

GEORGE-LITTLE ROCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

The George-Little Rock Board of Education met for a work session on Monday, January 6, 2020 in the High School Library in George. Board President Kristi Landis called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. Board members present were Kristi Landis, Wade Netten, Andrew Sprock, Austin Lloyd, and Jason Fugitt. Also in attendance were Superintendent Pat O'Donnell, Board Secretary Cathy Bonestroo, and guest Valecia West.

A quorum was established. President Landis read the statement about work sessions being different and no public comment is allowed at a work session, but public comment can be made at the next board meeting.

Superintendent O'Donnell shared goals for the evening of selecting the process for the new superintendent. O'Donnell shared that all district staff and the board received the survey results which he gathered. O'Donnell stressed that it is not about individual comments, but themes that come through with the surveys. He shared the board needs to identify priorities for the new superintendent noting some of the priorities will come out of the survey. Themes identified were experience with finances in small schools, declining enrollment concerns, people want someone friendly and personable with leadership qualities, strong leadership needed, community involvement, ability to stay in position for multiple years, visibility at activities and athletics, and approachable.

Hiring priorities were identified as consistency, strong financial knowledge especially as it pertains to Iowa law or the ability to catch on quickly if a good out of state candidate, creativity for small school, and demonstrate relevant experience. Board discussed the revolving door of district leadership and that the mindset needs to be adapted that we deserve a good candidate and to not be desperate. A confident mindset on the path for hiring was addressed and to not settle. O'Donnell noted in considering candidates, that often there are people behind the scenes doing superintendent work and not showing superintendent experience on a resume. The right principal can have the ability to be a good superintendent. Other qualities noted were leadership skills to lead and be a great leader. Discussion was held that with a shared superintendent, principals have more weight on their shoulders and more latitude in running buildings. It was noted that intention of where to live is not an allowable question in the interview process in government institutions but can look for someone who understands the importance of community involvement. It was noted the importance to read through the answers during interviews, and to trust but always verify.

The process for hiring a superintendent was discussed including involvement of community, student involvement was questioned and what levels worked well in the past noting high school student participation in the past allowing buy in, parent groups, and staff groups. A reminder was given that candidates are interviewing us just as much as we are interviewing them. Discussion was also held about giving candidates community tours, building tours, professional development discussions and finance review.

Superintendent options were discussed for full-time superintendent, shared superintendent, a superintendent/principal split position, or part-time superintendent. O'Donnell noted that sharing is not likely right now as he checked contiguous districts and one district out. There are possibilities for the future and others were not opposed, but a few were just timing of newer superintendents or projects at their districts. Discussion was held that there were concerns of community involvement with part-time candidates and how long they would stay at GLR. Landis noted that a shared position or split position

would be a challenge as well as also really a part-time position. Split position would mean reducing a principal and grade realignment for the district.

O'Donnell shared to think about grade realignment as what's best for the education of the students and a better position for administration. Grade realignment recommended was K-6 in Little Rock and 7-12 in George with the elementary used for a community daycare, some classrooms, and possibly the central office if needed for space in the high school. O'Donnell noted that he has had principals working on what grade realignment would look like for the past 2 months. Board discussed it was a good idea for student education and collaboration for students but were concerned about community kickback which occurred years before with changes. District cohesiveness would be improved, and teachers would be together for collaboration who are currently missing out on some things. Discussion was also held that this could be the time to look at realignment and would be a necessity if superintendent/principal was one position. Current administrative structure was also discussed with the difficulty of the principal position as an elementary and high school principal with gap in the education spectrum. It was noted that the daycare committee is very open to using the elementary building. The purpose of realignment would be commitment to both communities and what's best for the education of the district. It was noted that they did not see the Little Rock building closing in the future. The perspective of an applicant was questioned for the split position with it noting it would likely be a higher paying position and have burnout concerns.

Ideal situation is full-time but if it is realistic was questioned for the finances and viability of the district. The importance of balancing the educational program and finances without sacrificing one at the expense of the other was stressed. The decision must keep both education and finances in mind. Creativity was also discussed to make sure we get what we want and not settle.

Part-time superintendent route was discussed and a way to obtain operational sharing in the future 3-5 years for those who show interest in sharing. O'Donnell said his best guestimate was that there would be 2 interested in the future for sharing with concerns of one being political. It was again stressed that situations within their own districts right now were the hold up for sharing and possibility of being open in the future.

