

GEORGE-LITTLE ROCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

The George-Little Rock Board of Education met for a work session on Thursday, June 30, 2022 in the superintendent office in the GLR administrative central office building in George immediately following the special meeting. President Austin Lloyd called the work session to order at 5:20 pm. Board members present were Austin Lloyd, Andrew Sprock, Matt Mitchell, Jason Fugitt, and Andrea Johnson. Also in attendance were Superintendent Tom Luxford, Board Secretary/School Business Official Cathy Bonestroo and guest Lou Ann Gvist with Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB). Lloyd expressed appreciation for IASB attending to assist the board and read a statement about work session protocol.

Lou Ann Gvist with IASB thanked Lloyd, Luxford, and Bonestroo for previous discussions and reminded board members they can call IASB anytime. She opened by saying for highly effective boards learning together is one of the most important things the board can do. The work session focus will be on foundation of good governance with roles and responsibilities for the direction of the organization, structure established, accountability both fiscally and programmatic, policies and practices, and communication especially electronic communication. Lou referenced “The Governance Core: School Boards, Superintendents, and Schools Working Together” book by Michael Fullan and Davis Campbell. Boards make a difference in improving learning with superintendent and board members partnering together for good governance. It was also recognized that many don’t understand what the board does. Board sets the direction of the district with goals, budget, mission, structure through the importance of policies and is responsible for the education of all students.

The financial health of the district now and in the future with an estimated \$8 million budget, 100 staff members, and about 456 students is the responsibility of the board. The board sets the tone for the district with a culture for staff to thrive in, high student achievement for all students from both communities focusing on the district as a whole to have success and is “steering the ship” for the focus and goals of the district. The board establishes the “what” with policies and procedures and the “how” is delegated to the superintendent and team to do the work using the analogy of “rowing the ship”. Policies are implemented by the superintendent and the board holds the superintendent accountable. Superintendent goals and monitoring progress towards the goals is an important role of the board. Board’s role and focus is the long-term balcony view.

Board’s role towards students was discussed with reviewing student achievement reports and acknowledging accomplishments for both students and staff. Board’s role is keeping focus on the education of the students. Superintendent Luxford shared examples of his role in his day-to-day activities to create a positive image of the district, advise educational matters, keep board informed of district activities, be a resource and prepare and support administration team, develop policies of the district, and the district personnel. Role clarity was further discussed with brainstorming of implications for clarity versus non-clarity and how it affects the district. Clarity of roles and clear expectations and following them results in trust, communication, accountability, efficiency, goals accomplished, positive culture, stronger district, and clear focused goals. No clarity results in mistrust, confusion, frustration, uncertainty, dysfunction, no direction, and less accomplished. Awareness of board members passion or expertise and keeping their separation when needed to not overstep boundaries and remain in governance role. District goals with deadlines and timelines was also discussed with evidence of progress needing to be reviewed. Board’s role is serving all the district students and setting the tone for the district noting need to compete with other districts for students and staff recognizing choices are available.

Discussion was held and board policies reviewed relating to the board and superintendent roles and responsibilities and making decisions. Delegating versus partnership role through trust between board and superintendent and need to be removed when necessary were discussed. Establishing clear expectations were explored and the impact for one another and following them. GLR needs policy updates completed including the board's judicial role.

Goals and aligning support and resources to meet the goals were also discussed. Holding the system accountable and monitoring progress with timelines are needed to create high expectations. Recognizing struggles and accomplishments both need to be addressed with support and safe environment for discussion. Collective will to make change happen for the district with common board messages developed was discussed. Even if not supported in vote, board must come together as one regardless of the vote and move forward. Awareness of brokenness and when it can't be repaired needs to be recognized. Have all the information in order to make an informed decision is key.

Board's role with personnel was discussed with caution and awareness of legal implications and being able to remain unbiased. Termination hearings are like a trial and significance of action and evidence and ability to listen objectively versus recuse self if engaged in conversations or even being called as a witness. Remediation plans are private for staff. Staff evaluation forms and process are approved by the board with clear expectations and process in place with accountability of them getting done. Luxford shared evaluations were not getting done in the past and what people shared with him about staff he wishes weren't shared. Board needs to remain neutral about staff performance.

How to address concerns and complaints from the community were also discussed using the board policy as the framework and focusing on the chain of command. Open meetings law was reviewed and caution given of public perception and communication. Emergency situations communication was also discussed for review and establishing a process. Board policies regarding complaints were reviewed noting that IASB policies has updates that should be implemented noting chain of command and only viewing one perspective. Staff complaints about superintendent or administration were questioned. Refer back to immediate supervisor and then bring to the next person above if not addressed. Intent should be considered. Hierarchy organizational chart was discussed with examples of who the chain of command is. Discussion was held to develop an organizational chart. Board emails were discussed with process of who will respond if all members receive an email noting not to reply all. Information only can be emailed as a bcc email. Conversations would be breaking open meetings law and violation as not everyone is hearing and the community perception. Think about public perception and swaying a vote. Everyone's perspective needs to be shared at the board table for transparency. Difficulty was recognized with some conversations in the public view. Open meetings violation was also addressed and personal fines the board can have to pay individually. Spokesperson for the board is usually the board president for the generic response following policy.

Luxford requested to address employee complaint board policy and past complaint situation and how it was handled with him finding out last even after community along with complaint not being brought to the immediate supervisor. IASB reminded that we can't control people's behaviors and can only control your own behavior. They have first amendment rights and caution needs to be given. IASB also noted that when things are not fixed, people will stop coming to you. Discussion was held on how to handle conflict if both staff are within the district and if an arbitrator, such as HR, needs to come in between staff members noting want them in the district but don't want dysfunction. Lou said it probably isn't good to have them both in the district long-term and immediate supervisors need to handle staff conflict issues amongst their staff. Gvist was thanked for her attendance and guidance. The work session ended at 7:40 pm.