

LAMOILLE NORTH SUPERVISORY UNION
SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION COMMITTEE MINUTES
GMTCC COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER
OCTOBER 14, 2015

Board members present: Dan Regan

Others: Edith Beatty, Charleen McFarlane, Harry Frank

The meeting started at 6:01

H. Frank handed out a document in which he listed superintendent expectations from the job description, the job posting, the VSBA evaluation model, and E. Beatty's transition entry plan. He suggested coming to agreement on broad categories, seeing if existing documents align with those categories, and discussing how to address any gaps.

D. Regan said his understanding of what this mapping exercise would entail might be simpler than what H. Frank envisioned. His starting point would be the 5 dimensions of the VSBA evaluation model because he recalls that each of us found favor with those 5 dimensions and we couldn't come up with anything that was left out. His idea was that those would be the dimensions used for the evaluation but just as a check we would review other documents to see if anything else pointed to a dimension that was absent from that list.

It was agreed to review each of the expectations in the job description, the job posting, and the transition entry plan to see if each aligned with one of the 5 dimensions of the VSBA evaluation model (educational leadership, board relations, personnel administration, business and finance, and community relations.)

The group looked at E. Beatty's transition plan and found alignment between most of the items and the VSBA model. D. Regan brought up the board's interest in key transitions. H. Frank asked if any of that is formalized. D. Regan said he doesn't think much has been formalized. H. Frank asked if there is a set of board goals. E. Beatty said some individual boards have goals. There are either multiple directions or a lack of direction. She would say we have made a big start at the AdCo retreat this year. A lot of this work is more in progress now. One of the themes she will reflect on is the balance of management vs. leadership. She prefers working on leadership. But maybe because she was a new superintendent or maybe for other reasons, there has been so much management work that is so urgent and necessary that some of the timelines have shifted. H. Frank asked for an example. C. McFarlane said personnel has taken a lot of E. Beatty's time. D. Regan would say if that is the case then the evaluation should reflect a lot of time and attention given to personnel administration and perhaps less than E. Beatty would have wished given to educational leadership. E. Beatty said another example is board relations. During October and November she will be at a board meeting or some other type of meeting (negotiations, Act 46, etc.) every Monday through Thursday. There is generally some prep or follow-up needed for each meeting. That can add up to 4-5 hours a day 4 days a week. D. Regan said one request of E. Beatty would be a rough time management breakdown. H. Frank said he thinks that is important. It would be beneficial for the board to do its own reflection on where it spent its time. Some of the items on E. Beatty's transition plan don't align with the VSBA model dimensions because they are about her own reflection or personal wellbeing.

E. Beatty reviewed another set of goals she had shared with the board. One was to create an effective and efficient central office. She has done some work on that. Another was to support PLC work because that was of primary import to the principals. She could talk about what she has done and how she would like to shift that goal. Another was to create a plan of priority goals for the boards. That is not done. Another was “showing up” – being present in the community, at schools, meetings, etc. The group found alignment between each of these and the VSBA model dimensions.

The group looked at the job posting expectations. H. Frank asked if anyone had thoughts about the last two listed: “continuous school improvement/responsible change, growth and development” and “most important personal/professional/ethical traits.”

D. Regan said personal traits may have been important when we were hiring a superintendent, but once she was here what she did became more important. If she was supposed to be nice to be hired, does that mean that a year after she is hired she should be nicer? No. He doesn't see how looking at these traits now would be relevant to a growth model. H. Frank said the reference to most important traits doesn't come from the most recent job posting but from a document used in 2008 when the board was looking for a superintendent. He read some of the important traits listed in that document. D. Regan said one of the ones that jumped out to him was the emphasis on collaboration. That is relevant, but it maps well onto several other items. H. Frank said he can make sure he pays attention to any language in this document describing important qualities and characteristics that might be informative as it relates to one of the 5 different VSBA model areas.

The group reviewed the expectations in the job description. H. Frank said what was striking to him about these categories was that by and large they are detailed in statute. The group discussed alignment with the VSBA evaluation model dimensions. Some of the items are about upholding legal and ethical standards. H. Frank said the challenge would be how to make a question about that accessible to board members. There is also the question of whether we should be asking people outside the board about that.

C. McFarlane said she sees what is needed from the superintendent regarding personnel and business/finance as operational leadership. E. Beatty has a business manager who is really the one who deals with the boards regarding finance. She would hate to set up an evaluation that would give E. Beatty a low mark in one area because the business manager presents budgets to the boards. If there is a question about whether she works with boards to establish and manage budgets, she does not personally do that, so she could get a low mark. H. Frank said we need to consider how the question is framed. We would not ask whether the superintendent develops line item budgets but something more like whether the board has confidence that management systems are in place that protect the assets of the SU or whether the superintendent helps shape a budget that reflects the priorities of the organization.

