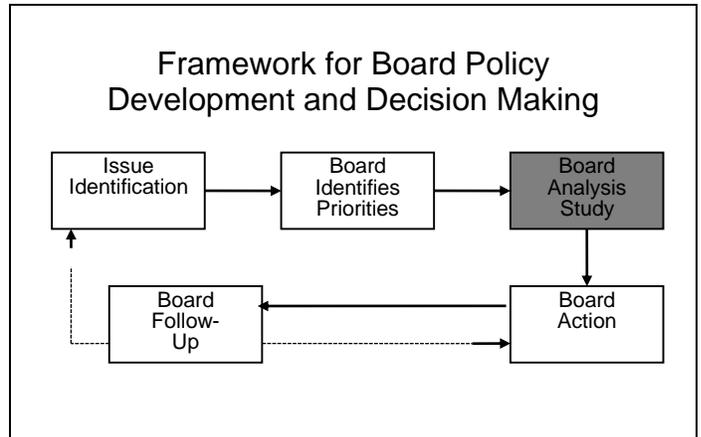


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

September 17, 2015



Agenda Item: Update on the Hamburg and Farragut Community School Districts' Accreditation

Iowa Goal: All PK-12 students will achieve at a high level.

State Board Role/Authority Iowa Code § 256.11

Presenters: Jeff Berger, Deputy Director
Division of School Finance and Support Services

Amy Williamson, Chief
Bureau of School Improvement

Attachments: 1

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board hear and discuss this information.

Background: The accreditation and finance teams made the first of four quarterly visits to Hamburg Community School District and Farragut Community School District on August 19-20, 2015.

**Hamburg Community School District and
Farragut Community School District Summary
August 20, 2015**

The Iowa Department of Education (Department) accreditation team and finance team visited Hamburg and Farragut Community School Districts (CSD) on August 19-20, 2015, for the first quarterly visit as part of a one-year conditional accreditation for each district. The conditional accreditation status of each district requires that:

1. No building or part of a building closed by the district to meet accessibility standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) may be used or reopened for any purpose other than cold storage. This prohibits the use of a closed building by staff or community members as well. Entry to any part of a closed building must be restricted to the facilities manager, janitor, superintendent, and a realtor, as needed for the purpose of showing the property to prospective buyers.
2. Substantial compliance with state and federal code and regulations must be maintained. Compliance is considered substantial when there are few instances of noncompliance, the noncompliance is not itself substantial in nature, and the noncompliance is not systemic.
3. The district will be placed into an intensive level of support under the Department's differentiated accountability model for the 2015-2016 school year. Pursuant to this designation, Department staff members will conduct quarterly visits to the district, and the district will be placed on an action plan for which quarterly progress reports will be required. The required elements of the action plan, as well as the content and focus of each visit, will be determined by Department staff. Department staff will also provide district staff and board members with technical assistance required to maintain compliance with all requirements. Quarterly visits will not be limited to compliance and may address issues including but not limited to assessment, data-based decision-making, universal instruction, intervention, and continuous improvement.
4. Any violation of the above requirements will result in immediate revocation of conditional accreditation status. Upon any such violation, the State Board will convene to determine a date upon which the district's accreditation will be permanently revoked and the territory of the district merged with one or more contiguous school districts.

Each district's fiscal status and status with respect to compliance with state and federal requirements has been summarized below. We have separated compliance into three categories: continued noncompliance, previously corrected noncompliance, and new noncompliance. *Continued noncompliance* are items that were found to be out of compliance during the Phase II process and remain out of compliance. *Previously corrected noncompliance* are items that were found to be out of compliance during the Phase II process, were subsequently corrected as of the February 2015 site visit, and have fallen out of compliance again. *New noncompliance* items are those that were not originally issues during the Phase II process, but have been found to be out of compliance as of August 2015.

Farragut Community School District Status

Of 135 students anticipated to enroll in Farragut Junior/Senior High School in grades 7-12, 99 had registered as of August 19, 2015. Farragut had 61 students open enrolled out of the district as of August 19, 2015.

