

**Eau Claire School Board Retreat Minutes**  
**Friday, February 9, 2024, 1:30 p.m.**  
**ECASD Administration Building – Room 123C**  
*Generated by Terri Grzyb*

**Members present**

Lori Bica, Stephanie Farrar, Tim Nordin, Erica Zerr

**Members absent**

Joshua Clements, Jarrett Dement, Marquell Johnson

Superintendent Mike Johnson was also present

**BOARD DEVELOPMENT**

The Board of Education participated in their self-evaluation. To help with this process, Bryn Horton, a member of the Sun Prairie Area School District Board, was invited to help facilitate. The Board reviewed the goals they set from the last self-evaluation on August 3, 2023:

- Work on community engagement through continuation of the Key Communicator Group
- Create a professional development plan
- Monitor Board performance at regular meetings (with a focus on GC-7 as a framework for Board Debriefs)

Much discussion was on professional development and how to find such opportunities. This is one of the roles of the Clerk/Governance Officer. Lori will make a separate calendar for professional development, such as WASB workshops and conventions.

Bryn had Board members write down personal and Board goals and then have them look at what others wrote. First impressions were that there was a lot of overlap and that governance culture is shared by others. Additional findings included that the Board is working more effectively with Administration to meet our goals as a District and taking a long-term vision and finding what to do in the short term to achieve it; being strategic as to how we evaluate others; and being aware of gaps that need to be improved upon.

Board members discussed the effectiveness of monitoring report summary comments/statements. The Sun Prairie Area School District Board agrees on the summary comments right after approval of the report. Board members agreed to try doing this at the next Board meeting (starting with OE-7) and then put the summary statement on consent.

Bryn handed out the results of a survey that was sent to System Leaders. There were 27 responses. The feedback consisted of both strengths and weaknesses of the Board. It was suggested we identify the weaknesses that can become goals, such as having clear alignment between the Board, Administration, and buildings; how can the Board leverage their time in schools? What is the best practice to achieve alignment?

- Erica – assign schools to each Board member; could this be part of the Key Communication Plan?
- Stephanie – have Board members attend the principal meetings. Tim asked Mike to talk to principals about this; also, what are Mandy and Kaying's thoughts on this?
- Erica – after meeting with Mandy and Kaying, the expectations that the Board has maybe feels misaligned as far as what the staff is dealing with on a daily basis. How can we better connect with our building principals without distracting or pulling away from students? If principal meeting, then talk about as a Board; or is there a different way, such as coffee with principals?
- Get suggestions from principals; the Board wants to get more input to help support and build connections and trust.

Erica addressed the feedback comment from the survey that says that there is a lack of common understanding of governance among board members; maybe this needs to be addressed with a professional development plan; does our governance culture say what we want?

Tim said that onboarding needs to be improved for new Board members and that we need to create room to grow in the governance model – get more Board members to attend Wisdom Sharing; get more training and support for Board members; ongoing professional development needs to be developed; Board members need to state something impactful after attending. Maybe have someone come here to offer training.

Board members focused on the feedback comments about Board behavior during meetings. Bryn pointed out that body language says a lot during meetings (the audience picks up on things). Lori said some tension is necessary, while Erica thinks we got better. Depending on what she hears in the community, this can cause contention between the Board and Administration, coming across as critical. Tim said through ongoing self-evaluation and working as a team, we need to learn how to address such comments.

Bryn asked the Board members to look at their goals, based on the feedback. Do they expand on existing goals or create new goals; do they feed into the PD plan or the communication plan?

The Board touched on the Board Debrief agenda item for every meeting. This is where the Board should be monitoring their own performance. It was agreed upon that something different needs to be done because not all members participate. This could be done through a survey and become a new responsibility for the governance officer.

- Does statute allow us to change officer role?
- Can we decouple clerk from governance officer? At next reorganizational meeting? This would be adding to job description.
- How do we hold each other accountable?

Possible Board self-evaluation survey questions\*:

1. Were questions of presentations thoughtful, prepared, and focused on understanding?
2. Did Board members behave with professional decorum?
3. Did the Board focus on student results and not on operational decisions (Board roles vs. Administration roles)? GC-1
4. Did the Board do a good job of providing clear consensus of expectations and feedback?
5. Another question based on the Board's strengths – Combine support for staff/teachers and support for public education.

How can the Board be reflective of how we acknowledge or understand what is happening in buildings?

\*Tie into B/SRs and GCs; highlight specific things from feedback we are addressing to be in compliance; refer to GC-2 and GC-7. Lori will work on this survey.