

School Board Meeting: Reflection

I have attended school board monthly and special school board meetings regularly since accepting the role of K-12 Dean of Students on December 1st of this school year. The school board meeting I chose to reflect on was a February 23rd Special School Board Meeting. I chose this particular meeting because it was held to discuss the future administrative structure of our district.

Those in attendance were all members of the school board, our out-going superintendent, our part-time principal, several teachers and para professionals, our administrative secretaries, a handful of parents, and our local media representatives. Quite a full house in anticipation of a very open discussion about how we want our learning community to look, from the top down, for the foreseeable future.

After the agenda was agreed upon the discussion regarding our future administrative structure began with a proposal from one board member. He proposed we look at a .6 Superintendent, a K-12 Principal, and a K-12 Dean of Students. There was further talk about the division of labor that would entail, salary structure, hiring process, etc.

Several staff members, myself included, suggested that the proposed structure might not be best suited for our small district. We noted concerns about communication gaps, discipline issues, and ambiguous job descriptions that were raised by members of our learning community in the fall while we were all working on our strategic planning initiatives. Then, one of our administrative professionals suggested perhaps a FT E-6 Principal, FT 7-12 Principal, and .6FTE Superintendent would be a better fit. Many staff in attendee spoke in support of that proposal citing better support, communication, and clear “chain of command” moving forward.

Having sat in on many board meetings I was pleasantly surprised by both the staff participation in the discussion and the school board’s willingness to, not only listen, but act upon the recommendations of teachers, staff, and parents. There was a genuine and palpable effort to move forward in the best interests of our district. At one point, near the end of the meeting, there was even clapping. Clapping at a school board meeting? Not a common occurrence.

More specifics were discussed and voted upon without much fanfare. But a tone was set at this meeting that I hope will carry into the process of hiring our next administrative team. The meeting lasted just under 2 hours, the process that followed is still in motion. I wish all school board meetings left me feeling like something had been accomplished; like adults acted like adults in the best interest of our students. It was a good night.