

**State Superintendent's Advisory Council
on
Rural Schools, Libraries, and Communities
Friday, August 15, 2008**

**Bayfield School District
La Pointe Elementary School
Madeline Island**

Council Attendees: Representative Gary Sherman, Barbara Blackdeer Mackenzie, Chip Mullineux, Dan Lathrop, Dave Polashek, Deb Pickett, Frank Koehn, Fred Yeo, Jerry Fiene, Don Stevens, Kelly Haverkamp, Kris Adams Wendt, Mary Cole Laub, Paul Dix, Scott Schultz, Sharon Stewart, Stan Gruszynski, Steve Guenther, Storm Carroll, Sue Beitlach

Bayfield Honored Guests: Senator Bob Jauch, Linda Kunelius, Sheila Kelly, Robert Kent, Sheila Everhart, Robert Nelson, Jackie Merila, Cindy Garrity, Brian Goodwin, Larry MacDonald, Frank Graves, Mary Duffy, Jean Oliver-Holder, Mary Beth Appel, Lesley Sederholm, Ronnie Rossberger

Other Guests: Henry Lamkin, Jeff Ehrhardt, Tim Kief, Christopher Patritto, Jean Serum, Mark Luoma, Peggy Smith, Fred Schlichting, Mark Christianson, Joni Weinert, Penny Boileau

DPI Staff Attending: Deb Bilzing, Sue Grady, Stacy Grandt, Becky Hannah, John Johnson, Mark Schwingle, Ken Thornton

Welcome, Introductions, Life in Bayfield

Council meeting opened at 9:15 with State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster calling the meeting to order. The State Superintendent provided overview remarks followed by council members and others going around the room for introductions.

The State Superintendent then moved into some more extensive remarks focusing on the long-standing progressive tradition of Wisconsin education. She reminded attendees that it will be a long, difficult budget process but that we must all remember not to pit one education group against another. She emphasized the uniqueness of the Rural Advisory Council and its ability to bring people together as demonstrated in our previous budget processes.

In the upcoming budget, the State Superintendent spoke of an increase in the sparsity categorical funding. She referenced the sparsity categorical funding plus the increase in transportation funding as great achievements of the council as well as setting a model process for other advisory groups to use in formulating recommendations for advancement into the budget.

State Superintendent Burmaster then introduced Linda Kunelius, superintendent of the Bayfield School District. Linda thanked the State Superintendent for choosing La Pointe and continued

with “It’s a great day for education.” Linda expressed her pride in the small 1927 school building. She then gave an overview of the district that consists of 250 square miles and serves 457 students. The island is 3 miles from Bayfield but it takes about 45 to 60 minutes to travel. Originally, the area consisted of 3 school districts that consolidated. Linda said that the people and community are very strong. In addition, she cited Bayfield’s outstanding teachers and that Sherry and Carol, the two teachers at LaPointe, are such examples. Linda remarked that children excel in the building. According to Linda, approximately 250 people live on the island and about 23 students attend school there. Having an island as part of the district leads to some unique transportation needs. Linda said that they have both an ice boat and wind sled that are used to transport the older students to the mainland when the water is completely frozen or in the spring and fall as the ice breaks or forms.

Linda then shared some of the other characteristics of the district as well as projects underway: disability rate is about 20%, the district receives about 16% of their budget from state aid, they experienced a 30% increase in transportation costs, emphasis is on nutrition and wellness give the high rates of obesity and childhood diabetes in the district, fighting the dwindling of the arts in the schools due to financial pressure, and working to keep the school breakfast and lunch programs given the high rates of poverty. Linda was very proud that the district is beating the odds as demonstrated by the New Wisconsin Schools of Recognition with their middle school being named this fall for the first time. She concluded by expressing her optimism for the future and thanked State Superintendent Burmaster for all of her work, particularly the formation of the Rural Advisory Council.

Tony Evers thanked Linda and reviewed the agenda for the day. The council then moved into the rural updates.

Rural Activity Updates

Note: The Rural Activity Updates agenda item was done in two sessions, due to the press conference on sparsity aid which was held at 10:30 a.m.

Fred Yeo reported that there is a lot going on at Oshkosh. They received money through the growth agenda. They are going to the smaller schools to recruit students into the science and mathematics fields and also going to businesses looking for individuals who might be interested in second careers as teachers in the areas of mathematics, science, and special education. They are also involved in rural education issues with some of the CESAs and have visited 25 school districts.

Deb Pickett reported that they have the premier school community project with the covered bridges. They are using this as a tourism feature and linked to the Platteville engineering program. Darlington used recycling program to bring in 150 computers, got them running for about sixty dollars, and made them available to families. The Optimists partnered with the schools on this project.

