

From: Renee Sessler [rcc821@hotmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2008 8:05 AM
To: Brian Duncan PMT; Dr. Scott Rogers
Cc: Betty Miller
Subject: Request for Lighthouse Information

August 28, 2008

Greetings! I hope your summer was restful as well as productive. Fall is approaching and your efforts in learning about the board's roles in improving student learning will begin to be implemented. I write this letter after attending a two-day session in Iowa for Lighthouse training and research updates. While there, I was asked to complete feedback sheets for each Idaho Lighthouse district I am working with going back to our very first meeting.

My memory is jumbled between all the sessions I delivered in so many different districts (10 to begin with) that I need to ask you to assist me in fulfilling this request. Any attempts I might make to provide that feedback would be woefully lacking in substance since I am not in the district or attending your board meetings. The feedback you can provide to the researchers is best, especially in the areas of thought processes/beliefs and behavior/action.

So, would you please take a few minutes at your next board meeting to discuss your Lighthouse training to date and what you gained from participation? (As well as all those other questions I already asked you to discuss.) After your board meeting, will you please send me a transcript of the conversation to relay to the Iowa Lighthouse researchers? Including any dates of actions taken would be appreciated. If you video or audio tape your board meetings, you could send me a copy of that portion of the meeting and save typing out a transcript of the conversation. I will do that for the researchers for you. (If you have a list of attendees from each session I can include in the feedback, too, that would be awesome. I didn't keep that information and my memory back to January, etc. is lacking since I am working with several districts. Thanks.)

As a refresher below is a list of the Lighthouse training sessions:

Meeting #1, January 24th – What's at stake if nothing changes, what's possible to expect in improved student achievement and what it will take to see improvement (videos of struggling readers, snapshots of other districts' successes & what districts did differently (particular emphasis on teacher professional development in the area of instruction). Homework was to learn the story of someone who is not, or did not, academically succeed in your district.

Meeting #2, February 28th – Review of LH 1 (1998-2000) findings on differences between boards in high and low achieving districts: Beliefs held and the presence of the 7 conditions of school renewal. As well as, an introduction to the role of the board in respect to the 7 conditions

and district leadership: 1. Creating clear expectations, 2. Creating the conditions necessary for success, 3. Holding the system accountable, 4. Learning together as a board/superintendent team, 5. Creating the public will around the improvement effort. Homework was to read the Iowa Compass report on Lighthouse 1 and record comparisons of LH district board to your board, what was most and least like you and discuss your observations at a regular board meeting.

Meeting #3, March 25th – Learning to analyze student achievement data by practicing with I-SAT data in reading and math, creating a list of what needs to change and what is possible to expect for the board to use as a unified (one voice) message. Homework was to take the message of what needs to change and what's possible to at least three different district patrons and report on those conversations at your next regular board meeting. Also, the district was encouraged to bring more data to the board than I could provide for analysis in the way Lighthouse provided in the training session for the board to understand the current state of student achievement.

Meeting #4, April 29th – This session encouraged you to narrow your focus from attempting to fix everything to put the district's attentions on addressing the greatest area of student need as based on what your data is telling you. The board's message from session #3 was narrowed down to address the focus area for improvement. We discussed the district's mission, why it exists, and asked you to narrow that down to two words: Teaching (or instruction) and Learning. There wasn't a Lighthouse provided homework assignment, but the board was encouraged to look at data with district administration to help narrow the focus for improvement.

Meeting #5, May 29th – We spent this time looking at the results of your two surveys. Lighthouse 1 let us know how important the beliefs of people in the system are and the beliefs survey provided you with a look at the beliefs of people in your district. It also taught us what the 7 conditions are and how important their presence in the district is. The conditions' survey results provided you with the degree to which district staff perceive the conditions are present. These results are the baseline for measurement of expected changes in beliefs and conditions as the district moves forward implementing the Lighthouse recommendations. Again, there wasn't a Lighthouse provided homework assignment, but discussing the findings with staff and the public is encouraged.

Meeting #6, June 26th – We are just beginning the training of the material on Distributed Leadership and what that will mean for the district particularly with the installation of a Lighthouse-defined District Leadership Team. The Iowa Lighthouse team included so much material in this lesson that it will require more than one work session to deliver all of it.

Additional Lighthouse training sessions will occur after the foundation acquires additional funds, and will focus on the board's role in professional development and sustaining change over time. I cannot tell you the exact number of additional sessions will be required so we'll figure that out as we move forward.

As a reminder, we need to consider the administration of the two surveys. We need to identify a two-week window of time for the staff to take the surveys as a part of a professional development day or in a faculty meeting in order to obtain as much of 100% participation as

possible. Also, you may want to consider allowing the trustees to take the surveys before the start of a board meeting.

Thank you so very much. I look forward to hearing about district/board changes as a result of Lighthouse!

Renee Sessler

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