher then outlined the characteristics of a successful board. These included having a mission and vision statement and being there for the right reasons, which Gallagher stated she believed were moving the students forward while retaining the cultural integrity of the small towns. A characteristic of challenging boards included a lack of clarity. Gallagher stated that she had noticed that when she encountered pushback or resistance to an idea it was often due to a lack of clarity in her presentation. Conflicting interests was also a characteristic of a challenging board. Gallagher noted the LNMUUSD had a conflict of interest policy. She noted that Board members in the past had opted out of negotiations because they had a relative in the school system. The role of the School Board was to ensure the school was run well; it was not to run the schools. Gallagher encouraged all Board members to be mindful of that. The Board's role was to hire a Superintendent that the Board could eventually trust and communicate well with.

Gallagher discussed policy parameters, stating that she was informing the Board of the mandatory policies, the Board was adjusting and adopting them. Gallagher noted that the budget process would be interesting this year because the local boards had previously had input on the budgets in their towns. The burden would now fall on the Board to ensure that communication happened across the Supervisory Union. Gallagher stated she would be requesting that information meetings be held in all of the towns during the budget process.

Gallagher reminded the Board again that member didn't have legal powers outside of the Board and that executive sessions needed to remain confidential. She also stated that executive sessions could only be used in certain situations. Gallagher went on to discuss the role of the Board Chair, which was establishing a strong connection with administration, organizing and conducting productive meetings. Gallagher stated she met with Whitcomb often and they agreed to disagree often. However, they did what was needed to work together.

Whitcomb then complimented Gallagher for how she allowed open discussion at meetings. He stated that the Newport newspaper recently published an article about the Council in Newport not allowing any public comment period at their meetings. Whitcomb never wanted to see that happen with this School Board. He stated that executive session meetings could not be warned as an executive session. A motion needed to be made at the beginning of the meeting to enter into executive session. B Sander stated the courteous thing to do would be to say a possible executive session might occur. Gallagher agreed, saying that she would prefer to avoid executive sessions at all costs. Transparency was very important to her. Gallagher said the Board was well poised to have incredible success. There had been challenges and the Board had faced them in the limelight.

Gallagher then highlighted the policies that were in the Board Binder. These were policies that had been adopted so far. Policies would be updated throughout the year and ideally the Modified Board, the LNSU, and Cambridge would eventually have the same policies.

Gallagher outlined one of the programs that had been reviewed at the summer retreat was the Teacher Supervision and Evaluation Program. Last year, administrator evaluations were rolled out. This was guided by the AOE and the State Board of Education and received 5 out of 5 stars. The AOE and State then looked at the Teacher Supervision and Evaluation system and the District received 1 out of 5 stars. Wendy Savery was now spearheading a subcommittee to review what the AOE was looking for. The committee would include students, teachers and administration in reviewing how to better evaluate the teachers. That will be ready to be rolled out by end of November.

Gallagher then discussed proficiencies. She asked Board members to think about something they had perfected as a child and the steps that it took to master that. She outlined the various and varied steps involved in learning to play the piano. Identifying common proficiencies that could be used across the supervisory union was a very hard task.

Gallagher noted she felt eternally optimistic about where the Board was going. She appreciated the camaraderie and the hard work done by Board members. Gallagher noted the work done by the Hyde Park Board to pass the bond.

Fagnant asked if there were any rules or laws about Board members being removed from a Board. Gallagher stated there were no policies specific to that. Board members needed to hold each other accountable. Whitcomb stated there was no recall option in Vermont. If a person was elected, they filled out their term. He also disagreed with Board members endorsing other candidates who were running. Whitcomb suggested working with the Board members and helping them through the process.

Gallagher finished by requesting that Board members talk with her. She would always try to provide information to the Board but couldn't read minds. If there was specific information that they wanted, she asked that they contact her. Whitcomb followed up by saying that Gallagher needed to be a little less involved. He stated she lived her job 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Gallagher said she loved what she did and it was important to her.

Hayford asked that the Hyde Park construction updates be communicated more effectively. Gallagher agreed and said that Reilly had been working with Clark on that. Barry asked if the blog had been shared with the whole Board. Gallagher replied that the blog was on the LNSU website. Barry asked that the address of the blog be sent to all Board members.

Brian Pena then discussed responsible computer use. Pena informed the Board that the domain name would be Insu.org. Passwords would expire after 125 days. Password complexity had been designed to keep the network secure. IT had the ability to manage all iPads that were issued. Every user group was treated differently as far as restrictions. At this time, there were no restrictions in place on the iPads issued to Board members. There would eventually be a web filtering system that would prevent individuals from visiting inappropriate websites. iPads could be tracked if lost or misplaced and the device could also be locked remotely.

Pena then discussed the Organizational Mobile Device Agreement, which outlined how the iPad was to be used. While it was understood that some personal work would be done on the iPad, the intent of the policy was to remind the Board member that this was an organizational device. He encouraged Board members not to store sensitive information on the device and there should be no expectation of privacy with the device. Each device would come with protective covers and Pena requested that cases and screen protectors not be removed and stickers not be attached. If there was any damage to the device Pena asked that it be reported to IT and they would repair or replace the device.

Whitcomb stated he would like to see the school do something about the language being used on Facebook. He asked if there was any way to control what the students could see. Pena stated that was more of the media/communication side of things. Barry asked if students could see Facebook while they were at school. Pena said they could and while they could block Facebook, they couldn't filter it. Stebbins stated Facebook was not the cause; it was a symptom. As an example, he stated he was bothered to hear that some teachers allowed students to curse throughout class. Gallagher asked why Facebook was needed. Pena said the culture was to allow it as a method of communication and the idea was not to limit access but to limit inappropriate sites. Barry said she would not want Facebook blocked but thought it was a learning tool to teach students how to use it appropriately. If a teacher saw something on a student page that was inappropriate, the teacher should have a conversation with the student. Barry noted that you had to be at least 13 years of age to be on Facebook. She suggested that if parents or teachers saw a student younger than that using Facebook they should report them. Stebbins agreed it shouldn't be blocked, as clubs and teams in the high school were using Facebook to communicate with each other. Board members then signed the Mobile Device agreement.

Pena explained they were almost done migrating the Eden domain, Cambridge domain, and Waterville domain to the LNSU domain. This would allow individuals to access information saved to the LNSU domain from any school location. Gallagher stated the Board should remember that anything done on the computer was discoverable and nothing was private.

Prescott asked if goals were supposed to be developed by Board members, as this was something that normally happened at retreats. Gallagher said she didn't know if that was the norm anymore, especially in recently consolidated Boards. She explained that administration had developed goals for the year based on a strategic action plan. That would be brought to the next meeting. After the Board weighed in on that information, goals would be finalized. It was a slower process but more thoughtful.

The Board Retreat adjourned at 7:55 p.m.