Findings - Continued Noncompliance

1. It was reported during interviews with district staff that the weight room at Farragut is still being used by members of the community. The weight room is not accessible per ADA requirements. The superintendent and members of the Farragut school board were directed in February 2015 to ensure that the weight room was no longer used by students, staff, or members of the community. Board policy 905.3 states that the superintendent is the coordinator of the weight room schedule and has keys to the weight room. The weight room was scheduled to have the locks changed on August 21, 2015, following an additional reminder from the accreditation team that use of the building is not permissible. *Update August 28, 2015: The weight room locks have been changed.*
2. The Phase II report from the Department stated the following:
Based on the meeting between the Iowa Department of Education, Superintendent Tom Hinrichs', School Board President Jenny Varellas', and representatives of Facilities Cost Management Group, the following action steps will be taken to address accessibility citations by the first day of school in August of 2015:
 - *Farragut CSD will educate both Farragut and Hamburg students in grades PK-6 in the Marnie Simons Building and the Farragut CSD will educate both Farragut and Hamburg students 7-12 in the Nishnabotna Junior/Senior High Building as part of their whole grade sharing agreement in the 2015-2016 school year.*
 - *The Nishnabotna VoAg and Farragut Elementary Buildings will be closed to any use by the school district; and*
 - *Farragut CSD will complete construction of additional space at the Nishnabotna Junior/Senior High School Building during the 2015-2016 school year, which will include accessible shower rooms and address all other accessibility citations remaining.*

If the Farragut CSD follows the action plan discussed above, all accessibility issues within the Farragut School District will be addressed.

The grade levels and buildings in each district have been reconfigured, the VoAg Building in Farragut has been closed, and the Farragut Elementary Building has been closed. Farragut CSD is not on track to complete construction of additional space at the junior/senior high school building during the 2015-2016 school year, however. No bids have been solicited for construction, the funds have not yet been secured, and the soonest construction could begin is spring of 2016. At this time, the district is planning for an addition to the junior/senior high school that would remedy the ADA issues and add space to the building. The proposed addition is approximately \$1.2 million. The district is depending on a September 8, 2015, Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) vote to pass in order to fund the project. It is the understanding of the accreditation team that there is an alternate proposal that would correct ADA issues for around \$250,000. The accreditation team also provided the district with a proposed no-cost solution of closing the showers and shower rooms.

Interviewees reported that if the PPEL vote fails in September, it is the intention of the district to return to the public for another vote(s) again during the school year. The superintendent indicated that the backup plan, should the PPEL vote ultimately fail, is to remodel/retrofit the existing building, which will cost approximately as much as a new addition.

3. Farragut CSD does not meet the following offer and teach requirements for the 2015-2016 school year. These results are preliminary until a class enrollment list is final; more items may be added at that time.
 - a. Short one unit of physics - *Update September 2, 2015: Physics has been added with two students enrolled, but the teacher is not properly endorsed.*
 - b. Short one unit of family consumer science.
 - c. Spanish 3/4 are on the schedule, but no students are enrolled. The district does not have a waiver.
 - d. Concern about career and technical education (CTE) program: a single student is currently enrolled in intro to auto, auto mechanics, and advanced auto agriculture.

The accreditation team also has concerns that because so many staff were hired very late, the district is having difficulty matching the appropriate courses to the new teachers and their endorsements. The master schedule is in constant flux with only one week remaining until school starts. Course names differ between the course catalog and course master schedule. This is a critical time when staff are matching instructional materials and instructional strategies to the Iowa Core standards and the 21st Century Skills which are required by Iowa Code. The accreditation team anticipates that staff will have difficulty providing appropriate instruction and meeting requirements in Iowa Code under these circumstances. Hamburg board members also expressed concern about the rigor and college preparatory capacity of courses provided at Farragut CSD.

