

Brookfield-LaGrange Park School District #95
Superintendent's 2013-2014 Mid-Year Report

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Superintendent Mid-Year Report, 2013-2014

Introduction:

The main focus of this Mid-Year report is two-fold. It provides an update as to the progress on the goals established between the superintendent and the Board. Second, it provides a summary overview as to the financial status, instructional strength, and status of the physical plant for the district.

First, three broad goals were established between the Board and superintendent. They included:

- 1) Provide the technology vision to bring administrative efficiencies through the use of technology and to address the use of technology in curriculum and instructional practice.
- 2) Provide on going assessment, evaluation, and recommendations relative to the instructional programming of the District.
- 3) Provide on going assessment, evaluation, and recommendations relative to the operations of the district.

Although the goals are broad, there have been certain key areas focus established for each goal. These key areas are addressed in detail in PART ONE of this report.

This report also serves to provide pertinent information relative to the financial status of the district, the instructional strength of the district, and the status of our physical plant. This information is reported in PART TWO of this report.

PART ONE:

Review of Superintendent's Goals:

The primary work that has taken place to accomplish the three goals is detailed in the following section. Although key work has been indentified that supports each goal, it is important to remember that this work is not inclusive of everything done to support that goal. Indeed the day-to-day operations also support the goals.

Goal One: Provide the technology vision to bring administrative efficiencies through the use of technology and to address the use of technology in curriculum and instructional practice.

Key Areas of Focus: Electronic Board Packets are implemented, on-line lunch program implemented, and a plan is developed to integrate technology into classrooms to facilitate differentiated instruction.

In order to bring greater efficiencies to the District through the use of technology, the implementation of the electronic board packets and the on-line lunch program were established. The electronic board packets are in full use at this time. The implementation was seamless and, to date has seen little or no issues with the transition to the electronic board book.

The on-line lunch program is also fully underway having been implemented at the start of the school year. The on-line lunch system was much more involved of a process as it entailed aligning our financial institutions with a new accounts receivable method. Further, it required educating the community on a new payment method at the same time as rolling out an entire new lunch program. The process, from the technology standpoint, had a few hiccups as we encountered parent access problems, student id problems, and problems with connectivity with the transactions at the actual cash registers. All in all, we are able to address these issues quickly and had the system running smoothly within about the first 30 days of implementation. The system not only has made for a smoother payment process for parents, but our ability to track and monitor the financial side of the lunch program has been beneficial from a budgetary standpoint.

In addition to creating the efficiencies with technology, the integration of technology into the classrooms to support learning continues to move forward, albeit slower than any of us would like. The start of this work began with acknowledging that our technology integration would not be a one-to-one model, but, rather, a model of integration that would allow appropriate technology to reach students in different ways. In short, that a one size fits all approach would not be our goal. To understand what technology is better suited for, and maybe has the greatest potential for impact on student learning, a survey

was conducted with teachers to learn how and what technology they would like to use to support learning.

At the same time, the plan to integrate technology also included a comprehensive plan to develop a personnel model that would support the integration of technology. The board felt that value would be gained by conducting an outside audit that would help to, among other things, develop the scope of the personnel structure. Thus, it was agreed through the technology committee that the audit would help inform the personnel model that would, in turn, help inform the direction of what and how technology is implemented in the classroom.

The technology audit is underway and should be completed by mid March. This information will help to drive the much need personnel structure that will support future technology integration into the classrooms.

Goal Two: Provide on going assessment, evaluation, and recommendations relative to the instructional programming of the District.

Key Areas of Focus: The role of librarian is evaluated, CCS Gap Analysis is completed, SBR is developed and prepared for implementation, and a foreign language program model is further explored.

In conjunction with the work to determine how technology is made available to teachers and students for instruction purposes coupled with the transformation from print resources to digital media resources, it was essential to evaluate the role of the library and librarian within the district. It is important to note that the function of the library at Brook Park is very different from that of S.E. Gross. Due to the nature of the library and how it supports and teaches reading at Brook Park, there are no recommended changes to the operations at this time. Future attention may need to be given based upon technology integration, but the library's function of supporting the teaching of reading and serving as an exploratory for students would need to remain. However, the service function at S.E. Gross should become a cornerstone of the conversations that come as a result of the technology audit. It is my recommendation that the library become viewed as a major component in how 21st century learning is *supported* by the library. At the middle grades, this resource should support, enhance, and facilitate the integration of technology in the classroom at the same time as serving as a physical space that is used by small groups of children engaged in technology rich work (i.e. projects, group presentations, research, etc.).

It is amazing that the goal was simply to complete the gap analysis as we have gone so much further in this area. The board heard the presentation from Cathy Cannon and me at the first meeting in January that outlined the work and progression of the common core to date. The gap analysis is complete. Further, the curriculum maps have been developed that included alignment to the common core, assessments to be used for each instructional area, and a timeline for when the standards are met. Needless to say, we are

about 6 months ahead of our original schedule. As we move forward, continued work to refine the assessments and preparing for PARCC will become a focus.

