

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2011-12

SUMMARY DOCUMENT - HISTORICAL REVIEW

Dear Executive Committee Board Members,

Here are notes from previous joint board meetings that we can review to 1) determine how much progress has been made since 2004, and 2) to inform our work going forward. We will use this information in conjunction with the Executive Committee Summary of Work Topics from 2009-2010, which we have been working from to date.

In September 2004, a joint meeting of all boards was held, with Bob McNamara (Supt.) as the “moderator”. The questions raised were “Why should boards work together?” “What are the issues of critical importance to boards?”

In January 2008, the Superintendent Search Committee brainstormed assets of the supervisory union and what is working well, as well as major challenges/needs facing the district.

Below is a summary of each group’s meeting.

SEPTEMBER 2004 JOINT MEETING

Why should boards work together?

- To improve education: provide best education and new options for children and communities; coordinate curriculum; student learning.
- Common problems/goals/issues: avoid problems and have open lines of communication; new ideas, common patterns, new solutions, and save time; working together and not at cross purposes; learning from one another; common goals leading to increased communication and collaboration.
- Combined resources/savings: capitalize on combined resources; savings; quality control; economy of volunteer efforts.
- Continuity/consistency in curriculum, contracts evaluation: Consistency, not having to rebuild the wheel; curriculum, contracts, evaluations.
- More effective/efficient: Lack of duplication; consolidate mission, education, and create protocols.
- Make an opinion matter.
- Reduce differences.

What are the issues of critical importance to boards?

- Common contract/teacher negotiations: salary negotiations with teachers; contract issues and decisions.
- Cost containment/sharing resources: issues of economy of SU, keeping quality; money for more resources (people); funding – increased taxes, little affordable housing; per pupil cost fluctuations; what are the advantages and disadvantages of being small and what are the costs; sharing personnel among schools; overall spending district-wide; rising education costs; technology and cost savings; balance of taxes and quality education; maintaining a high quality system in the face of changing community demographics and economics; fiscally responsible.
- Fluctuating enrollment: declining enrollments in some schools; fluctuation as it relates to staffing, students, and resources; how small per class are we willing to go.
- Curriculum coordination/common expectations: across schools and within schools; common expectations; curriculum without losing individuality; consistency within the primary and middle schools to ensure all are at the same level when entering high school; incorporating media literacy education and service learning into school curriculum/programs across the district.
- Supervision/evaluation and teacher quality: purposeful teacher evaluation reconstruction.
- Mentoring: mentoring new employees; supporting current teachers.
- Enrichment opportunities for all: after school programs; gifted and talented programs and offerings; providing a variety of learning alternatives for K-6 students; personalization of learning, connecting with each student to individualize learning experience; maximize enrollment opportunities and pooling resources.
- Transition of students: Are kids prepared for Harwood; assessment to show progress; does Harwood prepare them for the world; better understanding of Harwood programs/budget.
- Policies: consistency; policy work, specifically equity issues, harassment, following common approach regarding challenging children keeping kids from falling through the cracks.
- Assessment/tracking: Track kids through grades; cross school supports to deal with kids falling through the cracks; technology and data management issue to improve student achievement.
- Governance: as a district, brainstorming creative solutions; take another try at governance change.
- Tuition issues: tuition students looking at creative ways; tuition policy; accepting tuition students.
- Public relations/community-board relations: learning the ropes of being a board member.
- All day kindergarten.
- Boards working together: time share critical importance to board and might best be addressed by working cross supervisory unions; SU opportunities.
- Special education: special needs addressing counseling of students.
- Leadership/model expectations.
- Middle school or 5-8 school.

JANUARY 2008 SUPT. SEARCH MEETING

What is working well?

- Staff: very stable; many are community members deeply invested in the well-being of their particular school; high achieving students and professional staff; experienced Central Office staff; low turnover in administration of all schools in SU.
- Community: Investment in education as seen in the ease with which our budgets pass; negligible high school drop-out rate; alternative education programs have been embraced as a great benefit to students.
- Strong sense of purpose and mission in creating a seamless PK-12 educational experience for our students.
- Collaboration: Environment of open dialogues and communication between schools/administration/faculty seems to have been created to support positive change; willingness of individual towns to work together, coalescing of priorities, value of education; school boards and administrative team that cooperates and collaborates on SU goals and other issues; very strong and productive collaboration.
- Professional development: district-wide professional development initiatives; early release days; exceptional professional development model and offerings.
- One of the highest high school graduation rates in the State.
- District transparency and openness.
- Increase in technology use (PowerSchool, VDC).
- Values education

Major challenges/needs facing the district

- Changing demographics: shrinking student base statewide means districts will be competitive for students; effect of declining enrollment on cost per pupil; decreasing resources; willingness to lead discussion of school consolidation if necessary.
- Curriculum coordination: Common outcomes with transition from elementary to middle to high school; must balance teacher initiative, strengths and creativity with common expectations across schools; improve consistency of instructional opportunities for K-8 students; need for a greater focus on students who are struggling in school; need for programs for high risk students in grades 7-10; connectivity of the elementary schools to the Harwood campus in a more formal sense instead of by individual efforts.
- School boards: Collaboration of 7 school boards and trust is new and fragile; successful navigation of a complex set of governance structures within SU; micromanaging by some board members; need to better define roles and responsibilities for board members and administrators.
- Getting everyone to think PK-12, not just for their individual school/town.
- Unique issues per town based on size and economic composition.
- Transforming SU goals into real, tangible outcomes.
- Loss of local control in education.
- Legislative mandates.
- Transportation.

- Have yet to change instructional programs and show improvement in achievement after significant investment in data collection technology and analysis.
- Need to increase starting wages and create equal wage scale for all schools.