

Chippewa Valley hears update on strategic planning

Published: Thursday, February 12, 2015

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Dakota High School Principal Paul Sibley attended the Chippewa Valley Board of Education meeting on Feb. 9 to say a few words about retiring teacher Mary Castle. (Photos by NICOLE TUTTLE)

On Feb. 9, Chippewa Valley Superintendent Ron Roberts offered the Chippewa Valley Board of Education an update on a committee forming in relation to the district's strategic planning.

The Chippewa Valley School District hosted a strategic planning community forum on Jan. 24 at Chippewa Valley High School. The event was designed as an initial community kick-off to strategic planning, to seek input from stakeholders such as parents, school staff, administrators, students, local business leaders and others. The strategic planning process helps the district to define a mission, vision, beliefs and goals to assist in decision making for three to five years. Community members were invited to apply to serve on a strategic planning committee, said Diane Blain, the district's director of school and community relations.

"The original numbers from the Saturday when we had the community forum, I think we had 37 applications," Roberts said. "And we just finished today with collecting applications, and I think we have about the same number in the second group. So I don't know how many are duplicates but just in scanning through them I don't think most are. So that's where we are in number of applications, just over 70."

Roberts said the district has been working on creating a list to help ensure diversity on the committee.

"We've been working on a list of where we want these people to come from, whether they be parents north end, south end, teaching staff that would be representative of K-12, all over the district, plus then people from different areas such as special education, CTE, people from outside of our school district, community members. We do have some people who are residents who have nothing to do with the school other than they are residents. We want a really diverse group," Roberts said.

If the group is not diverse enough, Roberts said the district will do some outreach.

"I think it's important to have all aspects of our school community represented," Roberts said.

Blain said that the committee will meet several times in March and that a final wrap-up meeting will be held in May.

Roberts also updated the board on a recent trip to Washington, D.C. and the ESEA.

“So as you are aware, a few of us traveled last week to Washington for the Federal Relations Network, which is really about learning about issues going on at the federal level and then advocating for your point of view with your elected officials,” Roberts said.

Roberts explained a brief history of the ESEA, or Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which he said is expected to go through some changes.

“It really has a really large impact on what we do at this level, so I think it is important that when you hear about it or go to advocate for it you understand what it is about,” Roberts said.

The ESEA originated in 1965 and was designed for educational equity, according to Roberts.

“It was only authorized through 1970 and we still have it today, so during that period of time there've been many changes and additions to it,” Roberts said. “It was authorized for professional development, instructional materials, resources to support programs and promote parental involvement. So many of the same issues that we deal with today which the government is concerned about, which is equity, were issues.”

Changes to the act include youths with disabilities in 1966, bilingual education in 1967, the education of all handicapped children in 1975 and No Child Left Behind in 2001, Roberts said. This last section has had a significant impact on how schools operate today, he said.

“So some of the major tenants of No Child Left Behind in 2001 were that we're setting academic standards across the nation. Also this was the first time that the federal government required tests of all students. Those are annual tests in grades three to eight and once in high school. And they wanted students to be tested in math and reading,” Roberts said.

No Child Left Behind also required annual report cards and data divided into subgroups, he added.

“Hence the name No Child Left Behind, because the performance was also monitored with subgroups of students that you may have in your school or your district. And in schools that were more diverse it was more of a challenge, because if you have a subgroup of 30 that counted on your report card and for making AYP, for Adequate Yearly Progress,” Roberts said. “So what they would do is there were goals that you had to attain for all students in your school but it was also broken down by subgroups. All that was looked at and then that would determine whether or not you were on course for having all of your students being proficient by 2014.”

Curriculum, testing and proficiency were determined by individual states, according to Roberts.

“And that was supposed to occur in 2014, that all kids be proficient. And that really, along the way, the realization hit that that was not going to happen and maybe the people who designed it always knew that was not going to happen but they were really just going to push the envelope a little bit by having the legislation read that way,” Roberts said. “So in March 2010 the Obama administration had a new blueprint for ESEA and some of it included incentives for academic standards and having accountability systems. Well as you know government in many ways kind of ground to a halt over a few years, and this was never resolved. So the original No Child Left Behind of 2001 did not go away.”

