

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

Work Session

MINUTES

August 31, 2015

President Haas called the work session to order at 6:30 p.m. in the boardroom of the FNSBSD Administrative Center at 520 Fifth Avenue. The work session was called to discuss a strategic assessment program and to receive an update on the strategic plan, including information on the Independent Learning Center (ILC), the expansion of BEST, and the possibility of a magnet school.

President Haas read the district's mission statement: *"Our mission is to provide an excellent and equitable education in a safe, supportive environment so all students can become productive members of a diverse and changing society."*

Present:

Heidi Haas, President
Wendy Dominique, Vice President
Allyson Lambert, Treasurer
Lisa Gentry, Clerk
Sue Hull, Member
Michael O'Brien, Member
Sean Rice, Member

Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Dr. Karen Gaborik, Superintendent
Lisa Pearce, Chief Financial Officer
Sandra Kowalski, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Instruction
Dan Schmidt, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Instruction
Melanie Hadaway, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Kathie Wassmann, Executive Director of Special Education
Dave Norum, Executive Director of Facilities Management
Janet Cobb, Executive Director of Technology
Shaun Kraska, West Valley High School Principal
Helen Clark, Director of Federal Programs
Daniel Domke, Director of Career and Technical Education
Sharice Walker, Director of Public Relations
Holly Cervin, Director of Alternative Instruction
Dr. Ellis Ott, Research Associate and Accountability Coordinator
Sharon Tuttle, Executive Assistant to the Board of Education

Dr. Gaborik thanked Tim Larrabee for his work on the sound system. She explained the executive director group would be at the table for work sessions this year, along with other administrators as needed, depending upon the discussion topic.

Strategic Assessment Program [0:01:54]

Dr. Ellis Ott, research associate and accountability coordinator, provided a staff report, including assessment comparisons both within the district and with the other Big 5 districts in the state. He also reviewed the district's tentative 2015-16 assessment schedule and sample MAP and TerraNova reports.

Superintendent Dr. Gaborik explained the administration had identified two options for nationally norm-referenced assessments that had the capability of providing national student achievement comparison data. The two options included TerraNova and Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (MAP).

Strategic Assessment Program (continued)

The district had been utilizing the paper/pencil version of TerraNova and parents were familiar with the reports. However, TerraNova was currently not aligned to district curriculum or state standards. Classroom teachers typically did not use information received from the TerraNova reports to inform instructional practice. TerraNova was available online at a slightly higher cost per grade level than the paper/pencil version.

MAP was a nationally normed test that was aligned to the Common Core and consequently generally aligned to the Alaska State Standards, and the administration's research indicated 64 percent of Alaska school districts used MAP. MAP could be administered once annually as a single summative assessment in specific grade level bands one time per year to provide national comparative data. It could also be administered three times per year (fall, winter and spring) to provide progress-monitoring data for the purposes of Response to Intervention (RTI) support. In addition to RTI, MAP could be utilized as a formative assessment tool to determine progress toward student learning objectives established by teachers as part of the new educator evaluation system. A number of teachers who utilized MAP last year in a district pilot requested continued access for formative assessment purposes. The cost of MAP was slightly higher than TerraNova, but the potential application was greater.

Administration's Recommendations

The administration's recommendation was to select the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) to use as a single, summative, nationally norm-referenced assessment administered in early February 2016 to all students in grades 5, 7 and 9. The purchase of a district license would provide not only national student achievement comparison data in those grade levels but also allow teachers the option of selecting it as a formative assessment tool at any grade level. It was recommended that in future years, administration of MAP be expanded to three times per year and grade levels systematically added until MAP was fully implemented in grades 1-8. In order for the model to be effective, training for teachers and administrators regarding the use of MAP data would be required.

Board Questions/Comments

Board discussion ensued. There was unanimous consensus from the board to accept all the administration's recommendations. The board supported the selection of MAP for use as a single, summative, nationally norm-referenced assessment administered in early Feb 2016 to all students in grades 5, 7, and 9. In future years, MAP would be expanded to three times per year and grade levels systematically added until fully implemented in grades 1-8.

Strategic Plan Update [0:58:28]

The administration provided the board with an update on the strategic plan. The strategic plan was a living document and would evolve as the district moved forward. The administration had been meeting to work on implementation of the plan. OnStrategy provided schools with a template regarding their specific plans, including parent engagement, technology, personalized learning, and more. Dr. Gaborik planned to provide the board with department updates as they related to the strategic plan throughout the year's schedule of board work sessions.

Board discussion ensued. Board members had suggestions and comments on the strategic plan topics such as diversity and culture, class size and respecting what the community valued, the district's Workplace Diversity Plan, the definition of personalized learning, and expanding options for personalized learning. The strategic plan would be posted to the website and tied to the school board and superintendent's webpages. The administration also provided an update on the expansion of the BEST program, development of an Independent Learning Center (ILC), and magnet schools.

