



BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

John A. Krings, President
John Benbow, Jr.
Troy Bier
Larry Davis
Sandra K. Hett
Katie Medina
Mary Rayome

April 18, 2022

SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING Board Workshop

LOCATION: East Jr. High, 311 Lincoln Street, Wisc. Rapids, WI 54494
Cafeteria

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: John Benbow, Troy Bier, Larry Davis, Sandra Hett, John Krings, Katie Medina, Mary Rayome

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Craig Broeren

President John Krings called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Mr. Krings explained the purpose of the meeting is to approve special closed session minutes and then discuss and consider information gathered by individual Board members who recently participated in listening sessions hosted with staff.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to approve of the special closed session Board of Education meeting minutes of March 3, 2022 (5:00 and 6:30 p.m.), March 8, 2022 (5:00 p.m.), March 21, 2022 (4:30 p.m.), March 23, 2022 (5:00 p.m. and 6:15 p.m.), and April 12, 2022 (6:00 p.m.). Motion carried unanimously.

Staff Listening Sessions

Individual Board members met with interested employees at each building location throughout the month of April as follows: John Benbow (Grant Elementary); Katie Medina (Pitsch Early Learning Center, Woodside Elementary); John Krings (Grove Elementary, Washington Elementary, Lincoln High School); Sandra Hett (River Cities High School, Wisc. Rapids Area Middle School); Mary Rayome (Howe Elementary); Larry Davis (Mead Elementary); and Troy Bier (Central Oaks/Central Storage/Central Office/Substitutes, THINK Academy). The purpose of the meetings was to connect with staff to listen and learn about any concerns they have, discuss how they are doing as the District emerges from the pandemic, and share about the great things happening in their schools.

Board members shared and discussed what they learned from their individual visits. Following is not an exhaustive list of everything discussed at each visit, rather it is a collection of some of the main points of discussion raised during the meetings. Certain points were brought up in multiple buildings, but may only be recorded one time on the list.

- Staff members from Mead Elementary are fortunate for their colleagues and the support system around them as they work together in the best interest of students
- They would like to see relief in the area of a lack of substitute availability – many are feeling burned out and stressed from the additional coverage they have had to provide, feel guilty when they need to use a paid leave day, and are missing valuable preparation time – this was reiterated at most buildings across the district
- A lack of parental care and support for portions of the student population is discouraging – kids may come to school hungry, tired, distracted, unmotivated, anxiety ridden, stressed, etc. which makes it difficult for them to be prepared to learn
- Additional support in classrooms to help lighten the load would be helpful
- Traveling teachers lack the preparation time they need with the tight schedules they are on
- Staff appreciate the supportive Board of Education and administration in place – this commentary came from multiple buildings
- Elementary teachers do not need more to do or any new initiatives with the full plates they currently have

