



Robbinsdale Area Schools School Board Meeting Agenda

Monday, June 20, 2011 at 5:30 PM

School Board Dialogue

Education Service Center Boardroom, 4148 Winnetka Avenue North,
New Hope, Minnesota

1. Welcome and Introductions

Presenter: Chair Van Heel

Time: 5:30 p.m.

2. Leadership for Learning Lighthouse Discussion Conclusion

2

Presenter: Chair Van Heel, facilitator

3. Next Steps

Presenter: Chair Van Heel

4. Adjourn

Presenter: Chair Van Heel

Time: 6:45 p.m.



School Board/Superintendent/Cabinet Lighthouse Project Study Guide Notes – Compilation 5/19/11

Study Workshop Dates

October 18, 2010 – Introduction, Module 1

November 15, 2010 – Module 2

January 5, 2011 – Module 3, Module 4

March 2, 2011 – Module 5, Module 6

May 18, 2011 – Module 7, Module 8

Introduction

Why are we taking time to do this study? Why did you choose to run for the Board?

- On the board because I want to give back to the district
- To help us see the forest, not the trees
- To make a positive difference for students and the district
- To be a part of community growth and have a positive effect on the community
- Feel a responsibility to serve
- To represent neighbors, friends and other members of the district
- Have a background of being involved in schools/church, etc.

Why is important that we take time to do study?

- To make a difference – this type of work gives you more connect with work we need to do – gives us an opportunity to connect to the achievement gap
- Like the idea that this helps us be more focused on student achievement and data
- Gives the Board permission to learn more about curriculum and instruction – need to focus and understand to address achievement
- To improve instruction
- Close the achievement gap
- Would like to see more discussion with principals and teacher leaders to make better connection with those in the trenches – very energizing to hear from them
- Starting monitoring setting goals – helps us see which goals we are focusing on and how they interact
- Instruction vs. technology – teachers making a difference not technology
- Make sure our schools remain safe – if kids don't feel safe, they won't learn
- Closing gap – achievement for all
- Become broad-based about student learning – looking at the section of the population not doing well

- Sense of commitment to a clear vision and direction so people feel confident about what we are doing
- Curriculum alignment – that it be strong so we have good flow through for student learning
- Highly qualified, engaged staff – that shared a sense of urgency that we agreed to after the first meeting on the Lighthouse
- Treat systems that affect all student learning
- Hoping this will result in board being more informed in student achievement
- Addresses sense of urgency with staff
- Hope it brings us together as one district – hope that out of the conversations there is clarity in engaging our community
- Developing collective will across the district to become problem solvers
- See that we talk the talk as we walk the walk
- Like the piece that is uniting around a set of common beliefs – things we need to do to create that commonality

Key Words – What are some beliefs about student learning you have heard expressed?

- We believe all students can learn
- Over the years have heard class sizes get too big, not enough money, students don't come prepared to learn
- Some things have been presented as reasons/excuses for not achieving
- Life stresses, mobility – provide tools that in the face of these things need to address – mobility/variables are not changing
- Arts is important part of student achievement
- We can increase student achievement – can be done – needs to be done but hard for education to do it alone – when kids come with baggage, partnerships are important – collaboration
- Whole community has to see commitment

What are the catch phrases we hear?

- Equality – student being treated the same
- Conversation – yes we don't have enough money – but money we have has to be placed on priorities – a plus for our community to see and hear – planful in looking at options
- Everyone has a commitment to do this and will help us close the achievement gap

Module 1 – Committing to High Expectations for All

What are three excuses that are sometimes made for students not achieving?

- Kids in poverty are less ready to learn
- Mobility – kids come to us with gaps in their education – we spend so much time getting kids caught up – so everyone is falling behind
- For every excuse there is going to be a rationale – important to look at the rationale that people use – parents don't know about education tools
- Need to acknowledge and recognize excuses that are in the culture in schools/state
- Teachers saying they taught it – but students didn't learn it – need for shift to go from teaching to learning
- If you spend so much talking about why – but at a certain level power it through – to change something – can't take forever. At a level, push idea through and don't accept talking about why not – have to some level of push it through and then allow people to catch up

- Don't want to get bogged down – need momentum so you develop a culture of “can do”
- Believe we need to set high expectations – how depressing it would be to come to work if it's hopeless and can't make a difference – high expectations help staff and students
- Excuses tell us what roadblocks might be – need multiple strategies – so no detours
- Can't underestimate expectation for high achievement
- Kids in poverty have so many social issues at home that it is hard for them to learn
- When we talk about kids in poverty – there are many levels – need to be careful between those who don't have a lot of money and those engaged in unacceptable behavior

