



**BELLEVUE COMETS**  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

**SUPERINTENDENT**  
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**Comet Highlights from the August 14, 2023 Board of Education Meeting**  
**From Dr. Tom Meyer, Superintendent**

August 16-22	Teacher Professional Learning
August 16	All Staff Meeting and Breakfast
August 17	Poverty Awareness/Mental Health Training (Ott)
August 18	Mental Health Training (AEA)
August 21	"Unpack the Backpack" and MS and HS Orientations
August 23	First Day of School
September 4	No School - Labor Day
September 13	2-Hour Early Dismissal - Teacher Professional Learning - 1:30-3:30
September 13	OPN and Bellevue CSD Open House for the progress and planning for the Bellevue Elementary School - 6:30-7:30 - Elementary Gym
September 25	Homecoming Week
September 29	Homecoming Pep Rally at the MS/HS for grades PK-12 and Homecoming Parade
October 11	2-Hour Early Dismissal - Teacher Professional Learning - 1:30-3:30
October 18 & 19	Parent-Teacher Conferences
October 20	No School

To view a calendar of events, see the following link:

<https://www.rivervalleyconference.org/public/genie/628/school/1/>

**APPROVED - Consent Agenda**

**Approve Open Enrollment Requests**

- Kendall Kremer - 4th Grade - Dubuque to Bellevue
- Rebecca Mae Ruff - 8th Grade - Easton Valley to Bellevue.
- Rowan Meyer - 7th Grade - Maquoketa to Bellevue

**Approve Resignations**

- Paquita Ditzler - Preschool Associate - Paquita informed the district that she will not be returning to her position this upcoming school year. She has worked in our district for 23½ years and has been an outstanding employee working with students (and with staff). We wish her the best in her retirement.

### Approve Recommendations to Hire

- Mary Jo Meier - Substitute Bus Driver Contract to transport students in suburbans, etc before/after school and/or at lunchtime.

### Recognize any Visitors

No one was in attendance.

### Comet Curriculum

High-Quality teaching is important for our students and community, and we work to provide this to each and every student. In conjunction with this, I will review the Professional Learning Schedule and activities for all staff during our August 2023 meetings. Teachers will have time to work individually and in grade-level/small groups, along with time for building meetings and district meetings. The approximate times are the following:

- District Time - 12 hours
- Building Time - Elementary - 4.5 hours; MS/HS - 7.0 hours (based on guided training for AIW)
- Individual and Team Collaboration Time - Elementary - 16 hours; MS/HS 14 hours

*\*Times are estimated and may not equal to the same amount for buildings.*

I am also sharing a summary of the evaluation procedures currently used for teachers in our school district. It is taken from our Master Handbook for teachers, and is a summary of the main points of the evaluation system. Additionally, a copy of the Individual Career Development Plan that each teacher completes each school year is also included.



**BELLEVUE COMETS**

ELEMENTARY + MIDDLE + HIGH SCHOOL

BELIEVE IN THE BLUE

**Professional Learning Schedule**  
**2023-2024**

*(Last Revision - 8.1.23)*

*\*Schedule is subject to change.*

**Tuesday, August 15 - TLC Members, Mentors 23-24, Model Teachers, AIW Pilot, 2-5 Literacy**

Those in Attendance

- Elementary (Tracey Till's Room)
  - Cris Kellogg
  - Emily Reeg
  - Mindy Stroud
  - Tracey Till
  - Alex Wulfekuhle
  - Brittni Decker
  - Erin Roeder
  - Sami Schroeder
  - Tina Sieverding
  - Melissa Fondell
  - Tana Herrig
  - Nichelle Decker
  - Josh Kueter
  - Jodi Deppe
  - Dori Venema
  - Kim Jochum
  
- MS/HS (Tom Dorhout's Room)
  - Matt Cook
  - Curt Ernst
  - Blair Gerlach
  - Jessica Hingtgen
  - Matt Jaeger
  - Rebecca Lahey-Scott
  - Craig Reuter
  - Dave Ripperger
  - Mark Ruden
  - Adam Smith
  - Natalie Torres
  - Tracy Weber

8:00-11:30 - Building Meetings

- Elementary - Literacy
  
- MS/HS - AIW Pilot Team Training

11:30-12:30 - Lunch as a group at MS/HS Commons Area

12:30-3:00 - Building Meetings

- Elementary - Literacy
  
- MS/HS - AIW Pilot Team Training

**Wednesday, August 16 - All Employees (West Gym)**

All Staff

7:30-8:00 All Staff Welcome (Bagels, Fruit, etc.)

8:00-10:00 Welcome

- Tom Meyer, Superintendent (60 minutes)
  - Introduction of New Staff
  - Transportation, Maintenance, Food Service, Business Office, Secretaries, Technology, Media Services, Life Connections, School Nurse, etc.
  - State of the District - Finances, Enrollment, Future...
  - Professionalism/Ethics/Culture of Expectations (Meyer)
  - Social Media (Meyer)
  - Legal Issues (Meyer)
  - Safety Measures
  - Confidentiality
  - Other
- Kelley Humphrey (60 minutes)
  - Food Allergies, etc.
  - Bloodborne Pathogens
  - Other

10:00-11:30 Safety Training (By local and county emergency personnel)

Bus Drivers

11:30-12:30 Bus Driver's Meeting in the Bus Barn

12:30-3:00 Working Lunch (provided)

- Including District Time Clock Information
- Child Abuse Training - Online Training (Bellevue Room) - State Requirement
  - See the end of the document for information on this training

Elementary Associates

11:30-12:30 Associate's Meeting with building principals (Board Room)

Food Service Staff (Meetings in Board Room)

11:30-12:30 Lunch

12:30-2:30 Child Abuse Training - Online Training - State Requirement

- See the end of the document for information on this training

2:30-4:00 Register Staff, Cooks, Servers, and Custodial Staff involved with Food Service; Finish Child Abuse Training

Elementary Teachers

11:30-12:30 Lunch

12:30-1:30 Individual and Teacher Team Collaboration Time

1:30-3:00 Elementary Building Meeting (Cafeteria)

3:00-3:30 Individual Teacher and Team Collaboration Time

MS/HS Teachers

11:30-12:30 MS/HS Building Meeting (Tom Dorhout's Room)

12:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-3:30 AIW Training for All Teachers (West Gym)

Student Health Department (Kelley Humphrey, School Nurse)

1:00-3:00 TTRAK 2.0 - Medicaid Tracking with Timberline Services This will include the following:

- ALL Associates at the elementary (excluding those working in preschool - Paquita D, Heidi K, and Danielle R)
- Beth Norpel from the MS/HS (Site TBD)

**Thursday, August 17 - District Teachers and Associates (West Gym)**

- 8:00-9:00 23-24 School Year and Goals
- Individual Professional Development Plans
  - Grade Level/Course Syllabus Updates
    - "Topic-Based" vs. Standards-Based
      - Topics easier to understand on "what is being taught" in many ways
  - JMC/Grading
  - Faculty Handbook
  - Instructional Strategies
    - Relevant; Motivating
  - Process-Driven vs. Results-Driven
  - Fat Squirrel and Flat Squirrel
  - Legal/Legislative Information
  - Social Media
  - Public Purpose
  - Safety Overview
  - Thick/Thin

- 9:00-11:30 Jim Ott - Poverty Training
- Including book discussion on "Poor Students, Rich Teaching."
  - All teachers should bring summaries of 3 main points from the book.

