

ROSEBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Board Work Session

1419 NW Valley View Drive
Roseburg, Oregon 97471

Vol 1 No. 3B

August 16, 2019

Board Members:

Rodney Cotton	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joseph Garcia, Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>
Micki Hall	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rev. Howard Johnson	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rebecca Larson	Excused
Charles F. Lee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Steve Patterson, V. Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>

Administration:

Jared P. Cordon, Superintendent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Richard Burton, Director of Student Services	Excused
Robert Freeman, Director of Human Resources	Excused
Michelle Knee, Director of Teaching & Learning	Excused
Cheryl Northam, Chief Operations Officer	Excused

Guest: Renee Sessler, OSBA Board Development Specialist

TIME/PLACE: A Board Work Session of the Douglas County School District No. 4 Board of Directors was held at 11:58 a.m. on Friday, August 16, 2019, in the Administrative Office Board Room, located at 1419 NW Valley View Drive in Roseburg, Oregon, immediately following a Special Session.

CALL TO ORDER: Director Garcia welcomed back the attendees and called the Board Work Session to order.

ATTENDANCE: School Board members and the Superintendent were present, with the exception of Director Rebecca Larson, who was excused. No members of the media were present. OSBA Board Development Specialist, Renee Sessler, was present.

REVIEW OF AGENDA: Chairman Garcia noted that the Work Session Agenda would be changed to begin with Roles and Responsibilities of the Board and Superintendent.

BOARD WORK SESSION

GUEST: Board Development Specialist, Renee Sessler

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Garcia brought the Work Session to order at 11:58 a.m. and introduced OSBA Board Development Specialist, Renee Sessler.

Discussion: As a brief refresher, Renee reminded the Board that they started this work in November, and today we will begin with the Roles and Responsibilities. Renee was very impressed that the Board is utilizing the Focus Framework in their board work, noting that everything at OSBA is centered on that as well.

ROLE OF THE BOARD – THE FOCUS FRAMEWORK:

- 1. Set Clear Expectations**
- 2. Learn Together as a Board Team**
- 3. Create Conditions for Success**

4. Hold the System Accountable

5. Build Public Will

The first element in Focus Framework is setting clear direction by setting expectations. Chairman Garcia pointed out that through the interview process, the Board wanted an effective communicator. We are now trying to determine whether to run a levy, and some things may have to take a back seat if we embark on that process. The Superintendent and Board expectations need to match. Renee explained that the process gives you a message to share with the community and engage support.

Director Cotton commented on the most recent Superintendent Cabinet Notes, noting that they were impressive in explaining “the why”.

Renee referred to the Focus Framework and explained that the Board learns together and sets expectations in order to create the conditions for success for staff. *“What are we willing to support to ensure the expectations can be met?”* This can include many of the things boards make decisions about such as collective bargaining agreements, funding for professional development, etc. The form enables administrators to use as a guideline for proposing a course of action for board consideration. Chairman Garcia expressed that the model is necessary so the Board can measure progress and talk about clear expectations.

Board Goal: Need to improve setting clear expectations

Renee encouraged the Board to establish 3-5 Board Goals for the Superintendent, and Jared will establish an equal number of expectations for the Board. *For example, complete homework assignments.* The Board oversees the Superintendent, but that person has expectations of the Board as well. The working relationship is a two-way street.

The Board reflected on past practice of being reactionary to whatever crisis is happening, and Renee explained that by using the process, no matter what else is happening (the Tyranny of the Urgent), you have accountability with each other. The Superintendent Evaluation Process contains “check-in’s” that prevent losing sight of the goals. Having a strategic plan in place allows boards to be less distracted by the urgent and helps to create a public will to succeed.

As an example of a measurement, if it is important for a superintendent to be an effective communicator, evidence could be his presentations at a board meeting trying to improve facilities and conveying to stakeholders what we are trying to accomplish – that is measurable. That is your evidence.

Check-in’s

Renee encouraged the Board to establish a check-in schedule – particularly for Jared’s first year when the Board needs to provide as much support as possible. Research indicates that the longer a superintendent remains in a district, the better student outcomes become – it’s a huge investment and it’s incumbent upon Board members to ensure success. Director Cotton shared that he enjoyed the search process this time and it had good results. He admonished his fellow Board members to not repeat past practice of not participating in the annual review process and leaving it for the Chairman to accomplish that task. That scenario is unfair to both the Board and the Superintendent. Renee concurred that the recommendation by OSBA is to complete the evaluation process as a team.