Lessons from Great Gains

- Accept negative information
- Courage to acknowledge poor performance
- No excuses – look for solutions
- How do we change without blaming? Need to be sensitive.
- Past results are not result of poor behavior
- Keep it at a systemic level – not personal – find ways for teachers to work together, compare, talk about strategies
- Create a collective will – buy-in – everyone working together
- Leaders believe it is the moral and ethical thing to do – where in the system can we make improvements?
- The more teachers work together and communicate – the more they will see us as one
- Do not want a culture where we don't celebrate achievement – not how we focus on high achievement – want to see schools celebrating success as a district
- We know we are competitive – but need a team mentality
- How do we ensure that there is time in every school to collaborate – and how do we work that into the budget?
- May be an opportunity to look at Q-Comp again – need to know that money is going to be there
- When one school is successful – raises levels for all
- Set high expectations – preparing students for life beyond school – set students up for high expectations.

Overall Conclusions – What are we Doing Well? What do we need to do better to have high expectations?

- We have an achievement gap
- We have a strategic plan
- Board not afraid to take action – firm, strong commitment to public education
- Express high expectations – create a culture that needs to permeate a consistent message – needs to be spread
- In terms of questions to board/administration – believe we are on the same page.
Board/Superintendent have same message – we are developing a culture of change – we've got a base – most people can make a difference and be successful with kids – so we can be hopeful that we can move in a right direction
- How does the board/administration show our commitment – how are we intentional about showing our commitment that all kids can learn
- Highlight a successful achievement – talk about gap and what we are doing to address the gap
- All in agreement on level of success that we want – working to set some goals – as board members talked about adopting a couple of schools – jointly with administration in supporting

sense of urgency, no excuses – to complete the circle – what would it mean and what would be the line we don't want to cross

- Adopting a school would help board members show their commitment
- Keep track of suggestions – sharing ideas along the way
- Recognize what you've done
- Teacher teams presenting to groups – and then to the board.
- As we systematize things more – value in schools coming in to inform what they are doing in their buildings to address achievement gap
- More organized board presentations to the schools – having two schools that you adopt – how do we do this without being intrusive?
- Like idea – but maybe planful and organized – what are expectations – more staff presenting to the board – how do we help staff understand the board's commitment?
- Need to define collective vision – board/superintendent. How do we demonstrate collective commitment?
- How does the board work as a team – here is the plan – how do we demonstrate it – how do you show it's not lip-service.
- Allocation of resources – one step in identifying priorities – resources is the next big thing that will impact the way they can do their job.

Module 2 – Focusing on Instruction

What do you feel are the essential actions in focusing on instruction?

- Focus on success of staff
- Intentional staff development
- Rhetoric – Communicate goal
- Indicate the policy of instruction
- Staff training
- Quality Assessment
- Build commitment throughout the community – make clear to teachers
- Learn about initiatives and be clear about what it will take
- Monitor and report progress on achievement goal
- Allocate required resources – say this will be number one priority
- Plan time for teachers to collaborate
- Identify what is expected of staff and community
- Commitment for success with the program – that we are on the same path and committed to move forward
- Clarity about our status
- Professional development
- Board to review and understand data
- Staff development
- Provision to monitor progress over time – set the benchmark

What do you feel are the critical assets – what must be happening to focus on the core?

- Teaching and Learning
- Board has knowledge of curriculum and staff development
- Core district goal is learning
- Customizing instruction to meet student needs

- Testing procedures in place and data
- Engage all staff – implementation that everyone is on the same page
- Concentrate on improving instruction
- Teachers assuming responsibility for instructional practices
- Align curriculum within district and with state requirements while customizing instruction
- Principals should be instructional leaders

What must be happening in the district for students to achieve?

- Identify barriers to having things connected
- What are the barriers – structural things to overcome – statutes and rules – how do you make sure everything fits together – perception of what those instructional challenges might be
- Issue of aligning curriculum and making sure people are teaching curriculum
- Innovation – people not going off in different directions but under an umbrella – you need innovation and that what makes the job fun – but within a framework
- How do you ferret out best practice?

HANDOUT – DuFour, R. (2010). *Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever it Takes*, (pp. 23-24). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Intervention will have a powerful impact on student achievement when the educators in a school:

Acknowledge a collective responsibility to ensure that students learn rather than that they are taught.

Are organized into collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common, results-oriented goals for which members accept mutual accountability.

Work together collaboratively to establish the essential knowledge (priority standards), skills, and dispositions all students must learn in each unit of instruction.

Create pacing guides or curriculum maps each teacher will follow to clarify when the essential skills will be taught.

Develop frequent common formative assessments to monitor the learning of each student, and provide teachers with relevant feedback.

Clarify the common standard of proficiency each student must demonstrate in order to be deemed proficient and/or the agreed-upon criteria the members of the team will use to assess the quality of each student's work.

Have access to timely and accurate information regarding student learning in order to identify students who need support, students who need enrichment, and the instructional strategies that appear to be most effective in helping all students learn.

