

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held Wednesday, January 27, 2010 at 6:33 p.m., in the Board Room, 625 Plum Street, Vineland, New Jersey, pursuant to notice with Mr. Giordano presiding and the following members present: Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. Fanucci, Mr. Franceschini, and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Mr. Bernardini, Mr. DeWinne, Mrs. Phillips and Ms. Rios.

Also present: Dr. Banks, Superintendent and Mr. Franchetta, Board Secretary. Absent: Dr. Gruccio, Assistant Superintendent, Ms. Greenfield, Executive Director of Personnel and Mr. DeSanto, Board Solicitor.

Mr. Giordano announced that in compliance with the New Jersey meeting law commonly referred to as "The Sunshine Law," the Vineland Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting.

Flag Salute:

Special

Presentations: None.

Public Comments: None.

Comments by

Board Solicitor: None.

G I O R D A N O	B E R N A R D I N I	D E W I N N E	D I G I O R G I O	F A N U C C I	F R A N C E S C H I N I	P H I L L I P S	R I O S	U L R I C H
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RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Board approve travel for district members as required by NJAC 6A:10A-8.3 and/or school field trips as per lists provided and on file with the Secretary of the Board.

All Members
 voted "yes."
 (5-0-0)

2. The Board approve the Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) Budget and the Five Year Preschool Program Plan for the 2010 – 2011 school year.

All Members
 voted "yes."
 (5-0-0)

B. Proposed for review or discussion or adoption by Board members.

1. Approval of QSAC District Improvement Plan.

Mr. Giordano said as everyone is aware last year the board went through the QSAC monitoring process, which is required by the Department of Education. At the end of the process there was an oversight on the board's part as far as not filing an action plan with the county superintendent. Mr. Giordano said he would like to entertain a motion to approve the action plan.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Franceschini, seconded by Mr. Fanucci, to approve the QSAC District Improvement Plan. All Members voted "yes."

Mr. Giordano introduced Mr. Charlene Zoerb, the New Jersey School Boards Association Field Representative.

Ms. Zoerb said this workshop is called "Making the Transition to a New Superintendent" and is for learning to work together as a team, setting goals and visions for the Vineland School District. She said tonight they will discuss roles and expectations, which is important in any working relationship. Ms. Zoerb said they will review the goals that were set last summer and see if any revisions need to be made. She said goal setting will probably be done again in June because June is usually the time after the board reconvenes and reorganizes. Ms. Zoerb said it is important that the board thinks about what critical issues the district and board are facing during the next few years.

Mr. Giordano said accountability and contract negotiations are at the top of the list as critical issues. Mr. Ulrich said also test scores. Mr. Giordano said he was going to mention test scores as being one of the top three critical issues that we need to focus on. Mr. Fanucci said also student/staff safety. Mr. Franceschini said next to test scores it is crucial to have parent involvement. Ms. Zoerb said parent involvement is something that all districts continue to struggle with.

Dr. Banks said during the month that she has been here she has had the opportunity and experience of dealing with almost every one of the items that are listed. She said there is no one thing that becomes a priority when you step into this job. Dr. Banks said in meetings that she has had with central office staff there have been discussions on the issue of technology in this district. She said it is still an area of need in terms of how it supports our instructional programs.

Dr. Banks said the Small Learning Communities are a very big issue. She said that next week she will be meeting with a group of students at the high school to see how they feel about the Small Learning Communities. Dr. Banks said she has had the pleasure of working with Dr. Isekenegbe the new President of Cumberland County College. They are planning to have some of Dr. Isekenegbe's representatives come to the high school to speak with the students in specific Small Learning Communities. Dr. Banks said she knows that there are scheduling issues with the Small Learning Communities. She would consider that one of her priorities to work with the high school staff and administration on those issues.

Mr. Giordano mentioned that the Ad-Hoc Committee met with staff members last year and some issues were remedied others were not. He said the survey from staff, students and parents was the important part.

Ms. Zoerb asked the board if there was one problem they would really like to have fixed what would it be.

Mr. Ulrich said the funding cuts have cut into the availability of after-school programs, which are what really helps the students achieve their learning goals. He said there are some students who are at risk and need extra help. In order to accommodate that extra help there is a dollar sign attached. Mr. Ulrich said it is the across the board cuts in staff that affect children's lives.

