



Mastering New Worlds

Manson Northwest Webster Community School Board of Education Meeting December 1, 2011

The Manson Northwest Webster Community School Board held an education meeting on Thursday, December 1, 2011, in the board room in the administration building.

President Paterson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Paterson, Nelsen, Petersen, Lawler, Jacobsen, Johnson arrived at 7:08.

Absent: DeWall.

Others present: Supt. Egli, Board Secretary Schroeder, Principals Duncan and Holloway, Laura Horan, and one interested patron.

Motion by Jacobsen, second by Lawler, to approve the agenda. All ayes, motion carried.

Mr. Paterson welcomed the group and led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

The board members discussed what they learned at the IASB (Iowa Association of School Boards) Convention held in Des Moines on November 17th. Board member Jacobsen went to a session about High Tech High at Muscatine Community School, which is a technology based education environment. He thinks it sounds like an interesting program and he would really like to see it in action. Students seem to like the program which allows them to see what standards they have met and showcase their portfolios online.

Board member Nelsen learned that many schools are turning to group learning and teamwork. In this teaching style students are graded on their performance on a project so no one student would feel pressure to do all the work. Nelsen added that students are excited about project based learning and often encourage other students to do their best. Not all students in the school participate in the project based program. Schools that offer this program had limited enrollment, but it's not just for high achievers. Supt. Egli stated a program like this may be worth looking into, as it may really fit in with our 1:1 program.

President Paterson shared that he attended a round table discussion on problems that arise from being a board member. The biggest part of the discussion was about the four year term for board members. It was brought up that four years may be too long and may scare people away from running for school board. This system also results in a large turn-over in board members every two years that can change or reverse what a prior board was trying to accomplish.

Jacobsen also attended Newell Fonda's presentation on their 1:1 computer program and a session on open meetings. Currently we have comments at the beginning and end of our board meetings. It was suggested to post our meeting agendas online and to possibly amend the agenda we currently use to include only an opening agenda item for the public to make comments.

Supt. Egli shared several handouts with the board regarding grading and grade reporting practices. He stated some schools already grade on standards and benchmarks. Showing student progress could mean highlighting the benchmarks that have been met. Curriculum coordinator Laura Horan added that the district needs to focus on learning and what the grades really mean. We need to be clear about what we want our students to learn before we change grading and reporting. At year end the district will have a report to show which standards and benchmarks our teachers have taught. Mr. Duncan shared standards based report cards that are used at Webster City elementary where Mr. Duncan used to teach.

The building principals each shared their current grading practices. The lower elementary uses + to show a student is making progress and a – to show improvement is needed. Letter grades start at 3rd grade and continue through high school. An area of concern at the JH/HS level is whether or not to grade on responsibility and promptness. The general consensus is that a responsibility grade should be limited or separate from the grade for academic achievement.

Mr. Holloway also shared a new procedure that was put in place at the beginning of second trimester. Each student will be allowed 4 “do overs” per trimester on an assignment or test which the student feels he or she could improve on. A “do over” is for full credit, but cannot be used on finals.

Comments:

Superintendent Egli commented on Director of Education Jason Glass’ meetings around the state. He is talking about the Education Blueprint for Iowa. It has several key parts—great teachers and administrators; high expectations and fair measures; a spirit of innovation/technology. The idea for increasing teacher pay and creating master teachers has been put on hold for this year.

Motion by Jacobsen, second by Peterson, to adjourn the meeting. All ayes, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Board Secretary

Board President