O'Donnell also recommended consideration of "grow your own" administrator within the district that could be groomed for the position and would stay around. Board asked if there were possible candidates. O'Donnell responded that he doesn't know staff well enough to make those judgments right now. Discussion was also held that the superintendent position should not be looked at for just now, but look down the road for this position as we get to a point to have met our needs but also continue to meet our needs for a long period of time.

Discussion was also held that a daycare would not be an immediate impact for the district but would be impactful more in the future and will take time. Grade realignment was discussed that it could have helped in the past for administration. If the high school needs additional space, the business office could also be moved to the elementary building. Netten shared the importance of the finance office being in a close proximity to the superintendent for collaboration with the superintendent.

O'Donnell shared the exempt session for negotiations will show options and the impact for finances. Decision and discussion for the superintendent position needs to be in open session.

Landis expressed concerns of rotating doors of administration, staff, and students. Fear of grade realignment at the current time and other things that are being discussed. Concerns expressed were public perception, fear of the unknown for constituents, and timing concerns of too much too fast. O'Donnell

shared there should be a motion made in special session and discussion and retraction of motion if needed for the superintendent position.

Community feedback was questioned if possibility for realignment consideration. Discussion was held that board understands and has more information for the ramifications for the district. Realignment was discussed as the right thing to do for the education, finances, and long-term viability of the district and necessary if split the position to a superintendent/principal one position. It was stressed that grade realignment should be considered for the future. Caution was given to tread carefully from past experience. It was again stressed that realignment is educationally best for the students and sensitivity is understood. Board expressed concerns for constituents and faculty. Realignment was also discussed as concerns for the new superintendent and “blame” or ramifications in their first year. Superintendent’s 3rd year progression would be better timing to make the realignment changes. New superintendent focus should be to build relationships first and concern should be shown if candidates want a lot of changes in their first year.

Board discussed that a full-time superintendent would be ideal if it makes sense with finances, but open to part-time position if it is the right person. It was also noted that faculty has previously addressed that the district is top heavy with administration, but still need the right decision for the district. Comprehensive district also needs to be of concern and the need for strong leadership and focus on academics. The comprehensive status has been an awakening for the district and staff have acknowledged it. Professional development from American Reading Company has been very beneficial.

Professional development plans are being made for the future with the focus on quality and consistent professional development rather than the “flavor of the day” and looking at math and reading and what it means to us. O’Donnell stressed that teachers have high expectations for their students, and it is the job of the teacher to get the students there. He also noted that the administration and board have high expectations for teachers, and it is their job with professional development to get them there to make instruction better. O’Donnell shared the teacher leadership group will have a plan by the end of the year for next year’s professional development with some changes due to circumstances. The teacher leaders will be implementing as it is part of what they are paid for with their leadership contracts. O’Donnell shared he was concerned that there was no professional development plan when he arrived. He also stressed that not all teachers are at the same level, so professional development should also not be at the same level. Professional development will be differentiated by building level, skill, and experience levels within the buildings to give teachers what they need to be great teachers.

Superintendent needs to lead a quality instructional program. Part-time possibility can exist for that with the example given of Les Douma as a go getter and could have gotten things done. It was stressed that part-time would need to be the right person with competence and efficiencies.

The board was recognized for the good discussions held and stressed that this is how board conversations should go talking about education, looking at what we want, and how to make it work. Board members ranked their preference without discussion for the superintendent position of full-time, part-time, or decrease to a superintendent/principal position right now as sharing was not currently an option and presented to O’Donnell.

Search firm estimates were reviewed and discussed. Discussion was held on the benefits and comparisons of the search firms. Grieves and Richardson, Ed Wise, Ray and Associates, and Grundmeyer were considered. Grieves and Richardson were noted as experienced and familiar with northwest Iowa. Ed Wise is from Alta which is a young search firm with limited experience. Ray and Associates is from Cedar Rapids and does a lot of searches with a higher rate and expands out of Iowa.

Grundmeyer also does a lot of searches across the state and newer on the scene from Ankeny. Recommendations were Grieves and Richardson or Grundmeyer. Discussion was held that Grieves and Richardson know GLR and NW Iowa culture and would have a running start with having assisted with the interim position.

A motion to adjourn the work session was made at 6:35 pm with a motion from Netten, seconded by Sprock, and carried 5-0.

GEORGE-LITTLE ROCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

The George-Little Rock Board of Education met for a special executive exempt session on Monday, January 6, 2020 in the High School Library in George. Board President Kristi Landis called the meeting to order at 6:45 pm. Board members present were Kristi Landis, Wade Netten, Andrew Sprock, Austin Lloyd, and Jason Fugitt. Also in attendance were Superintendent Pat O'Donnell and Board Secretary Cathy Bonestroo.

