

**MINUTES OF BOARD RETREAT HELD
June 19, 2006**

The Board Retreat of the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education was called to order by Mr. Hemant Marathe at 6:00 p.m. in the Media Center at Grover Middle School. The following Board members were present:

Mr. Hemant Marathe	Mr. Anthony Fleres	Mr. Richard Kaye
Mr. Robert Johnson	Ms. Anjani Gharpure	Mr. Randall Tucker
Ms. Patricia Bocarsly	Mr. Stan Katz	Ms. Ellen Walsh

Present also were: Dr. Robert Loretan, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Larry Shanok, Assistant Superintendent for Finance; Dr. Victoria Kniewel, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, Dr. Thomas Smith, Director of Pupil Personnel Services/Planning

CONVENE

In accordance with the State's Sunshine Law, adequate notice of this meeting was provided by mailing a notice of the time, date, location and, to the extent known, the agenda of this meeting to the PRINCETON PACKET, THE TIMES, THE TRENTONIAN, THE HOME NEWS TRIBUNE, AND WEST WINDSOR and PLAINSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARIES. Copies of the notice have also been posted in the board office and filed with Plainsboro's and West Windsor's township clerks and in each of the district schools.

No members of the public were present.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Bob Loretan introduced the agenda for the retreat and the parameters for the discussions. A recurring topic of the committee chairs was a desire to review our current supervisory structure. As a result, the discussion focused primarily on a review of our current structure and some suggestions for change.

DISCUSSION

Victoria Kniewel continued the discussion introducing the characteristics of leadership and how leadership can be tied to student learning. She discussed the concepts of distributed leadership, first order change and second order change.

Change involves a cultural shift to address the gap between where we are versus where we want to be. Leadership is not simply knowing where you want to go, but how to get people to move towards a common goal.

Review of Current District Organizational Structure

Larry Shanok, Victoria Kniewel, and Tom Smith presented the current structure of the departments they supervise.

Victoria reviewed the organizational charts of other high performing districts including Princeton, Montgomery, South Brunswick, and New Trier, Illinois.

Bob Loretan discussed the issues related to various organizational structures. It was noted that although department heads are helpful; they lack the supervision/evaluation portion. We trust what teachers are doing in their classroom but must verify this.

Victoria reviewed our current supervisory structure and addressed some incoherence. For example, in certain areas we have separate supervisors for high school - this model creates a lack of coherence at the important transition between 8th and 9th grades. Another characteristic of our current model is that the supervisors report to different principals. This reporting structure is not the best model for K-12 scope and sequence and for meeting district-wide goals.

The Board raised a question about the supervision of the computer science courses. Bob Loretan explained that this could be folded into mathematics supervision. Technology courses, at all levels, were also referenced. The Board was reminded that being able to utilize technology at any level is critical. The importance of teaching technology to teachers was also stressed. Currently, technology is not as connected to teaching and learning as it could be.

Review of Options to Revise our Current Structure

Larry Shanok reviewed the suggested changes to his department including the addition of the Director of Buildings and Grounds.

Tom reviewed the possible change in structure to his department including the establishment of two district athletic directors. Bob Loretan suggested creating a supervisor of athletics position. The Board suggested that people may have an issue with the term “supervisor” as they like to talk to the “Director of Athletics.” The Board was concerned that there is no policy that determines who evaluates coaches. Equity must be guaranteed between both schools and clear expectations must be set for our coaching staff.

A discussion took place regarding the responsibilities of the middle school assistant principals supervising athletics on the middle school level. A question was raised whether an athletic director should answer to a building principal or the head of pupil services.

Victoria Kniewel reviewed possible changes to her department; specifically, transitioning the supervisors’ evaluation responsibilities from the principals to the Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction. The Board discussed how we would/could transition to this point. The current district culture reflects this as a building vs. central office issue. However, Bob Loretan reviewed the current perception - when one person takes more power, someone else’s is reduced. However, when working together using current leadership research, the overall power structure can expand through shared power and leadership. Another option is to move to K-12 supervisors with department chairs at various levels. However, department chairs do not have the ability to supervise teachers. This task could not be completed in an effective way by the number of people we have.

Bob Loretan cautioned the Board to not move towards this in a day - this is a long term transition. Bob Johnson suggested a way of moving towards this, the supervisors could rotate between more than one principal to begin to share ownership. As a pilot, in September, the elementary supervisors will be housed in one building and report to Victoria.

The Board agreed that before we can even consider any changes, we need more data. We must review the current structure and determine whether the district is being run well. Stan cautioned that we should review the potential impact of any changes on the morale of staff.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Administration and Facilities Committee

Mrs. Walsh reported that the Administration and Facilities Committee Each reviewed their committee's current agendas and priorities for the near future. The committee is rotating their meetings among the buildings so as to update their view of building conditions.

Curriculum Committee

Dr. Bocarsly reported that the Curriculum Committee reviewed their committee's current agendas and priorities for the near future. The main topics for 2006-2007 are: program reviews in Mathematics, World Languages and Middle School Exceptionality and a review of the current 6th grade structure in view of the developmental needs of the students. Although these are the main projects, there are a few topics that have been of interest to board members for a while including grading at the high school level. A special board retreat just for curriculum topics will be scheduled in the fall.

Finance Committee

Mr. Katz reported that the Finance Committee reviewed their committee's current agendas and priorities for the near future. With S1701, a significant task is balancing issues such as tax relief, minimal fund balances, capital reserve, and effective current spending.

District Priorities: What Can We Do Better?

The following items were raised by the Board during the discussion. The administration will review and prioritize with assistance from the Board.

- Evaluating coaches and extra co-curricular evaluations - who does these? The expectations in the classroom should be the same on the field. A structure must be in place.
- Grading and assessments - Is there equity between schools?
- Teachers- The largest concern raised by parents: problem teachers. What are we to do about teachers who do not perform to our expectations?
- Class size-We should not have small classes running while we have over crowded classes.
- Board members should attend more activities.
- People don't see the district as a whole. We should work towards unifying the buildings.
- Extra-curricular costs that parents feel they have to pay. We may be shutting out students who can't afford the trips. We should review the way we decide on field trips.
- What is reasonable for us to provide to students in this era of fiscal accountability?
- Continue to review the exceptionality initiative.

Upon motion by Mr. Tucker, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and by unanimous voice vote, the meeting adjourned at 10:16 p.m.

Larry Shanok, Board Secretary