



6000 Grand Avenue, Ste. A
Des Moines, Iowa 50312

direct (515) 288-1991

toll-free 1-800-795-4272

fax (515) 243-4992

September 12, 2016

Jane Abell, Board President
Keokuk Community School District
1721 Fulton St,
Keokuk, IA 52632

Dear President Abell,

On Monday, August 22, 2016, the Keokuk school board, superintendent, director of instructional services, and business official met to learn and talk about potential next steps to establish district goals and discuss key learning from the research about the roles of the board related to this work. This letter and attachments summarize the conversation. A copy of this letter is being sent to your superintendent and board secretary with the request for Heidi Harness to please provide copies to the whole board.

During the first hour of this work session, the participants learned about the Dubuque Board's work related to goals, the districts' strategic plan, and community engagement. Keokuk participants reviewed materials from Dubuque, talked with Dubuque Board member Tom Barton by speaker phone, and summarized the following key "take-a-ways from the conversation.

- Participants acknowledged their desire to establish district goals/strategic plan (so the board is proactively leading and to minimize being reactive). The board believes Keokuk has structures and elements of a strategic plan and goals in place, but needs to pull it together through a formal process.
- Regarding goals, "less is more" (the importance of districts narrowing the number of goals).
- It's essential to remember "citizens own the joint" (quote from Dubuque).
- It's critical to have goals stated in understandable, everyday language.
- Process, process, process is essential in establishing the strategic plan and goals.
- An agreed upon strategic plan should be one the community has input (board, staff, and citizens).
- Community connection is important to ensure the district (& board) are aligned with community values.
- Once the goals/strategic plan are established, stick to them.
- The value of a 10 year "rolling" facilities plan (Dubuque continues to update it each year).
- The essentialness of dedicating adequate funds for technology.
- The benefits of using an outside facilitator to lead the strategic planning meetings

Next the board and central administration summarized existing goals and big areas of work the district is facing. The team also speculated on the importance of integrating this work into goal setting/strategic planning because commitments have been made and staff professional development has been scheduled. Keeping the existing work in mind is important to avoid overloading staff or fragmenting work in too many directions as new goals are set. Participants identified the following areas as existing and upcoming work.

1. Implementing Teacher Leadership Compensation (TCL) – growing the capacity of teacher leaders through mentoring, instructional coaching, etc. related to providing powerful instruction and student learning (what students need to know and be able to do – the Iowa Core Standards)
2. Strengthening Professional Learning Communities (staff learning teams).
 - a. Focused on improving instruction and student learning



6000 Grand Avenue, Ste. A
Des Moines, Iowa 50312

direct (515) 288-1991

toll-free 1-800-795-4272

fax (515) 243-4992

- b. Aimed at implementing standards-based grading
3. Facilities improvements – Developing a long term plan
4. Technology
 - a. Hardware
 - b. Infrastructure
5. Open Enrollment

Participants also discussed these two key steps related to this the initiatives/efforts listed above. ***I believe these are two of the priority next steps for the board and central administrative staff to consider.***

- Areas 1-5 above are “actions” or initiatives (means or pathways) Keokuk is implementing. An essential step is to ask, “*What are the ends or results we are trying to achieve?*” Identifying the results should help your district identify the goals behind these actions or initiatives.
- Another step is to describe the above work in “everyday language” (*What will I tell my neighbor these mean? What education jargon words need to be replaced with language people use on a daily basis?*).

During the last part of the work session, team members discussed the *8 Traits of Effective School Boards*. The purpose of this activity was to review key researched-based characteristics of boards focused on making a difference in the learning of students. Team members identified traits where they believe the board and superintendent have momentum and traits that would be next steps to help the team move forward.

Attachment A summarizes ratings of team members (*momentum* – left side and *traits to consider as next steps* – right side). **Attachment B** is the 8 Traits article. **As a follow-up step, I encourage your team to identify specific strategies which your team can take to strengthen your work related to traits 7 & 8.** I would be happy to assist your team with this discussion.

Compiled feedback/evaluation from the workshop is included in **Attachment C**.

Team members engaged in thoughtful conversation during this work session. Your board team’s commitment to engage in goal setting or strategic planning in the near future has the potential to have a powerful impact on students, staff, and the community. As your team moves forward, please know I am willing to provide any support needed (*i.e. advising board leadership/superintendent team; interacting with whole board/administrative team, etc.*). This support can be virtually, speaker phone, or face-to-face. Please contact me regarding questions about this summary or other ways IASB can support your district.

Sincerely,

Harry Heiligenthal
Board Leadership Director
(515) 247-7062 hheilighenthal@ia-sb.org

cc: Tim Hood, Superintendent
Heidi Harness, Board Secretary