As the work on the Common Core is drawing more focus on assessment, the natural progression is to communicate student progress related to the standards as measured by the assessments. Thus, the work of the Standards Based Report Cards (SBR) emerged. There are two components to this work. The first is the communication piece necessary to help our parents understand the value of a “change” in how a report card looks. The second is the actual development of the report card.

Communication relative to the movement towards SBR has been consistent and constant. We have held parent forums in the evening, been present at curriculum nights, and included messages in all school and district communications about the movement towards the SBR. All of these have been positively received. Future communication includes a parent brochure that introduces the new report card and gives them basic instruction on how to read the SBR as well as how to use that information for discussions with their child and school personnel. This will occur during our implementation phase when the final SBR is developed.

The work to develop the actual SBR is underway and going well. A committee of teachers and parents have met 3 times already to develop the SBR. We are at the point where the group will fraction into a middle school group and elementary group to establish the actual strands under each core area (i.e. math). We are on target to have the SBR developed by end of school year. I have also secured a proposal to have the actual SBR (when created), integrated into power school (our student management system). This is a very large task that will require approximately 50-60 clock hours. This work will be done over the summer. There will be two pilot phases that occur. The first will be simply a pilot to ensure that the technology to upload student data into the new SBR works correctly. This will be done first quarter of 2014-2015. A pilot of some degree will take place in the 3rd and 4th quarters where parents will receive the actual SBR. Full implementation is expected no later than 2015-2016 in all grades.

The last area of focus under goal two is further exploration of adding foreign language to the instructional program within the district. A small program has been introduced at grades 1 and 2 that is consistent with an after school program model. In short, it is outside the school day and not required for students to participate. The program has been well received by students, but there is some caution to the fact that this is the only option to an extracurricular activity for those students. When offered to students in grades 3-5, only one student chose foreign language. Work continues to evaluate program models at the elementary level that would include all students. These models include a push-in instructional approach and a computer-based guided learning approach. At S.E. Gross, options to expand programming that would have each student participate in a foreign language has been explored including adding a second language area to the existing Spanish offering. It should be noted that any change to programming at any level might necessitate changes to the current offering.

Goal Three: Provide on going assessment, evaluation, and recommendations relative to the operations of the district.

Key Areas of Focus: A plan is developed to re-structure the technology operations of the District, strategies are developed to address future facility needs.

A plan was shared with the board to re-structure the personnel operations to include a technology director and two technology technicians (one at each building). Job descriptions were shared with the board for each of these positions. The initial goal was to have that paradigm in place by January 1. The board asked that a technology audit be conducted prior to any restructuring and that consideration be given to outsourcing the technology director position. Two options to a technology audit were presented and the audit is now underway with completion expected by mid March. It is my belief that this audit will reinforce the need to change our personnel structure even if it includes outsourcing high level technology direction. After reviewing the findings of the technology audit, it is my hope that we can create the needed personnel structure to support our technology goals.

The major undertaking relative to the future facility needs has been the electrical upgrade project. The Buildings and Grounds committee determined that this project was critical to the future operations of the district. We established a plan to produce a RFP that would provide the District with the most competitive bids. We did realize the financial benefit to the calculated practice by arriving with a bid some 175k less than originally forecasted. The bid process meet the established time-lines and the work is underway with substantial completion by 8/1/2014. Future work will be to begin conversations to address the “what’s next” question. In order to plan for this work, a long-range financial plan is being created (completion by Feb 28) that will show the financial conditions of the district long-term. This will help in large project planning. Further a demographics study is being secured as it has become apparent that increasing enrollment has been a challenge for the district in recent years. The demographics study will help to influence the scenarios within the financial report. In all this will help to determine long-range facility planning and how to address the revenue needed to support such.

Closing Recommendations:

The work referenced above, for the most part, is completed and/or implemented. However, as we move through the end of the school year, a few items remain as outstanding work:

1. Produce the actual SBR and get it integrated with power school.
2. Provide options and recommendations for foreign language.
3. Use the technology audit findings to develop personnel structure.

4. Use technology audit findings to inform changes in the SEG library.
5. Use information from the financial and demographic study to begin future facility conversations.

PART TWO:

Financial Status of the District

At the end of FY 13, the district continued to perform exceptionally well relative to predicting revenues and estimating expenses. Not including the large one-time revenue we received from the CDB of 3.1 million, the district received \$220,000 less in revenue than predicted (1.8% less than budgeted). The district expended in FY 13 only 97 % of the budgeted expenditures leaving \$283,000 in unexpended funds. Overall-again not including the one time 3.1 million payment to the district- the district's revenue to expense was within less than one half a percent of total budget. In short, through detailed planning and careful attention to estimates, the district operated within \$60,000 of a 12.2 million dollar budget. The district's fund balance grew by almost 7% largely due to the 3.1 million.

