

**MINUTES**  
**McLean County Unit District No. 5**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Special Session**  
**June 6, 2005**

The Board of Education of Community Unit School District No. 5, McLean and Woodford Counties, Illinois, met in special session on June 6, 2005, at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the District Office, 1809 West Hovey Avenue, Normal, Illinois.

**1.0 Roll Call** Members present: Gail Ann Briggs, Meta Mickens-Baker, John Puzauskas, Jay Reece, Steve Whittington, and Board President Scott Lay. Members absent: Martin O'Connor.

Also present: Superintendent Dr. Alan Chapman, Assistant Superintendent of Operations/Human Resources John Pye, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum/Instruction Jim Braksick, Executive Director of Secondary Education Bruce Boswell, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer Tod Altenburg, Community Relations/H.R. Specialist Meghan Leiseberg, Directors: Cathy Greene, Donna Lutkehaus, Cory Tello, Principals: Mary Ahillen and Jennifer Hamilton, Teacher: Jim Broach and Dawn Phelps, Counselor: Camille Taylor, Students: Ryan McAllister and Abby Spachman, Parents/CAC/DAC Representatives: Mary Jefferson and Amy Pemberton; Gary and Susan Kayser.

**2.0 Pledge of Allegiance** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**3.0 Public Comments** Gary and Susan Kayser addressed the Board regarding their positive experiences in Unit 5 and expressed their appreciation for the services and care provided to their children over the course of the family's Unit 5 experience.

**4.0 Strategic Plan Review**

President Lay welcomed participants and provided a brief description of the strategic planning process. Dr. Chapman noted his appreciation for the participation of community members and described the manner in which Strategic Plan items would be assessed for potential revision. Chapman stressed the importance of considering progress made toward the attainment of Strategic Plan goals and objectives while simultaneously prioritizing the need to evaluate each goal and objective for relevance and applicability.

Community Connections

Strategic Plan review began with consideration of the Community Connections theme. Significant discussion of the "Establish a program of regularly scheduled town meetings" objective was initiated. Alternate wording of this objective, including "Use scheduled town meetings as a vehicle to improve community engagement" was suggested. Participants indicated that effective communication between the Board and community could be promoted by engaging in varied approaches to the town meeting concept. It was recommended that town meetings be held before regularly scheduled board meetings and that board meetings be held at school sites on a rotating basis. It was also suggested that specific questions and topics be solicited from and promoted to community members prior to town meeting events in order to garner attendance and audience interest. Additionally, alternative formats for town meeting events were discussed. Ultimately, it was decided that the objective would remain unchanged.

Participants discussed the second Community Connections objective, "Sponsor family learning workshops and activities on topics suggested by parents, and held at times and locations easily accessible to all parents" and considered the fact that over 100 such events were held by schools and district programs during the 2004-2005 school year. Participants recommended heightened publicity of school or program-based family

learning workshop events that are open to the greater district community. Insertion of event announcements in school newsletters was mentioned as a particularly effective means of promoting events. It was agreed that the “assigned to” portion of this objective would be revised to read “Principals and Directors”.

The fifth Community Connections objective, “Board members personally present the strategic planning outcomes (mission statement, goals, objectives) to schools and Bloomington/Normal Community throughout the 2004-2005 school year” was considered by participants. Participants expressed appreciation for the effort demonstrated by Board and administrative team member visits to schools at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year. However, participants indicated that staff members might be more receptive to the content of visit presentations at a relatively less hectic time of the school year. Specifically, it was proposed that presentations of this nature be conducted during the October School Improvement Day. Participants also recommended that principals be involved in the Strategic Plan presentation process so that they can help to connect specific school improvement plan information to Strategic Plan goals and objectives. This approach would allow staff members to better understand the manner in which the Strategic Plan impacts and relates to everyday school activity. The personal approach to Strategic Plan communication was praised and it was stressed that presentations provide the opportunity for information exchange and feedback. Participants also addressed the importance of including all staff members in Strategic Plan presentations, with a particular focus upon the attendance of non-certified staff at school-based presentations and holding presentations at the Warehouse and Transportation facilities. Participants agreed that regardless of the format or nature of presentations, Board and administrative team member presentations are inherently valuable as they increase the visibility of the Unit 5 leadership. Participants agreed that the “...throughout the 2004-2005 school year” portion of the fifth objective would be deleted.