- 11:30-12:00 Bellevue Education Association Information Meeting and/or Individual and Teacher Collaboration Time (BEA meeting optional)  
(Sooner if prior session ends early)

MS/HS Associates

- 11:30-12:30 Associate's Meeting with building principal (Board Room)

Lunch

12:00-1:00

Elementary Teachers

- 1:00-3:30 Elementary Teachers Building Meeting and Individual/Team Collaboration Time
- Literacy Work
  - ICDP

Middle/High School Teachers

- 1:00-3:00 MS/HS Teachers Building Meeting
- JMC Basics and Expectations
  - AIW Pilot Groups; Future Steps
  - ICDP
  - Other

- 3:00-3:30 Individual Teacher and Team Collaboration Time

**Friday, August 18 - District Teachers and Associates (Bellevue State Park Lodge)**

- 8:00-1:00 (est.) Bellevue State Park Lodge - District Discussion and Activity
- 8:30-11:00 Mental Health Training (AEA)
- "Building You to Benefit Them"
    - *An additional time with athletic coaches outside the school system will also be scheduled.*
- 11:00-11:30 Financial Presentation (11:00-11:30)
- 11:30-1:00 Lunch on-site - BBQ and Discussions/Perspectives on the training and implications for our students and their learning.
- 1:00-3:30 District Teachers - Individual and Team Collaboration Time/Building Meetings
- 1:00-1:30 Elementary Time Clock Information - **All Elementary Teachers (Cafeteria)**  
Bring a Computer or other device to log in to the employee time clock/leave system.
  - 1:00-1:30 All **MS/HS Teachers** who have Associates in their room at any time, and ALL Associates (Library)
  - 2:00-2:30 Middle School/High School Time Clock Information - **All MS/HS Staff (Tom Dorhout's Room)**  
Bring a Computer or other device to log in to the employee time clock/leave system.

*\*Other time not designated above is for Individual/Team Collaboration Time*

**Saturday, August 19**

*EMS Training at Bellevue MS/HS for Local EMS Staff from 7:00 AM - 1:00 PM approximately. If you wish to work in the building, please contact the administration for potential areas.*

**Monday, August 21 - District Teachers, Associates, and Building Secretaries**

Prior to 11:30 Athletic Practices/etc. for grades 9-12

11:30-7:00 School Day (eat on own at school)

**Associates & Building/District Secretaries-Administrative Assistants (Bellevue Room at MS/HS)**

8:00-10:30 Child Abuse Training - Online Training - State Requirement

- See end of document for information on this training

10:30-11:00 District Time Clock Information - All Elementary and MS/HS Associates

- *This time could be earlier if the child abuse training ends prior to the scheduled time.*

**Bellevue Elementary Teachers**

11:30-5:30 Individual and Team Collaboration Time

*Break for dinner (on your own)*

5:30-7:00 "Unpack the Backpack" at Bellevue Elementary; Individual Work Time in Rooms

**Bellevue MS/HS Teachers**

11:30-6:00 Individual and Team Collaboration Time; Grade-Level Meetings;  
Curricular Area Meetings (If not in Special Education Meetings)

- 12:30-1:00 Special Education Accommodation Meetings with MS Teachers (Tom Dorhout's Room)
- 1:00-1:30 Special Education Accommodations Meeting with HS Teachers (Tom Dorhout's Room)

*Break for dinner (on your own)*

6:00-6:30 MS Orientation - All incoming 6th-grade students and all new MS students to the district (Main Gym)

6:30-7:00 HS Orientation - Incoming 9<sup>th</sup>-Grade students and all new HS students to the district (Main Gym)

**Teacher Quality Committee**

2:30-3:15 Discussion on the 2023-2024 school year

- Learning Experiences
- Funds
- Format

**Tuesday, August 22 - District Teachers**

8:00-3:30 Teacher Work Time, plus work on Individual Career Development Plans (ICDP)

*Break for an hour-lunch on your own.*

**First Day of School - Wednesday, August 23**



## Future TENTATIVE Plans for Professional Learning in the 2023-2024 School Year

### Scheduled on District Calendar

- September 13 - 2-Hour Early Dismissal
  - Grade Level/Curricular Area Meetings
    - Preschool (SDI); Elementary (Literacy); MS/HS (AIW)
  - CPI Refresher
- October 11 - 2-Hour Early Dismissal
  - Grade Level/Curricular Area Meetings
    - Preschool (SDI); Elementary (Literacy); MS/HS (AIW)
- November 8 - 2-Hour Early Dismissal
  - Grade Level/Curricular Area Meetings
    - Preschool (SDI); Elementary (Literacy); MS/HS (AIW)
- December 13 - 2-Hour Early Dismissal
  - Grade Level/Curricular Area Meetings
    - Preschool (SDI); Elementary (Literacy); MS/HS (AIW)
- January 3 - Full Day
  - Grades/Prep for 2nd Semester
- January 15 - Full Day
  - Grade Level/Curricular Area Meetings
    - Preschool (SDI); Elementary (Literacy); MS/HS (AIW)
  - TBD
- February 14 - 2-Hour Early Dismissal
  - Grade Level/Curricular Area Meetings
    - Preschool (SDI); Elementary (Literacy); MS/HS (AIW)
- March 20 - 2-Hour Early Dismissal
  - Grade Level/Curricular Area Meetings
    - Preschool (SDI); Elementary (Literacy); MS/HS (AIW)
- April 2 - Full Day
  - Grade Level/Curricular Area Meetings
    - Preschool (SDI); Elementary (Literacy); MS/HS (AIW)
  - Discussions between grade level teachers and curricular areas in regard to transition between grades and curricular areas
- April 17 - 2-Hour Early Dismissal
  - Grade Level/Curricular Area Meetings
    - Preschool (SDI); Elementary (Literacy); MS/HS (AIW)
- May 8 - 2-Hour Early Dismissal
  - Grade Level/Curricular Area Meetings
    - Preschool (SDI); Elementary (Literacy); MS/HS (AIW)
- May 24 - Full Day
  - Teacher Collaboration and Grades

### Other Professional Learning

- Ott - Poverty TQ Opportunities (\$25/hour)
- Mental Health Training
- Other

## Child Abuse Course Training Overview

Various times of training for staff to complete this training (as indicated in the schedule). This is a new state requirement for all staff 18 years of age or over. There is no cost to the employees for the training/certification, and staff will be paid to complete this training at an hourly rate.

Sign-up information will be available at the designated training times.



### Mandatory Reporter: Child Abuse (INITIAL TRAINING)

Register

[show/hide description](#)

The purpose of this training is to provide the learner with the appropriate knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities as mandatory reporters for child and dependent adult abuse. Curriculum provided by the Department of Human Services.

**Instructor(s):** [Evan Abbey](#)

**Price:** available at no cost to district and AEA employees

**CEUs:** 0.2

**Subject(s):** Workplace Safety

**Intended student(s):** Administrator, AEA Consultant, Athletic coach, Instructional Coach, Media/Library, School Counselor, Substitute, Teacher

**Tag(s):** Mandatory Reporter Training

**Iowa Teaching Standard(s):**

- Standard 8 - Fulfills professional responsibilities established by the school district. Criterion 1: Adheres to board policies, district procedures, and contractual obligations.
- Standard 8 - Fulfills professional responsibilities established by the school district. Criterion 2: Demonstrates professional and ethical conduct as defined by state law and individual district policy.



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**BELLEVUE COMETS**  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

### **Teacher Evaluation Summary**

#### **Tier 1 - New Teachers (Year 1 & 2)**

- ICDP Goal Setting and evaluation of plan with administrator.
  - Before, during, and end of the year
- Minimum of two formal evaluations during year 1 & 2
  - Includes pre- and post-observation forms
- Multiple informal evaluations during year 1 & 2
  - Learning Look-In (WeClimb process) and other times
- Summative Evaluation at end of year 2 - Recommendation for licensure as goal
- Development of a cumulative professional portfolio documenting the Iowa Teaching Standards

#### **Tier 2 - Career Teachers (all licensed employees, including those new to the district)**

##### Year 1

- ICDP Goal Setting and evaluation of plan with administrator.
  - Before, during, and end of the year
- Multiple informal evaluations during school year
  - Learning Look-In (WeClimb process) and other times
    - Feedback shared with teachers regularly.
- New teachers to the district, who have received licensure beyond an Initial License, are evaluated formally in year one of employment with the district.