A quorum was established. Exempt session is not open to the public. A motion to enter exempt session for the purpose of negotiations strategy and preparation per Iowa Code 20.17 (3) was made by Netten, seconded by Fugitt. A roll call vote was taken with Landis, Netten, Lloyd, Fugitt, and Sprock all ayes, no nays. Motion carried. Superintendent O'Donnell and School Business Official Cathy Bonestroo were noted as in attendance with the full board for the exempt session.

A motion to come out of exempt session at 7:40 pm was made by Netten, seconded by Fugitt. A roll call vote was taken with Landis, Netten, Lloyd, Fugitt, and Sprock all ayes, no nays. Motion carried.

A motion to adjourn at 7:40 pm was made by Netten, seconded by Fugitt, and carried 5-0.

GEORGE-LITTLE ROCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

The George-Little Rock Board of Education met for special session on Monday, January 6, 2020 in the High School Library in George. Board President Kristi Landis called the meeting to order at 7:42 pm. Board members present were Kristi Landis, Wade Netten, Andrew Sprock, Austin Lloyd, and Jason Fugitt. Also in attendance were Superintendent Pat O'Donnell, Board Secretary Cathy Bonestroo, and guest Valecia West.

A quorum was established. President Landis opened up for public comment. After completing and submitting the proper paperwork for public comment, Valecia West asked for confirmation if all the survey results were included in what was presented. She also stated that she felt there were some negative comments that the board should take with a grain of salt as some are vindictive and have some bitterness with following policies and procedures that have been put in place. O'Donnell shared that all the results were included and as for the negative comments towards some people, that's why he is encouraging the board to look for themes and not particular statements. Ms. West also noted that

documentation provided to staff with board packets has been reduced from what is being handed out or emailed to the board. O'Donnell shared that board packets are being reduced so it is not overwhelming for the board. Full documents are available to the board if needed. West inquired if those full documents are available to staff as well which O'Donnell responded they were. West also shared concerns of the superintendent search process and if the public and staff will be involved in the process as the last two searches seemed secretive with candidate names not being disclosed. O'Donnell shared that firms keep things confidential to protect the candidates from interfering with their current jobs and to prevent those involved from calling and doing their own research on candidates. Board members shared that staff and the public were not involved with the last 2 hires simply because of the late resignations and limited timing. Previously when Superintendent Eyerly was hired, students, public, and staff were all included in the interview process.

Board member choices were shared that before sharing negotiations strategy and finances, board choices were unanimously all five choosing full-time superintendent. After financial discussion, board preferences for superintendent position were full time (2), part-time (2) and superintendent/principal split position (1). Core value was questioned as to what the choices are telling the board. Discussion was again held for the superintendent position. Fugitt shared envisions position as extremely visible with good connections and relationships to students and staff as reason for full-time superintendent. Fear is full-time would bring hand-cuffs for spending money. Landis stressed the need to develop a culture which needs strong leadership and the right person. Sprock expressed concerns of burnout for split position. Netten shared the right person can be split or part-time which can buy temporary timing for future shared position. Board all agreed it comes down to the right individual.

Culture change is in process and the want and need to keep things moving in the right direction. Core value keeping district fiscally sound and financially responsible with quality education. Goal is to keep GLR viable 15-30 years and into the future with good sound financial decisions and to control what we can control. GLR needs to be good enough that if people are making a choice, they choose us. What makes us stand out at GLR and importance of creativity is necessary.

Discussions was held that part-time would have to be a special person. Part-time concerns of nervousness in the community and concern of viability for GLR down the road. It was noted GLR will survive if we do the right things, that's why this is a difficult decision and there is not a wrong answer. Board members were polled again for the position with results of full-time (3), part-time (1), and split superintendent/principal position (1). A culture for students and their success was again stressed. Board discussed if it could be advertised as part-time or full-time with the search firm to see what they could find. Part-time can give time for more consistent leader and possible operational sharing in the future. Advertise as full-time but have consultant look for possible part-time qualified candidates was discussed. O'Donnell stated the board has done good board work tonight with free discussion and keeping discussions about the issue and not about the person.

A motion was made to advertise for a full-time superintendent but have the consultant also look for part-time candidates and to hire Grieves and Richardson as the search firm at an estimate of \$8,100 plus advertising, mileage and possible travel costs. Motion was made by Lloyd, seconded by Fugitt, and carried 5-0.

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:15 pm by Netten, seconded by Lloyd, and carried 5-0.