D. Regan asked if H. Frank was suggesting we might want to add a 6th dimension regarding upholding the law. H. Frank said no; he thinks that can be woven into existing categories.

The group continued discussing how the items from the job description map onto the 5 VSBA model dimensions. C. McFarlane suggested we might want to change “business and finance” to “operations and finance.” H. Frank said he thinks the expectation of ensuring compliance with legal requirements has to be woven into the 5 dimensions. He doesn't know how useful it is as its own category. D. Regan said he thinks ensuring legal compliance is a minimal expectation. We just

check whether that is met and then move on. H. Frank said it is important that the superintendent is up to date on what is legal and is following any changes. Risk management is important. He thinks there is a nuance we could ask about that is not just yes or no. D. Regan said he agrees with that and wonders if that means it is better to integrate this or if it should be a separate category. C. McFarlane said if you did make it a separate category you still would have to say whether the superintendent is ensuring legal compliance in each of the other 5 categories. E. Beatty said legal compliance doesn't relate so much to educational leadership or community relations.

H. Frank asked what rises to the top regarding what we would ask about on the evaluation.

E. Beatty said there are two different things to consider – the questions we want to answer through the evaluation and the questions we want to ask people on the evaluation. We need to figure out what we want to understand about the superintendent's educational leadership and we also need to figure out the specific questions we would ask the board in order to understand that.

D. Regan said for him what rises to the top traces back to student learning – evidence of continuous growth in student learning, ability to motivate building leaders to move their staff toward continued student growth. He keeps wanting to see what the evidence is.

C. McFarlane said she keeps coming back to the words “confidence” and “trust.” H. Frank said a desired outcome of the evaluation is increased confidence and trust. Hopefully it is two-way. How do we ask about that? The example around student learning is a good one. One thing that would give us trust and confidence would be a system where students are continuing to grow.

H. Frank said if HR is the lens we want to use, areas to ask about might be personnel relations, professional development, collaborative culture, or central office efficiency and effectiveness. What could the superintendent do that would most make C. McFarlane's life easier? C. McFarlane said she thinks it is important for a superintendent to have fair and consistent implementation of the master agreement and personnel actions.

D. Regan said there would be trust that would reside in the superintendent to the extent that communities felt well apprised of SU directions and priorities and also felt that citizens had reasonable and appropriate access to central office or to SU leadership. C. McFarlane asked if those questions would be asked of the community. D. Regan said we haven't decided yet. They might be asked of community members. They might also be asked of school board members who represent communities.

H. Frank said the notion of 360 feedback is to ask people who see the system from different places in order to get the most information. The risk of a 360 is that some people have very narrowly defined information. The board needs to look at patterns and assess whether a response resonates. When we ask a large range of people there will inevitably be outliers.

E. Beatty said she would welcome the opportunity to do a self reflection using the 5 categories. She would want some of it to be in executive session. It would be helpful to hear from the board how they think they have worked to provide a supportive environment. She thinks it would be helpful to do those things before sending out the evaluation. One thing that would be most helpful to her would be to get a sense of what the board wants more of or less of. She continually hears what people want more of. She wants the board to say what they want less of. It is interesting to hear the

trust and confidence piece. She sees that superintendent colleagues who have been in their position for many years have a lot of trust, faith, and confidence from their districts. With a new superintendent there is a natural uphill climb. She doesn't expect to come out high on trust and confidence.

H. Frank asked what E. Beatty has done well in the first year that she wants the board to pay attention to. E. Beatty said she isn't prepared tonight with a list. H. Frank said the evaluation is to shed light on how our system is doing. It is important to also pay attention to what is working and improving.

H. Frank said he thinks he will need phone conversations with J. Sander and J. Hunsberger before moving forward. He asked if D. Regan or C. McFarlane have thoughts about having the conversation E. Beatty described before heading into the evaluation process.

C. McFarlane said her worry would be that a conversation before the evaluation process would be about whatever is weighing most on people's minds. It is almost like an evaluation before the evaluation. It doesn't feel right to her. H. Frank said it would not just be a conversation about the superintendent but also about the board. It would be about what we are saying our work is in the most general sense. He is not thinking we need to rush a survey out this fall. He thinks it would level the playing field if the conversation with the board were structured around self-reflection and self-assessment. He would facilitate it.

D. Regan said that is consistent with the understanding this committee had from the start that the evaluation would not cast a spotlight on the superintendent only but on board as well, under the assumption that the effectiveness of a superintendent is the product of interactions between her and the board. His ideal model of an evaluative process would start with the kind of open dialog E. Beatty is talking about and include a healthy component of board members talking. He has some pragmatic questions about how effective it would be as a way of starting the process. As C. McFarlane pointed out, it would take some careful preparation and strong facilitation.