##### Year 2

- ICDP Goal Setting and evaluation of plan with administrator.
  - Before, during, and end of the year
- Multiple informal evaluations during school year
  - Learning Look-In (WeClimb process) and other times
    - Feedback shared with teachers regularly.

##### Year 3

- ICDP Goal Setting and evaluation of plan with administrator.
  - Before, during, and end of the year
- Multiple informal evaluations during school year
  - Learning Look-In (WeClimb process) and other times
    - Feedback shared with teachers regularly.
- Formal Observations
  - Includes pre- and post-observation forms
- Comprehensive evaluation of Iowa Teaching Standards to be completed by the administrator, and shared with the teacher.
  - Evaluation will be placed in the educator's personnel file

#### **Tier 3 - Intensive Assistance - Licensed employees not meeting Iowa Teaching Standards**

- Teacher notification/awareness of deficiencies in Iowa Teaching Standard(s)
- Plan for improvement developed
- Multiple evaluations during timeframe of the plan during the school year
  - Formal and informal observations
  - Learning Look-In (WeClimb process) and other times.
    - Feedback shared with teachers regularly.
- Evaluation of progress in meeting Iowa Teaching Standard(s)

BELIEVE IN THE BLUE

*It is the policy of the Bellevue Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, gender identity, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability or socioeconomic status in its educational programs, services, or employment practices.*

## **Bellevue Community Schools Mission Statement**

*We believe real-world learning opportunities build passionate and engaging experiences for student success in life.*

### **Individual Career Development Plan (ICDP)**

The Individual Career Development Plan focuses on improving student learning and should engage all teachers in collective professional development. Student needs drive the decision making process and student learning forms the basis on which professional development is designed, supported, and evaluated. The Iowa Teacher Quality Program legislation states that the the local district is responsible to develop and implement a District Individual Teacher Professional Development Plan that:

- Aligns with the Iowa Teaching Standards
- Delivers professional development that is targeted at instructional improvement and designed with the following components:
  - Student achievement data and analysis
  - Theory
  - Classroom demonstration and practice
  - Observation and reflection, and
  - Peer coaching
- Includes an evaluation component that documents the improvement in instructional practice and the effect on student learning.
- Integrates the instructional application of technology.
- Focuses on research-based instructional strategies aligned with the school district's student achievement needs and the long-range and annual improvement goals established by the district as well as supports the career development needs of individual teachers.

### **ICDP for Licensure Renewal Credit**

Starting with applications received after **July 1, 2021** holders of a standard, master, professional administrator, or professional service license may use one Iowa Individual Career Development Plan (annual goal setting) **for up to 1/2 of the required renewal credits for their license type.**

- Standard license - 1 ICDP plan is 3 credits (6 needed)
- Master educator license - 1 ICDP plan is 2 credits (4 needed)
- Professional administrator license - 1 ICDP plan is 2 credits (4 needed)
- Professional service license - 1 ICDP plan is 2 renewal credits (4 needed)

In your online renewal application, upload a completed (spring) ICDP signed by you and your evaluator. The plan should minimally include specific goal(s), planned activities, alignment to building/district goals, alignment to the Iowa teaching standards, data collected, and how the goal impacted student learning. The plan needs to have been completed after the issue date of the current license, or be no more than five years old if the license is expired. The plan must be completed in an Iowa school setting, as the plans are based on the Iowa teaching or administrator standards.

# *Bellevue Community Schools Mission Statement*

We believe real-world learning opportunities build passionate and engaging experiences for student success in life.

“Everyone Has a Story”

*Focus Areas: Relationships, Relevant Learning, and Student Engagement - All Leading to Increased Student Achievement.*

## ***Relationships***

*Recognize the...*

- *Strengths of students*
- *Needs of students*
- *Interests of students*
- *Challenges of students*

*Design Learning Around Student...*

- *Strengths*
- *Needs*
- *Interests*
- *Challenges*

## ***Relevant Learning***

*Make Learning...*

- *Matter*
- *Connect to the lives of students*
- *Engaging for students*
- *Relate to the lives of students (current and future)*
- *Expand beyond the classroom walls*
- *Focused on student needs and solutions*

## ***Engagement***

*Engage Students in School through...*

- *Clear classroom and building expectations*
- *Respect and Responsibility as key aspects for students and staff*
- *Character-Driven focus in all areas*
- *Meaningful conversations and activities*

*Bellevue Community School District  
Individual Career Development Plan*

Teacher Name	Building	Date

General Focus of Plan:

Specific Goal: (Written in a manner that allows progress to be measured/noted.)

Rationale for the plan:
What student learning concerns will this plan address and what data is used for analyzing the goals and progress?

How does this plan relate to building and/or district student achievement goals?

What strategies and activities in this plan lead to accomplishing the goal?

Check the Iowa Teaching Standards that are addressed in this plan:

	1. Enhance Student Achievement		5. Monitoring Student Learning
	2. Content Knowledge		6. Classroom Management
	3. Planning and Preparation		7. Professional Growth
	4. Instructional Strategies		8. Professional Responsibilities

Action Plan with Timeline:

--

Resources Desired to Implement the Plan:

--

Expected Learning and Incorporation into the classroom as a result of the Plan:

--

Teacher Signature and Date

Evaluator Signature and Date

--	--

*Bellevue Community School District  
Individual Career Development Plan  
Mid Year Reflection/Update*

Teacher Name	Building	Date

What progress have you made toward completion of this plan?

What are you learning?

What impact is this learning having on students?

Specifically, what needs to be done to complete this plan?

Are there any revisions needed?

Teacher Signature and Date	Evaluator Signature and Date

Signature of teacher does not indicate that the teacher agrees with the content of the review, only that s/he received a copy.



*Bellevue Community School District  
Individual Career Development Plan  
End of Year Report*

Teacher Name	Building	Date

What are the results, outcomes and/or products of this plan?

What has been learned as a result of this plan?

As a result of this experience, what might be the focus of the next Career Development plan?

Teacher comments and reflections:

Administer comments and reflections?

## **Registration Update and Curricular Planning**

Meyer shared information on participation in activities and points of curricular emphasis. Two points of curricular emphasis are the literacy work at the elementary level, along with the Authentic Intellectual Work training at the MS/HS.

Some initial numbers for our athletics are the following:

HS Football - 36-40 (JV and V teams)

HS Volleyball - 23-25 (FS/JV/V teams)

7-12 Cross Country - 25+ (with full varsity teams for both boys and girls)

## **APPROVED - Approval of Student Handbooks and Other Documents**

The documents to approve (which are attached to the notes in a separate attachment via email) are the following (and will be placed on our website):

- Elementary Student-Parent Handbook
- MS/HS Student-Parent Handbook
- Preschool Handbook
- Faculty Handbook
- Non-Certified Staff Handbook

No major changes in these handbooks overall, but as I mentioned a couple of weeks ago in notes to the board, the MS/HS will be placing a stronger emphasis on cell phone use in school classrooms (not using them, unless specifically directed by the teacher for educational purposes). Part of this is related to the article in the "Comet Reading and Reflection" and a variety of other information related to the negative impacts of devices on students in school.

## **Summer Projects and Facilities Updates**

A lot has been happening with projects, general maintenance, and overall cleaning of the buildings. Some highlights of special notice are the following:

- Floors - Floors in both buildings are basically completed (or will be by the start of next week), and the buildings are available.
- Ag Room - The Ag room is getting closer to completion. The heating and cooling system is ready with ductwork completed, the walls painted, the drop-ceiling nearly completed, the floor is getting a coat of sealant, etc., and the toilet and sink have also been installed. THIS IS COMPLETED AT THIS TIME (AFTER THE BOARD MEETING).
- Scoreboard - The scoreboard has power to it and is ready (after some troubleshooting effectiveness by Brett Ernst).
- Long Jump - The project is completed. It is a dramatic improvement.

