

March 3, 2014

1. The Iowa Falls-Alden School Study Committee met at 6:00 p.m. in Iowa Falls. Committee members in attendance: Kristin Elerding, Mike Swartzendruber, John Robbins, Greg Lascheid, Lisa Prochaska, Mark Arends, Amy Klaffke, Deanna Krause, Elaine Loring, Marcela Hoversten, and Kim Nelson.
2. The purpose of the study committee is to earnestly discuss the merits of reorganization, and make recommendations to both school boards as to what should/could an IFA consolidated school district look like.
3. The committee discussed specific points regarding how it wants to conduct its' meetings. It was decided that Dr. Robbins will facilitate the meetings. If he is not in attendance, another administrator will facilitate in his absence. The members of the committee will enjoy an open forum for discussions. If there are visitors in attendance at the meeting, they will need to be acknowledged before speaking. If they so choose, they may submit a card (anonymously) with comments or questions, which will be brought forth by a committee member. The meetings will be adjourned when the agenda items have been discussed, aiming for the meetings to conclude within 1½ hours.
4. The committee discussed what communication strategies should be used to inform the public about the work of the committee. Various suggestions included: Monday Newline, building facebook pages, newspaper, radio, notices posted in the libraries and banks, IF-A website (special tab), email, Horizons, Cadet Gazette, and building newsletters. Notices in these various communications should include the names of the committee members. There will be an "email tree" set up for communication with committee members. The minutes from each meeting will be published on the paperless board meeting website.
5. The committee reviewed and evaluated the whole grade sharing agreement. Items listed that have worked well: 6th graders going to Alden, contacts with the students thru little league have revealed no issues for the students, the teachers from both

districts work well together and communicate well, good teamwork has been established, the transition for Pre School and K-Prep has gone well between districts, having the same curriculum is helpful (the curriculum is mostly similar, with some areas still different depending on the adoption cycle), shared professional development has gone well, the students are given similar opportunities, and there appears to be more stability. Some challenges that have been addressed with whole grade sharing were to maintain a middle school atmosphere with the 6th graders and bus discipline issues. A monitor is present on all shuttles and cameras have been installed on the buses. Another ongoing challenge is to obtain comparative data for district assessments. Following assessment trends has been difficult because of changes in the assessments used and how progress is measured. It was questioned if both districts have maintained academic freedom and if that would change with consolidation. It was noted that even within a building, teachers will use different methods and they have freedom to vary their techniques. The question was raised why did we enter the whole grade sharing agreement 10 years ago? Answers from Alden reps included: athletics~numbers were down and we couldn't field teams, there was pressure from the state to offer a larger variety of classes, there was some impetus from neighboring districts to build a school in a central location, enrollment was not stable, and there were financial benefits as a result of whole grade sharing. Iowa Falls reps stated that Alden was looking for a partner and Iowa Falls wanted to be that partner. How does whole grade sharing benefit the students for Iowa Falls? Larger class sizes present a better opportunity to offer more programming. How does the current whole grade sharing agreement affect the districts financially? The current agreement stipulates a certain percentage of the district cost per pupil, as calculated by state formula, to be paid to the educating district. The actual cost per pupil may be more or less than that calculated amount. It is customary that the high school programming will be more costly than the elementary programming.

The following questions were asked and will be a major focus of this committee: What are the benefits to consolidate versus whole grade sharing? What are the major differences? What is best for the students? How would each option benefit/hurt the students?

6. Financial incentives for shared positions were presented. Although very beneficial, these incentives are a small fraction of the general fund budget. Current legislative action may change these amounts drastically. They will be reviewed again at the next meeting.
7. Presentations were given by Dr. Roark Horn and Mr. Larry Sigel at a joint meeting held in March, 2013. Information from those presentations was available. Updated financial information was reviewed and discussed.
8. The committee would like to obtain additional viewpoints regarding the evaluation of whole grade sharing. They would like to conduct a survey of parents to gain information from a wider spectrum of stakeholders. It was stated that the purpose and intention of this committee is to make a formal recommendation to the Board of Education regarding consolidation. The next meeting will be held in April in Alden. This meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Submitted by: Trish Lee, Board Secretary