

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

Work Session

MINUTES

November 30, 2015

President Haas called the work session to order at 6:02 p.m. in the boardroom of the FNSBSD Administrative Center at 520 Fifth Avenue. The work session was called to discuss K-8 and high school options.

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

Present:

Heidi Haas, President  
Lisa Gentry, Vice President  
Allyson Lambert, Treasurer  
Michael O'Brien, Clerk  
Wendy Dominique, Member  
Sue Hull, Member  
Kobe Rizk, Student Representative

Absent:

Sean Rice, Member

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  
Traci Gatewood, Executive Director of Human Resources  
Melanie Hadaway, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
Kathie Wassmann, Executive Director of Special Education  
Janet Cobb, Executive Director of Technology  
Dave Norum, Executive Director of Facilities Management  
Tim Larrabee, Director of Business Information Systems  
Sharice Walker, Director of Public Relations  
Holly Cervin, Director of Alternative Programs  
Sharon Tuttle, Executive Assistant to the Board of Education

District administration presented an update from the K-8 Options and High School Options Work Groups, as well as information regarding future cyber centers, the BEST program, and considerations for an Independent Learning Center.

**K-8 Options** [0:01:25]

Sandra Kowalski, assistant superintendent, shared the K-8 Options Work Group had made good progress researching the possibility of shifting from the current K-6/middle school model toward multiple K-8 schools districtwide. There were many items for consideration in regards to shifting to a K-8 model such as facilities, staffing, funding, Title I programs, sports, program changes and delivery options, enrollment and boundary considerations, special education offerings, and transportation.

## **K-8 Options (continued)**

### **Board Member Comments/Questions**

Board and administration discussion ensued. Questions and comments included the pros and cons of a magnet school model versus a K-8 model; the number of K-8 schools; feeder schools; possible parental/staff resistance; the possibility of repurposing a middle school to meet the goals of the strategic plan regarding expanding BEST and/or offering an Independent Learning Center; curriculum offerings for middle school and elementary students; consideration of whether to utilize a middle or elementary facility; Title I funding; facilities use, availability, and appropriateness; funding and possible cost saving options; consolidating of staff and resources; and sports and student activity offerings.

Administration requested direction from the school board with regard to future efforts in this area:

- Was it the school board's desire for administration to continue to research and plan for a shift from the current K-6/middle school model to one that includes multiple K-8 schools districtwide, with a target transition date of fall 2017?
- Or would the school board like administration to return to the original strategic plan objective of focusing on a K-8 magnet school, with a target opening date of 2017?

Board members were in general agreement to continue work on offering a K-8 school model option rather than a single magnet school model. K-8 models would allow neighborhood schools flexibility to provide offerings to meet their needs. Board members voiced support for starting with the cohort of proposed elementary schools that fed into Tanana Middle School – Arctic Light, Joy, Ladd, Nordale, and Weller. If the goal was to free up a middle school for an Independent Learning Center, Dr. Gaborik wanted and would research more information on facility capacities and options.

### **Full-Day Kindergarten** [1:06:35]

The work group was also planning a 4<sup>th</sup> quarter launch of full day kindergarten at three pilot sites, Hunter, Joy, and Ladd Elementary Schools. Schools that did not volunteer for the pilot cited a concern for class size in kindergarten, reluctance from staff based on concerns about a full day program, and/or a general sense that with the new teacher evaluation and RTI being new to classroom teachers, it was not a good time for some staff to take on a new kindergarten initiative.

Mrs. Gentry left the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

### **Board Member Comments/Questions**

Board and administration discussion ensued. Board members had questions on kindergarten class sizes, teacher and aide support, costs, and in-attendance and out-of-attendance registration. Concern was voiced regarding the potentially large size of full-day classes. A majority of board members supported the full-day kindergarten pilot. In spite of the potential large class sizes, they were cautiously optimistic. The district had been considering full-day kindergarten for a long time and families were interested in it and they would not know if it would work unless they tried it.

While some data on the impact of the pilot might be known at the end of the current school year, the administration recommended the pilot complete a full cycle (the fourth quarter of the current school year and all of next year) to assess its impact.

### **High School Options** [1:34:10]

Dan Schmidt, assistant superintendent, shared the High School Options Work Group had also made progress with regard to flexible day options at the high school level. The group's vision statement was, "We envision learning without boundaries, where every student achieves his/her path to academic and career success. Learning will be driven by student need, through flexible and adaptive options. Supporting the district's educational system are highly engaged families; proven technology infrastructure; staff that are continually raising the bar in their profession; and a community that is committed to growing our future."

## **High School Options (continued)**

Mr. Schmidt reviewed the work of the group including increased course offerings, expanded schedules, and career technical education (CTE) options. The district would pilot a cyber center at West Valley High School in spring 2016. The Proposed Budget would include staffing for cyber centers in every high school beginning fall 2017.

### **Board Member Comments/Questions**

Board and administration discussions ensued. Agenda topic for discussion only; no action required. Board member questions and comments included the pros and cons of expanded periods, before school (zero hour) courses and after school courses outside the regular school day, content and offerings at the cyber centers, credit recovery, online and distance delivery courses, and rotating schedules.

### **BEST** [2:14:27]

Holly Cervin, director of alternative education, provided an update on the BEST program. The current enrollment had 316 students registered. District administration continued to evolve and expand BEST. The location of an Independent Learning Center (ILC), and eventually BEST, would depend in part on the final outcome of the possible shift to multiple K-8 schools districtwide.

### **Board Member Comments/Questions**

Board and administration discussions ensued. Agenda topic for discussion only; no action required. Board members questioned the percentage of completed courses in the program. Other questions and comments included the possibility of utilizing space and collaborating with CTC in regards to personalize learning options and considering personalized learning options across the district, not just through online or distance delivery options.

### **Closing of a School Facility** [2:27:14]

Dave Norum, executive director of facilities management, provided a broad overview of the scenario of closing a school facility, using examples of one elementary and one middle school. It was noted there were no plans to currently close any school; the report was just for informational purposes only. The scenarios had each school completely closed; without repurposing it for another use or maintaining heat. In an elementary school scenario, at a very conservative estimate, it would be approximately \$476,816 in savings; at the middle school level, a very conservative estimate would be approximately \$759,390. There would be savings in electric, heat, and water/sewer costs, as well as reduced custodial staff and supplies costs, and maintenance hours.

### **Board Comments/Announcements** [2:31:46]

President Haas thanked everyone for their work on the reports. She asked Mr. Schmidt to email his presentation to the board.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

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