

Special Board of Education Meeting

Tuesday, March 30, 2021 12:00 PM

Gering Public Schools - Central Office
1519 10th Street
Gering, NE 69341



Minutes

1. GPS Board of Education Information

2. Opening Procedures

1. Call to Order

President B.J. Peters called the meeting to order at 12:08 p.m.

2. Roll Call

3. Excuse Absent Board Member(s)

3. Opening Meetings Act

4. Reports and Discussions

1. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Cooper highlighted upcoming district happenings as students and staff celebrate the end of the school year.

5. Action Items

1. Discuss, consider and take all necessary action with regard to the Application and Agreement of certain Certificated Employees of the School District to participate in the 2020-2021 Gering Public School District Voluntary Severance Program (VSP) which provides for the payment of certain dollar amounts to certificated employees employed by the School District as a voluntary termination incentive for certificated teachers pursuant to subsection (3) of section 79-8,142, and section 77-3442(2)(d)(ii) in exchange for such certificated employee's resignation at the end of the 2020-2021 school and contract year.

Board member Mary Winn noted sincere appreciation for those participating in the Voluntary Severance Program. Doing so supported the Board in avoiding the weight of reduction in force measures which B.J. Peters added would have been a no-win scenario that none of the school board members wanted to consider.

2. Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to adopt a statement supporting GPS Administration's actions to revise the GHS building schedule to a modified-traditional, and update the grading system to a 10-point scale beginning with the 2021-22 school year.

Board members unanimously decided to discuss and vote on the scheduling and grading topics separately. First, Mary Winn spoke to the history of GHS's transition to block scheduling around 1995. At that time teacher's utilized the 90-minute block in a 30-30-30 instruction model which aided

prolonged, in-depth instruction in courses such as vocational and laboratory sciences. Despite advantages, Winn acknowledged students participating in activities would sometimes not have her class on certain weeks with the 2-day/week rotation, for example. The potential for increased student opportunities with dual-credit course offerings highlighted in last week's special board meeting was "eye opening," she stated. President B.J. Peters encouraged the other board members to share their thoughts on the matter prior to taking action. Brent Holliday expressed perceived advantages from the vocational tech aspect. Josh Lacy shared that the expanded opportunities for students in the modified-traditional schedule proposed by administrators at last week's board meeting made him confident a change was the right decision. On the contrary, Brady Shaul held firm in his belief that a scheduling revision may have adverse impacts on vocational courses. Superintendent Cooper reiterated that a modified-traditional model would still allow those classes to meet for two periods back-to-back compacting a full year of student learning into a semester. Brent Holliday asked how Dr. Regan, GPS's incoming superintendent, felt about the proposed changes as he was absent from last week's meeting. President B.J. Peters noted that the majority of Lincoln's secondary schools are not utilizing block scheduling. Brady Shaul countered adding that while it is not a right-or-wrong decision, Omaha Public Schools is considering moving towards the block scheduling model to accommodate Career Academies. "My stance is known. Whatever the decision ends up being, I just want to see it carried out correctly," Shaul noted as he credited his career successes to the vocational programs at GHS. Brian Copsey expressed his concern that the worries shared at the community forum wasn't related to student learning or opportunities, but instead it was homework. "Educators like Kim Graslie who have experienced both sides made good points; block scheduling is not being used like it once was to enhance student learning. After over 25 years, any organization should reflect on practices and address obvious inefficiencies," he added. Mary Winn expressed benefits in having daily contact in light of the pandemic. To that point, B.J. Peters noted Gering has always prided itself in approximately 75% student participation in extracurriculars to highlight minimizing impacts on classroom attendance. In favor of that point, he added extra emphasis to a modified schedule to ensure student learning in vocational programs continue to receive the same in-depth, hands-on instruction that block scheduling has allowed as well as a need to provide professional development to staff to support the transition. Brent Holliday offered closing remarks stating a strong desire to see GHS counselors tap deeper into the network of community partners eager to provide work-based study opportunities for students, especially for those choosing the career-ready path. With regard to proposed grading modifications, the board members felt it would be in the best interest of the school district to focus solely on the scheduling piece at this time.

3. Discuss, consider and take all necessary action regarding expansion of the Early Childhood Program to add an additional classroom at Northfield Elementary beginning August 2021.

6. Adjourn

President B.J. Peters adjourned the meeting at 1:26 p.m.