

Minutes
School Improvement Advisory Committee
Held in conjunction with the School Board/Administrator Retreat
September 26, 2006

Board President Randy Bauer called the session to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Educational Services Center Board Room.

Board members present: Randy Bauer, John Titler, Greg Kelsey, Shirley Exline, Brian Farmer, Laurie Hughes; absent: Norm Zahradnik.

Administrators present: Dick Whitehead, Jim Rotter, Ying Ying Chen, Mark Gronemeyer, Greg Leytem, Tracy Laue, Dave Brauhn, Sue Skala, Ann Wooldridge, Kathy Miller and Jim Barth, Regional Facilitator at Grant Wood AEA.

Members of the School Improvement Advisory Committee in attendance: Valerie Brophy, Linda Carver, Julie Farmer, Amber Ferry, Beth Hanna, Sue Lala, Pam Sokolowski, and Shawn Thomsen.

Superintendent Whitehead asked each person in attendance to introduce themselves.

Superintendent Whitehead lead a focus activity which included a discussion and small group question – see power point. Each group/table was asked to discuss questions concerning where the District should focus it's efforts. Questions were posed focusing on the importance of a World Class School vs. World Class learners and whether the District's focus should center on how the College Community School District measures up to other surrounding districts or, how the District functions to prepare all students for the world. Each group reported out on their discussions.

Superintendent Whitehead focused on "Raising the Bar" in American Education and what that would mean for College Community Schools. The focus of his presentation was on the need for school districts to offer and require that all students take rigorous coursework through out their high school years. Statistical data indicates that, based on current practice, the U.S. economy is in jeopardy of declining in the world market if U.S. schools are unable to produce highly literate, highly technical workers. Rigor and Relevance continue to be a key to ensure the success of all students. Whitehead's presentation included information about the role of the school board and the role of the community in setting high standards. See Power Point Presentation.

Ying Ying Chen, Director of Instructional Services, shared information with the group concerning the simplicity and necessity of school improvement and how research based techniques are the key to that improvement. The concepts of Collaborative Leadership, Professional Learning Communities, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Personalizing your School Environment were central themes. The ability for educators to utilize "research based" techniques to improve their instructional methods has never been more accessible for teachers. The establishment of essential learnings and mastery instead of just coverage of a topic are key to improvement. See the attachments.

Small groups did a prioritizing activity to identify the top conditions that support the goal of "raising the bar":

1. Quality research about rigor and relevance owned and understood by all key players in curriculum and instructional decision-making – 91
2. A comprehensive approach in developing rigorous and relevant K-12 literacy skills and higher order thinking skills - 86
3. Strong instructional leadership to ensure alignment and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment – 81
4. A comprehensive and systematic approach in developing our human resources (recruiting,

inducting, developing, and advancing all teachers and staff) with the focus on quality instruction and support services - 69

5. A clear vision of Rigor and Relevance by the school and community – 68
6. Access to quality professional development – 59
7. A sense of urgency and realization that higher standards are necessary for our student's success in a competitive world – 49

The same groups also rank ordered the conditions that impede the goal of “raising the bar”:

1. Lack of structure to prioritize human and financial resources to support the effort of “raising the bar” – 87
2. Lack of coherence in school improvement initiatives – 80
3. Past practice in tracking prevents us from generating other ideas for delivering rigorous and relevant instruction to ALL students – 75
4. Lack of proactive approach to the increasing challenges of diversity – 73
5. Lack of clear K-12 standards aligned with common assessments – 72
6. Lack of consistency in access to quality professional development for K-12 teachers in curriculum design and effective instructional and assessment strategies – 71
7. A sense of urgency is not shared or understood by the larger community to support rigor and relevance – 60

Chen and Whitehead then explained a variety of actions that could have the effect of setting high standards, namely:

- Eliminating remedial classes while supplying support services needed for success but expecting rigor in **all** classes
- Raise performance standards through personalized learning
- Universal access to quality 4-year old pre-school
- Increase the number of Prairie students taking rigorous courses in high school, i.e. AP, PSEO, dual credit, etc.

The group was then asked to rate the importance of each action on a ten point scale. All received strong support. The ratings were:

- Universal access to quality 4-year old pre-school - 9.9 average
- Raise performance standards through personalized learning – 9.4 average
- Eliminating remedial classes while supplying support services needed for success but expecting rigor in **all** classes – 8.4 average
- Increase the number of Prairie students taking rigorous courses in high school, i.e. AP, PSEO, dual credit, etc. – 8.1 average

The School Improvement Advisory Committee and Administrative team was excused at that time - about 7:45 PM.

The School Board members conducted a self-assessment of their performance together.

The Board reviewed the input from the evening and asked Board President Bauer and Superintendent Whitehead to use that information to propose Board Goals for action at the October meeting.

The Board adjourned the meeting at 9:10 PM.