What are the most important factors for successful change?

- Focus on improved instruction – staff development is all we have – measure data to see if students are learning and then adapt curriculum – centralized and de-centralized

- Research has shown (site based decision) and we learned – don't decentralize curriculum – daily lesson plan/same text book – now able to set a system – fits within pyramid response – for every students we know intervention
- Principals support what is happening and support discussion
- How do you monitor teachers – growth by student/classroom - teachers all know growth
- Teachers working in groups – what are your kids getting and then they help one another
- Structure is what we keep tight – the strategy gets down to individual students – where professional development is building strategies – not sharing on structural level – theory of the pyramid model
- Sounds like we have a good foundation from what Gayle described – then how can we add to what we are doing that brings additional dimension to that – how do you utilize best (master's teachers) - don't want to lock up so much that we don't have good utilization
- SmartBoards – makes abstract more concrete – that's what we want to see – math teachers using SmartBoards to differentiate instruction – December 22, 23 – first two days of winter break – E2T2 teachers in for two days and they get paid because of grant
- Have to focus on instruction – instruction all about staff development and channeling the best of what we have
- Important to know staff development budget – board should know that during school day - is there time for teachers to meet and learn about instruction
- Best practice says job imbedded during the day
- Stress role of principals as instructional leaders
 - Doing independent evaluation of teacher
 - Teacher evaluation instrument – dialogue and discussion – principals have learned about evaluations and what is an effective teacher and what is the instructional leader looking for – the formal piece
 - Informal things principals can do – being with department leaders and teams – some sort of minutes and what they looked at for their next meeting – principals should be looking at those things – are these things in place – did teachers bring data – Walkthroughs – if a principal is in classrooms – asking is this teacher on pace with others – role of instructional leaders is very critical
 - If we are working with principals – and if in five years we haven't seen a change in gap – what is it we are going to do differently to make that change – in past, curriculum review cycle was 7 years – we are finding a way to do that faster – to get structure in place faster – so when leaders are doing walkthroughs – what priority standards are you working on this week – don't have enough common assessments – but once they are together, principals will be in on those data chats – Rtl – what is intervention on a frequent basis
 - Sounds like it takes a lot of time – we are running out of time
 - Work with principals in conducting teacher evaluations – whether or not we tenure teachers – but looking at tenured teachers who are perhaps underperforming – the process used at last principal meetings – for elementary and secondary was eye-opening – what kind of evidence they were using to rate a teacher – continue that work – something lacking in principal preparation program – principal group needs to be on the same page in terms of what evaluating
- What happens to principals' management jobs – adding something more on top of what they have – could be difficult
 - Principals need to hand off to assistant principals – how to make all happen – none of the other responsibilities go away – decide what you have to hand off to other staff

Conclusions and Implications – what are our strengths and what might be improved?

- **Strengths**
 - Over last few years – administrative models we’ve worked with – an opportunity to do more differentiating – sounds like we have an array of talent and focus to have instructional leaders and proficient in what they are doing and teaching and learning administrative structure is aligned
 - Commitment to student achievement and closing gap
 - Looking at strategic plan and action plans
 - Setting goals and monitoring is a huge strength
 - Board demonstrated this is our strength and administrative focus on this – every time we meet we highlight how intentional we are – student learning, teacher improvement and staff learning
 - Common goal – safe schools – raise bar – lower gap – academic progress – same goal that we are aligned with what we want to accomplish
 - Data savvy school board – board gets data and goes beyond
 - Principals and teachers – they are also very data hungry – that’s amazing and a strength
 - Impressed with how focused on doing what’s best for kids – impressed with knowledge on curricular areas and implementation – a real strength

- **Need improvement**
 - Allocate more time to train all teachers
 - Make sure school board understands strategies, goals and assessments
 - Communicate to staff and community
 - See monitoring – see actions
 - Keeping the focus – day to day things that come up – getting back to the focus
 - Make sure we are paying attention to see where we are going and where we want to go
 - Communication based – consistency – community hearing whole picture – getting everyone’s viewpoint
 - Like to think we are about the kids
 - Find a short way to articulate – how do we sell school wide – and stay intent upon closing the gap – don’t want highest achievers to get left out
 - Articulate message
 - Caution as we get further down the road – things we want to improve on and sense of urgency – sometimes that leads to simplistic, working in isolation – in other words – we as a board/staff team – make sure we don’t throw out one thing that might be working

Module 3 - Setting Clear and Focused Goals

High achieving districts – what are essential actions for a board that wants to use goals as a powerful lever to get district moving toward high achievement for all?