Findings - Previously Corrected Noncompliance

4. The district continues to have compliance issues regarding equity. The nondiscrimination statement is not found on the Nishnabotna home page, though this was an item that was previously corrected. There are three different and conflicting nondiscrimination notifications provided in which three different names are given as the district's equity coordinator.
5. While all staff members had current evaluations when the team visited the district in February 2015, as of August 19, 2015, two staff members did not have current evaluations.

Findings - New Noncompliance

6. Every district in the state is required to have a designated equity coordinator. The website for Farragut CSD designates the principal, Lisa Spencer, as the equity coordinator. Tom Hinrichs, the Superintendent, also told team members that Dr. Spencer is the equity coordinator. When interviewed, Lisa Spencer was unaware that she was to serve as the equity coordinator. She told the team she does not have any background in equity or maintaining any of the district's documentation or compliance on equity issues. In addition, grievances are not reported to Lisa Spencer.
7. Farragut CSD is renting space at Sidney CSD to hold auto and ag classes. The space is not ADA compliant, as it is not fully accessible. It is the responsibility of Farragut CSD to

ensure that the building they send students to for classes is accessible. It is also the responsibility of Sidney CSD to ensure accessibility of the facility, since they are the owner of the facility and are sending students there. The facility needs to have a complete accessibility review and the deficiencies need to be corrected.

8. The district does not have a certified English language learners (ELL) teacher at this time. *Update August 28, 2015: Lisa Spencer has obtained a conditional endorsement in ELL.*
9. Farragut CSD currently employs the following teachers who are not properly licensed and/or endorsed as of August 20,2015:
 - a. [REDACTED] to teach high school math. *Update August 28, 2015: License obtained.*
 - b. [REDACTED] to teach family consumer science (expired 6/15). *Update August 28, 2015: Conditional license obtained.*
 - c. [REDACTED] to teach high school business. *Update August 28, 2015: Conditional license obtained.*
 - d. [REDACTED] to teach physics.

Hamburg Community School District Status

As of August 20, 2015, Hamburg has 207 students registered in grades PK-6 of approximately 220 anticipated to enroll. As of the same date, there were 68 resident students who had open enrolled to neighboring districts.

Findings - New Noncompliance

1. The district does not currently have a certified ELL teacher. *Update August 28, 2015: Lisa Spencer has obtained a conditional endorsement in ELL.*

Findings - Previously Corrected Noncompliance

2. The nondiscrimination statement is not found on the Nishnabotna home page, though this was an item that was previously corrected.

Finance Update

Each district is working to complete its Certified Annual Report (CAR) and Special Education Supplement (SES) for the July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015, reporting period. These reports are due September 15, 2015. Caution should be used when reaching conclusions on the overall fiscal situation of the two districts since the CAR reporting has not been certified. Actual unspent balance is not known until the CAR is certified.

Projections based on preliminary data currently uploaded to the CAR reporting site indicate that both Farragut CSD and Hamburg CSD may end FY 2015 with negative unspent balances. However, in discussions with the business manager during the visit, it was clear that there are several critical parts of the CAR that still need to be entered and/or adjusted. These items could positively impact these balances (i.e., reduce the negative balances). In both cases, it is possible the district could finish with an end balance in the black for FY15. It is just too close to

call at this point based on preliminary data and acknowledging that there are still noncompliance issues to correct that will affect those end balances as well.

Outside of modified supplemental amount (MSA) for a negative unspent balance, the districts may also be eligible for additional FY15 budget authority for the special education deficit (if any) and any excess cost of providing ELL services through requests to the School Budget Review Committee (SBRC). Those amounts will not be known until the December 15, 2015, SBRC hearings. These two retroactive MSA approvals would reduce any negative unspent balance the district might have. It is also possible the districts could request additional spending authority to address the ADA fixes mentioned earlier in this summary.

Considering the negative positions of both districts a year ago, significant progress has been made correcting fiscal deficits. This is couched, however, in the knowledge that there are still noncompliance issues to correct.