

SPECIAL CALL BOARD WORKSHOP FEBRUARY 14, 2004

The Board of Directors of the Davenport School District in the Counties of Scott and Muscatine, State of Iowa, met for a Special Call Board Development Experience Workshop on Saturday, February 14, 2004, pursuant to law and the rules of said Board. The Board met at the John Deere Davenport Works facility, in a conference training room. President Susan Low called the workshop to order at 9:15 AM.

On roll call the following members were present: President Susan Low; Directors Richard Clewell, Nikki DeFauw, Alan Guard, Larry Roberson, Timothy Tupper, and Patt Zamora. Superintendent Jim Blanche attended the board development meeting that was facilitated by Mr. Richard Wahlstrand.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

Mr. Richard Wahlstrand facilitated the board development experience workshop designed for board members and the superintendent. The purpose of the meeting was to guide people through a series of reflective activities to help improve communication skills and relationships. Board members told their stories through a reflective activity where people shared reasons why they ran for the school board. Next they were asked to choose three things they thought the Board was doing well from a list of expectations developed last November. As they discussed how the group voted on areas listed, they were able to develop better understandings about each others' perspectives on communication.

Mr. Wahlstrand talked about the dynamics of group development and stages new teams go through as they work together. These include the forming stage, storming stage, norming stage, and performing stage. There is self-assessment which will help people grow and work together productively. The next exercise asked board members to select items they felt they could do better. After the selection process was finished, discussion continued and thoughts were clarified. They commented how it was easy to misinterpret what people said unless you asked for clarification. They agreed on the importance of improving skills in active and open listening. Board members shared stories and experiences with one another to help build relationships for future work.

Mr. Wahlstrand told the Board there will be challenging issues to work on in the next few months and it will be a test of their abilities to be open minded. People will lobby individual board members and community members will share why they want certain things done. The Board must work together and speak about issues openly. They need to value each other's opinions even if they vote differently on matters before the Board. Mr. Wahlstrand thought many of the suggestions made will be of help to board members as they deal with the selection process of a new superintendent this year. He felt the group was much more engaged now than when they first met in November and they were growing as a group.

There was a short break at 11:00 AM and Director Tupper left the meeting at this time. At 11:15 board members returned for some concluding activities that dealt with the role of board members and what the role of the superintendent should be. They brainstormed and clarified the list of duties and responsibilities for both the Board and the superintendent. Dr. Blanche encouraged board members to continue to work through this process and appreciate the strengths that are brought to the table. It is important to our staff and community to know the people at the top are interested in what is best for the children. Mr. Wahlstrand noted there were overlapping areas in both lists. It is important to understand what responsibilities belong to the Board and what things the superintendent is supposed to handle. Dr. Blanche mentioned to board members that they were in a difficult situation and often people want them to fix a situation. People don't always like the answer they get from administration and hope the Board will side with them instead. If the Board can help people work through the process, it really helps everyone.

Board members felt the time to share experiences really helped them find some core values and will make them better at their work. They have a good relationship with the superintendent and are comfortable asking him questions or requesting information. They felt that good communication with the Board and the public were extremely important to a good working relationship. Mr. Wahlstrand summarized the activities and hoped board members had some new thoughts for reference to take with them.

Director Roberson expressed his thanks to Mr. Wahlstrand for helping the Board a second time and sharing his leadership abilities. Board members said they would like to have the opportunity to come back in one year and see how they are doing at another workshop. They all thanked Mr. Wahlstrand for taking care of them and giving them food for thought.

ADJOURNMENT

President Low thanked board members and Dr. Blanche for attending the workshop event and declared the meeting adjourned at 12:10 PM.

Linda Smith Kortemeyer, Board Secretary