Three things about the evaluation that must be agreed upon:

- 1. Criteria (goals)**
- 2. Timelines**
- 3. Process**

Once that is agreed upon in a public meeting (such as this one), then you meet the requirement of meeting in Executive Session.

Board Roles, continued...

Boards trying to set expectations (for example; changing school start times) can consider avenues such as

- Reading articles (homework),
- Viewing presentations
- Attending conferences dealing with the topic
- Asking why you want to do that.... brain research; sleep studies for teenagers
- LEARN together

The learning can take place over several months depending on the topic. This sets the stage for establishing clear expectations.

Learn as a team and then set clear expectations

Renee recalled that in November the Board wanted to undertake PLCs and build learning time into Board meetings. How has that worked out?

Director Rod Cotton responded that it's great and wish we had started those years ago. You learn about the individuals presenting when they share their passion for their work and responsibilities. Director Micki Hall noted that it's a tough classroom, it's awesome and we learn. Would like to invite teachers to share how new adoptions are working out and share a lesson. You learn a lot even in less than optimum presentations. Director Charles Lee pointed out that the PLC's tend to be short and lack different options and alternatives, but the Board is informed of what is happening in the District. They help the Board increase their knowledge.

Renee explained that researchers recognize that this role of the Board – the expectation is similar to how PLCs teach teachers how their efforts are impacting student learning. The idea of PLCs is to gather colleagues to learn to improve on practice. Regarding Board work, it's good to learn about the systems and then take the opportunity to reflect how that can relate to the Board's work. As an example, when Tatum Stedman presented Pre-K program information to the Board, that was helpful to be able to share with the Budget Committee.

Consideration: Are the PLCs too restrictive in time frame? Director Steve Patterson theorized that they are appropriate for the setting and time frame. If the Board wants to expand knowledge and dig deeper, there is a different setting for that purpose. It provides that glimpse into the program and data. It's something the Board followed up on and it's been positive. He appreciates how the presenters have involved the Board. Renee pointed out that there is nothing preventing the Board from following up with a work session. Director Cotton reflected that his favorite was the presentation on the RHS virtual reality classroom. He would encourage the Board to schedule a visit to observe that in operation.

Chairman Garcia discussed how PLC topics are determined, and Director Patterson recalled that Superintendent

Lee Paterson started them with help from the Cabinet. Jared suggested that another avenue could be a text read to help us think through a process. Mr. Garcia also challenged the group to help staff learn more about how to get information to the Board if they want to share something since most staff members don't attend board meetings. Director Micki Hall pointed out that PLCs send the message to staff that the Board is learning too by following the same process as staff in the schools.

Renee agreed that as Board members are governing a learning organization, it's important to model the learning you expect everyone else to engage in.

Suggestion: Consider presenting at the 2020 Winter Conference

The Board was encouraged to consider presenting at the next OSBA Winter Conference on the topic of a Board being a PLC. In the spring, OSBA requests proposals from Districts on presentation topics, and this would provide the opportunity to be an example for other boards to follow.

Recess: There was a brief recess from 6:40 – 6:45 p.m. at which time the meeting was reconvened.

Potential Goal – Enhance Community Engagement

Renee demonstrated for the Board that, for example, if a goal was established to enhance community engagement, the focus framework would be followed to –

- Set the associated expectations; if it involves addition of staff, the superintendent must figure out how that happens
 - He would need approval for the budget capacity to hire a communications person; rather than the Board directing him to hire a communications person

Renee explained to the Board that no one member of the Board directs the superintendent. During periodic check-ins, the Board would be updated on the progress being made in establishing a communications person. The Board sets the strategic direction, and the superintendent creates a plan around that. The Role of the Board documents was created at OSBA eight years ago and is now a foundational piece for the work that they do.

Renee pointed out that boards typically struggle with understanding how to hold the system accountable. They also tend to be weak in the superintendent evaluation area. A new model is being piloted by OSBA, but it would not be suggested for districts with a first-year superintendent.

