

NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Office of the Superintendent
Memorandum

TO: Board of Education
FROM: L. Chris Richardson, Ph.D., Superintendent
RE: Table File Items for August 10, 2015, Regular School Board Meeting

- VI. Items for Discussion and / or Reports.
2. Northfield Public Schools Charter School Authorizer Renewal Update.
 3. Southeast Minnesota Special Education Cooperative (SEMSEC) Update.
- VII. Superintendent's Report
- B. Items for Consent Grouping
3. Personnel Items.
 - a. Appointments.*
 14. Karin Bartlett, Child Nutrition Associate I at Sibley Elementary for 3 hours/day beginning 09/02/2015; \$15.52/hour.
 15. Anne Campbell, 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher (2/3 EBD) at the High School beginning 08/26/2015; BA, Step 0. **
 16. Danielle Crase, 1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute Special Education Resource Teacher at the High School beginning 08/26/2015 – 06/08/2015; BA, Step 0. **
 17. Correction: Marcy Korynta, .6 FTE School Psychologist at the High School beginning 08/26/2015 – 06/08/2015; MA60, Step 10.**
 18. Robert A. Sullivan, Assistant Football Coach at the High School beginning 08/10/2015 – 11/14/2015, Level E, Step 7 (25% of total salary – shared with Mike Allen).
 - b. Increase/Decrease/Change in Assignment.
 19. Mike Allen, Assistant 9th Grade Football Coach (hourly) at the High School, change to Assistant Football coach at the High School beginning 08/10/2015; Level E, Step 7. (75% of salary shared with Robert A. Sullivan)
 20. Len Kallsen, 9th Grade Football Coach (hourly) at the High School beginning 08/10/2015; \$12.00/hour.
 21. Geoff Staab, Assistant 9th Grade Football Coach (hourly) at the High School, change to 9th Grade Football Coach at the High School beginning 08/10/2015; Level F, Step 2.
 - d. Resignations / Retirement.
 9. Mike Allen, 9th Grade Football Coach at the High School, resignation from 9th Grade Football coaching position effective 8/9/2015.
 10. Karla MacDougal, Early Ventures Site Assistant, resignation effective 08/26/2015.
 11. Geri Schlecht, Science Teacher at the ALC/High School, retirement effective 8/24/2015.

* Conditional offers of employment are subject to successful completion of a criminal background check.

** Subject to revision upon settlement of the 2015-17 NEA Master Agreement

Northfield Public Schools Authorizer Renewal Process Update August 10, 2015

What has been completed?

1. Attended in person or by conference call or webinar all Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) meetings for Authorizers held during last five years.
2. Received notification from MDE of five-year authorizer renewal for cohort two.
3. Attended MDE required meetings to learn about authorizer renewal application and documentation as well as process for completion.
4. Received USB encrypted drive to upload all application responses and documentation that could only be opened on Windows 8, a format not compatible with our current Windows 7 or Mac platforms.
5. Learned that first cohort of authorizers completed process with only 50% of authorizers achieving a satisfactory rating (1 exemplary, 1 satisfactory, 2 approaching satisfactory). We also learned that because we have not had requests from any new charter schools to locate in Northfield, we would not be eligible to earn an exemplary rating no matter how well we had done with our existing charter schools.
6. Notified that Minneapolis Public Schools and several colleges will no longer be authorizers so a number of charter schools will be looking for a new authorizer in the 2016-17 school year. Other than Northfield, we believe that the only public school authorizers are Cambridge Isanti and Rushford-Peterson. I provided support, and application materials, and documents for both of these districts when they were going through the application process. We believe that all remaining authorizers are private non-profits serving as single purpose authorizers.
7. Attended two MDE conference calls to request more information and clarity on what was being requested.
8. Completed drafts of 20 narratives responding to specific questions and requests for information and documentation of authorizer.
9. Despite being licensed administrators with significant experience and required annual evaluations, we were asked to provide resumes, proof of professional development and leadership skills required in order to get and renew Minnesota Administrative Licensure.
10. Amassed approximately 800 pages of documentation to expand the responses to the 20 narrative questions and provide proof of authorizer skills, staff capabilities and ongoing supervision and evaluation of and accountability for each of the charter schools we authorize.

What is currently being completed?

1. Review of each of the narratives and documents to determine if we have thoroughly answered their questions and responded to their requests for documentation.
2. Preparing to load all answers and documentation back onto encrypted drive and hand delivering to MDE by August 17, 2015.
3. MDE is currently surveying Arcadia and Prairie Creek Directors and School Board chairs about our performance as an authorizer over the last five years. Ryan Krominga graciously offered to complete the evaluation survey rather than having a brand new Director trying to complete this task.
4. MDE is currently hiring a third-party evaluator to complete the evaluation of cohort two authorizers including Northfield.

What happens after Authorizer Renewal Application has been submitted?

1. MDE contracted evaluator will review and grade each of the 20 narrative responses and the documentation for those responses.
2. MDE evaluator will identify all areas where additional information or corrective action is required and request timely responses.
3. MDE evaluator will review results of Charter Leadership Surveys provided by Charter School Directors and School Board Chairs.
4. MDE evaluator will interview members of Northfield administrative team as well as members of Board and directors of each charter school.
5. Draft Performance Reports will be drafted by MDE and sent to authorizers for review and comment.
6. Final Performance Reports will be issued and published to each authorizers' performance profile page on MDE's website and to Arcadia and Prairie Creek by December 31, 2015.
7. Depending on rating received, district will complete all corrective action requirements and then will complete submission of new Commissioner's Approved Authorizing Plan (CAAP) for submission to MDE for approval prior to June 30, 2016.