- Staff from River Cities are pleased with the location of their program and recent parking lot improvements; students adapt and excel in the current location and supportive environment developed there
- Staff members throughout the district are pleased that the mask requirement is no longer needed, and multiple buildings expressed deep appreciation for the Board’s leadership and tough decision-making throughout the pandemic to keep everyone safe and make it possible for students to be able to attend school in person
- Staff members expressed appreciation for the communication they receive from the Superintendent
- As teachers continue to cover classes due to a lack in substitutes, one mentioned feeling lied to, suspecting that the substitute fee comparison schedule included a number of districts, but purposely left out the school districts of Auburndale and Pittsville which may pay a higher rate
- At WRAMS, it seems as though a handful of kids (less than 2% of the student population) are creating the biggest problems which detract from the learning environment and take quality instructional time away from other students
- Math learning targets changed, moving from 25 to only 8 or 10 – this change seems to be causing some issues on the Forward Exam for students; math interventionist support at WRAMS is a crucial need
- Data that is collected should change teaching, not just be collected for the sake of collecting it
- At risk students at the middle school level need a different path (Alternative Middle School) as there is limited remediation and few extra-curricular and/or after-school opportunities; transportation for after school activities is a barrier
- Career planning at the middle school level is needed
- An idea to have 8th grade students tutoring 6th grade students was raised to provide them with additional support
- Meeting the needs of homelessness and students in poverty should be more of a priority
- Social and emotional skills are as important, if not more important, than academics
- Bright students need interventions to challenge them, meet their unique needs, and help them excel
- Staff at WRAMS are considering the implementation of a “RESET” program which stands for *Remediation, Enrichment, Social-Emotional Learning, Engagement, and Teacher Collaboration and Prep* as a way to improve not only the school, but community partnerships as well. Under this program, the first day of the week, twice a month, would be designated as a “RESET Day” to allow schools to meet the increasingly overwhelming needs of students and staff, as well as provide opportunities for engagement with community members and parents. Staff involved in developing the proposed program expressed excitement about presenting it for consideration at upcoming staff meetings, and are hopeful it will gain traction and support. Board members will receive a copy of the RESET Day proposal which was provided to Ms. Hett, and they expressed deep interest in the proposed program. They would like to hear more about it in the future and ways in which the administration is working toward implementation of these exciting ideas generated by staff.
- Students at WRAMS need expectations and consistency – Superintendent Broeren explained to Board members that he is aware of the disconnect between staff and the administration when it comes to student expectations, and is working with all involved to address the concern. He has also had conversations while at WRAMS about trying innovative programming with the main constraint really only being the confines of the start and end time of the school day, and he is familiar with the RESET Day proposal and expressed support for staff ideas like this being generated and brought forward.
- THINK staff members expressed excitement about the upcoming gym project; an added restroom will be very beneficial but there are ongoing space limitations and class sizes at the building which are a concern – they wonder if more classroom and storage space can be added during the referendum construction. Mr. Broeren stated that the class size situation at THINK is being monitored closely and while the referendum request to the public could have potentially been for a higher amount to add space not only for THINK but other buildings, it is unknown how this may have impacted its passage by the public.
- THINK staff are fortunate for their custodian and his efforts to go above and beyond on a daily basis
- THINK staff would like the District to develop creative ways to incentivize the Rudolph area, perhaps through dairy promotions, as an example
- First year teachers feel supported very well and appreciate the great mentor program in place
- Staff at THINK are hard-working and wear many hats to sustain their duties – a fun group that truly cares about student growth
- THINK staff would like clarity on special education aides and their abilities, questioning if different licensing might be needed based upon all hands being put on deck to assist; additionally, the wage for aides is inconsistent and more compensation for support staff needs to be considered
- A lack of aides and resources makes for difficult and stressful work days
- The staff at THINK raised a question regarding whether the District plans to teach about gender identity. Mr. Broeren mentioned that public schools help students, not judge them – situations involving gender identity with students are worked out in concert with parents, and the Board will be seeing some gender identification policies brought forward at some point which address how these protected class situations are dealt with uniformly districtwide
- Mention was made about curtains that separate rooms at THINK being distracting and ineffective with no noise barrier
- Additional flexibility built into prep time is essential

