

Strategic Planning Vision Retreat Meeting – Tuesday, October 30, 2018

MINUTES

Steve Olson, Superintendent, welcomed all those in attendance. Mr. Olson shared information from the Community Engagement Sessions (one held at each school) citing insightful ideas from students, staff, and parents/community.

Perry Soldwedel, Consortium for Educational Change (CEC), briefly explained the folder of documents provided to all members and the Vision Retreat Agenda which included the day's activities. It was noted that members would be reviewing the feedback received from the Data Retreat SWOT Analysis (student, staff, and parent/community) and begin creating the district's mission, vision, and core values. Mr. Soldwedel further explained that the Vision Retreat is considered the creative day ("Where do we want to be?") and that the day's activities would reflect what the district should look like in the future – what could be – through creation, aspirations, hopes, and dreams. The final product will be a draft of a Preferred Future Statement. Mr. Soldwedel explained that tradition is deep in an organization and spoke on some of today's challenges. Members in attendance then viewed a short video regarding the future of our schools (rethink high school). It was noted that Board of Education members will be continuously updated throughout this process.

Shannon Podzimek, Director of Communications, explained the activities held at all building meetings to create and develop a SWOT Analysis. These meetings involved students, staff, and parents/community (Community Engagement Sessions). A survey was also sent out on October 19, 2018 providing the opportunity to respond if individuals were unable to attend any of the Community Engagement Session meetings. Survey results will be posted on the district website.

Perry Soldwedel, CEC, explained Activity One: Review by table teams the feedback received from the Data Retreat SWOT Analysis from stakeholders and make any adjustments. A poster was provided to each table. Tables 1, 2, and 3 discussed and examined the "Strengths" and "Weaknesses" stakeholder feedback while Tables 4, 5, and 6 discussed and examined the "Opportunities" and "Threats" stakeholder feedback. One representative from each table then summarized any changes made to their designated topics aloud to all in attendance. It was noted that if a remark/feedback was listed under both "Weaknesses" and "Opportunities", one would be removed as such remarks/feedback may only be listed under one category. Members were informed that these charts are the final product of their thinking and that the vision should match the challenges.

Activity Two - Identifying the characteristics of a great Preferred Future Statement and understand what we mean by reimagining our future. Mr. Soldwedel explained that members were to start thinking about vision (Characteristics of a Great Preferred Future Statement) and provided eight characteristics (Future Focused, Directional, Specific, Relevant and Purpose-Driven, Values-Based, Challenging, Unique and Memorable, and Inspiring. Every Strategic Planning member was to choose one as critically important and share his/her thoughts with their table members. Examples of a Great Preferred Future Statement were also provided from Wellesley Public Schools, Crystal Lake District 47, Northbrook District 28, and Peel School District (along with a short video and handout - Empowering Modern Learners). It was noted that core values of a system should have six or fewer items.

Activity Three – Understanding the elements of a Vision for Improvement that identifies a reimagined school system: Beliefs, Context, Practices, and Learning Culture. Mr. Soldwedel explained that these elements encompass the Modern Learners' Lens and that members were to begin with the end in mind. Members were to individually investigate these elements as related to their homework reading assignment links and two homework articles.

Activity Four – Share the findings from the Homework Investigations. Table members then shared and discussed their investigative thoughts with one another (ideas they think might be great to consider as they reimage District 155). Homework articles discussed were: Ten Principles of Modern Learning and 9

Elephants in the Classroom That Should Unsettle Us. Representatives from each table then shared their thoughts/ideas from these two articles to the entire group as well as summarizing the electronic table investigation assignments (Stonefields School, New Zealand - Visible Learning; Green Dot Public Schools; XQ The Super School Project: High Schools that Matter; New Tech Network; Marzano's High Reliability Schools; and Redefining Ready). It was noted that the six investigation assessments involved the elements of Beliefs, Contexts, Practices, and Culture.

Activity Five – Apply what we have learned to begin a draft to reimagine District 155's future – thinking activity. Perry Soldwedel requested that tables be divided into four groups to consider the key questions (brainstorming ideas to the Beliefs questions, to the Contexts questions, to the Practices questions, and to the Culture of Learning questions). It was noted that this is regrouping around each part of the Modern Learners' Lens. Additional information/explanation included the following: Beliefs – need to guide toward mission, vision, values, get us to a better place, less is more; Contexts – knowledge, curriculum, assessment piece; Practices – student role of instruction, teacher role of instruction; and Culture of Learning – essential ingredients, allowing us to change. Members were allowed 30 minutes of “think” time and then 30 minutes of time to share their work with the other three groups – providing input on all four of the elements. Posters were distributed and used to advocate brainstorming ideas (Invent a Preferred Future Statement as a result of your investigation). One representative from each of the four groups shared and summarized their group's ideas and primary goals.

Activity Six – Use the ideas from the previous activities to draft a new mission, vision, and core values statement for the district. Mr. Soldwedel requested that members refer to their participation packet to evaluate this statement. Perry Soldwedel further explained that the Mission pillar asks the question, “Why do we exist?” A mission statement should be short, memorable, and inspirational – concise words. The Vision pillar asks “What must we become in order to accomplish our fundamental purpose?” A vision statement is a longer statement with bullet points, describing and capturing the essence of what we aspire to be, not fully accomplished today, and what we plan to see and accomplish in five years. The Core Values pillar asks the question, “How must we behave to create the district that will achieve our purpose?” The core values statement identifies our beliefs and then clarifies those beliefs through collective commitments. Members received additional information regarding the criteria for evaluating each of these three statements. Mr. Soldwedel provided each table with a poster that was divided into three sections (Mission Statement – core purpose, key ideas and beliefs; Vision Statement – our future; and Core Values – how we act and behave). Discussion was held at each table with members writing their thoughts and ideas on post-it-notes; attaching to the appropriate section. This correlated with Drafting the District's Mission, Vision and Core Values which was further divided into Students Learning Environment, Professionals Learning Environment, and Families & Communities; Partnerships & Resources. It was noted that results of Activity Six brainstorming (getting ideas) would be shared with the Board of Education, Superintendent's Cabinet, Union Leadership, and Parent Group.

The next meeting (Setting Direction Retreat) will be held on Wednesday, November 7, 2018. This meeting will focus on dealing with goals and strategies. The agenda and documents/information will be shared prior to this meeting.