**MINUTES**

**Six Directions Indigenous School Governing Council Meeting**

**21 July 2017**

**2055 NM-602, Gallup, NM 87301**

**In attendance:** Ben Soce, Oliver Tapaha, Madeline Leyba, Susan Estrada

**Absent:** Same Crowfoot

**Others in attendance:** Tom Genne, Lane Towery, Alanna Purdy, Stephanie Vicenti, Tamara Allison

1. Meeting opened at 5:44 PM
2. Welcome and Intros
3. Roll Call
   1. Ben (in person), Madeline (phone), Susan (in person) and Oliver (in person) are present
      1. Madeline is finishing work at a remote location.
   2. Sam is absent
4. Approval of agenda
   1. Approved by GC verbal acclimation
5. Public Comment
   1. No comments
6. Public Forum
   1. Introduction of finalists
      1. Stephanie: Asks for permission to intro self in Zuni first. Stephanie describes family lineage. In education for 17 years, 13 in the classroom as a K-5 educator. Has run a lot of summer programs, including an environmental program. That program did Project based learning. Also had community and science components. Stephanie counts that experience as a success in her career. Testing burned her out. She requested to be moved to a grade with less testing. Got moved to Kindergarten. She loved that experience. Affected a lot of students early on, built a strong foundation. One of her successes was with a child who had autism and was non-verbal. He left the class speaking sentences, and was able to write simple sentences. Parents thought this goal was unreachable. Stephanie worked with staff to see success with this student. Stephanie likes integrating SPED students into the classroom, wants them to think they are a valuable resource. Got her master’s degree from UNM. Her thesis was about students not being file cabinets; it was about project based learning. She also investigated community involvement in her research. She got her admin masters in 2013 from Western. She moved to Gallup to further her career. She knew she had more to learn and saw all of that when she moved to Gallup. Experience in GMCS, she has been a Principal, Dean of Students, SAT chair at Gallup Middle. Wants to catch students now and help them be successful in the classroom. Parents and students are frustrated but she also saw hope. Loves working with families and believes connecting to them is her strongest asset. Does not want families to fend for themselves. A lot of our mission and vision support what she personally believes as an educator. Students are her priority. Administrators and school board members think she’s crazy because she’s also a board member for Zuni. She sees how administrators have to have relationships with all stakeholders.
      2. Tamara: Is from Farmington, got an alternative license, was inspired by history minor in American History. She wanted to bring in Native American authors and policy. When she was hired, she wasn’t expecting the skill level. Writing skills were really low. Students were really intelligent but lacked foundational skills. During that time she learned best practices, following the lead of master level teachers. Tamara was very interested in language interventions/approaches, which needed to be documented at that time. She had lots of conversations that “brought students to the dinning table.” She was focused on writing and being a real writer herself. She taught each concept should mirror the discipline. Asked her students to think about real world applications, have debates, write essays. Believes in high rigor. She worked with students at the 3rd grade in 9th grade. If you’re using best practices and TSOL strategies, you’re providing and modeling everything that needs to be done, students will learn it. You also need to accommodate for your special education students. She was a very interdisciplinary teacher. She also included history and background into her lessons. She also brought in adolescent writers. Tamara thought about how to bring in American Indian authors as well. Her best years were designing those units. Also career units, one of which ended with a field trip to local colleges. She was also always teaching language arts skills alongside other content. That’s at the heart of what she does. Very interested in empowering Native youth through Native curriculum. Also using best practices. She has hired teachers who have valued Native students. She has also been an administrator for majority native schools. Has a lot of respect for Kindergarten teachers. Elementary school work taught her to be procedures oriented. It’s really specific in the elementary setting. Secondary is more about activities and sports. She hired coaches at Newcome high. Boys played first round in state for football. Needed to work on a system for getting them in on provisional licenses.
   2. Questions from the public
      1. Are you both familiar with NM Teach?
         1. Both answered affirmatively
      2. Tom: The state has created compulsorily observation requirements around domains 2 and 3, experience in ABQ public schools is that a lot of principals use the Danielson’s framework. A lot of components of that framework do not apply to our school model.
         1. Tamara: It would be interesting to look at NM Teach through an indigenized perspective and see where they are aligned. There are also groups in there. Culturally cooperative learning is more relevant. Hated NM Teach when it first came out. It does cover some base though. It’s not a complete system but does incorporate best practices. With the old strand system, that didn’t feel strong enough to fall back on. Now, with NM Teach, the language is really specific. You really do need to be culturally relevant. The rubric is an interactive teaching style. Has helped with teachers that were resistant to the process. Has been helpful to point to what the state deems good teaching. Does not see it as too limiting. She would need to sit down and see what’s missing base on our charters differences. There is a subjectivity to the rubric that she can give credit for aligned things. It is time consuming. Takes a lot to finish and score.