- Staff members at THINK have questions surrounding equity and wonder if the ESSER III funding plan is set in stone with no movement for change
- District messaging on hot button issues need improvement, with questions raised about how we can better address Critical Race Theory (CRT) and “furry” concerns – mention was made that some language in current social/emotional learning seems suspect. Mr. Broeren stated it is difficult to develop communication to defend things the District isn’t doing, and he would challenge anyone who makes claims about particular things being taught to provide the evidence so that it can be followed up on, and he reiterated that indoctrination and marginalizing students goes against the fundamental basis of public education
- Having only a part-time guidance counselor and no social worker at THINK is very challenging – Mr. Broeren stated that plans have already been developed to make a change for more support to be available beginning with the 2022-23 school year
- High turnover of academic specialists is a challenge
- THINK staff wonder how to best explain to parents when they raise concerns about students being behind (multiple years of learning loss) and placement of skills
- Administration (Superintendent) is rarely present, and is brief during any visit to THINK
- Woodside staff are very pleased with intervention funding support and District DEU opportunities
- Libraries and library staffing across the District is phenomenal, and Jamie Jestadt is an amazing professional
- Woodside would like to see a potential STEM or technology creation space developed at their building as well as a technology person to assist in the integration of technology at their building
- Staff members would like to see a salary/longevity scale of some sort developed as an incentive to stay, and for staff to have a bump in pay they can look forward to
- More positive PR for teachers would be nice to see since these jobs seem to be more scrutinized and criticized these days
- An idea was raised around extending the school year past June 3rd in order to build in “refresh” days for staff during the school year
- A shortened summer break would save on intervention time needed to bring kids up to speed when they return
- Concerns about teaching on Good Friday were raised, as well as the fact that many daycares are closed on that day – why was this changed?
- Staff members are frustrated with how “personal” days work, mentioning that they find their sub, pay for their sub, and then must provide a reason to their Principal for the personal day being taken which defeats the intent of it being a personal day. Some staff members may feel they are forced to be dishonest in order to take the day. Mr. Broeren mentioned the shortage in subs makes it difficult to always honor personal days, and at times they may not be approved based upon other initiatives occurring within the District. There also may be times when personal days get cancelled depending upon needs and circumstances to ensure that all classes get covered. The parameters set up with teacher payment of subs and the fact that they are not to be used to extend a break, etc. were implemented long ago with the intent to de-incentivize their use because they are difficult to cover at times. Staff members booking days well in advance have a better chance of successfully taking the day. Discussion revolved around what might be able to change with the benefit to make it more palatable and workable for both staff members and the District. One option discussed by the Board involves elimination of the two personal days and instead allowing one type of “floater” day that the District would pay for instead of the employee, with no explanation needing to be provided for its use. Parameters around how the date could be used would still be set, such as not taking the day with an extended break or holiday. The administration would need to explore the ramifications of this type of change. The topic will continue to be explored and considered.
- Too much micro-management is occurring from the District level in terms of how teachers’ shrinking prep time will operate, and in terms of Professional Development day structure and content – teachers know what they need to do and learn, and should be trusted to do it
- DEU payments and credit for teachers when they are involved in a Master’s program do not count, which is frustrating. Mr. Broeren clarified that teachers get DEU credit for their Master’s program work, but if mandatory training is required by the District and their DEU maximum of \$750 has been met, there is no additional compensation for this scenario. Teachers also receive a \$5,000 bump in pay once their Master’s degree has been earned.
- On Professional Development days, staff would like to see more time for collaboration and spend time in their classrooms
- A staff member raised the idea to allow staff to use some of the time spent at the beginning of the year outside of their scheduled hours prepping their classrooms as flex time when a snow day comes for which they are required to log hours. Mr. Broeren mentioned that reasoning behind this required documentation is because teachers are contracted to work a certain number of days, and the first two snow days are typically not going to be make-up days for students due to the instructional minutes scheduled; however, it is still a paid day for staff for which documentation of their tasks is required so that the administration is able to provide proof of work getting accomplished. Prep time prior to the beginning of the school year would not count toward snow days since the expectation for staff members in their roles

is that there might be occasions when additional time is necessary for them outside of their scheduled work day to accomplish what needs to be done to ensure the learning environment is prepared for student success.

