

MINUTES
BOARD OF EDUCATION RETREAT MEETING
St. Cloud Area School District 742
St. Cloud, Minnesota
December 17, 2024

A Board Retreat meeting of St. Cloud Area School District 742 was held on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, at Tech High School, 4200 33rd Street South, St. Cloud, Minnesota.

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m. by Chair Shannon Haws with the following Board Members present: Scott Andreasen, Al Dahlgren, Zach Dorholt, Shannon Haws, Heather Weems and Incoming 2025 Board Members: Diana Fenton and Bruce Hentges. Absent: Natalie Copeland (Ringsmuth) and Monica Segura-Schwartz.

I. APPROVAL OF BOARD RETREAT MEETING AGENDA

Moved by Andreasen, seconded by Dorholt to approve the Board Retreat Meeting agenda.

On roll call, the following voted “aye”: Andreasen, Dahlgren, Dorholt, Fenton, Haws, Hentges, Weems. Motion carried.

Board member Natalie Copeland (Ringsmuth) arrived at 9:20 am.

II. SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS AND SPACE

Joel Heitkamp, Executive Director of Operations, provided an overview of the presentation including elementary attendance areas, planned housing developments, Pre-K needs, K-5 needs, newcomer programming, immersion programming update, and 6-12 needs. Additional presenters included Nikki Hansen, Assistant Superintendent of E-5 Learning, Gary Ganje, Executive Director of Special Projects, Dr. Jason Harris, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education, and Adam Holm, Executive Director of Community Education.

Considerations:

- Boundary shift to include St. Augusta and County Road 8 boundaries in Clearview attendance area.
 - Starting in 2025-26, it will be optional for the existing 742 families.
 - New to district students would attend Clearview.
 - Kindergarten students with siblings would utilize the same waiver process as Clearview Immersion students.
 - Current transportation waiver.
 - This would be an action item on our January 8th School Board Meeting agenda.

Next Steps:

- Joel Heitkamp asked if the board members would like the Administration to move forward with this boundary recommendation on January 8, 2025. All board members agreed to move forward.

III. MCA Impact and Alternatives

Donna Roper, Executive Director of Research, Enrollment and Assessments, provided a review of MCA Impact and Alternatives. Joining her were Hillary Johnson, Director of Secondary Education, Laura Steabner, Director of Elementary Education, and Katie Herrboldt, Director of Innovation and Technology Services.

Main points

- Move towards valuing at instructional level.
- Shift what's happening towards recognizing that we can only do so much with norm reference assessments.
- Generally, what we are seeing is a widening of performance with students going to left or right but very few in the middle.
- Testing is not necessarily the enemy; it is how we use the results.

Appropriate use of the MCA results

- Curriculum review and evaluation.
- Resource allocation and understanding patterns / What areas need better supports?
- Research purposes and policy development / Are patterns or signal indicating shifts and in what way?
- Accountability requirements both state and federal / Compliance activities.

Some limitations of standardized test

- What they can't measure: Social emotional skills, creativity and innovation, collaboration skills, real-work application of knowledge, and individual learning pathways.

Other limitations

- Focus on a single moment in time.
- Potential cultural bias.
- Not reflective of true competence at the individual level.

The purpose of assessments → 3 main areas: As Learning, For Learning and Of Learning

Comprehensive Balanced Assessment System

- Grounded in the science of learning and that it is very social.
- Kids in the moment by giving them the right amount of challenge.
- Expanded technology.
- Inclusive and personalized - students that are learning promotes sense of belonging.
- Students play an integrated role in assessments.

- Students can opt out of the MCA; have seen massive opt out movement across the state.
- Goal to move forward to grow in the “green” area (Learner Data – growth opportunity area).
- STAR – measures growth; looking at transitioning away from STAR.
- Designed on how a student is growing compared to other students who have taken the test.
- Gated Screening – make sure students are where they need to be and what are we doing to help them.