         2. Stephanie: We are in a unique situation. We have a unique mission and vision that focuses on native students. It also focuses on them being proud of who they are. The need to understand the importance of their identities. We need to make NM Teach work for us, our unique situation, who are from Zuni and Navajo. We need to stay close to our mission and vision. Also believes we need to uphold why this school was created. As an admin, Stephanie believes its very important that that’s what she keeps at the front of her mind during observations. How are students doing? How are they interacting with each other? What is happening with communication? This is very important to indigenous communities. As far as coaching goes, she goes back to her experiences. She is a product of NIYLP. Also part of future leadership project out in Albuquerque. Both informed her perspective. We need to look at the whole child. NM Teach looks at part of what a child needs to be but it doesn’t capture the whole child. We need to value that as educators. Teachers can be successful with feedback. Students also need 1:1 opportunities. Sometimes those types of things are lost with the evaluation system. They need to know someone is there to support and encourage them to be better. That’s they type of conversation the leader needs to have. Administrator cannot be trapped in the office, they need to know where students are, where they are struggling, where they need to be. That means the NM Teach needs to fit into our mission, rather than requiring us to match them. Our parents are our number one resources, they need to feel included and respected. All of those things are included in NM Teach. We need to make this instrument fit us. We can use the tool to be successful.
      3. Lane: Technical question. Does not want to trap anyone with this one. Answers can be fluid. We operate under charter school law. What is your familiarity with charter school law and the way the PEC works.
         1. Stephanie: Knowledge is limited. Has been in the public school setting for 17 years. Has heard negative things affiliated with charter schools. She is willing and actively trying to learn. Stephanie is not afraid to ask and read until she understands.
         2. Tamara: Emailed questions to Tom. A lot were about funding and budgets. At the high school setting at Newcome high, operation money was drawn from the land base. That used to be high but now has been effected. There was a drop in funding. In GMCS, they talked a lot about loss with impact aid. Seems like they didn’t get their fair share for that credit. With Central, there was some money coming in from oil and gas. With charter schools, it’s a whole new thing. Has been looking for models to see how she could do better and started looking at some charters. Also a private (Navajo prep). Was blown away by NACA. High schools in central are behind what’s NACA is doing. Definitely a different set of resources but they really mentor their students and get them into dual credit classes. Has implemented special curriculum in other schools. Got interested in SDIS through NACA. She didn’t know how developed NACA was. As far as charter, she doesn’t have experience. Has had to learn how scheduling works in other school positions. She and her dean had to step in and put students where they thought they needed to go. Just jumps right in an works to learn it. Was interested to see where SDIS was going to end up. Knew there were not a lot of spaces in Gallup. Has really admired what has happened this first year. Sees that there are a lot of supports in place, which is great. She also got support from other schools in the past, even though those schools may not be aligned to her personal philosophy. That was hard for her to deal with. Mainly she has gotten help from her colleges.
      4. Alanna: Has a few questions. First is related to the mission and vision. We focus on rigor in the content areas. What would be your plan to focus on rigor and rapid improvement in fluency with both the languages you teach? How would you operate across lines of difference?
         1. Tamara: Hired Navajo teachers at her school. Think it depends on the model you teach. In other areas, they don’t introduce language until age 6. That was scary because our students are falling behind. In Window Rock, they provide until 5th grade. If you were to change, if you really want students to speak the language, you become a language acquisition school. If you really want rapid use of the language, you would need to become a language school (at least until the 3rd grade). Tribal language becomes their first language. Rough Rock has a great model. If you’re going to become a language school, it needs to become a 50/50 school. Half English and the tribal language. Then, working with Zuni, she would definitely support any language teacher. When she’s hired language teachers, she’s been most concerned with how they teach it. Its important that they be able to connect with students and understand best practices with language acquisition. Not just drill and kill approach.
