

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625  
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

**BOARD RETREAT  
360 Colborne Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55102**

**May 8, 2021  
8:00 a.m.**

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chair Foster.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Board of Education: J. Kopp, Z. Ellis, J. Brodrick, J. Vue, C. Allen, Y. Carrillo, J. Foster

Staff: Superintendent Gothard; Kevin Burns, Director of Communications; Cedrick Baker, Chief of Staff; Kaying Thao, Administrator to the Board; Sarah Dahlke, Secretary to the Board

**III. WELCOME AND BOARD RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Thao began by introducing Mario Hernandez, facilitator from Propel Nonprofits, to lead this portion of the retreat. Chair Foster then led the Board through a grounding statement for the day, including that this will be an opportunity for all board members, especially those new to the board, to be in the space together to share vision for the Board and District, and learn together, as well as be collaborative, and individuals, as elected representatives of the District. She also noted a remembrance of Chair Marny Xiong, as we think about her in this work as well.

Mr. Hernandez then led the Board through reflections and introductions, including the questions of motivation to join the Board, exciting work of the school district in 2021, personal aspirations in working on the Board of Education, and individual superpowers that each board member brings to this work.

He also facilitated conversations on three main areas in order to increase the Board's relationships together and bring members closer together in this work:

- Shared agreements
- Survey about Board dynamics
- Shared purpose as a Board

Board members reflected on these areas both individually, as well as within small groups and large group discussions.

Within the shared agreements discussion, it was noted it will be helpful for constituents to know that board members have seen, heard, and listened to their feedback for clarity and communication in actions of the

Board. Themes included “Is, should, or how is board governance enacted?” and the results of those issues by the District, and when relayed by the Board.

Board members then participated in a board dynamics survey with questions that included the drivers of board activity, definition of the community base, beliefs on power and authority, and from whom do we draw leadership for schools’ success (including students, teachers, administrators, parents, business and civic leaders, or others), board culture of more individualistic or more community-oriented, culture of the organization to be more task-oriented or relationship-oriented, preference on structure or flexibility as a group, preference of new members to help shape or adopt the board culture, as well as guidance from traditions/the past or from contemporary models/future trends, and dynamic or characteristic of the board that influences its culture.

Members then shared in small groups about items from the survey that stood out to them, and any they felt the dynamic needs to move, and thoughts to make that possible.

Members then discussed their collective, shared purpose as a Board to connect their individual, small group, and large group suggestions on their “why” for the Board and identity as a Board.

The Chair then provided wrap-up comments including that Saint Paul is a special, unique place, and this was a space to learn about each other, build cohesion, and learn from each other and work together for intentional, effective decisions as a Board. It is continued, ongoing work, and this is a step forward in being in a space together. Board members then expressed thanks and gratitude for being in this space, the facilitation, and organization of today’s retreat.

#### **IV. COMMUNICATIONS**

Director of Communications, Kevin Burns, then led the Board through a presentation on Communications of the District, including communication from the Board. Suggestions include Board newsletters and social media groups.

He led the group through discussion of Board communication strategy, including communication pathways, Board statements, community engagement and overall perception. Topics included current state of communications, strategy, communication pathways, board statements, board engagement, news media, social media, and support.

#### **V. STUDENT OUTCOMES FOCUSED GOVERNANCE**

A.J. Crabill, staff member from the Council of the Great City Schools, then led discussion for the Board of student outcomes focused governance. Board members were asked to determine their thoughts around time that is currently focused on student outcomes, and how much time they think should be focused on student outcomes. It was noted that school systems exist to improve student outcomes; no matter the input. Board members also suggested examples of inputs, outputs, and outcomes for students within the District. Board members then reflected on past meetings and percentages that focused on inputs, outputs, and outcomes. Members also reflected on time in meetings that focused on adult outcomes versus student outcomes. Mr. Crabill also led the Board through the importance of goals - it’s recommended to have 3-5 goals, and the formation of goals for the Board. It is the Board’s responsibility to represent both the vision and the values of the community. Board members also shared their reflections on this portion of the retreat, as well as the review of potential next steps, including the

possibility of continuing to work with the Council of the Great City Schools in this work and the impact of that on the budget, iterations of the Board, time commitment and changes to the Board and future commitments of the Board with the commitment to this work of 24 months. It was noted that we need to focus on what will benefit our students and community, and to define the goals of the Board, and information necessary for those goals and the support from CGCS. The structure of Board outreach centered on the values and vision with community will be important and to focus on student outcomes and strategic plan for outcomes. Intentionality was also noted in the welcoming and shaping of the Board. Envision SPPS was also noted as a source of upcoming work and engagement of the Board and community, and decisions. The strategic plan is a management document, and questions on where the Board fits into that, and the helpfulness of the discussion on adult input and student outcomes. The different pieces necessary to address the achievement gap were also noted. Superintendent Gothard suggested seeking out a timeline and additional, introductory information from CGCS.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Foster then led the group through a wrap-up exercise in connecting relationship building, and ongoing work of the Board and student outcomes, and the interconnectivity of those pieces. These are opportunities to learn and grow together, and learn how to speak as one voice for the community, and bring the value and vision of the community in order to speak from the positional power of the District. We are recommitting to the review of who we are as an educational institution, and excited about moving forward with ongoing work and commitment to the students of SPPS. Appreciation was noted of the planning of the retreat and to be in the space with each other together. Support was also appreciated in this work, and dedicated to this work for the Board to have a voice and comfort with the direction for the Board and District. It was noted the joy in being together, and the truths encountered today, and opportunity to be the leaders we want to be. Board members also thanked their colleagues to serve in appreciation for the candor, expertise, and heart of each in this role.

The meeting adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

For clarity and to facilitate research, these minutes reflect the order of the original Agenda and not necessarily the time during the meeting the items were discussed.

Prepared and submitted by:  
Sarah Dahlke  
Assistant Clerk, St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education