

Minutes
Clark County School District
Special Meeting of the Board of School Trustees

TELECONFERENCE ONLY

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

5:01 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present
Lola Brooks, President
Linda P. Cavazos, Vice President
Danielle Ford, Clerk
Irene Cepeda, Member
Chris Garvey, Member
Deanna L. Wright, Member
Linda E. Young, Member

Jesus F. Jara, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

Also present were: Mary-Anne Miller, Board Counsel, District Attorney's Office; Cindy Krohn, Director, Board Office; and Dr. Thomas Alsbury, Balanced Governance Solutions™.

Adoption of the Agenda

Adopt agenda, except note additional reference material and revised additional reference material provided for Item 3.01.

Motion: Garvey Second: Wright Vote: Unanimous

Public Comment on Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

Mrs. Krohn provided a summary of the written comments submitted, as follows:

Item 3.01

While thankful for their job at CCSD, a writer listed the following areas that need to be addressed: lack of transparency, negative climate and culture at CCSD, ESP positions always being the first to be cut, and too many administrators trying to intimidate employees and ignoring negotiated bargaining agreements.

A writer said their organization is committed to helping to make the educational system harmonious for all students, especially African American students and employees that work in the CCSD. Several items of concerns were listed, and they asked that the Trustees take ownership though the evaluation process.

A new CCSD educator said she is concerned with District leadership and asked to consider a different direction for CCSD.

Public Comment on Agenda and Non-Agenda Items (continued)

Non-Agenda Items

One comment was received on non-agenda items that included information and links to videos pertaining to the mental health of adolescents.

2020 Summative Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools

Discussion and possible action on the 2020 summative evaluation of the Clark County School District Superintendent of Schools.

Dr. Alsbury discussed the rating document and evaluation process. He said as discussed and agreed upon by the Board, he would be assisting the Board in developing a revised superintendent evaluation document. He discussed with the Board his recommendations for changes to the rating document as outlined in Reference 3.01(A) as the Trustees provided input on the modifications they would like to see.

Trustee Young commented that without the Trustees being able to present their own supporting documentation or evidence, this process, in her opinion, is one-sided.

Dr. Alsbury stated this would be one of the areas that the Board and the Superintendent would need to determine during the evaluation development discussion; that there needs to be some discussion and determination around what documentation would be formally included. He said also there are other categories, such as rationale, used by other districts that were not included in this evaluation document that was used this year.

Dr. Alsbury offered, as part of the process of narrowing the suggestions for growth statements, to merge the statements and recraft two statements for Theme I – External Communications, including language for communication with the Trustees and communication with the public. He said the Trustees could choose, instead, to decide which statements to include, merge, or exclude throughout the document.

Trustee Ford described her process for merging the statements and incorporating the critical language. She said she looked at all the statements in the theme, chose what she felt was the core statement, which was 3B-7, excluded ones she felt did not need to be part of the statement, and then began to highlight phrases or words from others that should be included, such as “public” and “straightforward” from 1A-1, “collecting meaningful feedback” from 4A-1, “sensitivity to targeted audience” from 3C-2, and “the use of social media” from 3C-7.

Trustee Garvey agreed with Dr. Alsbury’s suggestion for merging and recrafting the language around communication with the Trustees and communication with the public. She asked if the statements that are crafted through this process would be the basis for the discussion in January or February because she feels they need to get this evaluation more focused on items based on student achievement.

2020 Summative Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools (continued)

Trustee Garvey said she would be comfortable with Dr. Alsbury crafting the two statements and providing the document in Reference 3.01(A) as backup material so those having the discussion could see what the concerns were. She agreed with Trustee Ford's comment on including statement 3B-7.

Dr. Alsbury said this process would not be carried forward. He said he believes this process will not be necessary and the focus will be different. He said most effective boards do try and focus primarily on student learning issues.

Trustee Cavazos said she would agree with giving Dr. Alsbury the autonomy to merge the statements into two suggestions for growth. She cautioned that she did not want to lose the direction and content of what has been brought together and developed in the document through each Trustees' input. She said she feels communication is an essential part of the Trustees and the Superintendent being able to reach their goals for students and is intrinsic throughout the entire process.

Trustee Cepeda agreed with Trustee Cavazos' statement regarding communication. She disagreed with picking and choosing words from each statement because she feels the original spirit of the statement could be lost.