Sue Beitlich reported that she would like to see universal breakfast and to use locally grown food in the schools. Athens has a Farmer to School program. The community is concerned about

property tax and access to affordable health insurance. She commented that the food pyramid is not what it should be in that education should be the base. Communities need healthy, local food. Sue expressed her delight at being on the council and emphasized that education and cooperation are the foundation of the Farmers' Union.

Scott Schultz reported that buying local is catching on in their area as well. According to Scott, Osseo has long standing and continuing issues around their Indian mascot and logo. They are looking for hosts for the VISTA volunteer. One of the projects that is underway is TOFEE.

Dee Beasley spoke about the TOFFEE program in which community members work with high school students. One of the challenges is increasing some of the students' comfort level of being in school. Approximately, 60 community members work with students to help them realize their goals, develop and enhance positive attitudes, and forge partnerships across the community.

Kris Adams Wendt stated that she is the only librarian on the council so she speaks for what is happening across the state. According to Kris, the budget will have profound impact across the state. She reminded council members that libraries get people through times of no money and that libraries are used more in economic downturns than when the economy is doing well. She reminded members that lots of families do not have electronic access so computers are needed at the libraries. Kris stated that the complex library funding formula does not take into the seasonal population fluctuation that exists in many Wisconsin communities such as Bayfield, leading to stressed and stretched resources. She mentioned that she works with other librarians to host a legislative day. The librarians monitor what is occurring and concern is mounting regarding the attrition of school librarians across the state. She encouraged all to look at what is required in the state standards and work with their districts to keep librarians in place. Kris concluded with report on Rhinelander where a \$23 million referendum was defeated in April. The referendum dealt primarily with facility maintenance and will be re-configured to be tax neutral.

Dan Lathrop reported that the tourist business is down some in the Arbor Vitae area. He said that like many communities their school funding is decreased and are now receiving about six percent from the state. The district's referendum was unsuccessful, resulting in reductions in extra-curricular activities, staff, technology, and more cuts will come next year. He anticipates that art, music, and physical education will all be cut. Dan said that the Northwoods Alliance for School Funding is working to educate communities on why school support is important for the community and that a community should not allow the referendum to divide community. Kris Adams Wendt mentioned that Dan is author of several good articles related to rural.

Dave Polashek reported on seven trends in education with one being the student achievement emphasis with data. Dave mentioned that the Oconto Falls community libraries are going strong with technology providing a boost in that truckers are checking out 'books on tape' on a regular basis. Their district found that building their school budget was easier this year than last because the state had a budget in place. Oconto Fall will focus on energy and its impact on transportation, food, heat, and light costs.

Chris Mullineaux reported that challenges exist in 800 tribal communities and the greatest challenge is the access to high speed technology. He also mentioned that multiple education pathways, life skills, and personal finances are key issues in the tribal communities. He

applauded the wonderful things that are happening in the Red Cliff tribal community. He stressed the importance of diversity and acceptance of others as well as knowledge and respect for one's own culture, tradition, and heritage. Economic development and financing for minority-owned businesses is important in rural Wisconsin, referencing the commercial fishing done on Lake Superior and the need for

Storm Carroll reported that he is the district administrator of Florence. Because the budget is an issue, there is discussion to put one of the schools up for sale in that it costs over \$50,000 to heat. There is effort to get other entities to share the building along with pre-k and first graders. They are also doing a transportation survey.

Frank Koehn thanked the State Superintendent for all that she has done to support rural Wisconsin. He emphasized the need for communities to stop fighting against one another. Ongoing struggles exist to pay for ambulances in that need for them keeps increasing. According to Frank, service calls have tripled in the past two years.

Jerry Fiene reported on the online courses available to districts across the state through CESA 9. Over 70 high school courses and AP courses have been created as part of the web academy. Through this, students will be able to have access to courses not offered in their districts and to recover credits and then graduate from high school. He asked council members to mark their calendars for a March 30 and 31 best practices conference on rural education. The symposium will help develop a voice for rural education across the state. He credited State Superintendent Burmaster for bringing focus to rural Wisconsin.

Steve Guenther reported that they had a brand new library in Albany thanks to a large donation. Albany also has a brand new business park that will help revitalize the community. They recently started an education foundation for the district and hope to have \$50,000 by 2011. Ogden Industries, the area's major manufacturer, is closing and leaving many folks out of a job.

Sharon Stewart talked about the distributed brochure and importance of bringing artists together. She noted that technology requires good creative thinking that is developed through the arts. Sharon also said the arts help develop a stage presence which is helpful to students throughout their lives. She expressed her appreciation for the arts education task force appointed by the State Superintendent.

