

Fillmore Central Schools  
Board of Education  
Community Meeting  
March 2, 2011

The special board meeting for Community discussion was called to order at 6:30 pm on the evening of Wednesday, March 2, 2011 in the Fillmore Central High School Media Center by Chairman Ross Kiehne. Present: Superintendent Luehmann, Board members: Kiehne, Love, Sikkink, and Topness. Absent: Britton, Ristau, and Torgrimson. Community members: Lynn Aggen, Cara Ristau, Susan Kiehne, Jessica Aggen, Don Schoepski, Mark McKay, Jim Bakken, Travis Willford, Jay & Zo Masters, Julie Lange, Melissa VanderPlas, Mary Hershberger, Janet O'Connor, Steve Bronner, Shannon Bronner, Jim & Randi Wingert.

Superintendent Luehmann gave an overview of the Flexible Learning Year concept.

Love spoke about the session regarding the Flexible Learning Year he attended while at the MSBA conference earlier this year.

Member Ristau joined the meeting.

Chairman Kiehne opened the meeting for questions. Questions/topics are listed below along with some of the responses by Board members, Superintendent Luehmann, Principal Olstad, and Dean Mensink.

- 1) Q: What are the Board members feelings regarding the FLY? Is the Board just educating the public or looking for input? A: Kiehne stated that he is in favor of the FLY mainly because he sees the benefit of collaborating with other districts. Sikkink stated that the Board has not made a decision at this time.
- 2) Q: How many other school districts are in favor? A: When this started 35 districts were interested. Now it's down to six districts.
- 3) Q: Does there have to be a certain number of districts involved to move forward? A: No, we can be by ourselves if we want. We can apply to the Commissioner to get an early start but even without that we still have staff development. It may be more difficult to get approval with a smaller number of schools, including number of students and teachers.
- 4) Q: How important is the test and what happens to the attitude of the school after the test is done? Supt. Luehmann – Of course the test is important as it's a qualifier for the state regarding Adequate Yearly Progress target scores and if you do not meet your target scores, in accordance with the federal NCLB law, the district needs to define its focus with an improvement plan as well as other changes that the state determine. The NCLB mandate is that all students be proficient by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. No school wants to be identified as a "failing" school or district. We continually strive to improve our test scores.  
As for the "attitude" we step up and return to business as usual and teachers continue till the last day of school. We do however feel that ending the year earlier, leaves a shorter amount of time between the end of testing and the last day, and is a appositive. Part of that thought is that "spring" fever will hit no matter what and better to plan for that to happen.
- 5) Q: How many school districts in the consortium out west actually had their first semester done before Christmas break due to snow days? A: This can't be predicted.
- 6) Q: Will the education be that much better by starting early? A: There is no guarantee that this will improve test scores.
- 7) Q: Is the state funding the teachers to start early? A: There is no funding issue because school will be in session the same number of days as any other school year.
- 8) Q: How does the staff feel about this plan? A: A survey was given and overall the teachers were in favor. They like the staff development ideas.
- 9) Q: What are our current staff development procedures? The state has mandated in the past that 2% of gen. Ed revenue is set aside for staff development, however with the tough economic times that mandate has been lifted. Teachers turn in applications/requests to attend trainings that they are interested in. The district budgets an amount each year for staff development costs.
- 10) Q: What will the new procedure through the FLY allow? A: Some individual requests will still be granted, but the cooperative program will allow combined trainings with other districts. "Bigger and better" using a train-the-trainer model. There will also be trainings offered via technology.
- 11) Q: Are teachers required to put in so much time for continual learning? A: Yes that is a requirement.

- 12) Q: What are we currently doing with teacher workshop days? A: New Standards have been approved by the State of MN so the district gives teachers time to work on these. We also have CPR training scheduled for all staff members.
- 13) Q: Are teachers here for a full 8-hour day? A: Yes.
- 14) Q: With access to the internet can't teachers find information out there? A: Our teachers do have technology training with our tech each day. Nothing can replace sharing of ideas with those in a similar teaching situation. Also further instruction on how students learn is necessary for all teachers.
- 15) Q: Two weeks early doesn't seem like enough time to change test scores. A: The two week early start will also align PreK-12 education with the colleges and allow student teachers to start and end at the same time. A lot of instruction happens in that amount of time.
- 16) Q: Do many colleges start on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August? A: The start date is flexible. Ristau stated that she is in favor of the early start because it gives state fair participants time at school before they have to leave.
- 17) Q: How does the start date compare with other state colleges? The real issue seems to be the start date. Can the rest be done without messing with the school calendar? A: There is no guarantee the early start would help test scores, but there is also the possibility that the early start may be beneficial. It is frustrating the calendar is the driving factor.
- 18) Q: Why aren't we looking at year-round school? A: The superintendents involved felt that was too big of a jump. A member of the audience commented that her children came from a school that had year-round school and they liked it. Another issue with the 45-15 calendar is the sports schedule.
- 19) Q: After the three years are up what happens? A: We would gather data to see if it indeed was effective. If local control of the start date has not happened, the group would need to re-apply.
- 20) Q: Would it affect people to open-enroll? A: We never know how anything affects open enrollment.
- 21) Q: Are most school that are opting out waiting for others to stick their foot in the water and test it? A: Yes, and most think they want to wait a year or so.
- 22) Q: Is there a loss of funding for not making AYP? A: Not at this time.
- 23) Q: What is the purpose of the testing they do now? A: It is to determine grade level proficiency (a level determined by the state) in reading and math. If not proficient, school needs to improve teaching and learning.
- 24) Q: Can the testing date be moved? A: No.
- 25) Q: As a Board do you feel that the early start will benefit the students? A: Board members spoke in favor of the early calendar as well as the staff development proposal. There is no data available to show for sure.
- 26) Q: Is there data that supports that test scores improve with days? A: Some data is available in the handouts available tonight. The purpose of this plan is to determine if indeed that is the case. Each school would keep that data to provide it to the State Department yearly.

Comments received from the audience:

- If sports are an individual preference why can't we look at FFA and the State Fair the same way?
- It is nice to hear that the teachers were in support of this.
- Proceed with caution – staff development is a good start.
- Quality vs. quantity on the staff development issue also works with the students' education. Start with staff development and see if we can get a gauge on it.
- It's nice to see the Board is looking at options to the public what is available.

Kiehne thanked the community members for attending the meeting and for their comments.

Motion made by Ristau to adjourn. Motion seconded by Britton. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Ristau  
Clerk, ISD #2198