Independent Learning Center (ILC)/BEST [1:12:42]

The administration posed two questions to assist in the planning and implementation of the Independent Learning Center (ILC).

Independent Learning Center (ILC)/BEST (continued)

1. What population of students are we targeting to serve at the ILC?
2. What are the identified needs of those students that the ILC will meet?

Superintendent Dr. Gaborik, Chief Financial Officer Lisa Pearce, Melanie Hadaway, executive director of curriculum, and Holly Cervin, director of alternative programs, provided a brief overview of the FNSBSD Homeschool Comparison Report, reviewed the definitions of schools of choice, and spoke to considerations surrounding the possible expansion of the BEST program. Discussion topics included instructional space, allotments, funding, enrollments, incentives, activity expansion, advertising, staffing, and building and leasing options. It was difficult to get an exact number of other homeschool students within the borough, but it was estimated to be approximately 1,326 possible students.

Administration's Recommendations

The administration reviewed its recommendations and funding request regarding the Independent Learning Center and the expansion of BEST.

1. Expand BEST to a statewide homeschool program in order to meet the enrollment and revenue levels necessary to be self-sustaining. An additional 178 students were required to meet the goal within the current staffing structure and location.
2. Re-brand, advertise, and recruit for BEST for the 2016-17 school year.
3. Plan to locate BEST and the ILC in the same building outside the Administrative Center in the 2016–2017 school year. Determine the most desirable location within the context of resource availability.
4. Develop the ILC to serve part-time online students enrolled in other district high schools.
5. Provide a campus where ILC students had the opportunity to recover credit or take additional online courses in a supervised computer lab setting on a flexible schedule.
6. Expand and explicitly engage BEST and ILC students in CTE options and career planning.

Funding Request

Funds in the amount of \$12,500 from the board reserve allocated for implementation of the strategic plan in the 2015–2016 school year were requested at the current time to begin the process of BEST expansion.

Board Questions/Comments

Board discussion ensued. There was board consensus, although not unanimous, to accept the administration's six recommendations: expand BEST to a statewide homeschool program; rebrand, advertise, and recruit for the 2016-17 year; locate BEST/ILC in same building outside the Administrative Center in 2016-17; the ILC would serve part-time online students enrolled in other district high schools; provide a campus where ILC students could recover credit or take additional online courses in supervised lab on a flexible schedule; and expand and engage BEST/ILC students in career technical education options and career planning. Board members who did not agree with the recommendations, supported the BEST program, but voiced concern over the funding and timing of possibly expanding the program in light of financial challenges facing the district in the upcoming year.

The board requested talking points about the ILC and expansion of BEST to help them inform the public.

Magnet Schools [2:24:00]

The administration presented information regarding the development of a new district magnet school. The key question that needed to be answered early in the process was:

What was the target opening date for a new district magnet school?

Dr. Gaborik stated for the magnet school to be done properly, the opening date should be pushed back to fall of 2017; a year later than noted in the board's strategic plan. Sandra Kowalski, assistant superintendent of elementary education, spoke to developing a magnet school including timelines, projected enrollment, boundaries, building options, class size targets, staffing, special education programs, and funding and associated costs.

Administration's Recommendation

Primary considerations for development of a new magnet school included parent and community engagement, principal leadership, school boundary and attendance area impact, and communication. To facilitate a high-quality process that engaged stakeholders to the fullest extent possible and provided the necessary administrative oversight and staff support, the administration recommended the target opening date for a new magnet school be established as fall 2017.

A fall 2017 opening date would provide district administration the time necessary to establish a stakeholder work group, gather extensive community input, and engage in meaningful conversations regarding theme and philosophy, grade levels, location, curriculum alignment, activities, and other related topics. It would also afford the time necessary to address logistic issues such as occupancy planning, facility preparation, school boundary attendance area impact, resource needs, budget planning, and purchasing. Additionally conducting the principal and administrative secretary hiring process in the spring of 2016 would allow for both internal and external candidates and avoid the potential of disruption of current school leadership midyear.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the new magnet school principal would continue to build the academic and activities programs, engage in staff hiring, determine enrollment processes, conduct a lottery, and participate in implementation of the communication plan.

Board Questions/Comments

Board discussion ensued. There was unanimous board consensus to postpone the target opening date for a possible new magnet school to fall 2017. Board members also generally agreed it would be smart to have specific schools look at implementing some of the attractive options of a magnet school such as full day kindergarten, explorations, flexible schedules, etc. and then revisit the idea of magnet schools at a later date.

Board Comments/Announcements [2:44:57]

President Haas reminded board members to sign-up for school visits. She announced the issues of facilities rentals and user fees were scheduled for the October 5, 2015 work session.

The meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Submitted by Sharon Tuttle, executive assistant to the Board of Education.