         2. Stephanie: Being a classroom teacher, language implementation was one of her strengths. Not only was she a PBL teacher, she was also a language teacher to make sure they understood what they were learning. They shouldn’t be learning language for just an hour, it needs to be implemented throughout the day. It’s easier to implement through social studies and science. She did not use a text book for reading. Instead, she used Social Studies and Science books, which is why she saw growth in that area. She also was involved with getting Zuni language to GMCS last year. She met with the Zuni board, had 33 students in her elementary school that were Zuni, so she talked to Frank and the board. Zuni students need it. They got an MLA in place, started looking at how it would be implemented. They are searching for a Zuni language teacher in Ramah. One of the htings that is most important when teaching language, is to look at linguistics. Zuni curriculum was watered down. You can’t teach colors from kindergarten to 5th grade every year. Hired a linguist to create a framework that broke down into 5 areas. Reading, listening, speaking, similar to WIDA????? Looking at curriculum that is in place, didn’t get rid of it, challenged teachers to take new framework apart to figure out what students should be learning, when. It all goes back to how students learn. We need to make sure we ensure what we’re teaching matches students developmental level. There are lots of Zuni and Navajo resources. Stephanie has a lot of contacts in Gallup that give her insights into traditions and taboos. If you can bring out similarities while teaching. For example, Zuni folks use waffle farms, what are Navajo traditional practices? You can tell them in English but also need that native language to hit it home. Youngest child was fluent in Zuni but doesn’t speak it anymore. She takes responsibility for it, and works to bring language in. It was eye opening. If she doesn’t speak to them in Zuni, they will lose it. She has responsibilities every day when she goes back home because of who her father is in her community. Thinks we need to think about incorporating language in all aspects of the classroom. It makes our lessons even more powerful. Connects our students to their families. They need to be able to say it in their native tongue. Stephanie is not fluent in Zuni, sometimes she gets her verbs mixed up, but she’s trying. You have to make mistakes in order to learn.
      5. Lane: As a building leader, how do you think about building up students, staff, and communities?
         1. Stephanie: She wants to be present, talking to families when they drop off students, when they have questions. One of the things she likes to do as an instructional leader is getting out of her office. Office work is for before school and after school. She wants to be along side teaching students with teachers. She wants to be a presence that is along side teachers, not as a threatening presence. This year, she had a student who was self-harming. This students guardians were rough. She took it upon herself to reach out to them. They were upset, gave attitude, got down
            1. Madeline’s call dropped at 6:55
         2. Stephanie continued: she made it known that she was there to support and guide them. As an educator, we have to report this to CYFD. She informed them that this is just protocol. It took a while for them to be okay with it. She stayed with the parents and talked them through it, walking alongside them through the process. The child got the help that she needed and then came back to the school two weeks later. That behavior continued and Stephanie continued to intervene. This student made a point every day to make sure Stephanie was at school, would look for her, and would question where she was. Stephanie made her schedule known to the student, she was not happy about her being gone, and she connected her to another teacher. When someone is upset, she is not one to yell. Instead, she comes alongside people. The first time she was yelled at, she to really upset. Honest communication is the key. If you say you’re going to do something, you better deliver. She believes that especially with her role in Zuni. She is there for students. If the policies they pass are not good for students, she can’t sleep well at night. She is not there for personal gain. She has told her kids, she will sacrifice whatever she has to in order to make sure they get the education they need. Just recently made financial choices that enabled her to send one child to Paris and another to a science camp for the past three years. She want’s what’s best for her and all other students. This means building relationships with students and the community.
         3. Tamara: When she was a teacher, the most important thing is a caring relationship. They have to care for you in order to learn and reach expectations. A lot of how she spent time was team building, playing games, and made it a point to work with the most challenging students. That usually helped. She wanted students to build relationships with each other, too, which is why she is into cooperative learning. She grouped students to create a whole classroom of support. Expectations and rule were attached to a why, what they look like, what they sound like. What does respectful language sound like? One really challenging group one year that she had to do talking circles with almost every morning. Then she had to teach the expectations. Students are wound up on Monday so she gave them an opportunity to talk about their weekends. Building rapport, celebrating success, and thought about how to reward them. The relationship they had with her was that they can fail and she will not judge them. We may not understand, will make mistakes, but we’ll learn. That’s why we’re here. Tamara wanted to create an environment where they could take risks. Then with staff, she was interested in incorporate input. She really didn’t like when everything was top bottom. She wanted to get her team’s input. Once they were allowed to give input, they fostered a stronger team. She did not try to catch them in gottcha moments. She wanted to notice what was working right. Then, when she gave those suggestions, she did it in a respectful way. We are learning together, we’re just trying things out, this is just my idea, here are resources… Most important was getting their input, being encouraging. At the high school level, relationship building happened in assemblies. For example, there were too many fights. So, they talked to students, brought in