

LAMOILLE NORTH SUPERVISORY UNION BOARD  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2015  
GMTCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER

Present: David Whitcomb, Katie Orost, Dan Regan, Jeff Hunsberger, Raven Walters, Beth Bailey, Harry Frank, Edie Beatty, Charleen McFarlane,

D. Whitcomb called the meeting to order at 5:09.

H. Frank said the notion behind this session is to keep everyone informed and engaged in the process. The plan is to have a broad based conversation with everyone involved revisiting what we are trying to achieve and what it would look like if it were successful. The superintendent evaluation committee will walk through what they have done and what the next steps are. Then we can discuss the potential questions to be used in the survey. H. Frank will use his notes and the minutes of this meeting to revise the questions and get them back to the evaluation committee.

H. Frank asked for comments on what we are trying to accomplish and what success would look like. D. Whitcomb suggested that the 3 members of the superintendent evaluation committee talk about what is going on.

D. Regan said the committee doesn't want to forget the overall context within which the evaluation is being held. Our LNSU has had considerable turnover in leadership and we would like to stop that destabilization through a rigorous evaluation process that embraces the continuous growth model. A simple thumbs up or thumbs down would not be satisfactory. Rather, there needs to be a process that yields recognition of successes and also points out opportunities for growth and improvement and altered behavior, not just from the superintendent but from the board as well. Superintendent outcomes are a product of interactions between the superintendent and the board. The evaluation process ought to yield recommendations for the superintendent and for the board as well.

D. Whitcomb asked who is being evaluated, the superintendent or the board? When D. Regan says "altered behavior" what is he talking about? D. Regan said the superintendent is being evaluated but there has to be recognition that what she accomplishes or stops short of accomplishing might not just be on her shoulders but on the board's also. For instance if the superintendent didn't get high ratings in achieving the goals and expectations of the board, one possible reason is that the board didn't make it very clear what their expectations were.

H. Frank said what exists that speaks to the board's expectations is the job description, which is very general and includes much that is contained in statute, and a list of desired competencies, skills and traits developed in 2008 for a superintendent search.

D. Regan said the committee talked about things that are important to the board, like the board's interest in ensuring student success in making key transitions, fiscal health, and PLC's. None of it was formalized to identify board priorities for the superintendent.

E. Beatty said she could give a couple of examples. We are one of the largest SU's in the state with a large number of districts and boards. She has a counterpart whose board says they are making board work a high priority and they don't expect the superintendent to be in schools that much. Board members in this SU seem to want everything. They want her at board meetings, in schools, and attending superintendents' meetings. There could be quantitative priorities. In this SU we have been having some tough conversations about class size. In some other SU's boards are directing superintendents to get class sizes right-sized. She can't do that work if the boards are holding her accountable for making everyone happy because principals and teachers will not all be happy about class size changes. If she is directed to get class sizes right-sized and also get happiness high, there is a conflict. Her counterparts are getting some clarity from boards and some direction about priorities, quantitatively and qualitatively.

H. Frank said it is not particularly constructive to decide now, in November, what to evaluate the superintendent on. But conversation tonight could reveal 3 or 4 areas that are currently shared areas of focus for the superintendent and boards and we could focus to a greater extent on those areas in the evaluation. The questions drafted are fairly broad and could maybe be narrowed to some extent. Are there areas where E. Beatty is focusing currently?

E. Beatty said one example that is not in any of the written documents about expectations is Act 46. She has spent a lot of time on that. There are a lot of things she would like to be doing that she is not doing because of things that have arisen like Act 46. Building central office staff was one of her first charges. We are fully staffed and she thinks things are much better. She is trying to spend more time supporting principals. She spends at least half a day every day on grievances, parent or teacher issues, or discipline concerns. It is challenging to find time for proactive educational leadership when she has to deal with lawsuits or grievances that have time limits. She is trying to be in schools more and be there for principals more. Administrators are building a plan of common goals and common work that AdCo revisits each month.

H. Frank said it would be helpful to hear from board members about where the board is in defining expectations and how the evaluation process could clarify some of that. It is not reasonable to introduce something in the evaluation that has never been discussed before.

D. Whitcomb asked if E. Beatty has a meeting with all of the principals. E. Beatty said that is what AdCo is. There is also an elementary principal group and a secondary principal group and she has individual meetings with principals.

D. Whitcomb said he is very concerned about how we can bind the new board we will have after consolidation to make sure everything is done as this board hoped. He also wonders about the organizations we are paid members of. Where will they get their money when there is only one board?

H. Frank said he would hope an effective evaluation process would be a model the new board would build on. Can you bind a new board? There are certain things that can be included in the articles of agreement. They can be changed by board vote or community vote. VSBA is grap-

pling with its own questions about existence and how it serves boards. They would hope to continue to provide services like evaluation.

D. Regan said he wanted to address the point he thought he heard H. Frank making. H. Frank was suggesting the committee might use E. Beatty's expression of priority areas to inform the evaluation questions. He would suggest maybe we shouldn't do that but should pick a small set of enduring priorities that will not change year to year. If we stuck to those items over time we could adjust and help the superintendent fulfill the board's expectations. H. Frank agreed.

R. Walters said she agrees. One reason we have H. Frank helping us is that this board has not been very successful at articulating a steady agenda or priorities. She thinks we have to have confidence in this committee and move forward because something concrete put in place will be better than endless discussion.

H. Frank pointed out the categories for the evaluation: educational and operational leadership, operations and finance, personnel administration/human resources, community building, and school board relations. Within those 5 domains he has drawn on some existing questions for examples of language we might use. He would like feedback on what wording or questions people like.

K. Orost asked what the responses to these questions would look like. H. Frank said typically there is a numerical rating and an N/A option for those not well acquainted with the superintendent's performance in that area. There would also be a space to provide an example of why you scored the way you did. He will strongly encourage the committee not to have more than a dozen questions.

D. Regan said the two questions that speak to him in the first category are the one about providing effective leadership and support for school administrators and staff and the one about using data. R. Walters said she would echo those and also the ones about the superintendent promoting learning and growth and providing guidance.

In the operations and finance category, K. Orost said she likes the second one.

No one had any particular response to the questions in the personnel administration category. H. Frank said the evaluation committee can take that to mean it is their responsibility to focus a question or two around this area. Some of the conversation tonight was relevant to this area.

K. Orost asked who came up with these questions. H. Frank said he created them by drawing on previous evaluations VSBA has done.

C. McFarlane said she wonders if the first question under community building could be covered by some of the other questions. Others agreed that question is not the best way to capture that information.

D. Regan said he likes all the questions under school board relations. We still need to decide on the methodology for each dimension. Who will we talk to? For some items it would make sense

to talk to central office staff but it will differ considerably for different batches of questions. H. Frank agreed. He said that is one reason to have an N/A response. He thinks the next stage for the committee is to decide what the survey looks like in its final form and who we will solicit information from. We also need to decide on a timeframe. He would say that at the next meeting the committee will finalize the mechanics of the survey – the timeline, who is responding, and how that is communicated. We should be able to turn the survey around in about 3-4 weeks.

D. Regan suggested one more meeting of the evaluation committee in December to pave the way for rolling the survey out by January 15. H. Frank said he thinks that is a reasonable time frame. He will follow up with the evaluation committee to try to have a final planning meeting before the end of the calendar year so we will have a process to roll out after the new year. Everyone agreed that sounded good.

The meeting ended at 5:58.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*