Some official notes from OPN in regard to the last meeting on August 3 are the following:



## Minutes

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Date: August 03, 2023  
Location: Bellevue High School/Zoom  
Project: Bellevue New Elementary  
Project No.: 23210000  
Subject: DD Meeting 1

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### Attendees:

Bellevue: Tom Meyer – Superintendent  
Brett Ernst – Facilities Supervisor  
Janet Sieverding – School Board  
Penny Medinger – SBO  
Jeanette Hartung-Schroeder – Elem Principal  
OPN: Vicki Hyland, Jill Bills, Bethanie Zeller, Matthew Stewart,  
Lisa Lindley, Emily Greathouse  
Fehr Graham: Nate Kass – Civil Engineer

1. Design team provided review of current design
2. Project Estimate Review
  - a. The total project budget is 13.1M. At this time no additional funding is anticipated to be available.
  - b. The current Construction Cost budget is 11.1M
  - c. The Cost Estimator provided an SD Cost estimate of 12.3M dated August 1, 2023
  - d. The next cost estimate will follow our DD deliverable, scheduled to be received by mid-October
  - e. General Estimate comments from our cost estimator:
    - i. There is still notable market variability, but it is decreasing. OPN will continue to work with our estimator to understand the most current trends
    - ii. Some volatility is due to few contractors bidding portions of the project.
3. Project Budget
  - a. Tom confirmed that at this time additional funding beyond the 13.1M is not anticipated.
  - b. BCSD confirmed they do not want to drain other funding sources needed for maintenance on other facilities
  - c. Penny will review if potentially money is available in bond interest.
4. VE Ideas
  - a. OPN reviewed some potential cost saving (VE) items. The Design team will work to develop a comprehensive list with pricing for review by the design committee, anticipated review in 2 weeks.
  - b. MEP is priced as baseline system, see alternate 2,3,4 for other systems add to estimate
    - i. Preference would be a higher-level mechanical system than base
5. Next Steps
  - a. Community open house 9/13 – 6:30-7:30pm
  - b. Next Design meeting
    - i. 3pm August 21<sup>st</sup>
    - ii. Location: Bellevue HS board room
  - c. Design Development deliverable 09/22

As indicated in the notes, the Steering Committee has another meeting on Monday, August 21 at 3:00 in the Bellevue CSD Board Room. This is a face-to-face meeting with OPN representatives.

A question that has arisen is how much (if any) funds do we want to put toward the project outside of the bond funds? Keeping in mind that anything we utilize for this project at this time will impact funds for the future elementary project and other projects in the district.

Information from last week's notes in regard to the elementary project are the following:

Some highlights of the meeting included the following:

- The initial price estimate came in over budget by about \$1.2 million (11% approximately). This is not surprising overall, but leads to some work for the architects and us as a school district to find the funds and/or make changes.
- The district could put money from SAVE or PPEL toward the deficit if needed, but this also "takes money away" from the PK-2 savings and other facility improvements in the future. We may have to put some toward it, but I would want/recommend to limit that overall. Penny and Abbey pointed out that we will likely gain about \$200,000 in interest from our funds in savings for the bond the way it looks at this time.
- Some new estimates after work by OPN will be available in October again, with final documents developed in December and bids out in January. This is also after the Open House on September 13.
- There is still volatility in pricing...which may remain into the future. An example of this is the "flooring: Typically OPN has been using pre-cast plank flooring, but this has raised in price recently in comparison to another type that is usually more expensive (but less now).

Some other information:

- Open House on September 13 from 6:30-7:30 at the elementary gym. This time will be used to inform the community of our process, ideas, plans at this time, and overall having our process and planning being visible to them to provide input prior to final planning (but with significant planning and cost estimates).
  - This is also before the design development deadline that is set for 9.22.23.

**APPROVED - Board Policy Approval**

The following are policies introduced at the July Board meeting, and an attachment has more information on each (complete current policy when applicable, and the recommended policy by IASB). I recommend we approve these policies. These were also sent with the July Board Notes.

104 - Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Policy  
104.R1 - Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Investigation Procedures  
213 - Public Participation in Board Meetings  
402.02 - Child Abuse Reporting  
*New!* 402.05 - Required Professional Development for Employees  
408.01 - Licensed Employee Professional Development  
601.01 - School Calendar  
603.05 - Health Education  
605.01 - Instructional Materials Selection  
605.01R1 - Selection of Instructional Materials  
605.02 - Instructional and Library Materials Inspection and Display  
605.03 - Objection to Instructional and Library Materials  
605.03R1 - Reconsideration of Instructional and Library Materials Regulation  
*New!* 605.03E5 - Request to Prohibit a Student from Accessing Specific Instructional and Library Materials  
605.05 - School Library  
605.07R1 - Use of Information Resources Regulation  
607.02 - Student Health Services  
607.02R1 - Student Health Services Regulation  
804.05 - Stock Prescription Medication Supply  
*New!* 804.05E1 - Parental Authorization and Release Form for the Administration of a Voluntary School Supply of Stock Medication for Life Threatening Incidents

## **IASB Sample Policy Updates**

### **104 - Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Policy**

SF 391 and SF 496 made changes to this policy by removing references to comprehensive school improvement plans, which are no longer a legal requirement for districts. The bills also establish additional requirements for districts related to processing and handling complaints of bullying/harassment and student placement during the pendency of the investigation.

### **104.R1 - Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Investigation Procedures**

Changes to this regulation come from legal requirements under SF 496, namely that school employees have the ability to report allegations of bullying/harassment directly to parents when circumstances warrant.

### **213 - Public Participation in Board Meetings**

The *NOTE* to this policy has been updated. SF 496 now requires this policy language be displayed on a district's website to show community members how they may file a petition to place an item on a board's agenda pursuant to 279.8B. It would be best practice for districts to prominently display this on the district's homepage.

*I have kept the same limit of 3 minutes, plus a total public participation of 30 minutes.*

### **402.02 - Child Abuse Reporting**

HF 430 has expanded the definition of mandatory reporters to include all school employees 18 years or older. Schools must respond by ensuring a record of mandatory reporter training for all employees.

**New! 402.05 - Required Professional Development for Employees**

This new policy reflects the new legal requirement from HF 604 that districts provide the relevant legal authority under which required professional development trainings are mandated of employees. It is important to note that this requirement does not extend to any voluntary professional development or training.

**408.01 - Licensed Employee Professional Development**

This new language reiterates the legal standard from HF 604 and is consistent with the language in new policy 402.5. See comment above.

**601.01 - School Calendar**

With passage of SF 391, districts now have flexibility to deliver up to 5 days or 30 hours of remote instruction each year. This legislation is designed to assist districts in remediating the number of closure days due to inclement weather during the school year.

*I do not anticipate using these days but can have it in the policy.*

**603.05 - Health Education**

Districts are no longer required to teach about acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

**605.01 - Instructional Materials Selection - Opt. II**

Option II of this policy language reflects a voluntary change (not a legal requirement) that aligns with the legislative intent of SF 496. The change removes students from the instructional materials selection committee, consistent with the legislature prohibition on students serving on the instructional materials reconsideration committee. This language change is one that districts may choose to adopt but are not required to do so by law.

*Option 2, ideally, I believe is the best choice.*

**605.01R1 - Selection of Instructional Materials**

Language has been updated to better comply with the requirements of SF 496 with regard to gender identity, sexual orientation, and age-appropriate materials.

