Rural Schools Innovation Zone
Board Meeting Minutes
January 29, 2020

I. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32pm by acting Chairperson Doug Dawson. Members present include Adrian Perez, Robert Scott (by phone), Linda Villarreal, Doug Dawson, Richard Waterhouse (arrived mid-meeting), and Diana Sheeran.

Mr. Gonzalez announces that it’s Board Appreciation night, and that there are gifts available for board members as a thank you from the RSIZ team and staff.

II. Pledges to the U.S. and Texas Flags

III. Moment of Silence

IV. Deliberation and Possible Action on Minutes of November 13, 2019 Meeting

Linda Villarreal moves to accept minutes for November 13 2019 meeting. Motion is seconded by Diana Sheeran. All approve, motion passes 5-0.

V. Rural Schools Innovation Zone Updates by Executive Director Michael Gonzalez

Sophomores not tested this year. Will be comparable next fall but with 2 cohorts, not 3, numbers may fall next year.

NGMA adventure with new IHE, Del Mar College. Mr. VanMatre put Mike in contact. Presented to Freer board to make sure they’re aware of the transition. 2 information nights, Freer and Premont. Mike introduced speakers, Del Mar was there, close to 100% attendance on both campuses. Why the change? CBC 4 semesters with 1 cert (CNA). CCMR drives HS accountability, if we lose a kid partway, we get no points. Sometimes they don’t finish the program. We met with NGMA staff, Mr. Cantu, and Del Mar. 1 cert per semester for 4 semesters. If they stop 1 semester in, they have something to fall back on, get a CCMR point.

First 8th grade cohort visit this past Monday, all one day so CTE teachers don’t miss multiple days. We needed to get kids with boots on the ground. Student ambassadors were hospitable, professional, articulate. Our kids can do the talking. Instructors facilitated.

Local printer printing the family night posters for post offices, convenience stores. Feb 24 is first one in Premont. Different format than last year – we’ll get student videos/testimonials. Last year adults talked. This year kids involved.

[Mr. Waterhouse arrives]

Academic data coming. We haven’t gotten the support of region 2, but region 1 has a good plan for our weaknesses. Want Region 1 to host a content area specialist team for the zone.

Calendars and grading periods aren’t exactly alike, so we’ll be convening in the middle of a quarter or grading period for some of these.
Have you thought about the admin structure at Fal JH and Fal HS for next year? What’s the enrollment at each? 755 total, 400 at HS. Each campus has an AP who doesn’t flip. Mr. Wright and Ms. Herrera do flip.

A few groups with schedules taking online courses facilitated by Mary Alice Cantu.

Visitors: Next visit, we’d do more time at each campus (Empower visit was too fast). Region 1 group meeting next with Supts, then principals.

Principals discussing 15% priorities – zone instructional coach, zone counselor. On the fence about a counselor – we’re taking weight off counselors with the zone handbook. Monthly counselor meeting will help. Same code everywhere for the same class in the zone. Operations manager, admin assistant to keep Mike in line.

Mr. Dawson asked: Do you have data after student tours?

Tomorrow, working with Matterlab to create a second survey for students. Think numbers will sway based on the visits. A lot want to go to NGMA, they can walk away with something if they don’t finish the program. Dr. Chapa did well selling program to Freer students looking for the construction. 10 brand new kids from BCISD going to engineering academy. Juniors want to go to TAMUK, Mike tasked the 8th graders from Fal to be the adventurous one. Great idea from board and supts to get the kids exposed. (They were bummed by sack lunches, but Freer cafeteria is a big deal in Premont). Kids behaved well. Next year will be even better.

Linda Hinojosa: Student from Premont asked if she remembered him, he said he really likes her academy but wants to go to Fal. “I don’t know if I can handle giving someone a shot”

Facebook original was glitching, Matterlab figured it out, first post was 2 weeks ago. Updating every day. Lots of pictures. Need to save on hard drive, upload to computer. Need a techie who wants a part time job. Website up full scale since November. Launched at Supt meeting, they previewed it. Video on vimeo, no more glitches.

Linda Villarreal: Pre-read letter is amazing, kudos. Just a thought, I know there’s not anything else we should put on your plate, but I wonder if some type of update not this detailed could be done in between the quarterly meetings. This is a lot of rich information, maybe monthly in between.

Mike Gonzalez: We have a communication cadence.

Hannah Foley: We are working on it right now for each group of stakeholders. Monthly board letter is on there. By next month you will have that. 6 categories, weekly/bimonthly/monthly/community newsletter. Matterlab and Hannah met about categories, templates.