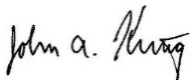
- An aide mentioned a concern about not getting paid for snow days that are not made up, yet the money remains in the budget; they cannot help when these days get called and should they work elsewhere, they would be working and earning the pay they rely on. Since the time is not allowed to be made up, the staff member is interested to know where the budgeted money ends up. Board members questioned if maintaining the pay for staff in these instances would be a plausible incentive measure to retain them. Mr. Broeren has worked in districts that have paid and others that do not in these instances. During the shutdown, these positions continued to receive pay even when many were not necessarily performing the tasks normally assigned to them which reflects the value the District places on maintaining these employees. If the Board desires to explore the possibility of making staff whole for up to two days a year in these scenarios, he feels the budgetary impact would be minimal and certainly something that could be considered.
- Prep time and time to develop report cards has diminished over the years, which is a problem
- Special education professional staff PD days should be more focused on their needs, rather than have staff participating in training dedicated more for regular education classroom teachers
- Woodside staff overall are happy, but would appreciate more trust and respect in what they do
- Pitsch staff are pleased with their location and the program’s operations, including the collaboration that can occur for the specific age levels served there
- Staff members really appreciate the Board taking time to pay personal visits to each building to hold listening sessions – this was mentioned in multiple buildings
- One individual who attended a listening session not held at Pitsch expressed concern about a lack of say in things when the Pitsch building was set up, and the fact that certain areas are used for storage rather than instructional space
- Grant Elementary staff are pleased with their new principal, staff collaboration, and a supportive School Board
- Concerns were raised around teacher shortages and retention
- Student negative behaviors are increasing and there is a lack of discipline; clear expectations met with consistency is crucial
- Concerns were expressed around the negative impact of COVID on students, parents, and staff, including the emergence of stress, anxiety, and mental health issues
- Frustrations were shared over all of the new curriculum initiatives being implemented in one year
- Pressure is being felt from having to catch kids up from pandemic learning loss
- Mention was made for the possibility of teachers to have sick days converted to be used toward healthcare in retirement. Mr. Broeren stated this is an allowed benefit for support staff since it is their only post-retirement benefit if eligible; however, teachers already have a different robust health benefit applicable to them upon retirement if they are eligible. Mr. Krings made mention of the fact that employment in the District on the work schedule that staff are on with their summers off is much different than most people working in private sector, as are the benefits. The Board must be cognizant of what might be accepted or palatable by community members who work in different fields or industry when changes are being considered.
- Concerns around who piloted the elementary math program were expressed. Mr. Broeren explained the various ways in which communication on topics such as these takes place including via Board minutes, dissemination of Superintendent Cabinet minutes to all staff, the *E-clips* newsletter, etc. The Board discussed various ways in which staff members receive information.
- Instructional aide onboarding and training needs to be improved, as does their pay
- Grant needs additional math intervention time. Mr. Broeren clarified this is being addressed and was recently brought through the Board for approval.
- Curriculum is too specific and doesn’t allow for differentiation or creativity in classrooms; teachers do not feel treated as professionals and are micromanaged
- Remove unnecessary items on teachers’ plates
- Grant staff members feel “in the dark” with regard to social emotional learning curriculum and wonder how they will fit this in
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) take too much time with not enough progress
- Howe Elementary staff feel the Board and administration make decisions that are child centered
- The workload of staff members is intense and stressful, with staff working evenings and weekends to accomplish everything needing to get done
- Staff members wondered about how elementary specials schedules get developed and/or how the instructional minutes work
- Staff are concerned about the potential loss of colleagues pursuing positions elsewhere
- Concerns around whether Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) will continue into the future were raised
- The assault on public education and the teaching profession is concerning
- Backlash about teaching social emotional learning, which teachers themselves are adapting to, is a concern
- Criticism from parents and the public seems to be on the rise, which is disheartening

- Staff are thankful for the ESSER dollars being utilized as quickly as possible to help address the needs schools have now
- The local political climate is concerning
- Staff members really appreciate the additional staffing that has been hired for buildings to help address student need
- Multiple buildings feel the District needs to focus more on the positives happening in schools. In that regard, the Board considered having each building take a month to attend the regular Board meeting held on the second Monday of the month to provide a brief presentation on something positive happening at the school. This could involve staff members and possibly students to showcase the topic of interest, but shouldn't be considered a competition between buildings. The Board is simply interested in whatever a building feels is important to showcase without causing too much additional work, and it doesn't need to include a great deal of grandeur. Mr. Broeren will work with building principals to develop a rotating schedule that will begin with the September, 2022 Board meeting.
- Grove staff are wondering if the lunch period will be back to normal in the 2022-23 school year. Mr. Broeren stated that it is possible to return to normal if COVID concerns remain low.
- Parent pick-up logistics that were changed at Grove have gone well and are appreciated, and staff members like having parents pick up their students outside, given security concerns
- Appreciation was expressed for the Board and administration's acceptance of all views, given the diverse group of students and families being served
- Staff members at certain buildings mentioned they felt supported by their principal
- Elementary teachers would like to know why 20 minutes of math instruction was added rather than social emotional learning time since the pandemic caused a social skills gap among students
- Mention was made around the fact that DEU payments are not implemented until the subsequent school year
- A suggestion for a monthly teacher workday in the building was brought up, and the Board discussed type of perception that has within the community, as well as daycare issues it may cause for families
- While there are many involved and supportive parents/guardians, parental engagement is a concern, and there are times when phone calls home go unanswered or staff members get hung up on; additionally, parent teacher conferences go unattended by apathetic parents, which often correlates to poor performance by students
- At one meeting, a Board member asked what might be a morale booster for staff; someone mentioned perhaps a free lunch once per week would be a nice show of appreciation
- Aides covering as substitutes in classrooms are underpaid
- It has been a struggle to hire and keep aides
- A question was raised about why 4K was left at Grant and Woodside. Mr. Broeren clarified that it mostly has to do with the address location of the families involved and their proximity to the school.
- A comment was made about how administration does not support all equally, and you have to be on a "friend's list" for better treatment
- Concern was raised over the fact that when behavior issues arise in a classroom with a student, rather than removing the student, all of the student's classmates are removed instead which disrupts the entire learning environment and impedes the instructional process due to a "hands off" law. Mr. Broeren stated that these statements lead him to believe that there seems to be some misinterpretation and/or misunderstanding of the statute concerning seclusion and restraint. Student safety and de-escalation are at the forefront when handling these unfortunate circumstances, and each one is documented in accordance with applicable state and federal statutes.
- Staff at Lincoln described themselves as team players who enjoy working together and are excited about the construction occurring
- Many students are adjusting well to being back full time, in person while others struggle. It seems that younger students are more apathetic toward following through and completing assignments after an absence
- Stemming from a question about what staff preferred in terms of in-person or virtual parent visitations, staff at Lincoln stated that they felt neither is as impactful as they would like it to be, and mentioned that years ago there used to be "M-team" meetings occurring with parents which they believe were much more successful than parent teacher conferences because the process focused more on the students needing a great deal of support. Mr. Broeren will follow up on the commentary to learn more about the history and intent of M-team meetings.
- Staff mentioned a desire for more flexibility with their own schedules
- Snacks and/or food at parent teacher conferences would be a nice gesture and helpful, as would childcare for parents with small children
- More PLC time at Lincoln would be helpful
- Perhaps looking at hiring District subs would be helpful, similar to what Stevens Point does
- Staff at Lincoln mentioned a need for more normal expectations for behavior. They are not pointing fingers, just expressing that consistency and expectations are needed – too much time is spent on issues that take away from instructional time; there are too many warnings, and consequences are not stern enough
- Mention was made that with the backpack rule at Lincoln relaxed, half the staff are comfortable or agree with it, while half do not

