

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION RETREAT

Saturday, October 13, 2012 – 8:00-12:00

Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

A G E N D A

DEVELOP A FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

- Board Members Present:** Gladys Cooper, Gary Falkenthal, Richard Jannelli, Kathleen Molinaro, Sandy Steichen, Robert Taborsak, Phyllis Tranzillo
- Administration:** Dr. Sal Pascarella, Mr. Joe Martino, Ms. Kim Thompson and Ms. Debbie Peterson from Administration
- Facilitator:** Jeff Olefson, President – Staff Development Associates
- Absent:** Eileen Alberts, Shirley Chilian, Annrose Fluskey-Lattin, Richard Hawley

The Chairperson, Gladys Cooper, called the Board Retreat to order at 8:10 am and turned the Retreat over to the Facilitator, Jeff Olefson.

Mr. Olefson gave the Board members a folder with an agenda as follows:

- Introduction and kick off
- Creating a Statement of Accomplishments
- District goals vs. Board goals
- Review of Mission Statement and Belief Statements
 - (how can we better inform stakeholders about our mission and beliefs)
- District Goals (5 year plan)
- Goals vs. Objectives
- Review of Superintendent's draft Goals and annual Objectives
- Review, wrap-up and next steps

Mr. Olefson addressed the Board and told those assembled that he had the opportunity to talk to the Board members by phone, before meeting today. I want you to ask question or talk about issues as I try to make this very task driven. In having looked over the District information, the state of purpose Mission Statement, my impression is that it maybe too many rather than too few. We need to consider who we are trying to build a plan for. Dr. Pascarella is going to be sharing specific objectives and measurable information. We are going to clarify for the public what the most important things are to be done. In looking at all the goals, I noticed one thing that was missing, statement of accomplishment. You say what you are going to do, but not what you have accomplished. We need to formulate a statement of accomplishment, then look at the mission statement and see if we want to make any

revisions. We need to talk about the Board goals. It is important for stakeholders to let them know what you are working on. Ms. Cooper asked everyone to make a list before this meeting and we will spend some time on that. Some of the things I saw that were important, were operational level, however, that is an operational procedure and not one that you would want to go out to the public. Before we start I want to talk about what is a Board goal and what is a District goal. Operational goals are the goals of the District and all goals have financial impact, those are the Board goals; objectives are where we need to rely on the professionals to own the plan and be responsible. Some of the objectives your administration has no control over, some are the alliance and some are state mandated. Since the whole Board is not here we will be treating this as a sub-committee.

Dr. Pascarella said we are looking for a 5-year cycle. The facilitator said we deal primarily with the Board goals, the professionals need to do the nuts and bolts. The first thing to work on is the statement of accomplishment. Here is the task, please refer to the agenda. I will be passing out post-it notes and want you to think of 3-5 things that have been accomplished in the district over the last 5 years. Please put them on the individual sheets. We will be writing goals that are more students centered. (*Board members, as well as Mr. Martino, Dr. Pascarella, Ms. Thompson and Ms. Peterson, wrote what they thought the most important goals were and the post-it notes were collected and put on the easel*).

From the post-it notes, Mr. Olefson asked his assistant to write the following goals:

BOARD'S GOALS

- Curriculum
- Overcrowding
- Teacher accountability
- Community outreach (parents and stronger PTO inter-relations)
- Student performance including positive and respectful school climate for all backgrounds and life experiences
- Recognize good students

Mr. Olefson then told the Board that they have to now create a list of accomplishments and the following list was created

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ★ Narrowed the achievement gap.
- ★ Implemented full-day kindergarten.
- ★ Developed a stronger curriculum with greater rigor in all classrooms.
- ★ Increased the number of students taking advanced courses.
- ★ Improved hiring practices obtain and retain a quality staff.
- ★ Improved accountability for results
- ★ Established a professional learning community culture in which data is used to inform instruction.
- ★ Created a positive and respectful school climate for students from various backgrounds and life experiences.
- ★ Provided more opportunities for students to be recognized for their accomplishments.
- ★ Reached out to the community to create more partnership in the service of students.

