

In follow up to the special meeting held on January 29th, where the Five-District Feasibility Study was presented by Gerald Ehlers, Study Committees from each of the five districts met for the initial time on Wednesday, February 26th at 6pm in the Creighton High School Library. The five school districts represented included: Bloomfield, Creighton, Osmond, Plainview, and Wausa. Three board members from each district were present and joined by the Superintendent and Principals of their respective school district. Creighton Community Public Schools, the host school, provided an introduction to the evening's agenda, commended the district leaders for being pro-active on an issue that is impacting most of rural Nebraska, and provided an opportunity for each participant to introduce themselves to the group.

The Boards of Education were divided into three groups with one member from each school district representing their district in the group. The Principals composed a fourth group. To begin to create a focus for the Study Committees, four questions were asked of each of the groups. Their responses were recorded and shared with the entire committee attendance. Although many groups had similar responses, some responses varied and considerable positive dialogue took place between board members from each school and administration.

The four questions that groups were asked to ponder follow along with a summary of the responses.

- A. What challenges does your district currently face?
 - a. Declining enrollment
 - b. Aging facilities
 - c. Finances
 - d. Attracting/Recruiting qualified Staff
 - e. Educating the community about issues/challenges that face the districts
 - f. Providing a diverse curriculum
 - g. Lack of course offerings
 - h. Activity sponsorship
 - i. Small class sizes in courses eliminating the ability to provide a competitive, collaborative classroom
 - j. Increased student mobility
- B. What is your district doing well?
 - a. Schools have scored well in Reading and Math
 - b. Parental/Community support
 - c. Great kids
 - d. Staff dedication/quality staff and administration
 - e. Financially responsible
 - f. Technology has been provided to students
 - g. District collaboration
 - h. Each district has areas that they truly excel in
- C. What do students need to be successful and to prepare them for their future?
 - a. Expanded class offerings

- b. Competitive, challenging classroom environment
 - c. Career development and preparation
 - d. College credit course options
 - e. Problem-Solving, Creative thinking skills
 - f. Life skills, ethics, professionalism
 - g. Technology
 - h. Communication skills
 - i. Differentiated instruction levels within the curriculum
 - j. Development of entrepreneurship
- D. What is the purpose of this study and what has brought these districts here?
- a. To give students the best possible educational experience
 - b. The need to increase student opportunities
 - c. The need to create a competitive environment for education
 - d. To create a dynamic, sustainable education system
 - e. Make better use of combined resources
 - f. An attempt to be pro-active and make necessary decisions on the districts' terms rather than someone else's
 - g. Declining enrollment, finances, and aging facilities have necessitated the meeting

Members of the Board of Education and administration had considerable discussion and dialogue on the above questions and the provided answers. Discussion on the third question (C) led to additional conversation regarding challenges that districts currently face, as it became evident that providing students with what they need to be successful has become more difficult for each of the individual districts. The answers to the above questions will be used to develop a purpose statement for the Study Committees in a future meeting.

The two-hour meeting concluded with encouragement to the Boards of Education to keep the lines of communication open, to be open and honest in discussions, and continue to put students first in future discussions. It is imperative that each district provides accurate and open communication to their patrons. Minutes of the Study Committee Meetings will be discussed at respective Regular Board of Education Meetings. The Study Committees are making arrangements to meet again in mid-March.