Comprehensive assessment system

1. Standardized Tests
2. Interdisciplinary Assessment
3. Competency-Based Evaluations
4. Performance-Based Assessment

Currently Happenings

- Assistant Superintendent Nikki Hansen (Pre-School): Competency-based evaluations – PK progress monitoring which is communicated like a report card through parent/teacher conferences, TS Gold, ECIPs; Not much needed with assessments but through access and opportunity; monitor monthly 707 Kindergarteners as of September 1, 2025, serving 371 4 year olds, and as of December 1, 2024, there are 119 registered and enrolled and on a wait list to get into the EC program.
- Laura Steabner (Director of Elementary): Assess foundational skills; more interdisciplinary assessments are seen; doing more integrated work; seeing growth in Social Studies ELA;
 - Strengths - Competency-Based Evals in elementary level; goes beyond kindergarten and 1st grade. New this year is Science notebooks.
 - Areas for growth – broader literacy skills, multiple modalities (different strengths on how they share their learning); real-world context/opportunities.
 - Progress monitor students or provide interventions.
- Assistant Superintendent Jason Harris & Hillary Johnson (Director of Secondary): In middle school (6-8), students could take up to 5 tests; in high school, you do MCA but then there is ACT and AP tests; What are the assessments based on courses taken? STAR in high school is on pause as teachers do not feel this is as efficient as they can assess within the classroom.
 - Strengths – CTE courses lead the way (entrepreneur courses) and our 8th graders do SHED classes. How do we expand into all areas? We do credit by assessments for our incoming 9th graders and intermediate algebra. The ELA team is currently leading the way by focusing on rubrics and what it will look like when student demonstrates that knowledge.
 - Areas for growth – We have task force in place for this Spring to look at what all those literacies mean and to bring that work to our teachers. How do we make skills just as important and that we spend the time helping our teachers,

community, and students know that we really value these and that it will show up on how we assess them? To be there seeing and hearing what our students are doing in real-time learning and align the classroom with our standards and communicate why they are important.

- Career assessment survey – We are looking at this.

-Currently we are measuring success. We want to celebrate success.

-The aim is to do a more holistic growth, continue improvement and collaborative effort (engagement of all educators, students, community).

Next Steps:

- Chair Haws suggested the Achievement, Integration and Equity Committee continue this conversation and consider forming an Ad Hoc Committee to work on next steps, while considering options, pros and cons.

IV. DISPROPORTIONALITY, SAFETY AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

Shannon Avenson, Assistant Superintendent of E-12 Educational Services, provided a definition of Disproportionality – The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), 34 CFR 300.266, outlines that states are required to establish thresholds and determine which districts have significant disparity rates of special education identification, placement in restrictive settings, and/or discipline, including suspensions and expulsions of students with disabilities. Also reviewed Disproportionality Status Letters for Year 1, 2 and 3. Past work with MDHR indicates we are in agreement with MDHR for similar disproportionality issues and have mutual goals of (1) learning occurs in a safe and supportive learning environment, (2) every student has an equal opportunity to fully participate in and to succeed in a quality education, (3) The district applies its student discipline policies and procedures in a consistent manner, and (4) between 2019-2022.

Data included by race, behaviors, and reasons for non-compliance, reasonable progress, expulsion or withdrawal for in school suspensions (ISS) and out of school suspensions (OSS) for Trimester 1 in 2024. Other health disabilities (OHD) students can qualify for special education services and speech language services.

In response to this data and how to improve the learning environment and potential of all students, the district created the African American Black Student Outcome Pilot Team and brought Dr. Corey Yeager and Tyrone Abington on board who both shared about the work they are doing in the secondary schools. There is a better way to do things than expelling students. We're going to be relational and authentic. Sixty students have already been impacted by Dr. Yeager and Tyrone so far in Trimester 1.

V. SOCIAL MEDIA AND CELL PHONE EDUCATION

Katie Herrboldt, Director of Innovation and Technology Services, provided information about a district wide approach to cell phone use and social media education to explore our students' well-being and provide a framework for district-wide education and policy.

Following the U.S. Department of Education's December announcement, all states, districts, and schools are urged to adopt clear policies regarding student cell phone and personal device use.

- Policy considerations include age appropriateness, equity and accessibility, consistent enforcement and communication.
- Three approaches from the U.S. Department of Education: (1) no formal policy, (2) scheduled-based restrictions, and (3) full-day restrictions.
- The current District 742 Policy for Elementary and Middle School is a full day restriction and the benefits.
- The current District 742 Policy for High School is scheduled based restriction and high school trends.
- Impacts of social media on student well-being include mental health, sleep, and attention.
- Educating students on responsible social media use includes digital citizenship, mindful use, and media literacy.
- Engaging families in social media education – parent workshops, family media plans, and open dialogue.
- Incorporating technology literacy into the curriculum – technology integration, digital skills development, and project-based learning.
- Recommendations for the school district's approach through policy review, professional development, and community engagement.
- What happens during a crisis situation?
- The cell phone policy is evolving and should be reviewed each year.

Superintendent Putnam noted we look at our Code of Conduct and the Parent and Family Handbook every spring, so this is automatically reviewed on an annual basis.

Discussion:

Board member Dahlgren noted that Administration should set the guidelines.

We should have a Personal Device policy approach and also provide a quick guide for easy reference for students, parents and staff.

V. BOARD COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Superintendent Laurie Putnam reviewed the list of Board Committees that are available for Board members to serve on. Chair Haws reviewed the list of other district organizations and meetings Board members can serve on.

The Board will also need to decide on the district newspaper at the Reorganization Meeting on January 6, 2025. St. Cloud Live has become a state approved newspaper. The newspaper provides the legal obligation, not so much informing the public.

VI. WRAP UP

Chair Shannon Haws closed the meeting at 3:30 p.m.