Dr. Pascarella asked do we have to communicate the goals better. Mr. Olefson said that he believes that as the Board learns, so does the community. Make sure there is a presentation. You have Board watchers and unless there is a crisis you are not going to have a lot of people attending the meetings. If they don't come, then they trust you. If they feel the Board is doing their job, they don't watch. The Superintendent mentioned that all the meetings are televised. Mr. Olefson said people who attend your meetings I call them Board watchers. Those people are out there and information gets to the public. For every watcher you can figure 100 more people know what went on at the meeting; they are an extension of their effort. Are there some things that should be the topics of a presentation throughout the year? Get the Board input on what they should be. Mr. Falkenthal asked if they should be for the Board or for the public. Mr. Olefson said both. Ms. Steichen said if we think we have to redistrict, should we say in have a presentation in June for the fall. The facilitator answered whenever you do something that is very controversial people need time to think about it. Ms. Cooper said we have done this. I know that redistricting is not the favorite word; we did have several community meetings with the Superintendent and parents. Mr. Olefson said beyond that, there is a lot of fear with change. Whatever parents' worry it is always about their kids. If you can get to what people are worried about and you can show them it is good for their child, you will build support and trust. How it will affect students and keep it about students? If you take something away, what are you putting in its place? If they know what they are losing, then they need to know what they are gaining; i.e. smaller class size, etc. Ms. Steichen, now you are going redistrict do you need to give them options – should we say no this is the only way we are going to handle it and the approach on how we came up with that decision. Mr. Olefson said you need to plan it carefully and they have to get used to it. Get out to the buildings as you need to do more than have Board meetings. That is the clarification between Board goals and District goals. The presentations need to be what people worry about, what are their fears, i.e. we need to carefully transition the students, etc. You need to decide on how many presentations you should have throughout the school year – maybe only 4 or 5 or maybe more. There is a difference in an operational goal and informational goal. Dr. Pascarella said the Board has had workshops. Mr. Olefson said see how many presentations you can do in a year, it is important not only for you, but for the public. Mr. Jannelli asked about the items of importance, we have improved in the outreach to the general public, we go out and have outside meetings for the public and have outside presentations; we try to talk about budgets, overcrowding and I think we have come a long way in doing that. I believe people come out if they are only interested in what is being presented. Parents know very little about the referendum that is coming up – how do you go out and do what you can to educate those parents, how do you build the trust?

The Superintendent said we don't talk about the student excellent behavior vs. the number of students at Danbury High School. We don't say enough about the good students we have. Our middle schools are over 1,000 students; we need to tell the public about how the students behave as well as how respectful they are. Ms. Molinaro said we are also missing the teachers that we have engaged on learning. The kids should come home and tell the parents what they did all day.

MISSION STATEMENT

Mr. Olefson passed out the current mission statement and asked the Board members if they wanted to change it, review it or keep it the way it is. There were several suggestions on changing some of the wording and he stated that he had a couple of suggestions as well. He wanted to be sure that the Board recognized that the new nomenclature is now “college and career readiness” and asked if they would want to include that in the Mission Statement or somewhere in the goals. Mr. Olefson said you should have a poster up in the Administrative Offices and in the Board Room with the Mission Statement displayed. The district's current Mission Statement reads as follows:

Our mission is to develop in all children the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable them to live a productive and self-fulfilling life and engage in responsible citizenship in an every-changing global society.

The following concerns and suggestions were made:

- Mr. Taborsak: I am okay with it the way it is
Ms. Steichen: Do you want it be catchy so people remember it
Mr. Jannelli: Statement should be short and brief; only a tag line that you can spew out in 2 seconds. Maybe we should have a committee come up with a short tag line
Mr. Falkenthal: I like “enable them to live a productive life”
Dr. Pascarella: Many schools have their own Mission Statement
Ms. Molinaro: Why can’t we read it all Board Meetings?
Dr. Pascarella: Whatever the Board comes up with at this Retreat, I will try to put it on the agenda
Ms. Cooper: It took a lot of meetings for the Board to come up with the Mission Statement and that she is comfortable with it. She asked how you would cut this down. If it is all about kids – what do we need to have in the Mission Statement?
Dr. Pascarella: I can tell you it would take many meetings to change it.

Mr. Olefson told the Board they should sleep on it and let’s leave it the way it is and come back with some suggestions. I don’t see a problem with it, or you can vote today. They Board decided they would take a vote today and modify the Mission Statement:

Modify the Mission Statement

S. Steichen
P. Tranzillo
R. Jannelli
G. Falkenthal

Leave it as is

K. Molinaro
R. Taborsak
G. Cooper

The vote passed to modify the Mission Statement and it was changed to eliminate the words “an every-changing”. The new Mission Statement will read as follows:

Our mission is to develop in all children the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable them to live a productive and self-fulfilling life and engage in responsible citizenship in a global society.