The Department of Education instead offered waivers, which leads to the present state of things, according to Roberts.

“Because they knew that that goal of all kids being proficient was not going to be reached so what they did was they said states could have waivers from that requirement and when they did that there were certain components of the waiver that you had to meet in order to not be under the requirements of No Child Left Behind, and each state could submit waivers. So how waivers look from state to state, as long as you had certain things in them

they would be deemed OK,” Roberts said.

Some areas included accountability and support for schools, according to Roberts.

“So out of that, out of those waivers is how we ended up with priority schools and focus schools and reward schools. And fortunately in our district we have had reward schools. We have not had focus schools or priority schools. Now priority schools are schools that are in the bottom 5 percent of performance of all schools, and focus schools are schools that have the largest gap between their top-performing 30 percent of students and their bottom 30 percent. The performance of the bottom 30 percent. This is designed by the state of Michigan. They submitted this to the Department of Education and the Department of Education said yeah that's good here's your waiver all kids don't have to be proficient by 2014,” Roberts said.

The new target in what was submitted by the state of Michigan in order to get the waivers was that 85 percent of students would be proficient by 2022 in several subjects and then all sub groups, according to Roberts.

“We have kind of a continuum that we are on in which we had to show growth each year on this slope to 85 percent of our students being proficient... And then also part of the accountability system under our waiver is the way our schools are evaluated. And we have five categories and last year our schools received a color coding, so you could be anywhere from red to dark green,” Roberts said.

The Chippewa Valley Schools district was in the middle with a mostly yellow rating last year, Roberts said. This rating system is under consideration for change in the state currently, and may become an A, B, C, D, E rating system instead, according to Roberts.

“I really personally, I like the color-coded system. I do not like it changing schools to an A, B, C, D or E because I don't think that a letter grade sums up the complexity of a school and to judge you with one letter grade I think is really inefficient,” Roberts said.

Another item that came out of waivers is the statewide evaluation system, he noted.

“According to our waivers originally it was supposed to have already been piloted in 2013 and 2014 and then implemented this year. And as you know that has not happened. So we have extensions on the waivers... And then also as part of the waivers was the federal government said that states had to adopt a curriculum that had high standards and would allow students upon graduation to be college and career ready,” he said.

The federal government did not specify the curriculum to adopt or design, and this is where the Common Core concept came from, according to Roberts. He said that Common Core meets the tenants of the federal government's requirements.

“So that is why we are now at the point of having Common Core. They also require that you test students with an assessment which met whatever curriculum it is you had,” Roberts said.

The state has not yet agreed to a test, said Roberts.

“So now we are to this point and now they are saying that they're going to reauthorize ESEA and if you have read about it lately there is a push back on certain things,” he said.

Roberts said he expected some changes to be implemented by the federal government this year.

“Whatever they do with this this year, and they say they're going to do something, it probably will really influence what we do here over the next 10 years. Plus you know, we are also dealing with what our state government seems to want from us which may be harder to figure out,” he said.

Also on Feb. 9, the Chippewa Valley Board of Education:

* Recognized the retirement of Dakota High School teacher Mary Castle, known as Missy in the building. Castle said she has been an educator for 27 years, the last 13 at Dakota. “It will be sad to see Missy leave Dakota, and she is not replaceable. There is no one like her. Her mood is always positive. She just brings a levity to our school. She has built very strong relationships with her peers, she gets along so well with our clerical staff, our parents, the administration. We all have a great relationship with her and a fondness for what she brings to our building,” Dakota High School principal Paul Sibley said.

* Approved a motion to award a copier contract to Ricoh USA in the amount of \$206,161.50 utilizing the MiDEAL bid cooperative program. Chippewa Valley Assistant Superintendent of Business and Operations Scott Sederlund said that aggressive pricing was obtained through the MiDEAL bid cooperative program. Funding will come from the 2010 building and site fund, he said.

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