In reference to the sixth Community Connections objective, “Train and educate students, staff, and community members on an established timeline regarding diversity topics”, a request was made that a specific date for plan development be set and included in revised Strategic Plan documents.

#### Professional Quality

Participants engaged in discussion of the Professional Quality goal, “Enhance student performance by recruiting, retaining, and supporting a highly qualified staff that are prepared to educate our diverse student population.” Participants suggested that the phrase “and diverse” be added to the goal in order to emphasize the importance of staff diversity. Following discussion of the implications of this proposed alteration, participants agreed to revise the goal, as suggested.

Additional discussion of the need for an increasingly formalized approach to the first Professional Quality objective, “Create an effective recruiting and hiring process that will increase the diversity of our employee base to be more reflective of our student body” occurred. Current district efforts to improve the recruitment, hiring, and retention of diverse staff were highlighted. Among these efforts, partnering with Illinois State University to leverage resources, and Bloomington-Normal Education Alliance initiatives aimed at assisting non-certified staff members in the pursuit of teaching credentials were emphasized. The need for additional internal recruitment efforts, recruitment at historically diverse colleges and universities, conducting recruitment events within a larger geographic area, and focusing upon the need for male instructors at the elementary school level were discussed as necessary facets of future district efforts. Participants also encouraged the District to tap into additional resources offered by two-year institutions, including Heartland Community College.

The wording of the second Professional Quality objective was considered for revision due to the fact that a proactive professional development structure has been established and should continue to be utilized. Participants requested additional information regarding the specific nature of professional development opportunities and activities. Highlighted examples of current professional development initiatives included the

introduction of the school-based action research team concept, Professional Development Academy offerings, and Illinois State University tuition waivers. It was also stressed that professional development serves as a critical portion of every teacher's evaluation and that principals are routinely reminded of the importance of assessing this area of teacher proficiency. Participants decided to revise the second objective by substituting "Utilize" for "Establish" at the beginning of the sentence in order to clarify the fact that this professional development objective will stand as an ongoing process.

Participants continued to discuss Professional Quality objectives as they relate to the need to retain a quality, diverse staff. Participants indicated that the establishment and maintenance of a positive work environment is critical to the retention of staff. Additionally, participants brainstormed potential strategies for improved retention including enhanced mentorship programs, further promotion of ISU graduate school programs, and providing more teachers with the opportunity to lead professional development initiatives and courses. Participants also suggested that staff members be surveyed in order to determine levels of employee work environment satisfaction. Participants encouraged the establishment of a minority recruitment committee to guide efforts towards Professional Quality objectives. Based upon these discussions, participants agreed to add the phrase "and work" to the fourth bullet of the second Professional Quality objective.

#### Student Achievement

Participant consideration of Student Achievement goals and objectives was initiated by discussion of the manner in which teachers, principals, and schools are held accountable for the improvement of differentiation efforts. Administrators shared that differentiation is emphasized throughout the district and is featured as a facet of learning standards and evaluations. Principals have received additional training regarding the use of the evaluation tool, which, in turn, helps to insure that differentiation occurs at the classroom level. Additional resources received in conjunction with the language arts adoption, new pre and post assessment tools, and required completion of differentiation templates have all contributed to the enhancement of differentiation efforts.

