

**PROCEEDINGS  
OF  
THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
OF THE  
GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN**

**OFFICIAL**

**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING/WORK SESSION/ORIENTATION  
ROOM 101, REV. LYMAN S. PARKS ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
1331 FRANKLIN, SE**

**MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2017**

Meeting called to order at 4:30 p.m. by President Falb.

Present: Flores, Grant, Lewis, Matias, Ross, Schottke, Slade, Baker, President Falb – 9.

Absent: None

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

President Falb asked if there were any corrections/additions to the agenda. There being none, the agenda is approved as written.

Carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

## **SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

### **Board Member Introduction & Length/Term of Service**

President Falb shared that she included times to the agenda topics and if more time is needed for questions/information we could take a deeper dive at the board retreat. The board began with introductions, time served on the board and various roles while serving on the board.

### **Organizational Chart/Cabinet Members & Roles**

Cabinet members joined the Board to do introductions and share their role with Board members. The new Grand Rapids Public School organizational chart 2016 – 2017 was shared with the Board. This chart may also be found on our GRPS website.

### **”GRPS 101” Overview of Schools**

Mr. John Helmholdt and Dr. Ron Gorman shared a PowerPoint regarding Grand Rapids Public Schools 101. This presentation really shares who we are, where we are and who we serve. It was shared that we are the seventh largest district in Michigan; we are the third largest employer in Grand Rapids and twelfth largest employer in West Michigan. We have the largest selection of school choices - 52 schools. We have neighborhood schools and theme schools. We will also be opening Ridgemoor Montessori on the southeast side in the fall. Innovation Central host four academies within one building and new for next year is an Early/Middle College program where students will graduate from a five year program with a high school diploma and an associate degree. This program will be housed at Ottawa Hills High School. In this program, the students will still join in the commencement ceremony with their classmates at graduation and continue in the fifth year to complete their associate degree in Liberal Arts and then may walk in the commencement ceremony with GRCC. We will host 50 students in our first year of this program. Other centers of innovation are University Prep Academy (6 – 12) and Grand Rapids Public Museum School (6 – 7) growing one grade per year to become a 6 – 12. We will house the high school at 54 Jefferson. As most of you know we received the XQ grant which will support significant upgrades for the building. We serve all of Kent County in our center-based special education programs. We oversee one charter which is the Child Discovery Center (K-5). We also have two alternative education programs, Grand Rapids Learning Center (ages 16 – 19) and Southeast Career Pathways (ages 16 – 20). We also have multiple cultural centers which are located in 17 of our schools. These schools provide intensive ESL support to the student. President Falb asked that the PowerPoint be sent to all Board members for their information. A question was raised regarding if all of our kindergarten classes were full day and how many pre-school programs do we run? Dr. Gorman stated that he believed all our kindergarten classes are full day but one and that he would confirm the answer to both questions and send it to the Board. Dr. Flores wanted to know if we have assembled an analysis of the predominant ethnic background of students for each school. Dr. Gorman shared that Dr. Gunnell’s office along with Mrs. Brown have this data by background, cultures, languages and countries. Dr. Falb thought we may have received this information at a previous meeting; however, it was done by district and not by each school. Dr. Gorman will make sure this information is received.

Mr. Helmholdt shared information regarding the Transformation Plan. This plan started five years ago and our Superintendent started this with listening tours. There actually have been five studies over four years to inform today’s Transformation Plan for quality, choice and

sustainability. One point we make is that West Michigan needs GRPS success. This will contribute to economic growth, produce a quality workforce, help attract and retain business investment and jobs, contribute to quality of life to attract and retain families and high performing, sustainable city schools reflect our community's commitment to the next generation. We have three guiding values: focus on children, invest in what works and provide stability. We have successes in multiple areas, including:

- Graduation rates
- Enrollment
- Safety and security
- Professional Development
- Parent engagement
- Athletics
- And much more!

Dr. Gorman shared that graduation rates are up 12% since the Transformation Plan began. What hurts us is that we have about 70 kids in our Center-Based programs that are working on obtaining certificates instead of diplomas. This counts against our graduation rate. Many of the students are not from GRPS but other districts we serve. Students at our alternative sites hurt graduation rates because they are about a year and a half behind. Our comprehensive sites are moving up. The state average of graduation rates is just shy of 80%. We are hopeful to see a rise in graduation rates again this year.