This revised Mission Statement will appear on every Board agenda with a date on when it was revised.

The facilitator then showed a slide presentation of seven Belief Statements, which he stated came from Dr. Pascarella’s draft goals, which he asked his assistant to write on the easel:

BRIEF STATEMENTS

Statement 1 Children are our first priority

- Statement 2** Education decision and actions should be based on BEST practices in the field of education
- Statement 3** Partnership between parents, educators, students and community is important for students' success
- Statement 4** All children can learn
- Statement 5** High expectations and accountability for all
- Statement 6** Educators should provide varied experiences and instructional opportunities (Learning Tree) to meet student's individual needs.
- Statement 7** Schools should provide safe and productive learning environments based upon mutual respect, trust and cooperation.

Mr. Olefson and the Board discussed the Brief Statements and upon discussion were then worded to incorporate in the goals. He then stated that the Mission Statement should be posted with the goals.

FOUR GOALS

Goal 1 *Growth In Achievement for All Students and College and Career Readiness*

To ensure the successful implementation of all aspects of the TDEC District Enhancement Plan and conditional funding Alliance District Plan according to the established timeline with an emphasis on increasing academic achievement and closing gaps.

To ensure that each and every student is stretched and has the maximum opportunity to reach his or her potential, identify annual growth targets and measures for students performing at or above proficiency levels in all grades.

To ensure each and every student has the opportunity to learn, grow and develop into an adult prepared to meet the challenges of the 21 century, the district will explore strategies and specific objectives to insure that instruction in all classrooms is comprehensive, rigorous, uses up-to-date technology and reflects best practices in the field of education. Students will have opportunities to pursue interests, collaborate with their peers, develop critical thinking skills, and be able to speak and write persuasively and creatively.

Goal 2 *Parent and Community Engagement*

Effective parent school partnerships are important to meeting the needs of children, and to ensure a continued support for school programs that are a benefit to students and the whole Danbury community.

Explore strategies and specific objectives to maximize opportunities for the creation of partnerships between parents, community, and the school district at all levels using both traditional and new emerging channels of communication.

Identify strategies and targeted objectives for enhancing public trust and confidence in the Danbury Public Schools at all levels: board of education, central administration, building administration and the classroom teachers.

Identify strategies and targeted objectives for reaching out to the entire community.

Goal 3 **Fiscal Responsibility and Planning for Growth**

To insure a careful stewardship of the district's resources, seek additional opportunities for funding of programs through: grants, and district/business partnerships.

Develop a process for periodically reviewing professional and other contacts providing resources to the district to ensure an on-going high level of service delivery at a reasonable cost.

In order to expand the effectiveness of our short and long term fiscal planning, develop a multi-year budgeting process, and to address anticipated increases in student enrollment, develop a multiyear timeline for the expansion of facilities to accommodate the need.

Goal 4 **Professionalism and Accountability**

In order to ensure that all of the professional staff is fully aware and engaged in the mission of meeting the needs of students and the Danbury community, expand opportunities for all professionals to be involved in the school improvement process.

Identify strategies and objectives to ensure that all the professionals be provided support, be held accountable for results, and share in the celebration of successes.

Mr. Olefson distributed Dr. Pascarella's Goals and said he has provided more measurable objectives and he will be giving you additional objectives as the year goes on. If you feel you would like to rearrange the order or to move faster, it is up to you to discuss it with the Superintendent. We have not talked about individual plans, particularly on Alliance; we have to look at the growth to meet those needs. You will be getting the details. A much better approach is that we keep these 4 goals and work with them. A lot of the goals have staffing implications. Smart goals are the objectives you are going to meet with parameters. Dr. Pascarella stated that when we talk about the goals, we have to be mindful that the staff is worried about resources and accountability. Mr. Olefson said we want the up-front goals. Don't take it that they don't want you to tell them everything. You should be telling them so they are reasonably informed about the goals.

Ms. Cooper thanked Administration for coming to the Retreat.

Administration left the Retreat at 12:01 pm. Mr. Olefson and the Board members had a further discussion.

Florence Modzelewski, Stenographer