Recognizing that communication issues have been problematic for the Board, Renee pointed out that this has caused the Board to want to be involved in personnel issues, and that's the superintendent's role. Director Hall pointed out that holding the system accountable is made more difficult for board members who are busy with full time jobs – but shared that this is not intended as a criticism, but went on to suggest that instead of scheduling work sessions randomly – instead consider scheduling “accountability work sessions” each month that would follow a “short agenda” board meeting so that the Board and Superintendent have an opportunity to discuss expectations and maintain accountability.

Director Steve Patterson expanded on the idea of a communications person, advocating for a position that is embedded in all activities of the district, adding that PR is only a small part of the responsibility. That person would help brainstorm avenues of communication as well as identifying areas where we are lacking, both internally and externally. It's unrealistic to point to the superintendent and say that area is lacking.

Renee reminded the Board that their over-arching responsibility is “Are our children learning?” Are they meeting our learning expectations? Are they at grade level? Are they meeting standards? Are they progressing? With that ultimate responsibility, there are a lot of “How to’s” that goes into educating children. Communication is another “how”. If the superintendent/board identify increased communication with stakeholders as a goal, he will include that in the strategic plan that he brings forward. Communications is one of the How’s”.

Superintendent Cordon reflected on the discussion regarding Emotional Intelligence during his interview with the Board. He reminded them that they have hired a person with EI who recognizes the importance of working together as a team and that the tools they are now learning together will help them form a different relationship than they experienced in the past. He encouraged the Board not to anticipate roadblocks, but to expect him to want to wrestle with differing ideas as he is a naturally curious person.

Recess: The Board had a brief recess at 1:50 p.m. reconvening at 2:00 p.m.

The Board had a productive discussion regarding Consent Agendas and roles of the Board and Superintendent. Renee encouraged Board members to review their board packets early in order to be able to follow up on any questions they may have. It is also important to obtain assurance from the Superintendent that appropriate policy around hiring is followed and that the system is allowing the best candidates to come forward. Jared suggested making sure we audit some processes to confirm that expectations of policies are being met.

Budget Process

Director Cotton suggested that board input be taken into consideration with Cabinet member input, and from that begin building a proposed budget. Rod appreciated that the principals were involved last year, but the board should have been more involved. Chair Garcia noted that the process had improved over the previous year, however. Director Johnson explained that the budget provides the opportunity to be visionary. Director Hall suggested that encouraging involvement from individuals with a fresh perspective would also be beneficial.

Superintendent Cordon stated his desire to involve the Board in the budget process in order to match the Board’s vision with available resources. Renee noted that board members have the unique responsibility to act in the three branches of governance: Executive (adopting policy); Legislative (negotiating contracts and developing goals); and Judicial (hearing cases on appeal). Board Policy BBA supports that. She explained the importance of staying removed from gossip and scuttlebutt and ignoring evidence that doesn’t come through the proper chain of command as you need to protect your role.

The group reviewed Policy BBAA. Renee noted that board members approaching Cabinet instead of the Superintendent is very uncommon. Pointing out that the Board has one employee, (the superintendent) out of respect communication should be directed through him. Technically superintendents have one boss, not seven. She also noted that some districts assign each board member to a specific school to attend PTA meetings, etc. Renee also confirmed for Director Johnson that he is welcome to request any agenda item to be added to a board agenda.

Homework Assignment

Renee asked the Board to be prepared in advance of the September 4th Work Session to collaboratively agree upon three expectations for the superintendent for this school year to be included in a proposed Board – Superintendent Operating Agreement. The Superintendent Evaluation Workbook is helpful in determining

performance standards and suggesting goals for the superintendent. The 360-degree evaluation is not suggested to be used for a first-year superintendent. Board members can also review Policy CBA – Qualifications and Duties of Superintendent.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: There were no members of the audience wishing to address the Board.

ADJOURNMENT: With no further business, Chairman Garcia adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Jared P. Cordon, Superintendent

JPC/jlk

Next Meeting: The August 28th School Board Meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. in the Administrative Office Board Room, located at 1419 NW Valley View Drive, Roseburg, Oregon