Trustee Brooks agreed with Dr. Alsbury merging the statements and developing two areas of focus being communication with the Board and communication with the community.

Trustee Young said it is difficult to speak with one voice as a Board when there are seven people with differing perspectives. She said they must find a way to include the minority opinions.

Dr. Alsbury agreed with Trustee Young's sentiments and asked that she point out language or words that should be included in the statements.

Trustee Wright agreed with Dr. Alsbury merging the statements, focusing on communication to the Trustees and communication to the community. She expressed concern with the language, "...with enough notice to re-evaluate decisions..." in item 1A-1. She said she liked the idea of adding "publicly in a straightforward manner" and "sound reasoning." She said while communication on the part of the Superintendent is essential, Trustees need to be held accountable and responsible for their role as well.

Trustee Cavazos asked if the Board would be confirming or discussing the final scores for the ratings.

Dr. Alsbury suggested that because each Trustee was able to give ratings and the ratings were averaged, those overall ratings speak for the whole Board, so they would not go over those scores. He stated he has sent the score averages and would be sending the approved suggestions for growth to Mrs. Krohn, and the final document would include the ratings and the suggestions for growth.

Trustee Young stated she would like the word "diverse" included in the suggestions for growth.

2020 Summative Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools (continued)

Dr. Alsbury asked Trustees to share their thoughts on Theme II – Systems Thinking.

Trustee Cavazos said the language in 4B-8 is all-inclusive and specifically, "...identify proactive measures that not only prevent negative outcomes..." encompasses everything and is extremely important. She said 1A-4 can be merged. She commented on Theme III – Trustee Communications, stating town halls and listening tours only work if the Board is able to be provided with the results of the effort.

Trustee Brooks said she would like to keep statement 4B-8 only.

Trustee Ford said she would like to include the word "context" or "reasoning," and she would also like to add "include all relevant comparisons" and "corresponding best practice."

Trustee Garvey said she would agree to including the language suggested by Trustee Ford and "when appropriate" in 4B-8.

Trustee Cepeda agreed with Trustee Garvey's comments.

Trustee Young also agreed with the first statement and adding "corresponding best practice" but said she would encourage international or global best practices.

Trustee Cavazos suggested removing "Continue to..." in 4B-8.

Dr. Alsbury asked for the Trustees' input on Theme III – Trustee Communications.

Trustee Ford commented on Theme IV – Equity and Diversity, which was mislabeled as Theme III. She suggested beginning with 3B-1 as the core statement and shortening that statement. She suggested merging 1A-5 and including a focus on transparency, including "equity gaps" and specifically "ELL and Special Education gaps" from 1B-4, and replacing "pandemic" with "any events that threaten to widen the gaps."

With regard to Theme III – Trustee Communications, 3B-6, Trustee Ford stated she would not want to include town halls but instead say "expand initiatives to connect with the public" and replacing "the broader community such as seniors" with "diverse community." She suggested merging 3A-8 to say, "Ensure that there is a linkage between high-level idea and implementation" and merging 1B-2 to say, "Ensure that the process to prevent unforeseen consequences is implemented" and include "future planning." She suggested merging 1C-4 with the broad community communication with the language, "Aim to inform and educate the community on important legislative items to ensure the District receives adequate funding and that all constituents understand the budget."

Trustee Cepeda commented that there are a lot of pieces of Trustee Communications that feel like external communications. She agreed with Trustee Ford's comments regarding 3B-6 and 1C-4 being more like strategies to a goal.

Dr. Alsbury suggested it might be best to incorporate some of the ideas expressed with the statement under External Communications.

2020 Summative Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools (continued)

Trustee Garvey stated with regard to the legislative piece and the town halls, people responded well to being able to engage and liked the proximity of the meeting locations. She said the town halls and round tables Trustee Brooks helped to organize to help people understand the budget and the legislative platform were very successful. She stated continuing that work and expanding on it is one of the best core suggestions for growth and should be merged appropriately. She suggested language that talks about having high-level discussions and the need to keep Trustees updated on changes or developments.

Trustee Cavazos said things she felt were relevant in this area are transparency and Trustees being kept informed through a feedback loop. She said in terms of 1C-4 she feels it is important for the Trustees to know who is representing them in the legislature and what is happening.

Dr. Alsbury asked if the discussion around the town halls would be a recommendation for the Superintendent or if that was a Board initiative.

Trustee Garvey said that was a joint effort and suggested the Board and the Superintendent should have a discussion about what activities will be a joint collaboration.

Trustee Young suggested incorporating language that states that the Superintendent must inform and include a Trustee when he is involved in an event or activity in that Trustee's district.

Trustee Wright said continual updates with meetings with the Superintendent and briefings for the Board, as well as urgent updates when something significant happens, are important. She said with regard to the legislative session, the weekly phone calls the Board received last legislative session were a major step in the right direction and should continue. She said it is about the communication between the Superintendent and the Trustees being timely and continual.

Dr. Alsbury asked the Trustees to provide feedback on Theme IV – Equity and Diversity.

Trustee Brooks said she thinks the statement in 1A-5 encompasses most of what is in the other statements.

Trustee Young stated equity and access are different, and she suggested including the word "access."

Trustee Wright agreed with Trustee Brooks' comment about 1A-5 but said she also likes "Ensure committees, workgroups, taskforce are intentionally diverse" in 3B-1, "Increase the sharing of people..." in 4A-7, and the language "debunk the misconception that the Superintendent has a small group of people that he deals with" taken from 4A-7.

Trustee Cepeda said she supports merging 3B-1, 1A-5, and 1B-4. She said one of the pieces she likes in 4A-7 is the potential for a community webpage that lists community meetings. She said she would also like to merge 1B-3.

2020 Summative Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools (continued)

Trustee Cavazos referenced the last sentence in 4A-7 and said it is important for the community to be informed of the community meetings and events. Regarding 1B-4 she agreed with Trustee Young's mention of access. She said it is important for the Board to be informed about things that may negatively impact ELL, such as the loss of positions, for example.

Dr. Alsbury cautioned against naming a specific group with special needs because then other groups are excluded and said he would normally suggest keeping the language broad. He said if the Board wants to specifically name ELL and Special Education, they can do that.

Trustee Cavazos said she feels they cannot ignore the fact that those are the students with the highest need right now, and they need to pay attention to the parents, to the community, and to educators.

Trustee Young said there is a digital divide, and there needs to be varying approaches when reaching out to the community or asking the community for input or to participate in a survey, for example.

Trustee Garvey agreed with the statement in 3B-1. She said with regard to 1B-4 she would support the Superintendent being mindful of the fact that the pandemic has impacted certain groups more than others in terms of student achievement and support and the Superintendent addressing those equity gaps. She said she could not support including a statement that says the Superintendent's evaluation would be based on whether he makes cuts to special education or ELL when the District is facing cuts that could be devastating to the District as a whole.

Dr. Alsbury asked Trustees for their input on Theme V – Personal Management.

Motion to have Dr. Alsbury merge the group statements using the feedback from Trustees in tonight's meeting to complete and finalize the Superintendent's Evaluation.

Motion: Wright Second: Cavazos

Trustee Cavazos asked how Dr. Alsbury would modify 4B-9 in Theme V – Personal Management, particularly the last sentence.

Dr. Alsbury said he would rephrase the last sentence to consolidate it but not lose the message. He said he would use language such as "that there be an opportunity for collaboration, input from the staff, feedback loops that allow for concerns to be expressed in a safe way."

Trustee Cavazos asked that Dr. Alsbury incorporate the phrase "at all levels" with the portion that reads, "Ensure that CCSD employees...."

Trustee Young asked that Dr. Alsbury keep in mind that mistrust is a real issue as he considers making changes to this paragraph.

2020 Summative Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools (continued)

Vote on Trustee Wright's motion was unanimous.

Superintendent Jara respectfully requested a meeting with Trustee Brooks to review his evaluation and discuss the areas designated as needing improvement so that he may identify the areas he should focus on moving forward. He stated that this was the first time he was formally being made aware of some of the concerns and that he wants to ensure the work that is being done is in line with the direction provided by the Board and is following the Balanced Governance™ model.