Mr. Fanucci said his opinion is that we are so hung up on test scores that the largest problem we face is educating students on the basics of life.

Mr. DeWinne arrived at the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Ms. Zoerb asked the board what will be the greatest challenge in the next two to three years that they need to start planning for now.

Mr. Giordano said they will be taking a thorough look at the hiring practices and making some changes along with additions that will benefit the district in the long run.

Mr. Franceschini said customer service starts with the superintendent and filters down. He feels the staff needs to improve on that.

Ms. Zoerb said the board has discussed enhancing and continuing to improve the communications that you have in the district.

Mr. Fanucci feels it is extremely important that in the community relations portion we ask for support on some of the decisions we make.

Mr. Fanucci said the district has a tremendous budget and when if we have the support it makes it easier to work with the city.

Mr. Franceschini said there are a lot of great students in our district. He said the board needs to know if there is something that needs to be recognized. Ms. Zoerb said you need to celebrate the wonderful things that are happening because it makes the students and staff feel great.

Mr. DeWinne said so often the students are measured by the tests they take. He said when our students graduate his hope is that they are prepared for the next step and his opinion is that we need to prepare our students for life beyond school.

Mr. DiGiorgio said something changed somewhere along the line with the industry of education. He said this is a failure and questioned who is lobbying on behalf of the educators.

Dr. Banks said we were hoping when No Child Left Behind was getting ready to be reauthorized that it would be revised. She said we have very big issues with the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards because we are not the only school district who has groups of students that are having problems meeting those AYP standards. Dr. Banks feels the benchmarks that they set by which we measure our achievement are unrealistic. She said despite what we are doing in the classroom and all the wonderful things happening to be told we are not making the mark when the test scores come out is frustrating. Dr. Banks said accountability and communication is high on her list. She is hoping the board is happy with the way that she has established her way of communicating with them.

Mr. Ulrich said he finds Dr. Banks communication excellent and very responsive.

Dr. Banks said she is hoping that administrators in the district and members of the community already know that she is committed as superintendent in the district with the task that is before her. She has high expectations of everyone's achievement and performance starting with the administrators down to the teachers and students. Dr. Banks said she is monitoring and getting involved in things. She sees some things that need to be changed administratively to the organizational aspect. Dr. Banks said she is well aware of the fact that she is going to make some decisions that will not making everyone happy but it will be done with the best integrity.

Mr. DeWinne said what he thinks is a critical issue is the six principal positions that we will be filling. Dr. Banks said absolutely and also the changes in administration. She said that she will have the opportunity to recommend for hire people who are going to make a difference in this district for a very long time to come.

Ms. Zoerb asked the board what their expectations were for Dr. Banks.

Mr. DeWinne said accountability.

Mr. Ulrich said fairness and to have a very objective view. He said the staff deserves it the parents and students need it.

Mr. Giordano said a comment that Dr. Banks made in the interviews that got his attention was I am not the only person that could come up with a good idea. He said which leads us to believe that she is willing to sit down, take input and listen to staff members.

Mr. DeWinne said they also discussed improving student achievement. Dr. Banks had a number of ideas about how to keep things fresh as far as teaching prospectives and keep our students in tune to wanting to learn.

Mr. Franceschini said one of the characteristics he likes in a leader is being able to think on your feet and go with the flow.

Mr. Fanucci said visibility is another important expectation. He knows Dr. Banks has already been around the district and will continue to be visible.

Dr. Banks said she always wants to make sure that she is available to staff and her door is open to everyone.

Ms. Zoerb asked the board if they have any other expectations of the superintendent that they feel are important for success in the coming year.

Mr. Franceschini said we are nervous as to what is going to happen this year in Trenton. Mr. Giordano said we have a new Governor and Commissioner of Education. Mr. Franceschini asked if we have governance over charter schools in regards to finance. Ms. Zoerb said the money follows the students. Mr. Franceschini asked who oversees the charter school. Ms. Zoerb said they have a board of trustees and are accountable to the Department of Education. Mr. Franceschini asked if the charter schools are for profit. Ms. Zoerb responded no it is more of a school choice.