- Traffic in the bathrooms on 2nd floor at Lincoln is causing huge lines due to the construction, and there is a small contingency of students who congregate in the bathroom which causes a portion of the student population not wanting to use it as they are uncertain about what they might walk into
- Some acknowledged that they know administrative staff at Lincoln are busy, but they do not feel as supported as they could, and the administration is not as visible in the hallways as they should be
- Hard and soft skills in high school students are lacking
- Staff appreciate the thorough and excellent communication pieces generated by administration
- If staff work their prep time, they are compensated; they are wondering if they could bank the prep time pay to cover their personal day. Mr. Broeren explained that it is an interesting idea; however, it would be extremely difficult and complex to track.
- Staff questioned why a 30-day notification is necessary to use a personal day and why it cannot be taken around days of paid time off
- A question was raised around how to incentivize staff members from using sick days once their maximum number of cumulative banked days has been reached
- Staff would like to know why some positions, such as those in the IT Department, is unable to work from home when a majority of their job is done on the computer and could be performed remotely. Mr. Broeren stated it has to do with the fact that working in a school district is a people business with face-to-face interactions necessary, plus the fact that if one person is allowed then everyone feels they should be allowed even though certain positions lend themselves better to this type of arrangement over others.
- Staff wonder if the LHS faculty lounge will be back starting next year, which Mr. Broeren believes will be the case.
- Staff members would like to see former students share their stories of success – perhaps a link could be created on the website for this purpose for both Lincoln and River Cities to share their information which, in turn, would be shared more widely by the District
- A question was raised about whether Board meetings that were livestreamed are available for viewing. Mr. Broeren confirmed that they are all found on the Board website in the meetings and agendas area.
- Documentation of parent contact being mandatory takes a great deal of staff time
- With regard to time between terms – staff need time to update Canvas – former virtual learning days allowed the time needed for these tasks
- More staff involvement is needed in Lincoln Virtual School (LVS)
- Not all time can be put in for what staff are doing with assigned classes paid at \$18.00 per hour

The Board discussed the thoughts expressed by staff during the visits. A number of questions have been addressed by Mr. Broeren, and others will be addressed or looked into as appropriate with follow-up to the Board in the future. Board members plan to take all of the commentary shared into consideration as they make decisions in the coming year. Staff members expressed an interest in having visits from Board members to see the great things that are happening in classrooms. Board members would enjoy this opportunity. Overall, the Board valued these listening sessions as much as the employees seemed to. Since they were so well received, the Board plans to schedule similar sessions again in April or May, 2023.

President Krings adjourned the meeting at 8:43 p.m.



John A. Krings – President

Maurine Hodgson – Secretary

Larry Davis – Clerk