



## *Board of Education Column*

*By Seth Holden, Board of Education*

### **Negotiations Committee Update**

The 2023-24 school year is nearing an end, negotiations are over, and we've had a negotiated agreement since October, but the work isn't finished. In my [last column](#), I talked about how we used the North Dakota State Education Fact Finding Commission's report to help guide us to a negotiated agreement with the Fargo Education Association. Part of the Commission's recommendations was to "consider on-going negotiations by having a monthly union-management meeting to address issues quickly." The Negotiations Committee agreed with this recommendation and began working on a format that would adhere to this recommendation while being collaborative, efficient, and inclusionary of all appropriate parties in a process "to address issues quickly."

An option that was considered was the creation of a Negotiations Advisory Committee made up of Board members, administrators, and teachers that could meet monthly to discuss conditions of employment. The committee's main objective would be to collaboratively come up with solutions to issues that could be solved either at or away from the negotiating table depending on the issue or solution. For this committee to be established, all parties would need to be on board.

After discussion of this possible solution at a monthly Negotiations Committee meeting, I sat down with President Burkland and FEA President Kraft and we had a great meeting discussing this idea. We discussed the creation of a Negotiations Advisory Committee, what the committee's make up would potentially look like, the committee's scope and scale of work, meeting frequency, and possible topics among other things. The meeting was productive and great discussion occurred but ultimately, the FEA was not able to support a Negotiations Advisory Committee.

Even though the creation of a collaborative committee did not come to fruition, the commitment of the Board's Negotiations Committee to follow the Fact Finding Commission's recommendations and to work collaboratively with the FEA both at the negotiating table and on an ongoing basis remains steadfast. The administration will continue to meet regularly with FEA leadership and the presidents of the Board, and the FEA will continue to meet as they have. In addition to those ongoing communications, the Negotiations Committee supports the idea of the FEA's lead negotiator and the Board's Negotiations Committee chair meeting on a regular basis to discuss the process of negotiations and how we can make the process more collaborative, more productive, and more efficient.



## *Board of Education Column, cont.*

Even though the two parties are not at the table right now, there is plenty of work that can be done to strengthen the relationship between the Board and the teacher's association and for all of us to understand each other's positions to strive for a successful negotiation. It'll be that time of year again before we know it! Have a great summer everyone!

