

Potomac Elementary School District #11

Minutes – August 23, 2010

Call to Order

Board Chair Robert O'Boyle called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM by leading all in the Pledge of Allegiance. Those trustees present were: Gary Long, Victoria Richardson, Alicia Vanderheiden and Jim Wrobel. Principal Johnson and Jill Thornton, clerk, were also in attendance.

Public Input (for issues not on the agenda) none.

Roles of Board and Administration

Questions have been brought before the school board that concern several issues at Potomac School. Chair O'Boyle felt an explanation of the roles of the Board and Administration was a good way to start today's meeting. He stated that the board sets policy for the school, but relies on a solid administration, which relies on the staff. The best way to have concerns answered is with informal discussions that allow a free flow of ideas between the individual(s) and the school personnel involved.

School personnel will endeavor to respond to and resolve complaints without resorting to the formal complaint procedure and, when a complaint is filed, will address the complaint promptly and equitably.

If an individual encounters problems following that informal path, then the protocol to follow is set in Board Policy #5240P. This policy was not read at the meeting, but was referred to. It is paraphrased below for clarification:

- First, as stated above, an individual with a complaint or issue to discuss should informally talk to the teacher, counselor, or building administrator involved, with the objective of resolving the matter promptly.
- Second, if the issue is not resolved, the individual may file a written grievance stating: 1) the nature of the grievance and 2) the remedy requested. The signed and dated grievance must be filed with the Principal within sixty (60) days of the event or incident. The Principal will investigate and attempt to resolve the issue.
- If either party is not satisfied with the Principal's decision, the individual may request in writing that the Board review the Principal's decision. This must be submitted to the Board within fifteen (15) days of the Principal's decision.

Policy #5240P continues with:

"...The Board is the policy-making body of the school, however, and appeals to that level must be based solely on whether or not policy has been followed. Any individual appealing a decision of the Principal to the Board bears the burden of proving a failure to follow Board policy.

Upon receipt of a written appeal of the decision of the Principal, and assuming the individual alleges a failure to follow Board policy, the matter shall be placed on the agenda of the Board for consideration not later than their next regularly scheduled meeting. A decision shall be made and reported in writing to all parties within thirty (30) days of that meeting. The decision of the Board will be final, unless appealed within the period provided by law."

Chair O'Boyle continued with the statement that school board meetings also have set protocol to follow. The requirement for a board discussion of any issue is that it must first be on the agenda. Without being on the agenda,

there is insufficient time for research and for all interested parties to come to the meeting. An example of this is when a member of the audience gives public input. Their input is for the boards' information, but it cannot be commented on or discussed until it is put on an agenda. This allows the board to gather all pertinent information before discussion, and also allows all interested parties to attend the meeting with that issue on the agenda. If it is not an issue for a future agenda, it can be given to the appropriate school personnel.

Jim Wrobel stated another difficulty he has encountered as a board member is when he has been presented with information while talking with an individual, and asked for his opinion or beliefs. As a member of the board, he has an interest in understanding the issues, but commenting or discussing those issues outside of a board meeting can be misconstrued as representing the beliefs of the whole board.

Tim Johnson compared the school board meetings with meetings of the legislature to give a better understanding of the way the process works. The legislature does not have discussions with the public when they are in session. They were elected to represent the public and hold discussions with other legislative members to decide on issues brought before them. The school board members are also elected representatives for the community, and as such value community input in order to better understand the issues, but the discussion is between board members in a public meeting.

Tonight's meeting is for the public to present their concerns. Then, the Board and Principal can see what could be followed up with an informal meeting with Tim Johnson, and what should be put on a future agenda for Board discussion.

Curriculum

To begin with, Principal Tim Johnson presented some information on what the term 'curriculum' encompasses.

He said there are four different components of curriculum:

- 1) First is the Montana State mandated content. This content is what is required by all Montana schools.
- 2) Second, there are specific textbooks and resources set with the Missoula Curriculum Consortium.
- 3) Third, there is Pacing, or the speed the curriculum content and textbooks are presented in the classroom.
- 4) And fourth, there is Differentiated Instruction, or how teachers work with students who are above or below the class level.

The only choices the District has are in the third and fourth curriculum components, which are 'Pacing' and 'Differentiated Instruction'.

Differentiated Instruction is the component that has been brought up to Principal Johnson the most. The question that arises is how the individual needs of students are addressed.

Principal Johnson explained that elementary school teachers are trained to deal with that issue within their classrooms. The level of Differentiated Instruction also increases as the students' progress to middle school.

In discussions of Pacing and Differentiated Instruction, the question is how and where our limited resources should be spent, or what should the balance be?

Cliff Vann started his input with a flip chart to clarify his thoughts on curriculum, as he stated it was a subject he has been thinking about for some time.

Adjourn

Chair O'Boyle adjourned the Board meeting at 8:05 pm.