- We want a strategic plan but need to focus on one or two things. Consider reducing the number of the goals now or next time, we have too many goals and objectives.
 - Suggestion: focus on strategic plan with 2-3 goals over a set number of years and still have objectives for the goals and allocate resources to achieve them.
 - Our action plans have dates, how do we want to integrate the plans?
 - Need to address ongoing needs in addition to goals
- Our new goal is to reduce the reading and math gaps. How many people know we’re talking about this? Consider using a dashboard style which puts it into one page views for

elementary, middle school and high school staff. Scary but puts our goals out there. All board members should know this and have it front and center.

- Collaborate with stake holders to set specific goals
- Keep the focus on these main goals and the progress toward them.
- Align budget process with the goals and top priority.
- Our focus is on raising achievement in reading and math, the numbers are arbitrary. Different schools have different targets. Next, gather data, we do know the achievement gap is steady. Decisions need to be made soon to eliminate achievement gap and need to take steps to get there.
- What can board do to help with budget discussions? Staff needs to figure out best recommendations to make to the board. Board needs to be cognizant why resources are being reallocated, raising the bar and closing the gap.
- When we say staff, who do we want to include? All district and building level and teachers.
- Are there policies set by the board that are making it difficult for staff to accomplish this? Need to know what it costs to close the gap. Is there evidence that addresses the costs to close the gap. We know where we want to close the gap. Is there any information about what it costs to close the gap? Different stories exist in different schools and districts but it has been multiple strategies that have made a difference. Looking for more consensus from staff.
- According to this chapter, is our goal too big? Case study talked about a more focused method to achieve goal.
- We're in this process and it is a multiple year process, we can't set the budget this year and expect to get to our goals now.
- If we had a million dollars to close the gap, where would we put it? RTI? We could frame it that way. We are saving those positions with Federal stimulus money. Good Question.
- Our students can't wait, we need to know where we're heading.
- Clear focused goals need all of us to make progress on this.
- Once the administration makes a recommendation the board needs to be ready to react to emails and phone calls and the message needs to be clear concise and the same.
- 90-90-90 research shows what successful schools are doing. Professional development is aligned to strategic plans and goals. Very strong focus on academic writing. There is agreement across about how to tackle, structure systems so it gives leverage to ask schools to change. A super structure across systems work. RTI is requested, says stay the course, early intervention works, Professional Dev. can help teachers know when to help students.
- Remember to add early childhood to overall strategy. It has been part of staff conversations and considered important.
- Are we willing to make some people uncomfortable to make the changes and has this board has done this with the necessary data? We are not willing to do business as usual. What are we giving administration to make necessary changes to accomplish the goal? We will leave unhappy customers.
- Need to better with marketing it and explaining it. We are not doing business as usual. We are doing more with less and our secondary elective offerings are many.
- Have necessary information before proceeding.
- Determine what we stand for and are good at and what we will change.
- Planning for legislative outcomes but what one thing can we do now?

Two to three great gains school district - describe what it takes to increase achievement:

- Reality of the timeframe of attainable goals,
- Develop high, specific measureable goals. Culture of high expectations and keep raising goals after success has been attained, and keep focus of goals at all levels.
- Use resources to support goals.

- PBIS could address loss instructional time for behavior issues.

Overall conclusions:

- As a board we work together well with administration and value their opinion.
- We need to take time to talk about “what if’s”.
- We have a strategic plan and are monitoring it, great work is in place but strategic plan is also a challenge.
- We have clear goals in place.
- Need to keep focus during meetings.
- Spend more time on vision. Board spends time on so many things during work sessions and asks for a lot of data. The more process questions the board asks takes away from the goal.
- Recommend adding policies around strategic goals. Keep focus on vision and outcomes and monitor
- Board requires knowledge about school improvement plans prior to year versus getting them in retrospect.

Module 4 - Making Professional Development Relevant and Useful

Lessons from Great Gains Districts Critical attributes – What must be happening for districts to build strong collaborative work cultures?

- Time is needed for staff development/collaboration and teaming.
- More focus on achievement goals
- Differing levels of staff development- stratified....building leadership/internal resources and external resources.
- Board sets policies that demonstrate their belief that staff development makes a difference.
- Staff development must be on-going and collaborative.
- Teachers have say in the content, consider how much.
- Administrators actively lead the skill development efforts of teachers
- Develop a resource pool of templates to have available to jump start known effective staff development
- Peer collaboration is important. How would this fit in?

The Power of Professional Development: What are actions that 281 can take?

- Do our policies really help to set direction?
- We don’t want more policies as a board, so perhaps the policies around staff development could be better connected with the overall district/board vision.
- Time and resources are needed.
- Provide opportunities so that teachers can practice what they learn.
- Board needs to monitor the results – periodically put staff development matters on the board agenda.
- Now data coaches are proving to be invaluable at the elementary level. Job embedded instruction close to the teacher in their own classrooms and buildings are well received, and very effective.
- See page 49 for consideration of adopting items 1-5 as possible foundation for board policy.
- Strengths – we have a professional development academy.
- Increased focus on staff development as a means to address student achievement aims.
- Need more focus on our specific math and reading goals..