VI. Presentation on Student Outcomes

If you go through data, we’re leaps and bounds ahead of last year. We can move pendulum even further. Extraordinary biology numbers. Hard core relative data from Premont in accelerated instruction in English – our toughest group to test. Mike wants two bites at the apple for weaker
kids. Ms. Garcia went up with first-time test takers double digits. Retest phenomenal. Ms. Hinojosa has the data room up. I question the data, I watched the teachers teach. With her growth one thing we talked about is leaps in meets/masters on CBA because compensation plan is tied to meets/masters, not approaches.

**Falfurrias**

Mr. Wright’s second week was benchmarks. Not where we need to be. 6th reading is scary. BUT in comparison to STAAR last year, grades are up. Right now, we’re up 8-9 points on accountability system. Hovering right below D. Making progress. First, we talked to teachers. Broke down accountability. Said where are we making the gains? Domain 1 not high enough. We need more time. So, through the glorious work of the counselor and instructional coach, we put together a block schedule with 2 hours of math and 2 of reading every day. Some don’t get elective. No complaints from parents. Now, teachers love it, adjust instruction based on formative assessment, not behind on the YAG now. Now 3 weeks into double block. Students don’t feel pressured, grades coming up, everyone likes the system. English and Math don’t have passing periods, so discipline is better. Teachers smiling. Dr. V and Dr. Perez say people are happy. We’re excited about what’s going on. Released STAAR test scores not where they need to be, but Region 1 has outstanding people. Ms. Herrera working with ELA, they broke down every TEK and integrated into lesson plans. Mr. Franklin from Region 1 doing same with math. Now, PD on campus, observing classrooms, knock it out in PLCs. Don’t leave the campus, don’t lose instruction time with students. I anticipate early march benchmark we’ll be alright.

**HS**

Biology is so far ahead, we’re in a different time zone. This presentation was before benchmarks. Gave released STAAR to biology Friday, scores are identical. 20-30 point gain from last year. Algebra CBA was semester exam. Released STAAR yesterday, right now 88% approaches, 54% meets, 22% masters with 3 months of instruction left to do in Algebra 1. English 1, masters is tough, not a lot in the state. Gave our CBA today, released STAAR now at 71% approaches, 15% higher than last year. English 2 benchmark tomorrow. US History brand new teacher, he’s at 100% on CBA (not many students). Interested in how his benchmark goes Friday.

Retest scores are atrocious. Anywhere from 5-12% higher than this time last year. If that stands, we only miss an A by 2 points. So we can project out and beat A at 91 or 92. Historically, these scores compared to last year are well above what we’ve ever done in the past. It’s a marathon not a sprint.

Linda Villarreal: Summer and December, how many retesters? Algebra 1 was 3, one of them hit. All SPED. Probably ARD out. US History, 18 students. Biology 10. English 1 48 students. English 2 27. What do you do differently for these students? They’re no longer enrolled in the class. Trying to fit into schedule an acceleration class, do makeup classes, hard to fit those in. Also not included here are 8 students who passed TSI 2 in lieu of English 2 exam. This is all tier 2 instruction, all the data shows it’s really about tier 1 in the original class.
Doug Dawson: Can you hold quality of tier 1 instruction by doubling blocks at JH?

Mr. Wright: It’s better than it was! Single most important part of better scores is closing the lesson. Formative assessment. Day to day adjustments to instruction. Now we have time and assessment to adjust.

Doug Dawson: another benchmark?

Mr. Wright: Yes in March, we can email you the results.

**Premont**

6th math had an instructor change. Had one in for about 9 weeks, based on the data we made some instructor changes. There has been some improvement, but that instructor is re-teaching things they didn’t score well on for previous CBAs. 5th grade cohort scored well last year, but as 6th graders, there’s a jump in content difficulty. 7th math is one of our demo teachers, 6th reading too. Meets percentages starting to come up. Telling students and teachers that approaches doesn’t exist, don’t consider it for students. 8th grade reading masters scores are looking good. 8th social studies had a change in instructor, now 6th. Coach Russell trying to get meets. Went to a workshop, bringing change to classroom. Same instructor teaches US History and 8th social studies. Biology working on meets.

Doug Dawson: US history he is the Rockstar of the zone for the common course across all the campuses? Juniors are motivated, they need it to graduate. 8th graders still have time. Would common PD days allow everyone to cross-develop content? Feb 17th planning meeting for joint PD. Does he have classes underenrolled that you could put more kids into from other districts? He’s at the max. But can you do that in general, take a great algebra teacher and max those out with students so kids in all districts get access to the best teacher in every subject? It’s possible. If Premont kids stay an extra period there before or after an academy. Easier if you have common master schedules.

