

RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL BOARD TRAINING/MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS

October 26, 2021

School Board Members Present:

Hurley Cavacas, Jr., President
Erin Shimp, Clerk
Brittany Cavacas
Ann Dages
Dena Goldberg
Kevin Kiefaber
Alison Notte
Tricia O'Connor
Charlene Seward
Cathy Solsaa
Stephanie Stoodley

Members absent:

Isabella LaFemina
Lauren Solimano

Also Present:

Superintendent Bill Olsen
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
CFO Ted Plemenos
Director of Instruct.Tech., Patricia Aigner
Director of Equity & Inclusion, Pam Reed
Director of BG&T, Glenn Scott
Pati Beaumont, Kerry Coarse, Melissa Connor,
Scott Corbett, Marie Gilmond, Susanne Engels,
Loren Pepe, Greg Schillinger

President Cavacas called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and noted all Commissioners are in attendance except for Student Representatives: Isabella LaFemina and Lauren Solimano.

ROLL CALL

President Cavacas called for a moment of silence regarding a student accident - fatality and injury in a neighboring district.

Board Training with VSBA – The meeting was turned over to Susan Holson, VSBA, to facilitate.

BOARD
TRAINING

Ms. Holson advised the topic of the Board's work: Goal Setting, noting that same informal rules (as last training/meeting) apply and that all discussion is good discussion. She explained that focus is on the future and a plan of building a vision for the District and planning/goal setting around that vision. Goal for tonight: come out of the meeting with goals (short term) for this school year and next year and hopes to start strategic planning process in the spring.

Ms. Holson led the group through the following activities:

- Think about a dream vacation (no restrictions on time or money) and form groups with some common threads about vacation desires.
 - Groups were formed with themes including: European travel, sight-seeing, camping, hiking, outdoor adventure, western travel, Hawaiian travel, family travel and travel to Asia.

Ms. Holson noted that Board Members do not generally get personal context at meetings as through this activity. She advised that the training would be Board centric.

- Participants were split into groups:
 - #1 – Commissioners B. Cavacas, Notte and Seward
 - #2 – Commissioners Dages, O'Connor, Solsaa and H. Cavacas
 - #3 – Commissioners Goldberg, Kiefaber and Shimp
 - #4 – Administrators
 - No members of the public were in attendance.

Ms. Holson asked about goals: What are they? Why do you need them? Why does a school district need goals?

Discussion revolved around: bettering ourselves, not being complacent, moving forward, being functional, measurable outcomes and vision.

Ms. Holson referenced vacation goals: If you didn't have goals, how would you know how to get to your dream vacation spot? How would you know you were there? Noting it is something you plan on, strive for and achieve something when you get there.

Slides and SOAR Analysis were introduced:

- Start with: Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?
- How are we progressing?

SOAR Analysis:

- Strengths - What can we build on?
- Opportunities, what are our stakeholder asking for?
- Aspirations – What do we care deeply about?
- Results – How do we know we are succeeding.

Groups were assigned to develop:

- # 1 – Strengths
- # 2 – Opportunities
- # 3 – Results
- Administrators – Aspirations

Ideas developed by group were reviewed:

- # 1 – Strengths – education programs, collaboration and community outreach, engaging teachers and staff, supportive community, enrichment activities, Incredibly caring faculty and staff.
- # 2 – Opportunities – ESSER Funds, geographical curriculum integration (sharing resources with other districts – share curriculum), transportation district (STC model – transportation to save money and work together – student transportation), opportunities for training (education, diversity, inclusion) for students, adults and community – school to play leadership role, better alignments & continuity and many transitions through a lot of different buildings (some evidence of learning loss in transitions.)
- Administrators – Aspirations – student well-being, family engagement, staff well-being, healthy community, highly engaged student learning and growing, teaming with community partners, 100% graduation rate, safe modern facilities and technical resources and kind independent learners.

Ms. Holson noted VSBA/VSA Conference/Webinar that may be of interest to Board Members: November 4, 2021 (4:00 pm – 6:00 pm) and November 5, 2021 (9:00 am – 2:00 pm) – **Addressing Key Issues for Vermont School Boards and School Administrators** – Key Note Speakers: Dr. Julia Minson and Dr. Luvelle Brown. She also noted a webinar geared toward Board Chairs, but open to everyone on November 16, 2021 (free to register and attend.)

- # 3 – Results – Data, attendance, enrollment, test scores, graduation rates, staff retention, employee survey satisfaction, superintendent evaluation, parent satisfaction survey, quality of buildings and grounds, fun and college retention rates.

