

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING,
BOARD OF EDUCATION, SCHOOL
DISTRICT #225, COOK COUNTY,
ILLINOIS, SEPTEMBER 26, 2020**

A special meeting of the Board of Education, School District No. 225 was held on Saturday, September 26, 2020, at approximately 8:00 a.m. at Glenbrook District Office Public Meeting Room 100A, pursuant to due notice of all members and the public.

The president called the meeting to order. Upon calling of the roll, the following members answered present:

Doughty, Glowacki (arrived 8:06 a.m.), Hanley, Kim (arrived 8:06 a.m.), Shein, Sztainberg, Taub

Also present: Fagel, Geddeis, Gravel, Markey, Johns, Swanson, Williamson

Approval of Agenda for this Meeting

Motion by Mrs. Hanley, seconded by Dr. Sztainberg to approve the agenda for this meeting.

Upon calling of the roll:

aye: Doughty, Hanley, Shein, Sztainberg, Taub

nay: none

Motion carried 5-0.

Recognition of Community Visitors

A community member expressed concerns about the communication practices of the district and stated that the communications audit focused too much on one-way communication between the District and the community. It was stated that there needs to be more listening to the community and examples were cited.

District Initiatives and Goals for the 2020-2021 School Year

The administration:

- Stated that because of the pandemic, there is still much uncertainty and unexpected situations even with a great deal of planning and preparation
- Reviewed the communications audit
- Explained the communications audit process that included many stakeholders

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Ms. Geddeis and Jessica Smith from JT :

- Explained the findings and recommendations of the communications audit
- Reminded the Board that JT has worked with the District on communications in the past
- Expressed the magnitude of the issue given the pandemic
- Mentioned that some recommendations can be implemented short-term and others may need to wait longer term because of the pandemic
- Reviewed student, staff and parent focus group processes and survey participation
- Noted that parent survey responses were not as high as those from staff and students
- Shared that equal representation between the schools and grade levels was proportional
- Stated the survey focused on District-level communication and not buildings
- Commented that overall, parents are satisfied with communication with 84% being satisfied with the kind of communication and 79% stated the amount of communication is appropriate
- Stated there was a desire for better communication around major initiatives decided by the Board prior to decisions being made and this should be considered moving forward
- Noted parents want calendar information, more about teaching and learning initiatives and achievement stories shared on social media
- Highlighted Key Recommendations:
 - Communications Director joins cabinet meetings
 - Have a designated person to package good news stories
 - Create three high-level goals around communication
 - Increased visibility of superintendent; recommends blog or video blog
 - Improve internal communications channels
 - Staff show lower levels of satisfaction of communication received from the district compared to parents
 - Staff want additional ways to give the district feedback
 - Recommendations to have a district level person flag important communication to push out to staff
 - Staff prefer communication by email

Communication Channels

Ms. Geddeis and Jessica Smith from JT:

- Stated the district update is widely read
- Noted some communications reach the same audiences and sometimes it is old news because it was shared earlier
- Recommended one weekly communication with more visuals or possibly videos should be provided.

Website

Ms. Geddeis and Jessica Smith from JT:

- Stated there are mixed reviews on the website
- Recommended:
 - Aesthetic changes
 - Longer Term
 - Navigation
 - More needs to be done to review this through user testing
 - Secondary navigation should be added to assist
 - Improving usability of calendar features

The administration:

- Stated it is important to prioritize long term and short term goals
- Presented overall goals
 - Increase stakeholder engagement
 - Establish the district as a credible source of information
- Explained some changes were made over the summer based upon the audit
 - Weekly updates
 - Targeted communication based on population
- Shared tactical hurdles with the website
 - Explained changes in website support from external providers
 - Provided examples of enhancements
 - Working on calendar functionality and navigation

In response to a Board member's question, the administration:

- Stated the company we are working with now is called Blue Modus
- Provided feedback on the web interfaces on mobile devices and stated it will work much better with both computers and mobile devices
- Explained the calendar functionality is working well and the new experience will be more of an instant update
- Agreed that the content does need to be expanded and will work with the schools to have liaisons in both schools to support this

The Board provided feedback and discussion related to calendar recommendations.

The administration provided an overview of the secondary recommendations and noted they may need to be reconsidered post-pandemic because many ways of doing business have changed.

The Board discussed and provided feedback:

- On secondary recommendations
- Differences in expectations for communication given the pandemic were noted
- The need to be more responsive to parent emails
- Understanding of where homework assignments are posted
- Teachers' use of Google Classroom to post assignments as an expectation

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Administrators responded to questions regarding monitoring of Google Classroom to be sure it is up to date.

Board members reported that parents are being more persistent in the engagement of their students now that we are in remote learning.