Linda Villarreal: Are you feeling comfortable with CBAs as far as alignment to the STAAR and EOC and standards? Math, reading, and 8th science demo teachers are on it checking alignment of CBA and instruction. Social studies Mr. Russell is expert, not demo. That change he dove in. Do you use the same CBAs as Freer? Same system to create them.

Steve VanMatre: huge difference between released test, CBA, and EOC STAAR test.

Claudette Garcia: 8th grade is reading and math, they blow off the science and social studies. We put something in place that if they don’t pass science and social studies, they have to come to summer school to receive instruction. I don’t know how that works with yearround school. Freer saw big gains from doing that in the first common PD shared it with Premont. Conrad put in administrative practice, not in board policy, last time. If you missed summer school, first week of August.

Linda Villarreal: Something to think about, I don’t know how I feel about it. Should the zone have common assessments that could be straight across to compare results? I’m throwing this out there, I know what autonomy looks like, but are there some times when we have some decisions made. Could go either way, teachers could have input, some areas where you want
more consistency in accurate data without stepping on the toes of autonomy. For Mike to think about.

Claudette Garcia: English 1 very difficult to hit masters. Steve – if didn’t hit meets, benefit there is they are in the same class with the same teacher with reduced ratio for the spring semester and get another bite at the apple. Bad news is CMM promised but didn’t come through when he said that we would be able to retest the approaches kids, and that hasn’t happened. It’s been a multi-year conversation. He asked for a public comment, Steve did it, and he said you’ve got it. We told those kids about it, you won’t exit the course unless you score meets and masters, and then we had to go back on that.

Seth Rau: Accountability manual comes out in the summer. Next time you see him or email him you can make that a big issue, other districts would agree with you, emphasize that to him for an update in next year’s accountability manual.

Claudette Garcia: We’ve had changes in Algebra 1. If they pass English 1, now in Algebra twice a day. Initially started accelerated instruction in algebra, but with CBA data we met with math teacher and got her feeling on accelerated instruction, we made a change and relaxed. She has a whole scope and sequence change. Instructional support to meet her needs before testing.

*Freer*

FHS used DMAC last year for formative assessments. This year teachers did through TCMPC test bank, which has specificity of individual TEK. Biology compared to last year, this area is the only one that dropped a little. Teacher last year with YAG used Macro to Micro, we switched this year, we haven’t. Algebra 1 looks too good. We are telling them to get to masters. Hoping data comes in similar. Checking in walkthroughs. Interims next week. English 1 and 2 masters low, dropped. But this year up from last year in other levels.

EOC data: Algebra retesters aren’t in algebra class.

*Closing*

Mike is going to hold an hour each campus, make sure data is on track, walkthroughs, DMAC. Working with each in T-PESS.

Doug Dawson: Thank you principals, this level was helpful information

VII. Discussion and Approval of Falfurrias Jr High Targeted Improvement Plan (TIP)

Local board already approved. Mike was very involved. Rick Ruiz at BCISD very involved. Milestones Mr. Wright and Mr. Ruiz thinking about – formative assessment. It’s like an IEP for the campus. When we looked at exit tickets, google classroom, teachers were checking the box without reevaluating. They didn’t go back and look. I’ll continue, 3rd round Feb 10 with TEA now that we have benchmark scores. If we need to readjust. But this board needs to approve because FJHS is part of the zone. We need you to also approve.

Linda Villarreal moved to approve. Adrian seconded. Motion passes 6-0.

VIII. Strategic Plan Update

*HB3 and TIA*
Seth Rau: In the future, policy committee of 3 members could review these types of presentations in the future. When I worked in SAISD our governance committee worked that way. Later this year, Premont and Freer have similar policies opted out of, and Brooks County has slightly different ones, we should eventually discuss aligning them.

HB3: many of you have seen every Thursday TEA videos on HB3 in 30. You can watch the videos. Empower team has notes.

300 districts submitted non-binding letter of intent to TEA. If someone passes NBC, automatic recognized. We heard TEA might change the definition of rural, we’re waiting on exact numbers. Your submitted teachers are compared to other submitted teachers in the state. Premont’s TAP program will likely validate, competing with Dallas ISD. Others still building. Teacher cut scores unclear, may be high in year 1 and down in later years.

TEA is going to create tools for districts to validate data themselves. TEA wants to give out this money. It needs to get results for students.

Cohort A had pay for performance last school year, submit in spring, receive funds in September. Freer and Brooks can do C or D, C means bring system to TEA by June this year, money in end of 2021-22 school year. Pay in September after year 2.

Linda Villarreal: you need a year of performance pay

Seth Rau: Then STAAR validates, then pay out in settle-up.