- The board needs to increase our awareness and knowledge about what staff development is occurring and how it aligns to the district goals.
- Excitement around the discussion about the achievement gap.

Wrap up - Once round the Table

- Appreciation of the opportunity for a deeper discussion.
- Value of focusing on this work without other multiple issues on the table.
- Inspiring to be able to be closer to what we think and believe and the opportunity to share with colleagues, this can help staff embrace the new normal in a positive way. Helps to soften fears about failure in the face of the competing demands of the economy in the new normal.
- MDE has a federal audit coming up, and our staff have been working hard to insure that we meet the demands of oversight and compliance.
- Open dialogue is valuable for administration.
- Thinking outside the box is exciting. Why not try something different. This has helped us think about changes that will help us move forward.
- Open dialogue around the questions posed in the Light House workbook. The discussion took us deeper in examining what it means to our district.
- Caring about kids, closing the gap, and facing big changes are great opportunities.
- Pleased as punch! We are getting a lot more out of this training that was anticipated.
- This is one of the best conversations that the board has had during the last several years, talking about students and learning. Great!
- Reading through the book gave an opportunity to see that these two chapters 3 and 4 really get to the meat of the work the board has to do.
- This work helped answer the question about what is the work of the board? This discussion and focus helps make it clearer what board work is. Use the board to help increase value of our staff development and don't forget to pull in the community.

Module 5 – Effective Use of Data for Accountability and Improvement

Data as a strong board tool – What are essential actions for a board that wants to use data to make better decisions?

- Increase use of data with multiple measures
- Improve systems for ---data
- Train staff in use of data decisions
- Opportunity for improvement
- Disaggregate data
- Celebrate progress and be honest about further needs
- Use data for accountability and improvement
- Develop specific goals targets by which to measure.
- Student perception of always being tested---incremental? Student understanding of why we're testing.
- Protocol in place to detail with students where they need to focus. How widely used unsure.
- As principal met w/ 3-4-5 graders after winter break to discuss their map scores. Kids got it. (last year)
- Still working on principal walk thru in classrooms not moved on to students
- Accountability
- Anticipate data- right amount *view data as opportunity not "I got cha"

- What gets measured gets done. Put action to it.

Lessons great gains districts

- No excuses mentality - teachers take initiative to do what it takes to achieve student success.
- Data used to identify successful strategy in teachers and also to strengthen those teachers who hadn't been as successful.
- Principal shared data with teachers results last year. Did affect staff awareness.
- One year in to MAP need trend level when looking at individual teacher. Data privacy
- Wrong direction. Many factors part of success of teacher. Keep focus on big picture
- Teacher looking at evaluation to use as self motivation. Not for public.
- Change for teachers and this is different. Could be used in wrong way. Single solution remedies. Teacher bashing backfires. Administration monitors staff. Improvements always being made. Teachers are held accountable every day. This is why principals evaluate their staff.
- "Walkthroughs" show value in classrooms. Trust in team facilitates use of data.
- Board facilitates environment where trust happens. Looking at how system works. Learning how what we do connects to this.
- Professional conversations about what is happening in the class with principals
- Sharing the accountability of what our district does to help our staff improve. We do a lot progress being made.
- Building a House. We are learning. Very cool to find out what we do as a district to facilitate this.
- Delicate process-don't want to set what we're working toward back. Conversations on how to help students work better/learn better.
- Board just wants to understand. To provide proper support. Time, resources, training.

Ensure data is energizing – Responsibilities

- Board needs to listen well. Facilitate community's vision. Need solid info to come back with.
- Use data to energize staff, identify opportunities, make it shared responsibility
- Strategic plan is boards tool to indicate what we are doing.
- Monitoring what's happening well, improvement, what needs to change to meet goals. Admin and board identify critical factors to monitor (graduation etc)
- Supt. assist board to understand appropriate date and context.
- Admin. reports results to board, help understand data, take corrective action if needed.

Actions to take

- Highlight staff
- Preset list of questions to look for. Ongoing check points to look at. To maintain consistency. Keep our level where it is suppose to be
- Put a face on data:
- Case study that is representative of what is being talked about. Individual success stories.
- Don't move too far away from data. Get out into schools. Scholastic endeavors.
- Use data to look forward towards improving.
- We need to continue to get training.
- Think about what you do well as a board. Use data well. Can get better, but we are doing this very well. Are the measures we use appropriate. Does not achieving goal equate to failure? NCLB Don't want data to become a hammer. Instructional.

- Learning balance on what to ask and what to stay out of.
- What is that right balance?
- How to succeed
- Clarity stability and rhythm. Know what to expect.
- Work with staff develop clear expectation *clear indicators of progress* identify how board can supply needed support.
- Working together.