Board members:

- Would like more data detail on student focus groups, which was not in the report
- Asked for clarification on a chart that may need to be reformatted
- Noted some differences between the schools
- Stated there needs to be a better understanding of the community to anticipate their reactions to initiatives that may present challenges
- Expressed concern about the low response rate from the parent survey and questioned the validity of the audit

In response to board members' questions the administration and Ms. Smith:

- Provided clarification on cross-district staff communication and in the differences in the staff focus groups between the schools
- Noted the improved coordination between the schools on communication to stakeholders
- Stated that we need to reflect on the need for accuracy, frequency, benefit, and method of communication in a fast-paced environment forced by the pandemic; the stakes were high and we had to move more quickly

The Board expressed a desire to stay ahead of the curve.

In response to a board member's comment Ms. Smith offered the following recommendations to stay ahead of the curve:

- Media is one tool
- Relying better on our own channels of communication is critical
- Timing is important
- Balancing transparency with a thoughtful process to make decisions
- Noted this is a challenge for all school districts
- Posed how the Board wants public input around a topic, willingness to listen and adjust thinking
- Decide what big decisions should pull in public comment prior to finalizing
- What are teaching and learning decisions that should be made within a school by the educators who are the educational experts

The Board:

- Discussed having an open public meeting to allow for back and forth dialogue with the community
- Suggested district branding that shows this is a great district

In response to a board member's question, the administration explained:

- Students do follow and are engaged on social media
- Parents do not want to get their information on the district via social media

A Board member suggested educating the community about the role of Board members.

The consultant stated it is always good to reinforce guiding messages, but all districts are in survival mode right now, it is a challenging time. Ms. Smith stated people just need to know what they need to know right now and bringing back overarching messaging would come later.

The board president summarized the critical nature of communication at this time. The Board will reflect on the audit and provide additional direction and feedback in the next few weeks.

A 10 minute break was taken at 10:28

Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

The administration:

- Stated this is a big topic and will need to devote a number of years to a plan
- Shared that as a district there is plenty of growth to be had
- Explained we need to start with an understanding of this topic
- Noted the process must be deliberate and thoughtful as we proceed on this topic
- Commented on challenges of another district
- Stated this is an important topic to students and staff today and unfortunately some students have felt bias and do not feel included
- Recommended
 - To start with IASB equity training built for school boards
 - Starting a task force focused on learning more about equity
 - Bringing in a series of experts to educate us on this topic
 - Learning the newest programs for success today
 - Stated there should be a variety of voices included before decisions are made
 - The result would be a long-term plan to address equity

In response to board members, the administration:

- Discussed the challenges of a self-audit
- Responded to questions about partisan beliefs compared to core beliefs; noted that teachers have been offered guidance on these topics especially with the election coming up
- Stated that resources have been shared with teachers about navigating challenging conversations; Social studies and English teachers have been provided the most information on this topic
- Offered information regarding professional development opportunities to help teachers frame the use of instructional materials and conversations
- Stated there is always more work to be done
- Noted that teachers do have a position of authority in the classroom so it is a very fine line

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- Explained there is a rubric for teacher evaluation that has to do with creating a sense of respect and rapport with students; this would be reflected in the evaluation process
- Shared how concerns have been addressed in the past and there have not been a number of reports

The Board:

- Stated there will need to be communication on the District's efforts around equity as soon as possible
- Would like to get out ahead of this
- Spoke in support of an audit
- Discussed staff biases
- Shared concern if a student has a differing point of view that they feel they cannot share their conservative point of view
- Emphasized the importance of critical thinking and this is paramount to our instructional approaches and noted that a core of instruction is helping students come to their own conclusion
- Noted the idea of perpetual foreigner can be an issue for some groups and asked the administration to consider a broader view

District Goals

The administration stated the focus on last year's district goals was around safety and wellbeing and stated this will be a critical focus as we reenter school. We will continue to work on an analytical tool as mentioned last year. District goals will come back in the next month or so after further review. The Board will have another opportunity to discuss in the future.

Motion to Move into Closed Session

Motion by Mr. Glowacki, seconded by Mrs. Hanley to move into closed session at approximately 11:22 a.m.

- to consider the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity;
- collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees;
- (Section 2(c) (1) and (2) of the Open Meetings Act).

Upon calling of the roll:

aye: Doughty, Glowacki, Hanley, Kim, Shein, Sztainberg, Taub

nay: none

Motion carried 7-0.

The Board returned to open session at 12:30 p.m.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Glowacki , seconded by Mr. Taub to adjourn the meeting at approximately 12:31 p.m.

Upon call for a vote on the motion, all present voted aye.*

Motion carried 7-0.

* Doughty, Glowacki, Hanley, Kim, Shein, Sztainberg, Taub

CERTIFIED TO BE CORRECT:

PRESIDENT - BOARD OF EDUCATION

SECRETARY - BOARD OF EDUCATION