**605.02 - Instructional and Library Materials Inspection and Display**

This policy language has been updated to comply with the requirements of SF 496. Namely, all districts must provide a listing of the available library books in their school libraries on their district website. Districts that do not currently possess software to be able to make this change may request a waiver from the Department of Education until July 2025 to allow time to obtain and implement the necessary software.

### **605.03 - Objection to Instructional and Library Materials**

This policy must be provided to parents/guardians at least annually. SF 496 creates additional requirements for districts related to the notification of the process for objecting to instructional materials.

*This received a significant amount of discussion at the legislative session. Meyer will also share a draft letter with the school board on Monday night and will be sending to parents and the media in the next week (after sharing with staff).*

### **605.03R1 - Reconsideration of Instructional and Library Materials Regulation**

See comments above.

*I am perplexed that they removed the students from the committee legislatively.*

### **New! 605.03E5 - Request to Prohibit a Student from Accessing Specific Instructional Materials**

This is a new legal requirement of districts from SF 496.

### **605.05 - School Library**

This policy language has been updated to comply with SF 496.

### **605.07R1 - Use of Information Resources Regulation**

This regulation has been updated to reflect the flexibility districts now have to employ librarians.

### **607.02 - Student Health Services**

This policy language has been updated to remove references to comprehensive school improvement plans, which are no longer required to be filed with the Department of Education.

### **607.02R1 - Student Health Services Regulation**

See comments above.

### **804.05 - Stock Prescription medication Supply**

See comments for 507.02 above.

*New! 804.05E1 - Parental Authorization and Release Form for the Administration of a Voluntary School Supply of Stock Medication for Life-Threatening Incidents*  
See comments for 507.02 above.

Additionally, there are several things we are doing this year to meet legislative requirements (many of the requirements we were already doing as a district). One of these is in regard to the instructional materials. The website has been updated with information on the process of reviewing instructional materials.

*Questions in regard to the instructional materials can be addressed to the administrators for each building and the district:*

*Building Principals*

- Jeanette Hartung-Schroeder at Bellevue Elementary, [jeanettehartung-schroeder@bellevue.k12.ia.us](mailto:jeanettehartung-schroeder@bellevue.k12.ia.us)
- Jeff Recker at the Bellevue Middle/High School, [jeffrecker@bellevue.k12.ia.us](mailto:jeffrecker@bellevue.k12.ia.us)

### Superintendent

- Tom Meyer, [tommeyer@bellevue.k12.ia.us](mailto:tommeyer@bellevue.k12.ia.us)

Additionally, other information and a link to board policies on instructional materials can be found at the following link:

<http://www.bellevue.k12.ia.us/board-policies>

Information on the request for the process for removal or inquiry of a book, article, outline, handout, video, or other educational materials available to students in the classroom or library is found in the 600 Series (specifically in the 605 Section).

All library books in our district can be found at the following link:

<https://sites.google.com/view/bellevue-csd-library-page/home?authuser=0&sa=D>

Additionally, this will be updated with the new policies being adopted at this meeting.

### Legislative Mandates

Meyer reviewed some information in regard to the Bellevue CSD compliance with legislative requirements. We are on track for these. One topic is "books", and the district is working to comply with this requirement (which is actually not required until January 1, 2024).

Meyer also shared a document with a statement of our process and progress to this point that I will be sharing with staff on Wednesday, August 16 and the media shortly thereafter. Sycamore Media (Bellevue Herald-Leader as part of it with the newspapers in Maquoketa and DeWitt) has requested a list of books the district intends to remove from the classroom use or library, along with any information sent to teachers/staff about the use of books. I had not spoken to David Namanny at the newspaper about this prior to this week's newspaper edition, but have reached out to him since to provide him with the same basic information I shared with Kelly Gerlach from Sycamore Media via email. This included a statement saying that I will send a statement to her in regard to the letter dated 8.4.23 that I received in my office on 8.7.23. I did share that we have NOT removed any books at this time or had significant conversations with staff at this time, and that the district is looking for



further guidance from the Iowa Department of Education, legal counsel, and other input in regard to books in our libraries and curricular areas.

I also shared that we have a link on our website about library books in our district and the process to challenge books.

Below is some broad information/guidance:

1. The DE is providing no guidance on any book removals, except that it should be age-appropriate. There is no list of books. The Urbandale Schools was removing 374 books from their libraries recently (K-12), but revised this to 64 books on Wednesday or Thursday.
  - a. Note the RSAI letter later in the notes that was presented as testimony to the Department of Education on Thursday.
2. Classroom materials fall under the same general provisions as library books.
3. Both aspects also discuss "...descriptions for visual depictions of a sex act". The question is, "What does this mean?" Romeo and Juliet? A John Grisham novel talking about people having sex? This is part of the confusion as a whole. Yet, obviously, we need to continue to differentiate between the elementary and middle, and high school.
  - a. Some of the best clarification I have heard yet on this topic was last week in Des Moines from Matt Carver (School Attorney for the School Administrators of Iowa) is that is it a "reference" to an act or a "description" of an act. For example, talking about having sex (reference) is different than "describing" the actions of the people involved (description). By the way, I never anticipated having this conversation in Board notes or in an upcoming board meeting!

The following is an "explanation" of this law. I would agree that sexual acts should not be described. But what is the definition of this?

- Requires districts to have a K-12 library program, consistent with educational standards, with age-appropriate materials, and supporting student achievement goals. (Note re: *SF 391 Chapter 12 Flexibility*. *SF 391 requires the state Board of Education to have administrative rules establishing library standards. It is unknown at this time if the State BOE will define "age-appropriate", gender identity or sexual orientation content through the administrative rules process.*)
- Districts have until Jan. 1, 2024 before penalties regarding library provisions are effective. If a DE investigation determines the district or an employee has violated the provision prohibiting content in library books that was not age-appropriate, specifies these consequences:
  - First violation results in a written warning to the school board or employee.
  - Second and subsequent violation, if DE finds the district knowingly violated the requirements, subjects the Superintendent to a BOEE ethics investigation.
  - Second and subsequent violation, if pertains to a licensed employee which knowingly violated the requirements, subjects that employee to BOEE ethics investigation.
  - BOEE investigations could lead to disciplinary action.
  - *Note: there were no provisions in the Bill regarding a process to initiate a DE investigation into library materials. At this time, it is unknown if State BOE rules will further define a process.*
- Defines "Age-Appropriate" to mean topics, messages, and teaching methods suitable to particular ages or age groups of children and adolescents, based on developing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity typical for the age or age group. *"Age-appropriate" does not include any material with descriptions or visual depictions of a sex act as defined in section 702.17. Note: The House version of this language prohibited "graphic descriptions or visual depictions of a sex act as defined in section 702.17". The final version of the Bill did not include the adjective "graphic" to describe sex act, leaving school leaders, librarians and staff somewhat confused about the intent of the legislation.*

I am working on this with other districts, our teacher-librarian, administration, teachers, etc. (I had a meeting last week via Zoom with several area superintendents). We are continuing to analyze this.

Overall, the "reference to" and "description of" are of assistance in our process. Yet, materials must still be age-appropriate, and I believe we have done a good job of maintaining age-appropriate materials in our district for our students. I will also form a committee with some teachers when they return to school, and they will join the administration, teacher-librarian, etc., in discussions.

#### **APPROVED - Depositor Banks**

I recommend the Bellevue CSD name Bellevue State Bank, Fidelity Bank, ISJIT, and UMB Bank as depositor banks for 2023-2024 school year up to an amount of \$21,000,000. We have done this for several years, and it allows us options in depositing funds. Penny can explain more about this process at the meeting.

#### **APPROVED - EICC Memorandum of Agreement**

This is an action item with the Eastern Iowa Community College District this month after some changes with EICC after our last board meeting. There were some issues with some of the cost increases and a few other stipulations that have been made in the agreement for this upcoming school year. These have been clarified.