Student participants were asked to assess their experiences in the district and encouraged to provide suggestions for improvement efforts. Student participants indicated that improved communication between students and teachers would likely impact student achievement levels. It was indicated that students sometimes feel that they have not received knowledge of what instructors expect in order for them to be successful. Students also stressed the fact that the topic of "student achievement" reaches beyond test scores and statistics and also relates to the overall quality of a student's educational experience. It was suggested that students be surveyed or included in focus groups in order to provide a broader sense of the quality of the student experience to school and District administration. While it was noted that school administrators interact and communicate with a diverse group of students on a daily basis, it was emphasized that all students, including those who are not the most prominent in the school community, should have the opportunity to provide feedback.

Students also discussed the difficulties experienced by many individuals as they transition between secondary levels (i.e., junior high school to high school). Students expressed a desire for additional support and assistance throughout the transition process. It was suggested that high school teachers visit junior high schools to provide "sample high school lessons" in order to orient students to the academic style of high school courses. In summary, participants concluded that efforts should continue to be made in order to better assess students' educational experiences on a personal level. Aside from necessary alterations to timelines, no additional revisions of Student Achievement objectives were proposed.

#### Growth and Change

Participants began discussion of the Growth and Change theme by addressing the work of the Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC). The DAC has been working to revise the Unit 5 Diversity Plan and will propose a revised version of this document in July. It was

suggested that the district consider expanding DAC membership to include staff members as well as community representatives. In order to more accurately reflect the impending completion of the DAC's 2004-2005 task, participants agreed that the first Growth and Change objective be revised to read "Actively seek to attain and evaluate goals and objectives identified in the Unit 5 Diversity Plan." Additionally, participants suggested that copies of the revised Unit 5 Diversity Plan be distributed to all schools and diversity committees for review.

The need to continue to establish and encourage active participation in school-based diversity committees was stressed. Participants emphasized the need for these committees to receive clear direction and to be assigned specific projects. The importance of measuring the outcomes produced by the work of these committees was also emphasized. Additionally, participants approved a revision to the wording of the second bullet under the third Growth and Change objective in order to account for the ongoing use of procedures to predict and monitor growth and change.

#### Fiscal Responsibility

Participants analyzed Fiscal Responsibility goals and objectives relative to the district's current and projected financial status. Participants suggested that a 20 to 30 year projection of the district's financial status be produced in order to generate a unified, formal vision. While this suggestion was tabled in terms of its incorporation into the Strategic Plan, it was placed under consideration as a potential long-range project that could be addressed by the Citizens Advisory Council (CAC). Participants also discussed the potential addition of a specific objective to address the district's involvement in school funding reform efforts. Participants agreed that the District's active participation in these initiatives is critical. Two objectives will be added to address growth and funding reform issues. An objective reading "Continue efforts to influence local officials to adopt development impact mechanisms to support growth needs" will be included relative to initiatives within the Bloomington-Normal area. An objective reading "Continue to support school funding reform in Illinois" will also be added to address fiscal considerations at the state level.

A minor change to the first Fiscal Responsibility objective was proposed in order to account for the fact that a rolling five-year projection has been developed and will continue to be updated and utilized.

In addition to discussion specific to Strategic Plan themes, goals, and objectives, participants expressed a desire for the development of specific timelines for "action step" completion within individual goals and objectives. Participants indicated that this more specific planning process could result in improved visibility and timeliness of goal and objective attainment. Additionally, it was noted that minor changes need to be made throughout the Strategic Plan document in order to account for routine alterations to timelines and to remove references to responsible parties whose assigned tasks have been completed.

#### **5.0 Announcements**

Dr. Chapman indicated that Strategic Plan revisions would be drafted and sent to participants for review. Revisions will be presented at the July 13, 2005 Board of Education meeting.

Dr. Chapman and President Lay thanked participants for their involvement in the Strategic Plan review process and closed the evening with expressions of gratitude for the progress that has been made towards goal and objective attainment.

**6.0 Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:12 p.m.

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Scott Lay, Board of Education President  
Community Unit School District No. 5  
McLean and Woodford Counties, Illinois

ATTEST:

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Steve Whittington, Board of Education Secretary

*Approved:* \_\_\_\_\_