

Minutes: Initial Meeting of DLR Boards of Education to Begin Shared Services/Programs Study

Date: October 24, 2017

Time: 6:30 PM

Location: Roscoe Central School Cafeteria

Attendees: John Evans, Superintendent

Board Members: Livingston Manor: Jake Gorr, Elliott Madison, Dawn D'Auria, Debra Feinberg, Frank Adamse
Downsville: Brian LaTourette, Chuck Dunlap, Chris Towsley, Rich Bell, Gary Champlin, Nancy Haynes (District Clerk)
Roscoe: Gary Dahlman, Ed Park, Tasse Niforatos, Lynne Wachter, Tim Clark, Marlyn Peters (District Clerk)

Administrators: Livingston Manor: Sandy Johnson, Roberta Rehwaldt, Chris Hubert
Downsville: Tim McNamara, Rob Rhinehart, Tim Maguire, Betty Early
Roscoe: Kevin Callegy, Janice Phillips, Robin Francisco

Invited Guests: Gray Stevens - Facilitator

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Superintendent John Evans began the meeting by welcoming all in attendance and noting that October is Board Appreciation month, thanking Board members for their service and indicating that after the formal presentation on sharing a meal prepared by the Roscoe cafeteria staff would be provided for Board members. Mr. Evans reviewed the extended discussions that each of the three Boards have had over a lengthy period regarding the wisdom of sharing services and programs between the districts. Reasons for sharing include:

1. Decreasing student enrollment.
2. Rising fixed costs (i.e. utilities, health insurance premiums, mandated employee retirement contribution increased, salaries, etc.) in a time of severely limited revenue increases due state imposed tax caps and a struggling economy.
3. Increased academic standards dictated by state and federal governments as well as increased expectations of parents for expanded academic and extracurricular opportunities.

Due to these and other factors, Mr. Evans indicated that the Boards are seeking to find areas to share so that cost savings arrived at by sharing may be used to expand opportunities for students. In order to begin the process of studying sharing, the three Boards have applied for a government efficiency grant that would help to subsidize such a study. A second study could be applied for once the time comes to actually implement sharing in specific areas. Superintendent Evans stated unequivocally that this was not a merger or consolidation study.

Mr. Evans introduced Mr. Gray Stevens who will facilitate the study of sharing for the three school districts. Mr. Stevens described himself as a product of small school education who spent his career as an educator in small schools, eventually retiring as Superintendent at Oxford Academy 12 years ago. Since that time he has provided interim services to 5 small school districts and the DCMO BOCES. He also consults with small schools regarding the sharing of services and programs.

Mr. Stevens quickly reviewed the following:

- *Reasons for a study of sharing: To find savings that can then be applied to the expansion of student opportunities
- *Efficiency Grant
- *His belief in the positive values and experiences small schools offer students and the importance of the small school district to the identity of the communities they are a part of
- *Clearly stated that this study was for the sharing of services and programs and was not a merger study.
- *Noted the irony that if small schools are to remain independent, they must share

Mr. Stevens provided the objective of this effort and outlined that goals of the share initiative:

Objective: Share services (and programs) between and among three small, rural school districts that are currently served by one Superintendent of Schools for the purpose of cost saving, efficiency, and repurposing savings to support expanded student opportunities.

Goals:

1. Gather information on school services that appear to have the potential to be shared between the three school districts
2. Synthesize the gathered data and compile it into a logical report outlining pros and cons of sharing specific services
3. Establish a committee of representatives from the three districts to determine which services should be shared, how the sharing will work, how and when the sharing will be initiated, and how the share will be documented and memorialized. The functions of the committee will be to:
 - a. Create a timeline and goals
 - b. Identify potential areas of sharing that need data gathered
 - c. Identify those areas where some type of sharing already occurs
 - d. Help the school administration in creating a process within which sharing may occur
 - e. Aid with public understanding of the initiative to share services, and create a process for public transparency
 - f. Study the “Shared Services Review Report” and help determine what services to begin sharing, how best to initiate, and when to initiate
4. Implement the sharing of the selected services

Mr. Stevens outlined his role as facilitator, answered questions, suggested that the Boards be thinking about a name for the sharing effort, noted that not every share would yield savings, stressed the need to document the process for each share and have the three Boards approve the final documentation.

After discussion it was agreed that the initial committee makeup would be, one the Superintendent and from each district: Board member, principal, business official, teacher, parent, community member. As areas of sharing to be studied are identified, representatives of those areas would be invited to committee meetings. Committee meetings would be public and minutes would be shared with staff and community. A news release would be created following each committee meeting to keep the public informed. An initial meeting would be set for Tuesday, November 24 at 6:00 in a location to be determined.

Mr. Evans concluded the program by asking and answering questions from the Boards and the public. The ended at 7:10, the public left and the Boards enjoyed their meal.