Stan Gruszynski reported that Wausaukee is the second district in the area that voted to dissolve. People in the area are hoping, however, that it won't happen. Stan reinforced that lots of rural schools either are or will face these same types of struggles and that the state needs to invest in rural schools.

Barbara Blackdeer Mackenzie reported that much is new. There is a new high school dean of students and four-year-old kindergarten is underway. Alternative energy is a focus. Also, there is a taskforce on truancy and absenteeism as a way to increase attendance. Communications have opened with direction to validate community experience.

Paul Dix reported that relationships and relevancy are high priority with possibility of 20,000 jobs opening in the Fond du Lac area due to retirements. He commented that while many of these jobs will be skilled positions they won't necessarily require a four year college degree. Project Grill is receiving attention in that it matches business to a school with the challenge to build a grill. A competition is held to choose the best with business contributing money. The project begins with the initial idea, moves to the CAD drawing, and concludes with the final product. The entire process benefits both the students and participating business.

Kelly Haverkamp remarked that 56% of property owners own seasonal property. One of the challenges faced in Vilas County is that they do not have access to a technical college or four year university. There is a four year degree offered at Nicolet through the Green Bay.

Mary Cole Laub reported that she is doing do a lot of work with communities on economic development. Beloit and Mauston are two such communities. She noted that many plans employ the same strategies with workforce education playing a major role. Currently, she is working with MATC to create summits and work on local solutions because help is not coming from the federal level. She also commented that Rural Partners is seeing community foundations being set up for both education and community development.

Representative Gary Sherman thanked people for being in Bayfield. He, also, spoke of the importance of libraries and their access to high speed internet. He said that every library in Northern Waters has T-1 lines. He also mentioned the increased interest in green with use of poplar trees as a bio fuel and the desire to take the town of La Pointe "off the grid."

School District Collaboration Initiatives in Northern Wisconsin

Ken Kasinski, Henry Lamkin, Jim Lee, Jeff Ehrhardt

Discussion opened with description of what is happening as part of the Rural Community School Alliance, an initiative to bring the five smallest school districts to work on creating 21st century schools. Participating districts include Butternut, Mellen, Winter, Glidden, and Mercer. The purpose is not consolidation but for preservation of quality education that is found in rural, public schools.

In the past five years, the participating districts have lost about 30% of their students due to declining enrollment. Four of the five high schools have fewer than 80 students. Consequently, they began looking at what others have done primarily the publications "Hobbit Effect: Why Small Works in Public Education" and "Breaking the Fall."

Initial meetings were convened that included review of district data and status reports followed by collaborative planning to identify strategies such as multi-age classrooms, shared staff through circuit riding, ITV, on-line courses, charter schools, combined purchasing, move into more entrepreneurship with connection to 21st century skills. Project-based learning was also incorporated.

Next steps include the development of the agreement, building the infrastructure, testing the strategies, and implementing the staff development.

The group then discussed the “Euro Curriculum” approach. The name evolved from the background of the Euro, money standard created to create uniformity and consistency across a geographical area so that all benefit. The 18 districts participating recognized that if they were to survive they needed a curriculum standard around which to build quality instruction, curriculum, curriculum mapping, professional development, and textbooks and materials. To participate, districts needed a three year resolution of the board plus the financial support for a curriculum coordinator. Emphasized was the critical need for leadership at the board, schools, and state to drop the artificial barriers that often exist.

Meeting the Challenge of Licensing for Rural Teachers

Mark Svensold

Mark Svensold described how he formed Norda and that there now are 392 teachers certified through the Norda program in the past six years. One of the challenges in rural areas is that often young folks teach for a few years and then move. Project Teaching is for shortage areas and participants, for the most part, are individuals who substitute in the schools or hold emergency licenses. About 70-80 percent of the individuals in the special education program are emergency licensed. The administrator program serves about 60-70 individuals. EdNova helps folks licensed in an area to expand the licensure through custom-designed programs. Two things—Kris does not do librarian and are working with 5 people who are adding the school teacher to the library license. A number of questions were directed to Mark regarding Norda. He urged districts that have individuals on emergency licensure to get them into a program as soon as possible.

What My Research Reveals about Rural Schools in Wisconsin

Stephen Guenther

Steve opened by outlining what led to his research. Ten elements as to why small, rural schools are stronger were presented. Also, the challenges of rural schools were highlighted. The council then discussed the impact of consolidation, internet access, and community vitality as well as the growing trend to create small high schools out of large urban high schools. Discussion also brought up that rural schools face both money and curriculum challenges and that money won't necessarily solve the curriculum access challenge. Cost effective measures also need more exploration.

Closing

State Superintendent Burmaster extended her thanks to the Bayfield school district for hosting the advisory council meeting, thanked council members for their time and energy directed to rural schools, libraries, and communities, and adjourned the meeting.