I'm excited to note that the 2013-2014 (FY14) budget was adopted earlier than ever before through new budget process procedures. The FY 14 budget estimated \$11,919,341 in revenues and 12,304,604 in expenditures. Although our expenditures exceed our revenue, this is a result of a conscious decision to spend existing fund balance in the O/M fund to complete building improvement projects deemed critical by the buildings and grounds committee. It should also be noted that the district is engaged in an electrical project that is estimated to cost \$850,000. More than likely, the vast amount of this money will be spent in FY15, but either way, this amount will reduce the fund balance of the O/M fund.

January 31 marks the mid-way point within the fiscal year. The district's fund balance as of January 31, 2013 was \$8,181,944. At time, the district has expended 56% of its estimated expenditures and received 49% of its estimated revenue. While one may expect that the numbers are exactly 50/50, it is important to note that much expenditure occur on the front end of the FY (i.e. supplies) and do not necessarily indicate a monthly operational expense. Based on a review of financial data, the District is operating within its means and revenues are streaming in as predicted. We have encountered no major surprises. While it is too early yet to forecast ending budget results, I am confident that we are healthy and in a good position today. A further forecast of ending fund balances, expenditures, and revenues can be done after the second collection (roughly April). A working budget for expenditures will be created by March for review.

The following represents a breakdown by fund of our percentages of revenues collected and the percent of our budget expended as of January 31, 2013:

	Revenue	%	Expenditure	%
Education	4,414,620	48	5,127,744	57
O/M	646,450	50	899,402	48
Debt Service	370,782	49	581,156	79
Transportation	206,055	55	160,270	44
IMRF	149,953	45	193,305	59
Working Cash	52,033	46	0	

The superintendent and the finance committee have made progress in streamlining certain aspects of the budget as well as developing the budget earlier in the budget season. Specifying specific purchased services in the O/M budget has allowed for better monitoring of these expenditures as well as allowing for more accurate funding of these line items. This fiscal year saw the adoption of the budget about 1 month earlier than normal practice. It would be my goal to establish the draft budget as early as March with the hopes of adopting the budget at the first meeting in June. While this would serve to increase transparency in that you are starting a fiscal year with an actual approved budget, one cautionary measure is that the ability to predict expenditures becomes reduced, as some staffing decisions coupled with insurance premiums are not determined until after July 1. How they would impact budget decisions will depend on the extent of the changes.

Instructional Strength of the District:

The district remains out front on the numerous changes facing educators today and continues to be seen as a leader in how to address these necessary changes.

The work to align our curriculum with the common core as well as the development of assessments that allow our students to demonstrate the rigorous extent to which they understand the content has been our major focus. The board was presented with some historical perspective on how the implementation of common core has evolved as well as changes in programming that has occurred to meet deficits we have found through our gap analysis. The district is ahead of pace to meet the challenges associated with

common core and, more importantly, have a teaching staff who does not feel overwhelmed by a daunting task.

Like any work, as we complete our implementation of common core certain concerns emerge. First, our instructional resources are not complete to instruct to the new standards. I believe initially we will have some level of struggle as we try and create a balance in finding teacher developed resources with purchasing commercially designed resources to meet the new standards. We are currently working on this identifying where we may need to look for outside products (i.e. text book adoptions). It seems right now our largest need is in reading/English in elementary. Secondly, we know that the more rigorous standards will most likely cause more students to be identified as needing intervention. To that end, we have been proactive in meeting administratively to determine RTI programming necessary to address potential needs.

Without staff development, no instructional program will advance. Our work in developing opportunities for staff as well as providing daily support is second to none in the business. Our focus has shifted from differentiation with emphasis on small group instruction to understanding assessments necessary for the common core as well as SBR. It is a hope/belief that this work will lend itself to the higher level thinking of common assessments. This year we participated in a joint staff development day with other local districts. Our leadership in this endeavor demonstrates that our work in developing staff and our forward thinking initiatives have us pointed in the right direction.

Moving forward, the development of assessments for the common core and planning for the new PARCC assessment will be a major focus of the district. Programming models will continue to be evaluated and instruction will continue to improve.

Status of the physical plant:

The physical plant operations and buildings themselves are in excellent shape relative to the day-to-day operations. We continue to have less and less issues, our staff is actively engaged in using the on-line system to track issue, our building automation system is proving helpful and our laundry list of small items is completed and up to date. Noted earlier in the report is the scope of the electrical upgrade project for the district. This represents a huge movement forward to address larger issues that face the district. Perhaps the main issue facing the district is the increase in recent enrollment (up almost 200 students in the last 5 years) and the restraints that it places on our instructional space. It will be critical for the board to evaluate both the financial and demographic studies that are completed over the next few months to begin planning for ways to address future needs. It is clear that the district has a desire to enhance programming which will also require attention to physical space.

As we explore answers to how to address these issues, the Board needs to know that the discussion will need to become large scale within the community. Programming will

need prioritized, funding options discussed, and the future instructional landscape will need debated. This, perhaps, will need to become a large-scale project for the Board.

Closing Remarks:

The goals outlined for the 2013-2014 year have been or are in process of being completed and represent solid attention to the key areas. Likewise, the financial stability, instructional programming and physical plant are in solid shape. The outlined recommendations in each area represent the future work of the district and may provide a focus for the future goals of the superintendent.