

WILLOW RUN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
Ypsilanti, Michigan

WORK-STUDY SESSION

September 28, 2006

The work-study session opened at 6:00 p.m. at Willow Run High School, 235 Spencer Lane, Ypsilanti, Michigan.

Those present were:

Claudette Braxton, President
Andreas Blakita, Vice President
Brenda Clay, Secretary
Clifford Smith, Trustee
Dorothy Stewart, Treasurer
Sheri Washington, Trustee
Scott Wilson, Trustee

Members of the Administrative Council Present Included:

Ron Ciranna, J.D., Superintendent
Katie Smith, Director, Technology and Community Services
Lana Tatom, Director, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

President Braxton called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

Ms. Hayes began by asking everyone how things have been going since the last workshop. Dr. Ciranna said since then, the board has agreed to move to work/study sessions for the first board meeting of each month, beginning in October. Board members shared their reasons for moving to the new structure, including increased communication and shared knowledge both among themselves and among the community.

Ms. Hayes said the specific focus of this work/study session would be focusing on the roles and responsibilities of the board and of the superintendent, and how to begin working together as a team. In order to grow into a team she said the following things must happen:

1. Unity of purpose – Unified group, acting as a team.
2. Agree on roles and responsibilities – This is the most difficult step.
3. Address issues, collective values, norms and informal standards and agreement on how to govern – Visiting buildings, public complaints, communicating with the superintendent, built-in structures that support our purpose.

Ms. Hayes said the ideal team knows each other strengths and weaknesses and how to use them to support one another. She then directed the board to complete an exercise where each board member wrote down two-strengths of each of the other board members. The purpose of this was to highlight each member's value to the board as a whole.

After this exercise was completed, Ms. Hayes pointed out common answers and perceptions of each member and how their strengths can help the entire board to function in a dynamic cohesive fashion. She encouraged everyone to look at and to respect the skills of other members and to use these skills, as well as their own, to work as a strong team.

Ms. Hayes then shared the four-stages of team development as follows:

1. Forming – team shape being identified.
2. Storming – open active disagreement.
3. Norming – working on self-improvement for the betterment of the group.
4. Performing – Highly productive, task oriented.

The group discussed where they currently are and agreed they are in the storming stage of team development. Ms. Hayes asked how they can move forward through the stages to performing. Ms. Braxton said the board needs to get back to basics, listen, let everyone be heard, and set-up structures to move forward. There was also some discussion about the board's decision to eliminate the committee structure to that of a committee as a whole, which Ms. Hayes said is a move toward norming.

In order to build trust the board agreed upon full-transparent disclosure of information to everyone, to open/honest communication and to disagree without repercussions. Ms. Hayes said every board member needs to commit to the same goal, looking beyond personal issues, and to respect each other's assets.

Ms. Hayes said as the board is not together too often, they need to be extremely effective when they are. She said the first step is to decide on a fresh start, leaving baggage at the door, while being professional and doing 100% for the kids in this district. She also stressed the need for the superintendent and the board to present a unified front to the public.

The group discussed ways of developing team trust and the roles of the board and of the superintendent. It was agreed that both the board and the superintendent have the right to expect civility, trust, respect, honesty, integrity, no surprises and to be each other's eyes and ears in the community. The board has the right to expect sound leadership, understanding of the district's culture, full-disclosure, communication, comfort-level, protection, clear, concise information and inclusion from the superintendent. The superintendent has the right to expect the board to allow him to do his job, no hidden agendas and to allow time for data gathering before decisions are made.

The board discussed plans for the next work/study session, including how to get administrative input for goals and strategies.

President Braxton declared the meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.