



## Board of Education Column

*By Rebecca Knutson, Board of Education President*

### Marching Towards our Mission of Educating and Empowering all Students to Succeed

This article is about how the Board's Governance Committee helps the Board do its work. While it is deeply interesting to me, I feel like upon uttering even that first sentence, I may have disconnected from some of you. In an effort to quickly bring you back, I am first going to talk about what interested me in serving on the Board of Education, so, please, stick with me for a bit if you can.

As this article comes out, we are on the heels of Dr. Martin Luther King (MLK), Jr. Day. To recenter myself on Dr. King's work, I watched the virtual MLK celebration put on by the North Dakota Human Rights Coalition and High Plains Fair Housing Center. One of the most touching parts of that event to me was when children were read a book about Dr. King. The children were told about times when persons of color could not sit wherever they wanted on a bus and when they could not go to school with white students. That got me thinking about what interested me in serving on the Board of Education, and it links in with how the Board does its work. I was also reminded that I have so much more to do.

I will sum up my "**why**" with one word: *opportunity*. MLK Day does a good job at reminding me that so many students across our nation have been stripped of opportunity. I wanted to see how I could be involved in helping to provide more students with opportunities they were missing out on. The mission of Fargo Public Schools, "educating and empowering all students to succeed," speaks to those opportunities.

Now, I am getting closer to "**how**" the Board does its work to fulfill the District's mission. At the highest level, the Board must comply with state law as set forth in the [North Dakota Century Code](#). The Board's own established governance process provides additional guidance with an emphasis on organizational vision, strategic leadership, clear distinctions between Board and Superintendent roles, collective decision-making, a focus on future orientation, and governing proactively. A series of policies (results, governance process, board/superintendent relationship and executive limitations) guides the Board in its work while explaining and delineating the working relationship between the Board and Administration.

As listed in [Board Policy GP-1](#), the District's vision statement ends with, "Equitable opportunities will ensure a quality educational experience to stimulate and support all students in



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their intellectual, social, and personal growth.” From the Board level, equity involves studying student outcomes and noting where our system results have parity as well as disparity, per our student population. I believe this is work Dr. King would call us to do and with this in mind, the Board must not become complacent.

[Board Policy GP-7](#) provides for the committee structure of the Board. The Governance Committee is one of the Board’s five standing committees. It serves as the overarching committee for the Board, helping the Board organize its work—in a way, so we will not become complacent in our work.

The chairs of the Board’s four other committees (the Planning Committee, the Governmental Affairs Committee, the Negotiations Committee, and the Communications, Engagement, and Advocacy Committee) serve on Governance, plus the Board’s president. The Board’s president serves as chair of the committee, while the vice president serves as the committee’s vice chair. The committee meets monthly and receives District staff support from the superintendent and cabinet members. Oftentimes, agenda topics come to governance for initial discussion via Administration, Board members, and committees.

As listed in GP-7, the Governance Committee’s purpose is to:

- 1) Assist the president and superintendent in planning the upcoming Board agendas.
- 2) Review the agenda planning calendar.
- 3) Recommend Board development activities including new member orientation.
- 4) Compile the annual review of the superintendent’s performance and prepare a recommendation for Board consideration.
- 5) Recommend updates in existing Board policies for consideration and action by the Board.
- 6) Have non-officer committee members canvass all Board members who are willing to serve in the role of president or vice president for Board consideration at the annual reorganization Board meeting and provide such listing to the secretary to the Board to create a ballot.

[This link](#) to the Board of Education’s page on the Fargo Public Schools’ website provides you with additional information on the Board’s committees, meetings, and Board member contact information.

I hope you have learned more about how the Board’s governance committee does its work and why I was drawn to serving on the Board of Education. I feel the Board’s governance process is



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one that helps the District move closer towards achieving its mission. We must keep our eyes on the inequalities within our system and make plans to address them, keeping in mind that when a system addresses disparity, it is not a win/lose game but rather the effort to address student needs so each student can be successful. In the effort to educate and empower all students to succeed, I will continue to march toward even more equitable outcomes for all students of Fargo Public Schools.

