

Paterson Board of Education Retreat
Saturday, October 26, 2013
Seton Hall University, Jubilee Hall

Attending:

Dr. Michael Osnato, Facilitator
Mr. Christopher Irving- President

Ms. Chrystal Cleaves
Dr. Jonathan Hodges
Mr. Errol S. Kerr
Mr. Manuel Martinez
Mr. Corey Teague

Henry Lee- Presenter
Dr. Kenneth King- Presenter

Meeting opened at 9:15 a.m., Dr. M. Osnato and Mr. C. Irving welcomed board members and provided meeting objectives and a general agenda for the day. The purpose for the retreat was to acclimate board members to their roles and responsibilities, provide an overview of the NJ Quality Single Accountability Continuum, (QSAC) and provide board leverage considerations and position recommendations during labor contract negotiations.

Dr. Osnato introduced presenter Dr. Kenneth King

Dr. King disseminated information binders to all board members and led a discussion detailing the QSAC evaluation process. The QSAC review and evaluation is conducted by a team of district, county and state representatives.

Dr. King explained the QSAC assessment and evaluation process. He also urged the board to set the stage for contract negotiations by identifying district strengths, challenges, needs and opportunities.

A review of required documentation for district files was provided. All board members must fill a governance conflict of interest form. The board is also required to have a professional growth plan on file.

Evaluation of Superintendent should contain specific information including district goals and objectives as well as the goals of the State Board of Education.

Two sets of district personnel files must be made available through the Superintendent's office. Personnel files should not contain any health information. A separate file should be established for medical forms with only the Superintendent and district medical officer provided access.

Criminal clearance letters for board members should be kept on file. There was discussion about the creation of an additional screening process for higher level employees including external background and credit checks.

Dr. King advised the district to implement a process to cleanse personnel files.

As part of the QSAC exit conference, board members should verify that all information requested of the QSAC has been collected

Dr. King provided a summarization of NJ School Ethics laws and the proper conduct of business under high levels of scrutiny including the proper process of hiring family members as employees. Do not make promises as board members. Code of Ethics for board members does not apply to administrators. Administrators operate under a different ethics laws.

Dr. King discussed the transition from state operated district to local educational agency as well as transition impact on unions, matters for grievances and challenges

Dr. King discussed Tenure Laws and their effect on school districts.

The board discussed in detail medical benefits and their impact on district budgets. Dr. King discussed percentage payment increases and provided an explanation of P.L. 2011, Chapter 78 . Under the law, all active employees will now pay a percentage of the cost of health benefits coverage premiums. Health care provisions “sunset” four years after new implementation of the new law (Chpt.78), however the law allows for new premium sharing schedules be a part of the collective negotiation process.

Board members discussed with Dr. King strategies to avoid union and public pressure during new contract negotiations regarding salary increments and health care.

Dr. King discussed Pension and Benefit Reform- new laws passed by the state legislature to save state funding include raising the retirement age and freezing annual pension increases for retirees until pension funding is recovered

Dr. King provided an overview of the Neptune Decision however he expressed that PERC is relatively employee friendly regarding the payment of salary increments at the expiration of contracts.

Board members broke for lunch at 12:00 pm and reconvened for second presenter

Presenter- Mr. Henry Lee

Mr. Lee led a discussion pertaining to school board conduct and fiscal accountability. In addition he discussed internal and external assessment of risk, control of employee positions, dealing with the fiscal cliff, transparent communication, and building district monitoring systems that contain goals, milestones and assessments.

Meeting was adjourned by C. Irving at 2:47 pm