

Hinsdale School Board Retreat
September 16, 2024
5:00 - 7:00 PM
A-1 Pizza - Hinsdale
Brattleboro Road, Hinsdale NH 03451

Present: April Anderson, Chair; Kaylah Hemlow, Vice Chair; Marc Sprague; Wayne Dingman, Jr.; Kendra Gardner; and Dr. David Ryan, Superintendent.

April Anderson opened the meeting at 5:01 PM.

April asked if there were any citizen comments and with no citizens present, there were none.

April reminded the board of the norms they developed at the previous year's retreat and asked for the board to review them and introduce any new norms. There were no new additions, and the norms will remain the same for the 2024-2025 school year.

1. Be respectful to all speakers.
2. We listen to understand and not to respond.
3. We will be fully present at the meeting by becoming familiar with materials before we arrive.
4. We will be attentive to how our physical and verbal expressions affect others.
5. Each of us is responsible for respectfully airing disagreements with each other in a timely manner rather than sharing them with others.
6. We will be responsible for examining all points of view before a consensus is accepted.

April began a conversation with the members of the board about the board goals and discussion ensued about how the goals were to be evaluated. The goals and steps to accomplishing them were broken down, one by one, and addressed for completion, non-completion, or change. The following represents the assessments and actions taken by the board.

2023-2024 Goal #1 - The board will work with the superintendent to establish the structure for developing a five-year strategic plan.

The board concluded that this goal was accomplished since the process outline was delivered last May and the process began with an orientation in early September. The discussion led to the development of a new goal.

- 1. New Goal #1 - The board will work with the superintendent to develop and approve a five-year strategic plan.**

2023-2024 Goal #2 - The board will effectively communicate with all stakeholders.

- External -

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- o Continue to utilize community connections to update the public with general information on what's going on in the district. Utilize the board's communication plan to keep all stakeholders updated on more urgent district messaging.
- Internal
 - o Minimum of two annual messages to staff from the board (board chair or community connections) updating them on board initiatives, well-wishes, or other general messaging.
 - o Utilize the board's communication plan to keep all stakeholders updated on more urgent district messaging.
 - o Meet annually with administration for the sole purposes of team building/check in to make sure everyone has the same interpretation of current initiatives, priorities, and general direction of the district.

The board believed the completion of this goal was well done, especially toward the end of the school year when there was a transition of leadership, and several programs were put in place to build up the system for the new principal. The board discussed how many important messages and information were shared on the Community Connections channel and how it served as a primary conduit to the households that do not have children in school. The communications plan was followed partly with those items that were not COVID related, as the plan was written mainly to guide effective communications during the COVID period.

Internally, the board believes that it and the administration delivered messages to families and staff throughout the year including the convocation that started the school year. While it believes there could always be more messaging, it was pleased with the newsletters, emails, community programs (NH School Funding Fairness Project), and other forms of connecting that took place.

One area that the board identified for improvement is meeting annually with administration. They feel that they didn't do this and need to get back to it. There was a hiccup at the end of the year with the principal transition and it may have prevented this goal from being completely achieved.

2023-2024 Goal #3 - The board will continue to support the recruitment, hiring, and growth of high-quality personnel.

- The board will continue to budget for and encourage meaningful and relevant professional development for all staff.
- The board will continue to update and improve the Culture of Kindness initiative as a relevant, respectful, and professional program.

The Professional Development Master Plan is scheduled to be rewritten this year and hiring was strong. There were some openings throughout the year that were either filled or worked around with existing staff. The Kindness 101 efforts from February to the end of the year in advisory at HMHS were great, and the HES program for social emotional learning is still a great program for all students and staff. The board agreed it wants to continue its efforts to promote a kind culture,

and they developed a revised goal to incorporate improving how adults are treated and how they treat each other.

1. **Revised Goal #3** - The board will continue to support the recruitment, hiring, **professional culture, and growth of** high-quality personnel.

2023-2024 Goal #4 - The board will continue to improve its approach to fiscal leadership and financial responsibility.

- The board will support and maintain a transparent budgeting process that engages all stakeholders.
 - **New subgoal - The board will support the creation of a simply designed explanation of the proposed budget that presents the main concepts in a graphic format.**
- The board will work with administration to identify and secure additional sources of revenue to offset budget expenses.

The board believes the budget process was done well and included many people in its development. The presentation and meetings were helpful and there was an abundance of information for the town and employees to consume and understand. Tied in with the communication goal, the board believes that it delivered on our messages and explained all of the reasons why things had to happen, or what was going to take place, and then lived up to the message. The board is very satisfied with the accomplishment of this goal and wanted to continue to strengthen it through the addition of the highlighted subgoal.

The board is satisfied with its progress on identifying tuition revenue opportunities and the pursuit of it with Winchester and other surrounding towns. The highlight of this goal was the successful recruitment and hiring of an experienced professional business administrator who has changed the financial climate of the district and improved the fiscal relationship with the town.

April entertained a motion to approve the revised goals as written. Kaylah Hemlow made the motion, which was seconded by Wayne Dingman, Jr. The motion passed, 5-0-0.

April addressed the second and third agenda items for the retreat:

2. Realign priorities for the upcoming school year that address any remaining goals that were not fully achieved, and
3. Develop a balance of new board goals that move our school district and community forward in the interest of doing what is best for students, families, staff, and community members.

The board concluded that they had addressed these two items in their conversation that is captured in the above minutes regarding the goals assessment.

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April introduced the topic of superintendent evaluation and passed out copies of the template that they had used in the past. There was discussion regarding the use of the template and the goals that the superintendent would need to submit. Wayne asked how they would evaluate the superintendent's performance with the many different things that the position is supposed to do, and there was discussion on limiting the assessment to the progress on the goals. Dr. Ryan shared that the goals would be aligned to the board's goals as well as the five areas outlined on the template. April asked Dr. Ryan if he would be able to submit goals in time for the next board meeting so that the process could be used this year, to which he said he could.

Other Business

Dr. Ryan provided a vision for updating the high school graduation requirements. He said he wanted the board to hear it upfront before discussion in the community began about it. The board discussed the current graduation requirements, and the number of credits required for graduation. Dr. Ryan shared that they will be working on a revision to the graduation requirements through the year and present a final draft in the spring. The information would be used to plan the program of studies for the 2026 - 2027 school year and outline a process for how it would be implemented.

April discussed the delegation for the NH School Boards Association and asked if any member would like to serve as the delegate. She expressed that she would be happy to attend should there be no one who was able, so she was elected with the board's authority to vote in line with the NHSBA's resolution prep sheet.

Wayne Dingman, Jr. made the motion to elect April Anderson as the delegate to vote in accordance with the resolution prep sheet, seconded by Kendra Gardner. The motion passed, 5-0-0.

Kaylah Hemlow made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Marc Sprague.

The board retreat was adjourned at 6:45 PM.