Slides/steps were introduced:

- Roles in Setting Goals – School Board sets district goals
- Superintendent and Key Administrators – Focus on goals, Establish objectives and Action steps
- Principals and other administrators – Implementation
- Teachers – Carry out objectives and action steps

Above is Continuous cycle, everyone is involved at some level.

Types of goals were reviewed:

- Board Goals (areas of operations and procedures) – designed to increased overall board performance
- District Goals – set by Board often in consultation with Superintendent – provide direction for the District, maintain standards, target areas of needed improvement or where change is to occur
- Superintendent Goals – often established by the board in conjunction with the Superintendent – based on performance as defined in contractual job description. - sets targets for carrying out district goals.

Ms. Holson passed out post-it notes and instructed participants (individually or collaboratively) to write priorities for the District for the next 1 ½ years on the notes (one priority per note) and place them on posted charts under: District, Board or Superintendent.

Results were sorted and discussed:

- **District**
 - Climate
 - Recovery
 - Equity
 - Staff wellness
 - Intervention (eliminate need for – tier one excellence)
 - World Language
 - 100% graduation rate
 - Facilities
 - Pre-k – public health
 - After School
 - PLP
 - Curriculum
 - Safety – safety of staff and students be a priority
- **Board**
 - Focus on students
 - Collaboration
 - Civil Discourse
 - Financial (workable budget, fiduciary responsibility – more aware and improve on financial ramifications in community (every year) and advocacy (supporting new weighting system)

- **Superintendent**
 - Wellness
 - 100% graduation rate
 - chocolate, espresso, clams and good food at meetings
 - Continued respectful personal interactions

Ms. Holson distributed 7 sticky dots to each Board Member and instructed the to vote for their priorities on the preceding charts.

There was a break from 7:22 pm – 7:35 pm.

Sticky dot votes were tallied with the following top results:

Board:

- Focus on Students (6 votes)
- Civil Discourse (8 votes)
- Advocacy (5 votes)

District:

- Climate (could be included in Board for single goal – 13 votes)
- Recovery (9 votes)
- Equity (8 votes)

Ms. Holson advised goal statements: reflect and embody the vision, are realistic (with time frame and available resources), are defined by the Superintendent (from Board statement of what is to be accomplished.)

Establishing Strategic Board Goals - Key Questions were introduced:

- Is it within the board's purview?
- Is it specific and clear?
- Is it measurable?
- is it actionable? Do we need to let go of something else? If so, what?
- Is it time bound?

Discussion revolved around: integration of subjects, K-12 World Language, approach and management of resources (Administration's work) and different perspectives.

One sentence goal was developed in regards to climate:

Promote an inclusive supportive climate where everyone treats each other with dignity and respect.

Discussion revolved around safety, security, COVID, perceptions, sense of belonging, civil discourse as related to climate, respect, checking egos and personal agendas at the door, serving students, faculty and administration, respecting different viewpoints, passion for issues, one united voice for the Board, social media, responding rather than reacting, listening and asking questions.

The Board was advised to work on civil discourse topic and check in measures.

Board's role with recovery was discussed (financial support.) Superintendent to communicate incremental improvements to the Board. Metrics and creativity, learning loss, differences in

measuring at different grade levels, standardized tests scores and receiving feedback from teachers were discussed.

Equity was discussed (massive issue, permeating everything, ginormous undertaking noted.) RCPS drafted/adopted the VSBA Equity Policy (Policy #7700.) Statement was developed:

Work to make sure every student gets what they need.

Links to RCPS definitions of equity (for adults and students) are published on the opening slide of website:

- Adults: Increasing the possibility of success for all, interrupting systemic practices that negatively impact students based on who they are, providing equal access to all and cultivating every student.
- Students: Everyone gets what they need to become who they are self-determined to be, making sure that nothing is “in the way” of any one of us growing to become the talented and wonderful humans we are.

Ms. Holson noted \$150,000 grant from the Vermont Community Foundation – influencing community and engaging two consultants to review policies with an equity lense. This is in the Equity Committee’s 5 Year Plan.

President Cavacas noted that the agenda for the next regular meeting may be scaled down due to a potential grievance.

Ms. Holson advised that she would send a summary with goal statements, indicators discussed and samples of monitoring reports to the Board.

Motion by B. Cavacas/Stoodley to adjourn at 9:06 pm. Passed.

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted,
Betty Kapitan, Recording Secretary