

Board Retreat Minutes

Meeting Date: December 1, 2025

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Central Office Conference Room

Board Members Present: Heidi Larson (left at 6:20 p.m.), Dan Tweten, Jason Rohr, Owen McKenna, Melissa Gleason, Jacob Meier, Aaron Roberts, Steven Veldcamp, Jamie Bear

Central Office Administration Present: Kristi Grounds, Adam Gehlhar, Dr. Robert Lech

II. Agenda

A. Budget Overview/Enrollment Trends

- Dr. Lech presented a review of the 2025/2026 approved budget, highlighting revenues from local (\$21,163,324.33), and federal (\$2,571,700.36) sources. Expenditures were detailed, with salary and benefits comprising 72.12% and other expenses 27.9%.
- The 2026/2027 budget projection was shared, noting that it does not include negotiated increases. There is a significant decrease in state and federal revenue.
- Current enrollment as of 11/25/2025 is 1,904 students. There is an ongoing downward trend in enrollment, partially due to the impact of open enrollment and private education in Jamestown.
- Projections for 2027/2028 (1,880 students) and 2030/2031 (1,808 students) were reviewed, with attention to the implications for staffing and facilities.
- Need to seriously consider decreasing from 7 sections of elementary to 6 sections in the near future.

B. Finance Priorities Exercise

Dr. Lech reviewed the Budget Priorities spreadsheet which divides the current budget into 4 broad categories: Core (68%) – legally required for FAPE; Priority 1 (13%) – Align with District Mission/Strategic Plan; Priority 2 (14%) – Enhance cored experience/operations but can be scales; Priority 3 (5%) – Supplemental value. Scenario analysis was conducted in small groups, with each group assigned hypothetical budget scenarios:

Scenario 1 – Eliminate all athletics and co-curriculars – savings of \$862,000

- Board members would need more detailed metrics, such as the number of students impacted and dollar spent. Discussed the importance of aligning expenditures with the district's strategic plan and preparing students for life after school.
- The board questioned whether the district offers too many athletics/activities compared to peer districts and discussed the role of booster clubs in funding extra coaches.

Scenario 2 – Eliminate all non-required transportation – savings of \$730,000

- Considered the necessity of rural vs. city bussing, potential for parent stipends, carpooling, park-and-ride options, and the impact of eliminating or expanding bussing on absenteeism and competition with rural schools. Discussed purchasing district-owned buses – especially for Activities.

Scenario 3 – Decrease Elementary Sections from 7 to 6 – savings of \$1,400,000

- Discussed reducing elementary sections to 6 or even 5. Potential closure of Lincoln Elementary, and expansion of Louis L 'Amour. Considered efficiencies in special education, teacher collaboration, and paraprofessional support with three 2-section schools. Class size is approximately 17/class currently. Low compare to state.

Scenario 4 – Decrease from 2 teams/grade to 1 ½ at JMS – savings of \$539,000

- Emphasized the need to maintain teacher collaboration time.
- Discussed reducing team size and embedding clubs into the school day to save on extracurricular costs and improve teacher work-life balance.
- Discussion of offering summer curriculum writing opportunities and possibility of utilizing “one-time” special reserve funds for voluntary curriculum work.

Scenario 5 – Transition JHS to Trimester schedule – savings of \$555,000

- The trimester model has been shown to be the most effective allowing more options for electives which saving up to five full-time positions.

Scenario 6 – Redefine JHS full load as teaching 6 of 7 w/ 1 prep – savings of \$555,000

- Provides equity for teaching loads with elementary and middle school teachers.
- Seems a reasonable ask.
- Ties in with the Guiding Coalition.
- Only challenge is teachers adapting to longer periods.

The board agreed that further analysis and community input are required for all scenarios.

C. Dinner/Innovation Design Challenge Presentations and Q&A

- Presentations were delivered by the JMS and JHS teacher teams, each sharing their vision and problem statements for improving the middle and high school experience for students and teachers. JMS focuses on electives and JHS focused on off-site learning.
- Deliverables and next steps for the design challenge were discussed, including the importance of aligning innovation with district goals and strategic planning.

D. Guiding Coalition and Next Steps

The role and responsibilities of the Guiding Coalition in the district redesign process were reviewed.

- December 18th is the deadline for coalition applications. Participation from community members and students is encouraged.

- Next steps post-design challenge were outlined, including continued outreach and engagement with stakeholders.
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E. Pre-K Discussion

- The board discussed current Pre-K service gaps, noting that ages 0-3 receive free intervention services, but ages 3-K must pay privately or attend other districts unless qualifying for special education.
 - Over 150 children in Stutsman County are affected. Concerns were raised about losing families to other districts through open enrollment.
 - Options discussed included establishing Louis L 'Amour as a Pre-K/K school, possibly adding Level C/D facilities, seeking grants, collaborating with Head Start and Health and Human Services, and conducting a cost analysis.
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Adjournment - Meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.