well-respected nurse, and community members. Brought in other presenters to address issues, like suicide ideation. Also had conferences 1:1 during the discipline process. Explained the policy and build the relationship. She build relationships with seniors every year, and put on pow wows at the school (was a fancy shawl dancer herself – this was important to her). At the high school level, you’re always reporting. Updated Facebook to communicate with parents (found it to be best). Made announcements at games. Really worked hard to get parent involvement. Knew she needed to present things in 5-10 minutes. Parents involvement is really important but you also need to stick to your schedule so that you don’t end up at school till 8PM. She had meeting where people were really speaking above parent’s understanding and she worked to make that clear. Also had parents come in that were really upset about students not graduating. She tried to understand where they were coming from and tried to show how they were really going to be working on the problem.
            1. Tom asks to take a break. Ben announces break at 7:13PM.
            2. Break ends at 7:22
      6. Ben: Restorative justice is one of the main tenants of our charter. Can you talk a little about that?
         1. Tamara: You still need a strong disciplinary code. You need to keep schools safe. We have an increase in violence and our students need to be safe. There is a place for expulsion, especially when it comes to drugs and violence. YOU need strong policies in place and you do need to follow policy. It will come back to you if you don’t. Social media threats are a form of harassment and bullying. You may need to work with law enforcement if it gets sever enough. You do have to have a strong policy in place. For example, a no harm policy, having a good councilor on staff. Students may want to speak to you. Conflict resolution, apology letters, and communicating with parents are important. Part of controlling behavior too is looking at procedures. Looking at times and transitions to lunch. Part of the solution can be team work in the classroom, positive communication, you can directly teach that. Making sure school wide there are clear expectations.
         2. Stephanie: She is a firm believer that we learn from our mistakes. We are far from perfect. Guidence growing up and into adulthood, she values conversations that build her to be the person she is. She uses that same approach with students when they come to her office. She wants to know how their day ways, what when wrong. It might not deal with situations at school, maybe something happened at home. This is why we need to look at the whole child. We need to be clear about what went wrong, how do you feel about it, and how it impacted others. Let’s look at all the other pieces that come into play, that impact your actions. That’s one of the tools she uses as a principal. She is a councilor. She is a mother. She is a father. She is not a grandma yet. She is an aunt and uncle. Her brother was the person who was mischievous and upset parents. Any time he got in trouble, parents (or aunts and uncles who were involved in his life) taught him how that impacted others. As we continue to educate students, we need to have bold conversations with students. There are consequences for behaviors. Stephanie didn’t like suspending or expelling students but she always made sure that the policy that she followed policies in place. She made sure to be supportive of families. Famlies who felt supported trusted her more. What you put out, you get back. When she was told that she was getting moved to a high school, she was terrified. It ended up being her most rewarding experience. Those students are learning who they are and what direction they are headed. They may talk for an hour in her office, but they also came back and updated her on how things were going. Instead of rushing around to get things done, we need to listen. When we talk about restorative discipline, she feels that is the way she learns. It’s also the way her family operates best. We have to teach them the process. Some of these students don’t live in Gallup. They may not know how to interact here. We need to build them up to socialize with other students. We also need to be an example to them, honoring who they are and letting them know we are the ones who determine our futures. She tells her children that everything they do is a reflection of themselves. If they are lazy, they won’t get build out cars. They have to work for what they want. Your actions from now will follow you. When you’re looking at discipline, you’re looking at how we’re going to bring them up into society. We really need to make use of our eight hours because we don’t know what they’re going home to. Any opportunity that we have, we need to capitalize on.
7. Executive Session
   1. Motion to move into executive session: Oliver
   2. Yes: Ben, Susan, Oliver
   3. No: none
   4. Motion to move out of executive session at 8:15PM: Susan
   5. Yes: Ben, Susan, Madeline, Oliver, Same
   6. No: none
8. Motion to move that the GC of SDIS offer a contract to Stephanie Vicenti as Head Administrator for the 2017-18 school year dependent upon their acceptance of the contract and passing state background check.
   1. Yes: Oliver, Susan, Ben
   2. Abstain: Sam and Madeline
   3. No: none
   4. We thank Ms. Allison for her engagement during the interview process. She is an incredible candidate and truly impressed the GC.
      1. Stephanie extends appreciation for Tamara’s experience and asks for her partnership moving forward.
      2. Tamara says she also learned a lot from Stephanie’s interview. She also enjoyed the process, found it to be the most rigorous process. She really enjoyed it.
      3. Ben: It was a very hard decision.
9. Motion to close the meeting at 8:22PM: Susan
   1. Yes: Ben, Oliver, Susan, Sam
   2. No: none