Making a change:

- To improve-district improvement plans, school improvement plans already in place
- We do a lot of these things well. Monitoring calendar, etc. Kudos to us.
- 10 years into continuous improvement. Keep up to date, get into hands of staff so they can utilize to improve their instruction. For self and in teams. TRUST. Develop assessments to use with kids together. Delve deep. Amazing work going on.
- Very motivated to succeed. Continuous improvement. We are human and work with humans. Challenging. Get better each day. No time for complacency.
- Culture focused on student learning. District focused on using data. Understand it. Want to do right by students, don't beat up on selves, perspective needed to create positive change. Urgency understood, work to be better.
- Frequent relative assessments. Clear goals, more training, calendar in place. Improve on communicating district goals to families and community. Staff up to speed on using data from map. (time needed-continuing challenge) what can board do to prioritize need for time
- Remain calm. Why-why. Didn't get outcome, why. Keep at it until explore fully. When works, why- how duplicate. Do the exercise at end of year. Evaluate.
- Commitment to using data at board level. Talk concretely about aligning resources to effect change identified.
- Outstanding education happening. Need data to bet represent district. Reinforce positive message. System Accountability- using data early and responsibly. Cutting edge.
- Trust. Vision. Technology. Use it smartly Think about the future and public education is not getting easier. Visioning system that will change rapidly. Saving public education is focus for boards. Under attack. Support.

Module 6 - Developing Leadership and Collaboration Around Shared Purpose

STRUCTURES that SUPPORT CONNECTIONS and COMMUNICATION – What are essential actions for a board to take that wants to build an inclusive team focused on student achievement?

- Already have district leadership team
- Have principal representatives (elementary and secondary) are in cabinet meetings.
- What about board meeting with district leadership team to discuss recommendations from leadership team and what is needed to implement
- Foster responsibility at all levels of the district
- We can be a little more intentional about meeting with district leadership team. Get clarity on how we are doing this now and how it compares to what is recommended in the book.
- Next month group dialogue with principals

- Some things in book apply more to smaller rather than larger school districts. With a smaller district principals may meet with board more. We need to think about who is going to be at the table. Different issues in our district may have different groups working on them.
- In book they talk about teams at different level. Page 73
 - Board supt team
 - Administrators (attending board work sessions)
 - District leadership team
 - Peer coaching or study teams
- Higher achieving boards can articulate structures (not assume things are happening- ie “I know we’re doing a lot of things in that area”
- If you understand better, helps explain with budget cuts
- Delicate balance of how much board is involved and knows vs Policy Governance- want to hear about results
- Page 74- Talks about the role of the board
- We have board members on a lot of committees, get more involved there. Sometimes certain committees get more prominence at the board table depending on who the board rep is.
- As more information is provided, how can we do it in a balanced manner?
- District Leadership--See it more related to the overall instruction in the district.
- Teacher leadership positions- Don’t have to be a principal to be a leader.
- Education is going to have to change.
- Handful of administrators has to work with all staff. Could this structure be changed? Groups
 - 1) classrooms
 - 2) mentors
 - 3) another level.
 Tiered approach so that administration has more time.
- Shared leadership- staff is going to national PBIS approach. A principal takes your leadership team around how you use data. Looking at having MCREL come into district for training.
- A lot of things in this book make you wonder how we may be already doing these. It’s good to hear that we are doing this and how.
- Last 3-4 years this has been high achieving board with heavy business to deal with. School closures, right sizing, budget cuts, referendum, transportation. Now we finally have some stability to have these conversations. Important to acknowledge all the hard work that has been done.

Responsibilities: Board

- Where do we see we need to be?
- We have made many changes to improve student achievement over the years. What does board, supt. do?
- Board needs to set broad policies that state our expectations. Have important discussions to set policies.
- I think the difference between policy governance and Lighthouse- Lighthouse seen as more teamwork.
- We all may have difference in view of policy governance.
- Encourage board to learn more about what the role of the principals as instruction leaders, get in schools. What is working well, what are the challenges. Concern about board members seen as usurping the supt.
- Amazing how much weight a single board member can have.
- Having board members visit principals is a good idea. We need to have a structure set up to support it. If we want to do this, how could we best do that so that everyone is comfortable with it- board, cabinet, supt, principals?
- I’d rather be invited into schools that inviting myself in.

