



Certified Staff Handbook Committee

Aug. 19 Meeting Summary

The following is a summary of what was discussed and considered at the Certified Staff Handbook Committee meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 19. The meeting was held in the MHS Upper Media Center and the committee spent approximately 7 hours going over a few new items and then discussing the nearly 80 items covered over six meetings.

Background

The committee unanimously approved the minutes from the meeting on Aug. 14.

Diane Hornung suggested developing a statement that says the District wants a collaborative process along with a timeline for how it will work going forward.

Don Johnson said staff with suggestions for the handbook can make them from the start of the school year until Feb. 1. That would allow the committee six weeks to reconvene and evaluate the suggestions. The goal would be to have the Board of Education vote on changes to the handbook by early May.

Johnson also pointed out that the salary schedule and voluntary early retirement will also be studied over the school year but that a study doesn't mean anything will change. It was also suggested by a committee member that a staff work schedule and time study be done. Johnson said he was open to that, but wanted there to be some context. He thought it was important to compare among levels and districts, while also looking at time spent in and out of school.

“It’s a fairly substantial task doing all that, but something we can entertain,” he said.

Johnson said the dilemma for the salary schedule is if state only gives districts 1.5 to 2 percent is it worth keeping the schedule if it can’t be sustained. “It doesn’t make a lot of sense to have the schedule but then we can’t give step and lanes,” he said. “I want to be able to give everyone a plan that we can commit to and live with.”

Review and Discussion of New Items

Charter Schools: Tabatha Gundrum said much of the language is no longer necessary largely because it is covered by state statute. All charter school employees will be covered by the handbook, she said. The only difference for Clark Street Community School teachers is that their

professional hours may need to be modified, which in fact happened last year. Johnson made it clear that they must adhere to the same rules and they are still governed by the District.

There was a discussion about whether to include statutory references in case something changes and Johnson thought that should be done as a beginning statement in the handbook. Johnson also agreed that references to what was in the contract should be in the handbook after a suggestion by a committee member who thought it would be reassuring to staff.

Certification and Qualifications: Language is essentially the same as it was in the 2013-14 contract. There was a deletion related to the North Central Association, because the DPI minimum requirement is the only one now used according to state statute.

Contract Year: Language has not changed, although format adjusted to make it easier to read. The inclement weather language was updated to reflect the current practice.

There was a question about the removal of days as a requirement now that the state statutes only require districts to meet a minutes requirement. Johnson said administration thought about adding minutes to the beginning or end of the school day once the law changed last year, but felt it didn't really equate to a school day. He said extra minutes are built into the District's schedule but when 5-6 inclement weather days occur it is difficult not to make up at least a couple of them. He said the goal is to find a middle ground and will continue to do so going forward.

Extended Days: Language is the same although references to MEA and seniority-based selection were removed.

There was a question if an extended day contract is the same as working an overload. Gundrum said they are different. She pointed out counselors often get extra days to work after the school year along with teachers who run co-op programs where students work for businesses. Johnson suggested calling it an extended contract or additional days to make it clearer. It isn't based on seniority but typically a group of teachers meets and decides if someone wants more or fewer days. Johnson said most just typically take what they need.

Professional Development: Gundrum said after moving language about CRTs and the MEA she thought it made sense to remove the entire item.

A committee member suggested adding specifics about new teachers having eight days and other teachers having five. Another member wondered if there should be wording giving staff more input on the structure of professional development topics versus having administration handle all of that. Johnson suggested adding language stating the day amount, that they be collaboratively planned, generally but not exclusively focused on school or district goals, and be differentiated whenever possible and practical.

Traveling Teachers: Language has been altered to be more responsive to those who are traveling and their travel specific schedules, Gundrum said.

A teacher who is traveling from MHS to CSCS doesn't need 30 minutes in all, while someone going from Glacier Creek to Kromrey will likely need more, she said, adding she works with the principals to make schedule work. She also pointed out the District has far fewer traveling teachers than ever. Some suggested adding something making sure principals discuss their ideas with teachers and Gundrum said she would work on it.

Statement of Credits and Placement: Language no longer valid and has been updated based on employee access in Skyward.

Professional Advancement Requirements: Language is the same as in the contract with the exception of the MCPASD credit section that wasn't implemented.

Gundrum said she spoke with George Mavroulis, who said it won't be implemented soon so he suggested removing it. Gundrum noted that Edgewood and Viterbo are schools where credit is accepted. The most recent contract also included letting District look at content and rigor of courses and the ability to reject in cases where they fall short, she said.

Gundrum said teachers could still use those credit options for license renewal from DPI, but that it might not be approved for lance advancement. She has encouraged teachers to check with her department if they aren't sure. Committee also suggested that language be modified in salary lane change section to clarify it can happen if the Board approves.

Deficiencies: Language is the same as in the contract with one change about written notice to align with the current contract statutes and contract issue dates prescribed. Previously, such action had to occur before June 1 but now needs to be May 1.