Mr. Helmholdt shared that we have had the best count days in two decades:

- 2014 – 15: Projected to lose 400, only lost 47
- 2015 – 16: Lost less than 150 in fall, expected to meet projection in spring
- 2016 – 17: Increased enrollment for first time in 20 years – up 164

Dr. Gorman shared that since Superintendent Neal came on board she stated that we were going to follow the student handbook. We will be firm, fair and consistent. With that, security incidents are down 11%, major incidents are down 23% and we have developed a Restorative Justice program which helps students develop positive conflict resolution skills. There are more than 1,500 students participating in 27 schools. We have PBIS programs in our schools. We have decreased the number of suspensions.

Dr. Gorman spoke about our profession development. Our professional development is intentional, coordinated, organized and district-wide for employees.

Mr. Helmholdt spoke to parent engagement. We have parent teacher community councils in every school. We launched Parent University which allows parents free classes in multiple areas.

Dr. Gorman spoke about athletics. One thing we are happy about is that our students do not have to pay to play. Our competitive high school teams were reduced from three teams to two and the teams are now earning conference and district titles. Individuals are breaking state records.

## **Board Member Responsibilities/Self Evaluation**

President Falb shared that the next section of the meeting is to breakdown board responsibilities but is not comprehensive by any means. She spoke to the self-evaluation of the board. She would like to bring this to the retreat. There is a secondary self-evaluation. This would be done about half way through the year.

- Board meetings – One of the requirements and responsibility of the board is to attend the meetings which are the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month with the exception of MLK day and spring break. We usually cancel the board meeting the week of Fourth of July. It is understandable that you may miss one on occasion but hope that you would keep this to a minimum. The packet is posted at least 18 hours prior to the meeting (the posting is done on Friday afternoon for regular board meetings and work sessions). Please get in the habit of looking at the packet prior to the meeting so you are familiar with what is contained in the agenda/packet. Public comment is available at all meetings. Our policy and procedure is to have the public fill out a card at the beginning of the meeting. I want to stay consistent with the three minute rule for public comment. I want this to be timely and respectful. Also, it is good practice and policy not to respond to public comment. We can ask administration after the meeting to give context in needed. Ms. Sharron Pitts shared hand-out regarding the Open Meetings Act (OPA). She shared information as to where board members should be especially cautious. Board members can only act as a unit never on an individual basis. You must have a quorum to conduct official business and you must vote on everything. In the board bylaws under section 1000 there are rules of order for the board. Dr. Baker mentioned that there were changes made to this bylaw (e. Rules of Procedure) but they are not noted in this copy. Ms. Pitts shared that we would look into this.
- Work Sessions – Held on the second Monday of the month at 4:30 p.m. usually these meetings are for deeper dives, policy discussion, evaluation, negotiation, closed session and we will now have legislative updates to this meeting.
- Committees - The committees have been set and the legislative committee will be moved to a committee of the whole. We will also reinstate the policy committee. Ms. Slade represents as a member of the KIASB and she would be glad to share this responsibility. These meetings happen quarterly usually at 7:30 a.m. Ms. Lewis agreed to be part of this along with Ms. Slade. Ms. Slade shared that this is a great group and a chance to network. President Falb is going to ask that the committees report out at regular meetings to the whole. Ms. Pitts shared that the Superintendent Neal has appointed leads for each of the committees: Academic is Carolyn Evans, Policy is Sharron Pitts, Legislative is John Helmholdt, and Finance is Larry Oberst. President Falb mentioned that she may reconvene the Executive committee as well. Dr. Baker also shared information regarding the City Board Liaison meetings which have been suspended at this time. Dr. Baker would like to see if we can get these meetings back on the calendars, understanding we need to develop a MOU. Dr. Falb will have a conversation with Mayor Bliss regarding the committee. It was requested for the committee chairs to get their committee schedule to Julie Anderson this week for scheduling. It was asked who develops the committee agendas? Dr. Falb shared that the administrative liaison would help in the development. In the retreat we will