E. Beatty said it is easier to visualize doing it with the executive committee. Perhaps a first conversation with the executive committee, boiled down for the full board.

C. McFarlane said she thought this process was intended to be fairly speedy. Is H. Frank saying now that we might not conclude the evaluation until spring? That would make this approach a little more palatable to her. H. Frank said yes, that is what he is saying. The conversation has been about wanting an evaluation consistent with a continuous improvement model. He thinks that calls for a more extended process. But we would need to clarify that with the executive committee.

H. Frank said he needs to follow up with E. Beatty, J. Sander, and J. Hunsberger then circulate an evaluation draft among committee members and E. Beatty. Then the committee should talk about the mechanism to lay the ground work, perhaps with just the executive committee and E. Beatty. He thinks that could all be done remotely. The next meeting would be with the executive committee and that might lead to one more meeting of this committee to fine-tune the evaluation tool.

E. Beatty said October 26 is on hold as a possible executive committee meeting date. A full LNSU board meeting is scheduled for November 23 at 6:00. The executive committee could meet at 5:00 on Nov. 23. H. Frank said we need time for J. Hunsberger and J. Sander to weigh in. Getting ready

for October 26 feels tight. Putting it off until November gives us time to shape an evaluation and roll it out in January. There could be a 10-day window to get feedback, then we could take 2 or 3 days to organize responses into consolidated comment, then the committee could have a conversation with E. Beatty, followed by a conversation with the executive committee and then the full board. He assumes the contract renewal date is sometime in March. We would be able to stay within that time frame. If we are going to have a conversation with E. Beatty and the executive committee on November 23 we would need to send out some questions to people ahead of time. E. Beatty said she doesn't envision needing a survey. She envisions reflecting on the work she has done, talking about what she has done well. Neither the executive committee nor the full board knows that they will be asked to reflect on what the board has done. There may need to be a conversation with the executive committee or the full board to see if they agree to that. H. Frank said he thinks the board's self-reflection would need to be limited to 2 or 3 questions people would get ahead of time.

D. Regan said from the beginning the board talked about a process that would yield implications for the board as well as the superintendent. How is this preliminary conversation with the board different from the dialog at the end of this process? It almost sounds like it preempts the evaluation.

H. Frank said he thinks in the preliminary conversation people would put on the table what our expectations are. He is imagining the first question – for both the superintendent and for the board – would be what expectations are for the superintendent and for the board. We could see if we are on the same page or making an effort to get on the same page so there is a good foundation for the set of questions that goes out beyond that group. He would hope the corollary benefit would be that we would have set in motion a conversation about continuous improvement and building an effective relationship.

D. Regan said it seems like there are a lot of "who" and "how" questions. For instance, are we going to try to get community perspectives and if so, how? It would seem important to connect with central office staff. Which ones? H. Frank said his understanding was that the committee endorsed a 360 model but didn't decide which people would be surveyed.

C. McFarlane asked if we can come to the November 23 meeting with a plan and timeline to give to the board. H. Frank said yes. C. McFarlane said we might need to schedule a January meeting for the full board.

H. Frank said he will come up with a set of draft evaluation questions and also a set of questions to structure the reflective conversation and an initial outline of the evaluation plan, and tasks and a timeline going forward.

It was agreed that M. Aumand should see if executive committee members can come in at 5:00 on November 23.

E. Beatty said she could present to the executive committee on October 26 to kick start the discussion with no expectation that the board would do a self-evaluation at that time. Then maybe the executive committee could decide whether they wanted to meet in November to do the same thing or if there some part of what E. Beatty presented that they wanted to share with the full board in November. H. Frank said he doesn't think E. Beatty needs to make herself vulnerable that way. He thinks the board also has to come to the table offering self-critical reflection. His suggestion

would be not to do that. E. Beatty said she thinks it could narrow the focus of questions to ask on a survey. If a survey asked about E. Beatty's community participation 90% of people would probably say they haven't seen her or don't even know who she is. She could tell the board that and say she is aware that she made a commitment to community participation, but if she is at board meeting she is not able to go to community events. She could encourage the board to have a conversation about how they think she should allocate her time. D. Regan said that is a great example but he had imagined that type of conversation at the end of the process. C. McFarlane said E. Beatty has already given that example to the board.

H. Frank said he doesn't think the board should tell E. Beatty how to spend her time. They should tell her the outcomes they want and E. Beatty should decide how to spend her time. There can be an interesting conversation about how she is using her time, but she should not set up a conversation that implies that the board gets to tell her how she should spend her time. He thinks a good message is that we will come together as teammates and each ask ourselves the same questions so there is a level playing field.

The meeting ended at 7:59.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths