

School Board Meeting 2-11-10

Someone else took these notes because I was unable to attend this meeting (a big thank you to that person!!!). Please contact me if you have any questions on the contents of these notes, Courtney Smith (Douglas County Federation).

- Executive Session tabled until the end of the meeting.
- Rick O'Connell/Ellen Bartlett: spoke with 326 people, 34 settings, 148 hard copy questionnaires (1500 total)
 - Asked to identify the strengths of the district, issues and concerns, and characteristics of a new superintendent
 - Items in report are those that were reported frequently
- O'Connell: Executive summary 24 pages(thanked Susan Meek and Nona)
 - Most proud: strong staff (certified/classified), admin., teachers classified
 - Make decisions based on what's best for kids
 - Choice schools
 - Range of opportunities IB SPED, world language, GT, extra curricular
 - Positive relationship with district, Board & DCFT, DCFCE, ATU which is unusual for a school district
- Challenges:
 - Lowest funded district
 - Finances
 - Uncertainty and concern with regard to BOE
 - Communication between all: comments from BOE and b/c of Nov. election
 - devalue staff
- What would you like to see in superintendent?
 - Performance & achievement
 - Strong leader w/ proven track record
 - Charismatic
 - Integrity
 - Desire to make decision based on what's best for kids
 - Desire to improve compensation
 - Willing to become familiar w/ all needs

Carson: Let's address the one that caught all of our attention, I talked with teachers this week who were almost crying because they have been told that this board doesn't value teachers and I don't know who's telling them this, a lot of the info out there is completely false and I don't know who's driving it.

Williams: shared during first two meeting he felt the same way about them.

Benevento: maybe we can schedule face to face meeting with teachers. Brenda is not responsible for all of her members but she's got to get the message out that we are not trying to do that, so much ignorance out there that we need people to know the shortfall is because of the state budget, not because the board wants to cut. Stuart: we need to be aware of our word choice that we put out there to teachers.

Silverthorn: mean what we say, say what we mean

Stahl: feel refreshed about the board, just because we banter doesn't mean we don't treat each other as people, even though politics played a role...fear breeds insanity. O'Connell: (in his opinion) first time ever politically charged campaign.

Benevento: I take exception with that I agree with Meghan, I'm surprised that I am the one who had to ask why 80 % are proficient on math CSAP in 3rd grade and 30% by 10th, because we question and ask things is the Board's responsibility, they've always been politically charged it's just been on the other side. O'Connell:

there were inflammatory robo-calls, comments were made by some board members that were right or wrong, my opinion, specific comments were made that came back to us in spades, in my opinion it was a different campaign and a different set of circumstances not just teachers, classified and admin have a big stake and they need to understand where you're coming from, it's the most important job you'll ever have in your life that you don't get paid for, staff felt after the election that they were getting beat up based on the comments that were made. Carson: asked to question Rick- what does he think the job of the board is? Why would you question that, of course the board's job is important and you have a big responsibility. Carson: how do we do that without getting people worked up? O'Connell: listen to people, listen first. Bartlett: as you want to make changes and revisions, you'll get a lot more done if you work with the people in the organization and respect them you can be positive without making them feel like everything they've done before is all wrong, ask them for suggestions with your support. Gerken: I don't think Doug was criticizing he was just asking. Stahl: we talked about this 2 years ago, sat through almost the same presentation and I thought then it is the fault of CSAP, I agree in standardized test but we don't have control over it in our local community, sounded like you thought we should teach to the test. Benevento: nothing has changed I agree but I guess I'll critique the board because what have we done about this in the last two years? My demographic comment seems to have attracted the most attention but I'm going to be here for 4 yrs.

Williams: teachers are insecure and sensitive, and you said it at the wrong time.
Silverthorn: people have told me they think you're right they just don't want to say it in public. Stahl: have you been asked to clarify because if that seemed to come from the board Doug, you're entitled to your point. Benevento: if you want to debate it, people should be uncomfortable about the loss of 100 million dollars, that's something to worry about. Gerken: tons of uncertainty now more than ever is the time to be sensitive about comments, lets not tiptoe, get out there and talk but for the next few weeks stay focused on the superintendent we've said it before, be very careful, reporters blow things out of context...

Bartlett: looking at page 4 those things reported across the group as those appreciated and seen as strengths

- Strong staff
- Academic achievement
- Commitment to meet the needs of all students
- Partnership admin staff, employee groups unions
- Parents and employees pride in dist
- Dist able to perform as well as it does w/ little \$

Some strengths particular to groups

Stahl: lets replace use of reform with innovation because all of the groups mention innovative except board who called it reform, don't we mean innovation?

Gerken: when people say they like choice what do you think they mean?

O'Connell: charters and magnets. Gerken: don't parents send their kids to charter schools because they get better services? Benevento: schools can't turn away Sped (students)...challenge is whether perception is funding of charters get less because they don't have sped. O'Connell: reality. Benevento: they get less funding? O'Connell: no they get 100% Per Pupil Revenue. Benevento: but not mil levy override. O'Connell: that goes way back to agreement between charters.

Benevento: can we look at changing that? O'Connell: if you want to sure.

Bartlett: charter & choice are seen as a strength of this district.

O'Connell: pg 9 most significant challenges facing dist

- Finance & budget politics
- BOE
- Doing more with less
- Mistrust (if you're making cuts you probably don't need it)
- Communication

- Morale
- ? board and district
- 70% community no stake, don't have kids in school
- maintain increase parent community involvement
- redefine performance pay: *union is more willing than any other to work with you
- losing employees

Stahl: do other districts have jobs? O'Connell: they are cutting too, but there are always other places to go. Right now, 80% of Cherry Creek applicants are from Douglas County. Gerken: there is about to be greater supply than there has ever been. Carson: perception of top heavy administration. Stahl: at least they said perception not fact. Carson: (in reference to today's Denver Post article) % budget cut admin I think it sounded appealing. Benevento: could we ask people what they want to cut? Silverthorn: (working on) federal employee program savings award employee gets cut for cost saving idea. O'Connell: if you ask the question, the implication is that we'll take your suggestion, are you going to? Benevento: darned if you do, darned if you don't. Stahl: I still read Kennedy's Profiles of Courage, we were elected to make choices and listen to public but were elected to lead. Benevento: what's a BRT? O'Connell: top notch mentor to teachers. Stahl: some are used highly effectively and some not, hard because you're increasing class sizes and heaping more on teachers, is BRT helping them stop-gap? O'Connell: SBB...principals have that choice. Silverthorn: people consistently like world language, but no one wants a fee, but willing to pay for sports. Bartlett: didn't get into funding. Gerken: interesting no comment relative to level of teacher compensation, concern is with losing staff and conditions. Stahl: 75% said don't cut pay increase class size 1600 surveyed, details who was surveyed. Gerken: what's best for kids we wouldn't fire people or increase class sizes. On the spectrum of dismissing people vs cuts in pay what's best? Bartlett: pros and cons for both. Gerken: they aren't going to leave if we cut because there aren't other jobs out there explain to me how cuts in pay isn't what's better for kids?

(back to characteristics):

- Continuing to make decisions based on what is best for kids
- Interpersonal skill
- Communication
- PR

- Both traditional= non traditional

Stahl: did anyone say best candidate? Bartlett: yes someone with the skills it takes to run the district.

- Fiscal responsibility
- Supportive of choice innovative
- Problem solver
- No one person can do it so needs to work with strong team

Gerken: will kids who misbehave be sent to innovative schools? Benevento: student criteria got it right who said superintendent serves students, teachers BOE, state, right order. Stuart: mentioned open campus concerns.

Bartlett: order of characteristics different for each sub group, extreme variance (not having doc in front of me I couldn't understand all the number and what they were assigned to) O'Connell: not our opinion, tool to market to candidates...should develop this soon. Carson: we should do it now and I like the first 6 but we should shorten them because it looks like we're looking for God. O'Connell: she hasn't applied. Carson: does anyone want to add to the top 6? Benevento: supportive of school choice, I think that's good but educational options is better. O'Connell: that's good. Bartlett: better to include both. Stahl: innovator is philosophy of how you look at education, not sure it fits where it is but needs to be a behavior.

Gerken: these are criteria, are we going to come up with questions? O'Connell: you said you wanted to, if you want to present some in initial app you can. Gerken: visionary? I have some questions, how would you approach a 40 mil deficit? Where do you see us in 5 years? How would you feel about choice? How do you see your role in the community at large? Separate those who are fishing up front.

O'Connell: application is already lengthy but if you want 2 or 3 questions for everybody that's fine. Williams: committed to excellence seems obvious

Stahl: strong public relation skills. Carson: could combine fiscal understanding with innovative. Williams: I'd be okay if they came from a small organization.

Carson: good track record in leadership roles. Gerken: I am just one of 7, but I am not looking for a legislator. Williams: have we had any legislators or politicians yet? O'Connell: no. Benevento: looking for someone to be part of the community

Silverthorn: embrace too strong. Williams: embrace is just what we've lacked previously. Gerken: ...not looking for someone who can pass a quiz on history of district. Williams: we're looking for embrace. Benevento: you want someone who can go out and talk about it. Bartlett: take out top and keep 2nd to last (many comments, keep 2nd, like 3rd etc but again, w/o doc too hard to follow). Stuart:

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due to unique relationship, should work cooperatively. Stahl: impressed with ability to work effectively. Williams: rules out non-traditional if they need to work cooperatively with union. Bartlett: keep work effectively with employee organizations. Gerken: fiscal? O'Connell: you have strong financial people. Williams: saying pay for performance saying choice, those say something, saying fiscal responsibility doesn't say anything unique about us. O'Connell: list won't make or break but these were suggestions from people. Bartlett: this list is a message to the community as well as candidates. Gerken: if anybody calls and says you didn't include... we should try to make something articulate...Stahl: politically savvy intrigues me, we need someone who can work with the state. Benevento: looking for someone w/ interpersonal skills (asked Rick how important it was). O'Connell: very, need someone with skills to go to legislature and work with community, who to say, when, what. This is a reflection of the board, not going to make or break but it says something about you. Williams: is there a probationary period? Silverthorn: are we looking at freezing superintendent performance pay? O'Connell: I was getting paid well salary and benefits

Discussion held about a flyer passed out at TRHS about cutting 14 teachers, increasing class size to 40, passed around board...

Stahl: let's go home. O'Connell: update, 24 applicants, would like 50 60 70 not much from Colorado feel good about a number of them, going to Phoenix this weekend and had 6 interviews, some are traditional a number are not, feel good about 8-10, this list will encourage people to jump in or out, have contacted Colorado people who've declined...interviews next couple weeks.

- Final five w/ board held at undisclosed location

Benevento: out of curiosity can we look through them and just read all of them?

O'Connell: no. Gerken: should just be Dan.

- Carson: can we begin dialogue on revenue options going forward, if we don't we're saying 2010 is out, people want to know our position. Do you just want to focus on budget cuts? Media inquiries, how do we handle them, notify Susan? Qualify w/ "own opinion." Benevento: I'm not participating in media calls. Carson: there is some concern that we try to be unified and keep it brief.