- Tuition Rates increase from \$187/credit hour to \$195/credit hour. This is a change from a 30% concurrent rate to 32.5% - Before discussions with EICC, the college proposed this to be 40-50%. After multiple discussions, this was reduced.
- EICC must review and approve ANY and ALL new high school faculty teaching concurrent enrollment courses on a case-by-case basis. This may mean the college providing the instructor and the district paying for this instructor.
- If a course is being offered in a career academy in Clinton, DeWitt, or Maquoketa, approval may not be granted for the high school to offer the course in the future in a face-to-face setting
  - This does not impact online courses at this time.
  - This does potentially impact us expanding on-site college course offerings in the future - whether that would be a new course(s) or if a teacher leaves the district who is teaching college courses in the school setting. But, I believe our location and needs will be to our benefit in this case in the future.
    - This has had an impact on us with not being able to add new courses for teachers to teach face-to-face on our campus to students - even if they are qualified to do this, and it would come at the cost of the district paying the teacher. But, I believe this can be changed now based on some discussions.
- Books for courses, when needed, will not have to be replaced for 3-5 years - no sooner than this. This has been an issue at times with different books or editions every 1-2 years that the instructor requires. Although, some courses do not utilize print-version books.

I recommend we approve this.

#### **APPROVED - Homeless Liaison**

The state requires that the district has a homeless liaison to assist children and other youth and their families. Jeanette Hartung-Schroeder has served in this role as needed.

#### **Comet Reading and Reflection**

Meyer included an article for this section that he shared in the past about social media with teens.

#### **Social Media and Teens**

I have shared this article with the District Leadership Team and will also plan on making this a part of the Comet Reading and Reflection at the next Board meeting. The schools will be enforcing a stronger policy for cell phones for the 2023-2024 school year (no use during class unless specifically related to content and teacher permission - students will not be allowed for any reason to be on their phones in the classroom at any other time).

## GUEST ESSAY

# Algorithms Are Making Kids Desperately Unhappy

July 18, 2023

**By Chris Murphy**

Mr. Murphy is the junior senator from Connecticut.

Kids are even more in the bag of social media companies than we think. So many of them have ceded their online autonomy so fully to their phones that they even balk at the idea of searching the internet — for them, the only acceptable online environment is one customized by big tech algorithms, which feed them customized content.

As our children's free time and imaginations become more and more tightly fused to the social media they consume, we need to understand that unregulated access to the internet comes at a cost. Something similar is happening for adults, too. With the advent of A.I., a spiritual loss awaits us as we outsource countless human rituals — exploration and trial and error — to machines. But it isn't too late to change this story.

This spring, I visited with a group of high school students in suburban Connecticut to have a conversation about the role that social media plays in their daily lives and in their mental health. More children today report feeling depressed, lonely and disconnected than ever before. More teens, especially teen girls and L.G.B.T.Q. teens, are seriously considering suicide. I wanted to speak candidly about how social media helps and hurts mental health. By the end of the 90-minute dialogue, I was more worried than ever about the well-being of our kids — and of the society they will inherit.

There are numerous problems with children and adolescents using social media, from mental health deterioration to dangerous and age-inappropriate content and the lackluster efforts tech companies employ to enforce their own age verification rules. But the high schoolers with whom I met alerted me to an even more insidious result of minors' growing addiction to social media: the death of exploration, trial and error and discovery. Algorithmic recommendations now do the work of discovering and pursuing interests, finding community and learning about the world. Kids today are, simply put, not learning how to be curious, critical adults — and they don't seem to know what they've lost.

A week before meeting the students, I introduced the Protecting Kids on Social Media Act with three of my colleagues in the Senate, Brian Schatz, Democrat of Hawaii, and the Republicans Katie Britt of Alabama and Tom Cotton of Arkansas. The bill is a comprehensive attempt to protect young people on social media, prioritizing stronger age verification practices and placing a ban on children under 13 using social media altogether. But there was one provision of the bill that was particularly alarming to this group of students: a prohibition on social media companies using the data (what they watch and swipe on) they collect on kids to build and fuel algorithms that spoon-feed individualized content back to users. These high school students had become reliant, maybe even dependent, on social media companies' algorithms.

Their dependence on technology sounds familiar to most of us. So many of us can barely remember when we didn't have Amazon to fall back on when we needed a last-minute gift or when we waited by the radio for our favorite songs to play. Today, information, entertainment and connection are delivered to us on a conveyor belt, with less effort and exploration required of us than ever before.

A retreat from the rituals of discovery comes with a cost. We all know instinctively that the journeys in life matter just as much as the destinations. It's in the wandering that we learn what we like and what we don't like. The sweat to get the outcome makes the outcome more fulfilling and satisfying.

Why should students put in the effort to find a song or a poem they like when an algorithm will do it for them? Why take the risk to explore something new when their phones will just send them never-ending content related to the things that already interest them?

What the kids I spoke to did not know is that these algorithms have been designed in a way that inevitably makes — and keeps — users unhappy. According to an advisory issued by the surgeon general this year, "there are ample indicators that social media can also have a profound risk of harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents." A report by the nonprofit Center for Countering Digital Hate found that users could be served content related to suicide less than three minutes after downloading TikTok. Five minutes after that, they could come across a community promoting eating disorder content. Instagram is awash with soft-core pornography, offering a gateway to hard-core material on other sites (which are often equally lax about age verification). And all over social media are highly curated and filtered fake lives, breeding a sense of envy and inadequacy inside the developing brains of teenagers.

Social media companies know that content that generates negative feelings holds our attention longer than that which makes us feel good. It's the same reason local news leads with the shooting or the house fire, not the local food drive. If you are a teenager feeling bad

about yourself, your social media feed will typically keep delivering you videos and pictures that are likely to exacerbate negative feelings.

These kids may think they need the algorithm, but the algorithm is actually making many of them feel worse. It is not a coincidence that teenage rates of sadness and suicide increased just as algorithmically driven social media content took over children's and adolescents' lives.

The feedback from the students in Connecticut left me more convinced than ever that this law is vital. By taking steps to separate young people from their social media dependency and forcing them to engage in real exploration to find connection and fulfillment, we can recreate the lost rituals of adolescence that, for centuries, have made us who we are.

The role that social media has played in the declining mental health of teens also gives us a preview of what is coming for adults, with the quickening deployment of artificial intelligence and machine learning in our own lives. The psychological impact of the coming transition of thousands of everyday basic human tasks to machines will make the effect of social media look like child's play. Today, machines help us find a song we like. Tomorrow, the machines won't just find the song — they will create it, too. Just as we weren't ready for the impact the social media algorithms would have on our kids, we likely aren't prepared for the spiritual loss that will come as we outsource countless human functions to computers.

Regardless of whether the Protecting Kids on Social Media Act becomes law, we should get to work on a broader dialogue, with adults and kids from all walks of life, to determine if we will really be happier as a species when machines and algorithms do all the work for us, or if fulfillment only comes when humans actually do the work, like searching and discovering, of being human.

Chris Murphy (@ChrisMurphyCT) is the junior U.S. Senator from Connecticut.

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## Information Items

### School Board Elections

- Elections are on November 7, 2023. Below is some information on specific dates for the process.

## **KEY DATES FOR NOVEMBER 2023 SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS**

If you are preparing for the fall school board elections, these **key dates** can help.

**Aug. 28:** Candidate filing begins.

**Sept. 21:** Candidate filing deadline by 5 p.m.

**Sept. 26:** Candidate withdrawal deadline by 5 p.m. (last day for candidates to withdraw by filing a written request with the school secretary).