Part Time Employment Credit: Language was added a couple of contracts ago about what happens when they work full days, such as parent-teacher conferences. Language is not required any longer based on the already reviewed in a separate part-time section of the handbook.

Worker's Compensation: Gundrum said nothing has changed in practice and the program is identical for all employees. As a result, she copied what is in the support staff handbook and included it in this item. She said it is the exact same process. Johnson clarified that it is an editorial change but no changes to the process. Gundrum said she thought it would be confusing to have different wordings in the handbooks.

Catastrophic Sick Leave Bank: The language has been modified to remove the MEA references. She said there may need to be some clarification on taxes that have to be paid if this is used, but she said she will work on that with those who might need to use it.

Extended Leave of Absence: The language has been rewritten to simplify the process and combines the leaves into one extended leave option. Gundrum said professional and medical leave have historically been the two areas where this happens, adding she doesn't care which one it is. Anyone who has been in the District two years can request up to one year leave and is open to putting it back in, although the practice has been to very rarely grant it.

There was a question about if person takes a leave to they get back their position or school. Gundrum said she left it out although that can be discussed when they request the leave.

Gundrum also said not every leave request is granted. In fact, she just had to deny someone who wanted to study aboard because it is difficult to find special education teachers. She also said that has been the practice for 3-4 years. If someone is denied, they get a communication about why and the committee requested that language be added.

Breach of Contract: This language is the same as in the contract and the Board already took action on this in July. Gundrum will continue to do research on area variables and the committee will review it again later in the year. She believes our breach of contract numbers are low compared to other districts.

Layoff and Recall: The language has been removed because the statute doesn't provide for an option of layoff. Non-renewals or resignation would be the only options for reduction. This is a result of Act 10. Gundrum said this was always in the statute, but used to be able to negotiate it with a union contract, Gundrum said. However, she also said there was an art or music layoff nearly a decade ago but haven't been any since.

A committee member suggested Waunakee and Monona Grove kept their same language with regards to seniority and layoffs when they went to a handbook. Johnson doesn't see this as time-sensitive so he suggested doing more research on this and not sending it to the Board at this time. He also reminded the committee that if numbers are low in enrollment in particular areas at MHS, for example, that has resulted in reductions.

There were also multiple questions about what the process would be to make decisions about reductions. Gundrum said the plan this year is to follow the process we have always had.

Review of Revised Items from Previous Meetings

The committee spent the remaining 5 hours going over items covered in previous meetings. The plan was to put them in one of three categories. Items with consensus would get a 1. Items where more review or time was needed would get a 2, although they would also be broken down as either time sensitive or not. Items where there was disagreement would get a 3, although they would also be broken down as time sensitive or not.

There was a question about staff meetings and how long they would be. Johnson hopes rather than putting in one rule for all schools that staffs in each building collaboratively figure out what works best for them. He also wants that done well in advance so staff know what the dates and times are for child care purposes. He suggested guidelines that say two meetings up to 90 minutes a month, a collaborative process between staff and building principal, and whenever feasible set meetings in May of the prior school year.

There was continued discussion about Parent-Teacher Conferences and Back To School Night. All staff should now be involved in BTS Night. Gundrum explained that faculty are contracted for 190 days: 176 in the classroom, 5 in-service, 3 work days, 3 holidays, 1 parent-teacher

conference, plus 2 more that get tagged on. Johnson again reiterated he wants to have similar expectations for all levels.

There was a question about five classes or the equivalent language at the middle school level. The committee believes the language isn't really what is currently happening. Everyone seemed to acknowledge nothing can do for this year but need to look at it again for next year. Johnson said it will be revisited in October by the committee.

Johnson asked the committee to take a global look at special education. The goal is to eliminate paperwork and pay stipends. He also said if there is a discrepancy that isn't reflected in the case loads the District will reconsider a larger stipend.

There was a question if there is comparable information with other districts. Jerry Nicholson said he does not know of any district that is paying for Medicaid billing. He said some districts do pay but then require a lot paperwork.

"We tried to represent in a fair way the time what people are putting in without making them jump through a lot of hoops," he said.

A committee member asked even though this is time-sensitive if they could review how it is working out later in the year. Johnson agreed but also made clear that any recommended changes would go into effect for the 2015-16 school year. Nicholson also explained that 25-30 staff members are already doing Medicaid billing so the stipend won't be an increase for them.

The committee asked for a change in the language in Integration Days to say 120 days are available in the district for curriculum integration rather than 12 days per school. The committee also would like a sentence added to say days will be approved by student services coordinator or director. Language may also be added saying request for work time outside the normal work day will be evaluated by the director.

There were lots of questions about insurance and committee members felt unsure what they were passing. Johnson reminded the group that there is an insurance committee made up of staff members who have already reviewed and approved this item. He also said the only change in insurance is the 30-hour requirement, which is necessary because of the Affordable Care Act. He also suggested that the insurance committee review this annually and add that language.