**Southeast Minnesota Special Education Cooperative (SEMSEC)
Update August 10, 2015**

What has been completed?

1. Multiple meetings of the five school districts have occurred to discuss our needs and the possibilities of creating a special education cooperative. All materials, presentations and documents were created to be shared with each district's administration and Board of Education. SEMSEC resolutions and agreement were developed, reviewed by legal council and provided to each Board.
2. SEMSEC Resolutions and Agreements approved by all five Boards of Education.
3. SEMSEC Resolutions and Agreements hand delivered to Commissioner's Office.
4. SEMSEC agreement approved by Commissioner and Coop District number assigned.
5. SEMSEC Board members (Board member and superintendent) approved by each member Board.
6. Owatonna Public Schools took a leadership role in identifying possible centrally-located facilities of sufficient size to meet our immediate needs and provide ongoing access for all five districts as these programs continue to grow. Experts have indicated that the need for programs addressing the complex needs of Setting 4 special needs students is and will continue to grow dramatically.
7. A 42,000 square foot site suitable for custom build out was identified in Owatonna and visited by representatives from all five districts. Superintendents determined that facility with appropriate modifications would provide customized space for students from all five districts in a centralized location.
8. SEMSEC Letter of Intent drafted by our legal counsel and discussed with Landlord. Letter details our intentions to move forward with a six (6) year lease agreement estimated at \$750,000 (\$150,000 per district) per year, including the building lease and approximately \$2 million dollars in build out costs to be spread over the six year lease.
9. Each SEMSEC District would need to sign the Letter of Intent and provide a non-refundable earnest money payment of \$40,000.00 by the end of August to secure the premises for three months while the final lease agreement is completed. The \$200,000.00 payment from SEMSEC partners would be applied to a portion of total actual expenses of build out that would occur prior to the beginning of the lease agreement payments on August 1, 2016.
10. If we are able to move forward, the Board needs to provide administration with the authority this evening to make a payment prior to our next scheduled Board meeting in the amount of \$40,000.00 to secure the Letter of Intent and provide initial support for the build out of the leased space. This would only occur if all five districts make a commitment to continue.

What has currently stopped progress?

1. Our initial plan was to lease and build out a facility that would provide appropriate high quality spaces to meet the needs of Setting 4 Students with Unique Needs (SUN) and Setting 4 Students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities (EBD). These students' needs were such that they could not be served at the local district level. The idea was that the centrally located, leased Owatonna site would meet our current and growth needs and would ensure that all five districts would have access to the programs whenever a student needed them.
2. While all 5 districts have immediate needs for the SUN program and currently have students who would be placed there, one district now believes that they could currently serve their EBD student in their own district. A second district believes it could then just send its EBD students to the first district.
3. These districts questions why they should pay an equal share of the lease costs or an equal share of the build out costs because they currently do not believe that it would have to send EBD students to the new facility. These districts would like to only pay a share of the lease and build out costs for the SUN program and support spaces. They request that the remaining districts that are ready to use the EBD space pay for all the lease and build out costs for that part of the property.
4. It is our belief that the power of a special education coop is that it is positioned to handle the complex Setting 4 students whenever they arrive and that a joint build out of the facility by all five partner districts ensures access to appropriate Setting 4 programs as needed. We also believe that by cooperatively staffing the facility to support current and future needs, we can provide higher quality staff and programming than any of us can provide on our own.
5. It is also our belief that SEMSEC is only cost effective when all 5 districts come together to create a pool of high needs students similar to what might be found in one of the State's largest districts. We envisioned this program like a buffet where for one shared cost, districts could access a variety of high quality services for SUN, EBD and other complex high needs students. It seems now that these two districts would like to treat this like an ala-carte menu where you only pay for the portion of services you need at that time.
6. We have asked these districts to reconsider and are currently waiting for a response.

What happens if these two districts refuse to move forward with the Coop?

1. At this time the other three districts believe that we cannot move forward with SEMSEC unless all five districts are fully committed.
2. The five districts would need to dissolve the Coop.
3. Northfield and Faribault have a decade of working together to provide programming for complex high needs Setting 4 students, but cannot continue the current joint powers agreement beyond the end of the 2015-16 school year.

4. Under the joint powers agreement, Faribault and Northfield currently have the Cannon River Education Center (CREC) that houses SUN, EBD, Day Treatment and 18-21 year old transition programming in Faribault.
5. We have met twice with Faribault to discuss how we might handle the situation if SEMSEC is unable to move forward. We believe the best option at this time is to split the hosting duties between the two districts. Northfield would provide the SUN program at a new leased location in Northfield and Faribault would maintain the EBD program, mental health services and transition program in Faribault at CREC.
6. Each district would take students from the other district and charge them for special education services. Each district would be responsible for paying the lease and build out costs for their own facilities and could lease levy for these costs.
7. I have contacted a real estate agent to identify potential properties in Northfield to determine potential costs of lease and build out on an approximately 6,000 square foot SUN program facility. We need to determine these costs prior to September 30, 2015, so they can be included in 2016-17 tax calculations and certification.
8. While we still believe that SEMSEC provides the highest quality services, greatest flexibility and long-term access for or complex Setting 4 special needs students, we need to have a plan B in place depending on the outcome of our efforts with our SEMSEC partners.