**Nov. 7:** School election day. Polls are open from 7 a.m.–8 p.m.

### IASB Annual Convention

- This year's convention in Des Moines is on November 16, 2023 (with pre-convention sessions, including delegate assembly, on November 15, 2023). I encourage board members to attend this to hear what is happening in the rest of the state (and beyond).

### Open Meetings Law Review

- The following is information on open meetings laws and closed and exempt sessions. This is a good reminder for all of us, board members, administration, etc. We are all responsible for the recognition of this.





## Open Meetings Frequently Asked Questions

Knowing and understanding the open meetings law is critical for all board members. The following information provides answers to some frequently asked questions regarding the open meetings law, but by no means addresses all possible questions that may arise. For additional information, please see the resources listed at the end of this document.

### **Which boards are subject to the open meetings law?**

The law requires all governmental bodies to perform their official functions in the open. Governmental bodies include the following:

- School boards;
- Area education agency boards;
- Community College boards of trustees; and
- Iowa State Board of Education.

### **What is a “meeting?”**

A gathering in person or by electronic means:

- Formally or informally
- Of a majority of members of a board, including certain advisory committees
- Where deliberation or action upon any matter within the scope of the board’s policy making duties takes place.

### **What is a quorum?**

A majority of the board of directors of any school corporation shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, but a less number may adjourn from time to time.

### **What are the different types of meetings?**

- **Regular Meetings** – Regular meetings include those meetings of the board generally held at the same time, in the same place and on the same day(s) every month. Some school districts have two regular meeting times, one for use during the school months and another during the summer months. Boards should set their regular meeting time for the year at the organizational meeting. Boards may want to have a board policy which establishes the regular meeting time and location.
- **Work Sessions** – Work sessions are open meetings generally held when the board wants to engage in board development, planning or goal setting. At work sessions, while the board may be discussing or deliberating policy issues, it is not acting upon any of the issues. Even though



- the board is not acting on policy issues, the board is deliberating policy issues, so a work session is considered a meeting, and all the provisions of the open meetings law apply including the provision that meetings be accessible to the public and minutes be kept and published.
- **Special Meetings** – Special meetings are held in addition to regular meetings. Special meetings are held to consider lengthy issues or those issues needing attention prior to the next regular meeting of the board.
- **Emergency Meetings** – Emergency meetings are held only when the board must act immediately and cannot wait the required 24-hour notice period for a special meeting. For example, an emergency meeting is appropriate if a board has bid on a piece of property, the bid is accepted, and the board must act that same day in order to finalize the bid. Only on rare occasions will a board need to hold an emergency meeting as most items can wait the required 24 hours for a special meeting or until the next regular meeting. The minutes of the emergency meeting should state why the meeting was held without the required 24-hours' notice.
- **Closed Sessions** – A governmental body may hold a closed session only by affirmative public vote of either two-thirds of the members of the body, or all the members present at the meeting. A closed session may be held “only to the extent a closed session is necessary” for any of the reasons listed in *Iowa Code* §21.5.

#### **What kinds of meetings are exempt from the open meetings law?**

Exempt meetings are not subject to the open meetings law and need not comply with the notice, minutes or other requirements of that law. The following information illustrates examples of when the open meetings law does not apply.

- **Chapter 20.17(3)** *exempts negotiating sessions, strategy meetings of public employers or employee organizations, mediation and the deliberative process of arbitrators in the collective-bargaining process for public employees. However, the initial two sessions shall be open to the public.*
- **Chapter 21.9** *exempts a meeting to discuss strategy regarding the employment conditions of employees not covered by a collective bargaining agreement.*
- **Chapter 279.15** *exempts hearings to discuss with a teacher a superintendent's recommendation to terminate a contract with that teacher.*
- **Chapter 279.24** *exempts a conference between a school board and an administrator to discuss reasons for a proposed termination of contract.*

While the notice, minutes, and other requirements of the open meetings law are not required for exempt meetings, there are practical reasons why a board may choose to provide notice of other open meetings requirements to the public. For example, while negotiating sessions do not require formal posting, consider the following: Might the board be well advised to let the public know that they are meeting outside the public view, that they have a good reason, and that it is allowed under the law? What issues might arise if the board seems to be getting together and no one knows why?

## **Does an individual who wants to speak or provide an opinion at a board meeting have a legal right to do so?**

No. There is often confusion about the role of the public in a board's open meeting. The term "open meeting" means that the meeting is open to the public to observe and listen to the proceedings of the meeting. The term, "open meeting," does not mean the public may join in the board's discussion. As the Iowa Supreme Court stated:

*It is clear the purpose of chapter 98 [now chapter 21] is to prohibit secret and "star chamber" sessions of public bodies, to require such meeting be open and to permit the public to be present unless within the exceptions stated therein. The statute does not require the public body to allow any individual or group to be heard on the subject being considered. Dobrovolny v. Reinhardt, 173 N.W.2d 837, 840-841 (Iowa 1970).*

Iowa school boards generally use one of three approaches for the process of hearing public comment during board meetings. These approaches include:

1. Public comments are allowed during a specified time on the regular board meeting agenda and the comment is not limited to agenda items;
2. Public comments are allowed during a specified time on the regular board meeting agenda, but public comment is limited to items on the board's agenda; and
3. Public comments are allowed on each agenda item, as it is discussed and considered by the board. The board's approach should be clearly outlined in board policy.

Where can I get additional information?

- Contact IASB at 1-800-795-4272 or [IASB@ia-sb.org](mailto:IASB@ia-sb.org)
- Iowa Public Information Board, <https://ipib.iowa.gov/> (2015).
- Iowa Freedom of Information Council, <http://iowafoic.nfoic.net/> (2015).



# Open Meetings Overview

## Official Meetings Open to the Public

*Iowa Code*, chapter 21 is titled “Official Meetings Open to Public,” but it is more often called the “open meetings law.” The open meetings law, along with *Iowa Code*, chapter 22, “Examination of Public Records,” comprise Iowa’s “government in the sunshine laws.” These acts establish the state requirements with which governmental bodies, including school boards, area education agency (AEA) boards and community college trustees, must comply in their meetings and records.

Open meetings serve both the board and the public. They allow the public to know what decisions are being made about the education of the community’s children and the expenditure of public funds. By seeing the board in action, the public may acquire a deeper appreciation for the amount of work a board handles, the difficult decisions it faces, and the knowledge needed to become a board member. Open meetings can also improve community relations because they allow opportunities for input and public access to meetings.

Knowing and understanding the open meetings law is critical for all board members. The following information provides an overview of the open meetings law, but by no means provides the detail necessary to fully understand all of the situations that may arise at the board table. For additional information, please see the resources listed at the end of this document.

## A Meeting Defined

Since school boards must meet and conduct their business in the open, it is important to understand how the law defines a “meeting.” A meeting means “a gathering in person or by electronic means, formal or informal, of a majority of the members of a governmental body where there is deliberation or action upon any matter within the scope of the governmental body’s policy-making duties.” *Iowa Code* §21.2. Generally speaking, the definition of a meeting has three parts which include the following:

- A gathering;
- Of a majority of the board;
- With deliberation or action.

A meeting exists when the board deliberates or takes action on an issue within the board’s policymaking duties. However, when board members meet for purely social purposes or ministerial duties, those gatherings do not constitute a meeting and are exempt from the open meetings law. Ministerial duties of the board may include attending the following: graduation ceremony, a school open house or signing an official document after the decision has been made.



## Issues for Your Board to Consider when Planning and Attending Meetings

**Public Notice** – A governmental body must give notice of the time, date, and place of each meeting, and its tentative agenda, in a “manner reasonably calculated to apprise the public of that information. *Iowa Code* §21.4. Reasonable notice includes advising news media who have filed a request for notice, as well as posting the notice on a bulletin board, which is clearly designated for that purpose and easily accessible to the public. Notice shall be given at least 24 hours prior to any meeting, unless for good cause such notice is impossible or impractical. In such a case, as much notice “as is reasonably possible” must be given and the “nature of the good cause justifying departure from normal requirements” must be stated in the minutes. *Iowa Code* §21.4. Additionally, it should be noted that notice must be given of meetings held by electronic means in accordance with *Iowa Code* §21.8.