- Previously have gone into high schools with SABE students.
- Partnering not only with principal but parent org. and students.
- This is a good conversation to have at our retreat. Are we using our time more effectively?
- Exploring the role of the board is being worked on this year

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS and IMPLICATIONS

- Collaborative effort, consistent message, encourage leaders among the staff, getting the message out there that we expect all our students to achieve. We are figuring this out as we go.
- Page 74-75 Good map for board. Agree we should talk about this at the retreat. We need to figure out what is really going to make a difference.
- Impressed with how this is being pushed out to the principals. Principals more in classrooms and doing evaluations and training. Consistent evaluations.
- There are whole different levels of leadership. Nice to see it's working at other levels. What is it we can be thinking about before the retreat?
- Board is pushing data driven decision making and looking how we can push student achievement.
- Board and administration are both changing.
- We work as a team very well. Board/supt/admin. Collaborate. Continuing to do that is a good thing.
- Collaboration across district is a good thing too.
- **SECONDARY LEVEL**
School level have SLC grants expands leadership team.
AT high school hard for one person to be instructional leader for entire school. Work with school team leaders to ensure role out of initiatives. When money is gone they will go back into classroom, but with intensified skills.
- How do you sustain PBIS? The team sustains it. Staff on second floor are teachers. Important to have teacher to teacher relationship.

Module 7- Connecting with the Community

What are essential actions for a board that wants to make a firm, meaningful connection with the community?

- Engaging entire community—
- Meaningful involvement in committees by community members could do better
- Engaged community in strategic plan-keep them engage...monitor plan. Parent Compact - specifies their roles and responsibilities.
- Parent compact - elevates involvement to higher level with defined action plans, differentiates between involvement in school (not as important)and how to improve students opportunity to learn
- Engage those not typically engaged.
- Equity teams in schools. District involvement leads to more opportunity for community members. Tie community in to results. Let them know their part in our successes.
- Parent coordinator at schools? We have AVC activity volunteer coordinator. A 5-6 hrs year. Volunteers in Action.

Lessons learned

- Surveys around student achievement - how to do this. (does your student have dedicated work space etc)
- Can be too detailed do parents have knowledge base to input.
- Have done stuff in the past... ie. Adding credits...
- Informing them on what's happening and why. Depends on level of what's being discussed. Not many here for stem...cutting activities, more people.
- Online survey-low expense...how many take it.
- Board role, reminding community what they can do to participate
- Communicate key goals and focus. Keep message Closing the Gap forefront.
- What is our key message. Clarify.
 1. High expectations for all students
 2. High Arts program recognition
 3. Fiscally prudent district.
- Same for our district (message)
- IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
- When have reports, emphasize why they are so important. All demographic groups MUST be represented.
- Board members reluctant to share bad news, but when coupled with our plan to address it can have positive results. Get community on board. Engage them.
- Be positive but address where need improvement.
- Be first to tell the bad news, and why and what doing about it.
- Balanced picture.
- Create alliances with organizations in community to improve student achievement
- Ideas, dollars, expertise.
- Adds support for later initiatives.
- Reach out to critics. Educate them. Try.
- Shared belief unite to deliver equitable learning. Reeducate our community on changes in education doctrine.
- Kids are getting it. They understand what value of improved scores.
- Parents need to understand why we're undertaking these reforms and our expectations of their success.
- Talk about student gains.. bring to community conversations.
- **Your kids are doing well** at community conversations.

Responsibilities:

- How do principals convey to parents...news letters...phone call...personal touch with parents on good news of their student.
- **Do we reach out to all our students? Once a year or so...may be doing**
- Personal touches. Positive enforcement. Relationships. Negative feedback given in context. PBIS.
- Still need to work. Some dragging, some looking at what can do to make student succeed.
- What can board do?
- Form committees. Be true to the focus of the meeting. Be sure our message in the meeting is student achievement.
- Community Conversation Initiative.We need to be intentional about the successes
- Talking points, actively communicate.
- Frequent reporting to community.
- Imbed community input into policy. Monitor progress. What doing not done before, impact.

- Doing good things...dollars in budget from closing schools, kept class size low, arts & music still here.
- Set clear expectations practice transparency strong connections with community.
- Be a role model keep it front and center, ask about it.
- Customer service. Everyone is an ambassador.
- Engagement around urgency.. how do we generate that.
- Engagement happens when family impacted. Must be personal. Everyone needs to push the message.
- Can get caught up in need to educate about everything and people don't want to know. What are their general perception...Focus can drive perception. Talking about ach. Gap can create perception of a problem. Talk about what we can do for your kids.
- G-reading in the tents at Cooper. Reach out and Read. All night, involved community. Building wide education effort where can go room to room and learn about dif things.
- Steph-when kids do well, affects entire community. To draw in those without kids, everybody benefits. Educating your workforce.
- GAP can have negative image. Overuse can tarnish district. Excellence Every day Every Child
- Demonstrate financial implication of failure, financial gains of success. Drag to economy, contribution to economy.
- Key messages and the story behind it to share out ... story changes, message is same.
- Strengths
- Superintendent... send good messages...community on committees... we do pretty good at this.

Module 8 – Staying the Course of Improvement

What are essential actions for a board to take that wants to make sure the district does not give up on school improvement?