Dr. Alsbury reviewed the ratings given by the Trustees for the indicators within the nine categories in the evaluation tool, as shown in Reference 3.01(B) as follows:

Effective Operational Oversight – rating range of 2.0-3.0

Effective Progress Monitoring and Reporting – rating range of 2.1-3.4

Effective Communication – rating range of 2.0-2.6

Effective Collaborative Leadership – rating range of 2.0-2.7

Trustee Ford read the motion made by Trustee Wright, and passed unanimously by the Board, during the Superintendent's formative evaluation on June 18, 2020, as follows: "Trustee Wright restated her motion as follows: 1, Develop and adopt a formal communication plan, developing a clear communication flowchart with top down and bottom up approaches; 2, Develop protocols to resolve operational issues and develop specific timelines; 3, Develop protocols to look at committees and working groups to make sure that they are reflective of our community and include people closest to the work; and 4, Develop a plan for addressing diversity staffing issues in the District, including teachers, administrators, police, and support staff, with the goal of mirroring the CCSD community." She said these were the suggestions for growth given to the Superintendent at that time.

Trustee Cavazos asked for clarification of the process and the Superintendent meeting only with the Board President.

Trustee Brooks said it was her understanding that Superintendent Jara was requesting a meeting with her to go over the evaluation after Dr. Alsbury finishes compiling it. She stated that under Board policy, the Board President facilitates the evaluation; therefore, she would be the person to take the final, completed document and have a discussion with the Superintendent.

Trustee Young said she was not given a copy of the statement Superintendent Jara read requesting to meet with the Board President. She expressed concern and reservation with the Superintendent meeting only with the Board President to discuss his evaluation.

2020 Summative Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools (continued)

Dr. Alsbury offered that he understands the evaluation process to be that the evaluation would be completed, the evaluation document would then be sent to the Trustees as a final document and would be voted on by the Board at a regular meeting to accept the final evaluation as written. He said it is normal for the Board President to meet with the Superintendent after the evaluation has been completed and finalized. He asked Superintendent Jara if he would be willing to meet with the Board Vice President and Board Clerk as well.

Superintendent Jara restated his request to review the areas of improvement with the Board President. He said Board counsel can be present as well. He said he needs to understand the Board's direction, not that of individual Board members.

Trustee Young noted that the finalized document needs to come before the Board before the Superintendent requests to meet with the Board President.

Trustee Brooks stated that this would be the final meeting for Trustees Garvey, Wright, and Young. She suggested Dr. Alsbury provide the final document to all Trustees and the Trustees be allowed to review it and provide feedback.

Dr. Alsbury stated that his plan was to provide the finalized document to Mrs. Krohn who would then provide it to the Trustees.

Trustee Ford asked for clarification of the timeline for this process.

Ms. Miller stated the evaluation is concluded, and all that is left is for Dr. Alsbury to put together the final document, and the Trustees can bring back any concerns they might have. She stated that the Superintendent can always meet with the Board President, and Trustee Brooks has expressed that she knows her role is not to change anything the Board has decided on.

Trustee Ford asked if the ratings in the previous document were final and if they would be included in this final document that Dr. Alsbury is compiling or if there should be a motion to approve that finalized average rating.

Trustee Brooks asked Ms. Miller if a motion was needed if the Board had agreed to average the rating and that it be the final rating.

Ms. Miller said not unless there was some concern that Dr. Alsbury did not do it correctly.

Trustee Ford said she wants to be sure that the rating is finalized.

Trustee Brooks said the process is the rating for the numerical scores is final, and Dr. Alsbury is going to merge the comments and put it all in one document; the document will go to the Trustees; once reviewed by the Trustees, she will review the document with Superintendent Jara.

2020 Summative Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools (continued)

Trustee Ford clarified that it would be the Board President and Superintendent Jara reviewing the final document just in case there is a delay and there is a new Board President.

Trustee Garvey thanked Superintendent Jara for his work and his leadership during this difficult time.

Trustee Young thanked Dr. Alsbury for facilitating this process. She advised Superintendent Jara not to take criticism personally and said the Trustees can be passionate.

Trustee Wright stated that even under normal circumstances, being Superintendent of CCSD is not an easy job. She said she was disheartened by some of the scores given to the Superintendent in his evaluation. She thanked the Superintendent for his intention to be transparent and responsive to the Board.

Trustee Cavazos thanked Dr. Alsbury for his assistance in this process. She thanked Trustees Garvey, Wright, and Young for their help and participation tonight.

Upcoming Meeting of the Board of Trustees – Monday, January 4, 2021, 5:30 p.m.

Adjourn: 8:08 p.m.

Motion: Wright Second: Young Vote: Unanimous