- go over a basic board calendar that will influence the agendas as well. President Falb and the Superintendent have had conversations regarding key items for the agendas.
- Negotiations - Dr. Falb stated that the board is who the unions negotiate with and the board receives advice from the superintendent. There are some dos and don'ts that we will dive deeper into at the retreat. Ms. Pitts shared that the board has delegated the actual negotiation process to administration. Superintendent has delegated responsibility of lead negotiators. Ms. Pitts is the lead negotiator over the teacher contract and all others are under Micky Savage. This is tremendous amount of work. The teacher contract somewhat sets the tone for all other contracts. What is important for the board is that we will come into close session to talk about what our parameters should be. The really important piece is the confidentiality of negotiations. It is important not to engage in negotiating, but to listen and bring the information back to the whole. It is up to the board how often they want to have updates. We will discuss in more detail at the retreat.
  - Reinstatements – Ms. Pitts shared that reinstatements are driven by state law. Students seven years old or younger cannot be expelled without board approval. Grades K – 5, if we expel for possession of dangerous weapon or threatening with a dangerous weapon can be expelled, the parent can petition for reinstatement after 60 days but cannot be reinstated prior to 90 days. Students in grades 6 – 12 can be permanently expelled for the following: weapon, arson, sexual misconduct, physical assault of staff. Parents can petition for reinstatement at 150 days but cannot be reinstated prior to 180 days. The process is that a committee of two board members, one teacher, one administrator, one parent come together to review the reinstatement request once the committee has reached a decision it is brought to the whole board for a vote to reinstate or not. A question arose regarding the difference between an open and closed hearing and what can be disclosed or what is confidential. Information that cannot be disclosed is the parent's address or student records. Parents have certain rights, as well as, the student. Dr. Falb shared that reinstatements are a responsibility of the board to serve. She would like to distribute the responsibility through the whole board. Julie Anderson will communicate with the board the dates needed for reinstatements. Ms. Pitts shared that the entire process is outlined in our student handbook and on our website. Mr. Ross suggested that we identify certain blocks of time for reinstatements. Dr. Falb shared it is based on the parents availability. Mr. Ross shared a point of clarification from the board table that Dr. Flores has concerns regarding putting the student back in a school where a student has assaulted a teacher. Dr. Flores stated that to the best of his recollection there are students have gone back to a school where the assault on a teacher had taken place. He shared that we need to make a statement that we have safe schools. We cannot give up safe schools. Dr. Falb question is what is the board's role in the process? She would like more clarity. Dr. Baker shared that he has sat in several reinstatements and that each member of the board should set in on a reinstatement prior to changing policy. We can have the policy committee look at our policy for reinstatement after everyone has taken part in a reinstatement. Dr. Baker has not had teachers come to him and say they do not feel safe. Dr. Falb asked that everyone familiarize themselves with the guidelines and process. Dr. Flores shared that it is his right, as a board member, to vote against the reinstatement. He philosophically does not agree to putting a child back in the same

school the assault took place. This is what drives him to vote no on these reinstatements.

- Graduation - Dates/Locations – Dr. Falb shared that it is important that board members attend graduations. The schedule was shared. Dr. Gorman shared that we love when the board attends. It is a wonderful week. City was the only school in the past at Fountain Street Church but this year there will be others at Fountain Street Church. A change this year is that we will hold the graduation at Calvin College as Sunshine Church is no longer offering their venue. New member's caps and gowns will be ordered for you. Julie Anderson orders those. Please reach out to Julie and she will order. Dr. Falb shared she liked how the schedule was spread throughout the week
- School Events/Community Events - Events are another responsibility of the board. You should try to attend as many events as possible. Keep an eye on your e-mails for information of upcoming events. This shows tremendous support.
- Retreat/Superintendent Evaluation – The retreat will focus on the superintendent's evaluation. The single most important role of the board is to hire fire and evaluate the superintendent. As the vice president, Mr. Ross will lead the charge of the superintendent evaluation process. We will look at two models of an evaluation. The MASB and AASA model. The retreat will be held Monday, January 23 beginning at 8:15 a.m. at GRPS University.
- Legislative Lunch/Day – Dr. Falb shared that another role of the board is to stay abreast of state and national policy. Mr. Helmholdt shared that on February 14 there is a legislative lunch/day event in Lansing. We will visit offices and have a luncheon and a couple more visits in the afternoon. We typically have three to five core issues that we bring with us to the capital. We have a very strong relationship with the lawmakers and chairs of the committees. It is a great opportunity to build relationships.
- Conferences/ Associations – Dr. Falb mentioned that we are member of MASB and they have extensive workshops for board members. One suggestion for new members is the Board 101. It is an opportunity to meet other board members across the state. They have great legislative summaries. It was also mentioned you can become certified. Conferences are offered through NSBA, MASB and the CUBE conference. KISD is doing a Finance 101. Ms. Pitts shared that we use Thrun Law and they offer trainings. Ms. Pitts will share the information with the board.
- Other – Retreat agenda will contain Board Docs, Superintendent Evaluation, and we will do a deep dive into finance and negotiation.

The Board adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

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Secretary

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