**Setting the Agenda** – How the agenda is formed is likely detailed in the district’s board policy. This will include who is responsible for developing the agenda and how items are added. A frequent source of tension is how much detail should or should not be included in the agenda? *Iowa Code* 21.4 requires that an agenda provide information reasonably sufficient to alert interested people as to the subject matter to be considered. For sample meeting agendas, please visit [www.ia-sb.org](http://www.ia-sb.org).

**The Meeting Time and Place** – Each meeting shall be held at a place reasonably accessible to the public and at a time reasonably convenient to the public, unless for good cause such a place or time is impossible or impractical. *Iowa Code* §21.4.

The time of day and location of the regular meetings should be consistent from month to month. The meeting area should provide comfortable seating, ample workspace, and ease of access to needed data for the board members, board secretary, and superintendent/AEA chief administrator. It should also provide seating to accommodate the media and public as well as being easily accessible.

**Minutes** – Each governmental body must keep minutes of all its meetings, formal and informal, showing the date, time and place, the members present, and the action taken at each meeting. The minutes must show the results of each vote taken and how each member voted, and the vote of each member present shall be made public at the open session. The minutes must be public records open to public inspection. *Iowa Code* §21.4.

**Public Comments** – An open meeting means the meeting is open to the public to observe and listen to the proceedings of the meeting. While the meeting is in the public, it is not of the public. The board decides the level of participation by the public, if any. Some boards set aside a specific time during the meeting for public comment. Other boards allow public participation during discussion of specific agenda items and still others offer a combination. The level of public participation the board chooses should be clearly addressed in board policy and the policy should be made available upon request.

**Publication of the Proceedings** – *Iowa Code* §279.35 requires publication of the proceedings of each regular, adjourned, or special meeting of the board. The board secretary is required to furnish a copy of the proceedings within two weeks of adjournment of the meeting to the school district’s official newspaper for publication.

There seems to be no distinction between “minutes” and “proceedings.” If the proceedings to be published contain the elements contemplated by the open meetings law, Chapter 21, they should be sufficient. In other words, any meeting of the board or an advisory committee. The minutes to be included in the board minutes book may be more detailed, including the full text of motions, resolutions or policies, an abstract of the speakers’ remarks, or attachments of reports or recommendations.

## Meetings Not Open to the Public

There are certain instances when it is lawful for a board to meet in private. These instances include closed sessions and exempt meetings.

Closed sessions are those sessions within an open board meeting which take place without the public present and may be held “only to the extent a closed session is necessary.” *Iowa Code §21.5(1)*. The open meetings law sets out specific instances in which boards may go into closed sessions. *Iowa Code §21.5*. Discussion during the closed session may not extend beyond the authorized purpose for the closed session. The Iowa attorney general has stated:

*A school board may not discuss any business during a closed session which does not relate directly to the specific reason announced as justification for the session. Hence, if the board is conducting a closed session under section 21.5(2)(i) with respect to the discharge of a particular teacher, it does not have authority to engage in a general discussion of the qualifications of other teachers or the need for discharge of a school administrator. 1982 O.A.G. 162.*

The board secretary or board president generally has the responsibility of ensuring the discussion stays on the authorized purpose for the closed session. However, each individual board member is responsible for raising the question of whether the discussion has strayed from the authorized purpose of the closed session. Because the penalties of the law are strict and potentially, expensive, each board member has a stake in ensuring that only topics directly related to the closed session are discussed.

Exempt meetings are not subject to the open meetings law and need not comply with the notice, minutes, or other requirements of that law. Two examples of instances when a board could meet in an exempt meeting include:

- Meetings to discuss strategy in matters relating to employment conditions of an employee not covered by a collective bargaining agreement (e.g., the district’s superintendent). *Iowa Code §21.9*.
- Bargaining sessions, strategy sessions of boards or employee organizations, mediation and the deliberative process of arbitrators in a collective bargaining process. *Iowa Code §20.17*.

While boards have the option for engaging in meetings in private, boards need to remember there are limitations associated with both closed sessions and exempt meetings. Questions as to whether the board may go into closed session or have an exempt meeting should be addressed to the school attorney.



## Closed Session vs. Exempt Meeting

### Closed Session

Closed sessions take place as part of an open meeting. The *Iowa Code* section and language from that code section must be listed as part of the tentative agenda a minimum of twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting. The motion for a closed session, stating the purpose for the closed session, will be made and seconded during open session. A minimum of two-thirds of the board, or all of the board members present, must vote in favor of the motion on a roll call vote. Closed sessions must be tape recorded and have detailed minutes kept by the board secretary. Final action on matters discussed in the closed session will be taken in an open meeting.

### Exempt Meeting

An exempt meeting is not subject to the open meetings requirements and can be held without public notice, be held without taping or minutes, and can be held without a vote or motion. Exempt meetings should be held separate from open meetings. While the notice, minutes, and other requirements of the open meetings law are not required for exempt meetings, there are practical reasons why a board may choose to provide notice or adhere to other open meetings requirements. For example, might the board be well advised to let the public know that they are meeting outside the public view and it is allowed under the law? What issues might arise if the board gathers and no one knows why?

Reasons for Entering a Closed Session	Exemptions to the Open Meetings Law
I. To review or discuss records which are required or authorized by state or federal law to be kept confidential or to be kept confidential as a condition for the board's possession or receipt of federal funds. <i>Iowa Code 21.5(1)(a).</i>	I. Negotiating sessions, strategy meetings of public employers or employee organizations, mediation and the deliberative process of arbitration. <i>Iowa Code 20.17(3).</i>
II. To discuss strategy with legal counsel in matters presently in litigation, or where litigation is imminent, if disclosure would be likely to prejudice or disadvantage the board. <i>Iowa Code 21.5(1)(c).</i>	II. To discuss strategy in matters relating to employment conditions of employees not covered by the collective bargaining law. <i>Iowa Code 21.9. "Employment conditions" for this section means areas included in the scope of negotiations in Iowa Code 20.9</i>
III. To discuss whether to conduct a hearing, or conduct a hearing for suspension or expulsion of a student, unless an open meeting is requested by the student or the parent of the student. <i>Iowa Code 21.5(1)(e).</i>	III. To conduct a private hearing relating to the recommended termination of a teacher's contract. The private hearing however, in the teacher's contract termination will be recorded verbatim by a court reporter. <i>Iowa Code 279.15.</i>
IV. To evaluate the professional competency of an individual whose appointment, hiring, performance, or discharge is being considered when a closed session is necessary to prevent needless and irreparable injury to that individual's reputation and that individual requests a closed session. <i>Iowa Code 21.5(1)(f).</i>	IV. To conduct a private hearing relating to the termination of a probationary administrator's contract or to review the proposed decision of the administrative law judge regarding the termination of an administrator's contract. <i>Iowa Code 279.24.</i>
V. To discuss the purchase or sale of particular real estate, but only when premature disclosure could be reasonably expected to increase the price the board would have to pay for the property, or in case of a sale reduce the price the board could receive for the property. <i>Iowa Code 21.5(1)(j).</i>	

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### Financial Overview

- Meyer shared a summary of our financial standing at the board meeting for you to review and discuss at the September 2023 board meeting.

### Comments from Building Principals, Superintendent, and Board Members

Meyer shared information on Early Bird PE, and some adjustments made, in addition to the emphasis that it is optional for students and will not take

place for specific students in activities that they get home after the activity after 10:00 PM.

**Adjourn**

The next Meeting is on Monday, September 11, at 6:30.