Ms. Zoerb asked Dr. Banks what her expectations are of the board.

Dr. Banks said she has no problem excepting the mission from the board and community on what you want her to do. She just hopes that she gets the support she needs to do it as she tries to move the district forward. Dr. Banks said she promised that she would give the board all the information they need to make informed decisions. She said if the board was not in agreement with her on a recommendation she would respect their decision but she hopes that at least she gave them the information needed to make that decision. Dr. Banks said it is important to her to know that she has the board's support in her endeavors in terms of what she is trying to achieve.

Ms. Zoerb asked Dr. Banks what the board can do to support her.

Dr. Banks said what happens to board member in all districts is that they are members of the community who have their constituents that elected them and will come to them with concerns. She would hope that the board would follow the chain of command to try to resolve issues. Dr. Banks said if someone in the community thinks they could get something changed by going to a board member it erodes the process and interferes with what we are collectively trying to do. She said that is the support she needs from the board in terms of having to refer concerns to her or to the principal so accountability in the district is there. She said in the short period of time that she has been here she is very appreciative that has happened.

Mr. Fanucci said in the short time that Dr. Banks has been here she has proven to the board that she has taken an immediate approach to something that has been brought to her attention. He said Dr. Banks has treated even the minutest issues as priorities, which says a lot about her as a person.

Mr. Ulrich said professionally Dr. Banks would never embarrass the board in public and there would not be these battles that have ensued where someone is upstaged. He said it is going to be the biggest challenge for the board to not interfere with Dr. Banks goal of taking us in the right direction with the accountability piece.

Ms. Zoerb said the superintendent needs to let the board know what they can expect when they come to a meeting so they are not caught off guard. She if the board hears something or has a concern, the first call they should make is to the superintendent so she is not caught off guard. Dr. Banks said that has happened and she is very appreciative of that. Ms. Zoerb stressed that in a district of this size there has to be order.

Ms. Zoerb said it is important for the board to spend time planning. She said the most critical role of a board member is being the vision for your district and community. Ms. Zoerb said a lot of conflicts can be avoided when you plan together with your superintendent and establish a vision for your schools. She said that she included in the packets that were distributed to the board a follow up and reminder of some of the things that we spoke about and did at the retreat that was held in the summer. Ms. Zoerb said some of the ideas that were discussed at the summer retreat were understanding board/superintendent roles, labor relations workshop, understanding curriculum, communication between board and administration, staff accountability, communication with the public and having a workshop on school improvement and standards. Ms. Zoerb said the district goals that were established in July are ongoing sustained evaluation and support for the small learning communities and the board will ensure that all district employees will become knowledgeable and accountable for district policies and regulations. She said it is helpful sometimes with a new superintendent that when you do set goals to also list who is responsible for achieving those goals. The superintendent's roles and responsibilities are progress/achievement, the development of action plans and communication. Ms. Zoerb asked the board if there is any goal they would like to add or see changed or revised.

Mr. Giordano said we are in our second year of the Small Learning Communities and it is good to hear that Dr. Banks has already made a decision to speak with the students.

Mr. Franceschini feels the hiring of the principals is a full time job in itself.

Mr. Fanucci said he said right now there is so much going on day to day in this district that you do not have to specifically spell anything else out at this time.

Ms. Zoerb said after your superintendent has been in the district for a couple of months come June or July the board will take a lead role in many of the district goals. She said to be in compliance with the Governance section of the QSAC the board can review the QSAC Action Plan to use as the third goal. Ms. Zoerb said she met with the Executive County Superintendent yesterday and he suggested measurable ways of looking at the governance issue. She reviewed the following roles of the board for improving student achievement:

- Set clear expectations
- Create conditions for success
- Hold the system accountable to the expectations
- Build collective will
- Learn together as a board team

Mr. Giordano asked if the board will be doing an evaluation in April on the superintendent. Ms. Zoerb responded yes. Mr. Giordano said he will need to schedule two workshops one on labor relations and the other on communications.

Public

Comments: Rahim Caldwell

Mr. Caldwell expressed his concern in regards to his child being transferred out of school district without his permission.

The meeting was adjourned by voice vote at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J. Franchetta, CPA
Board Secretary

KJF:df