- Improvement does not happen overnight. Need continuous effort
- Stay focused on the goals. Don't be distracted by \$ that don't relate back to student achievement.
- Stay the course. It's not a particular program but staying with the program. Implementation and buy-in of staff that matters
- Bring in new staff and board – orientation
Board- good to meet with each board member
Ensure new staff and board members have commitment to goals
- Training to increase student achievement
- No magic bullet. No superman theory. It's putting the pieces of the plan together and staying committed to plan.
- Less time spent squabbling, the less time you have to spend on important issues.
- Build leadership in the community. Look for people to run for board that will support the work in progress.
- Celebrate progress and recognize people.
- Stability on board and staff, administration
- Community trust is important
- Marathon not sprint
- Quote in beginning of chapter great
- Keep on going and it will be internalized

- Data driven improvement and dashboards

LESSONS from Great Districts – What must be happening in districts to commit to long-term school improvement?

- Stability and leadership
- Ensure implementation throughout the district and consistently
- Use time productively
- Evaluate programs and focus on and stick with programs that work
- Money goes to priorities
- No magic bullets- no superman
- Commit to ensuring that the policies are implemented
- Kids need to do well- look at implementing faster but still marathon
- We're doing a lot with instructional leadership.
- Everyone is feeling pressure to increase student achievement. These things take time. Ideas
 - 1) Longer MS school day
 - 2) Does it make sense to do a quality magnet program?
- Everywhere you go see schools with longer days and years.
- To improve bottom line can 1) decrease costs 2) increase productivity—longer MS day
- Where does staff think the board needs to improve? Do people see value in the school board?
- Staff recognizes the importance of the board. To make things a reality, has to go through board. Some staff don't know how the system works, especially lines of authority and board role-not in operations.
- Staff job satisfaction and job security is important
- Orientation- staff and board. Describe the role of the board and how they fit into big picture.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN BOARD TAKE TO HANG IN THERE?

- Continue to have board meetings focus on student achievement
- Next year we'll use RTI & PBIS as the method by which we will meet the goals. These are all big and require a lot of effort to implement. Better you get at implementation, the closer you get to your goals.
- Stay the course
- Build leadership in community
- Perpetual renewal- search for better ways/refine what you're doing
- Does it take longer for larger districts to make reforms? Most like Communication is more difficult with larger staff. Takes time and energy.
- Create a collaborative environment. Board-supt and admin-staff. Keep focus on goals
- Celebrate success! Stop and say wow, this works. Congratulations! It's so motivating. Success breeds success.
- Staff development.
- As current elementary students move to middle school they should be more successful.

KEY WORDS

- Stay focused. Have strategic plan and keep front and center.
- Keep communication framework consistent and in the framework of student achievement. What you say determines how you think.
- Positive communication.
- Reinforce that we're monitoring. Need time to get data and monitor. Monitoring calendar is a great tool to keep focus.

- Develop the community leaders before the school board elections.
- When we revise our strategic plan, engage community.
- Show why what we're doing is working (data) you can get community members on the same page.
- Board orientation-not only roles but focus would be helpful. Maybe a group conversation with the full board may be more helpful than individual conversations. MSBA session on a High Functioning Board was great!
- When one new person comes in it affects the board dynamics. Need to orient one or more board meets. Have a mentor for each new board member. Don't want to give appearance that board members are teaming up. Could have former board member mentor new board members.
- Professional development needs to be a long-range deal. Focus for this year is equity. Should we be framing it as student achievement and equity gets us closer to the goal. Need to be careful how we talk about those things. Don't want to say we have a lot of inequity in the district. We need to frame the message of equity and student achievement.
- We've talked about looking at achievement through an equity lens. Don't want to focus so much on behavior that lose sight of student achievement. Equity is not an add on. It's the lens through which we look at practices and policies. Look at through; all kids have same opportunities to achieve.
- We must have a consistent message.
- Sustained staff training
- Continue to sell the vision

WHAT ARE KEYS IDEAS of ALIGNMENT? Overall Conclusions:

- Talk about ALL employees understanding the vision.
- Use data for decision making. Dashboards. Student data folders so students could track their own progress.
- Data base superintendent performance goals
- Making time to discuss monitoring and improvement efforts.
- Board know our roles and support each other. Let people do their jobs.
- Understand and acknowledge that you will get push back at times and be prepared for it and work through it.
- Evaluate our work-supt & board team
- Recognizing and spotlighting the really good things that we're doing. Teachers tell their stories
- Train, train, train. More professional development.
- Honest about our need for improvement and state how we'll improve.
- Monitor our goals.
- Say, we invested X\$ and here are the results. Return on Investment (ROI)
- The stimulus money for RTI and PBIS was critical and perfectly timed.
- Board can help prevent distractions.
- Building leadership within the community that will continue the focus.
- Continue to communicate in terms of the focus.