ConradCantu: We had performance pay last year, can we use that as the baseline? Seth – would that system validate? Let’s do it with T-TESS already. It was based on STAAR data, meets and masters. Could that be the baseline? Why not?

Mike – I asked Texas Tech why we can’t use the zone-wide. We can’t validate because there’s no measurable growth. Did the algebra cohort growth match the algebra teacher’s evaluation? TAP proficiency has tiers.

Dr. Maria Casas: T-TESS is also a measure, some region 1 has cohort A and B for T-TESS.

Seth Rau: Question is do you have tiers? Can tier T-TESS this year and make it in cohort B.

Doug Dawson: Don’t want to create a competitive transfer market among teachers. Could be creative ways to use the grant influx to create long term sustainable systems (10% portion). Could you start to explore a CTE master teacher position where you do a two-year agreement with Premont?

Seth Rau: Even if you’re C or D, once someone is certified, you can recruit them. They’d get $12K in SAISD, $32K in Freer. If Premont eligible first, close to BCISD, don’t want to say inequity.

Mike Gonzalez: Tiered system in Freer already, proposing now in Brooks. Next step is to have individual conference calls to talk about what Freer did – what’s their cohort, can we jump them? How about Brooks?

**Zone team**
Draft of the process to hire next year.

Doug Dawson: I’m in your situation in the last year of our grant, we’re cutting great people because principals ramped up staffing with grants. Are there positions you can absorb great people you hired in the grant so you get them into the zone? It’s painful on this side of it, fast approaching it.

Mike Gonzalez: as a person who did a dual role, it’s hard to do both. 15% has room right now.

Doug Dawson: you can buy people full time from the campuses if they change their mind about who they need. Swaps help free up funds elsewhere.

Conrad Cantu: if we keep adding positions, on the back side locally we have to fund those, I don’t know if we can.

Linda Villarreal: Always have a Cadillac plan as the best model of all worlds, and then a secondary plan for what will do, and a rationale for what you want the end product, result of having this to be. I will tell you just from working with Mike, there’s really no way we can truly propel ourselves into a different stratosphere of performance and innovation with one person. I’m seeing it. I’m not saying these 4, but I can see a need for some assistance somewhere. We’re still not talking about other future grants, philanthropic, other funds to come in yet but it’s a conversation for later. I hope that down the line we can find the resources to get you started.

Conrad Cantu: I agree. From supt perspective, and these people get us to that level, we’ll find money to stay at that level.

Academies

Expanding is more of what we have. Adding is new underwater basket weaving academy. CareerCraft is amazing to work with.

Shane’s joke: Why did the bicycle fall over? It was TWO TIRED!

Shane Thomas with CareerCraft. I’m analyzing labor market conditions for this area of the state, analyze current offerings, look at opportunities for things to consider in the future.

Perkins funds CTE federally, trickles to states. Beginning this next planning cycle, every district needs a comprehensive local needs assessment, including labor market data. Offer programs aligned to state, regional, local sectors in-demand. I left out Corpus, I can run that if you want but it will skew.

We want in-demand jobs with solid wages. Fastest growing are low-wage here. High-wage aren’t growing.

Conrad Cantu: Need for the occupation will drive wages up right?

Shane Thomas: not necessarily.

Restaurant management is where the jobs are, not in the cooking skills.
Linda Villarreal: Is there high demand from San Antonio through the Valley South Texas? How many kids stay? We’re training kids, we’d love them to stay but also sometimes they go. Are we training them to be successful wherever they go?

Adrian Perez: Same thing. I hope my kids are getting out of this area. We didn’t have a medical school, pharmacy school, now we’re getting it. I get ticked off because when we started the technical stuff… I want my kids to get a 4-year degree, I want them to leave Freer, America. I don’t want them here, I want them outside the 6 counties. That’s where I really judge success. Why are they opening TX Tech vet school? More vets in rural areas.

Linda Villarreal: This info is good to tell us for partnerships with internships, there aren’t a lot of partnerships for vet tech near here.

Shane Thomas: There’s always local wisdom, data only tells you so much, you need to know what’s on the horizon that data doesn’t know. Snapshot in time. Informed decisions.

Adrian Perez: Medical, certifications are great but I want doctors. Work through college as a CNA, oil is king but I work for the state of Texas, and I see more things that my kids do and I don’t miss their games. Other people make more.

Shane Thomas: 72% stay close to where they grew up.

Linda Villarreal: They stay because they’re missing opportunities. The point of the zone is to give them paths.

Mike Gonzalez: CareerCraft helping get internships in Austin, San Antonio, trying to get them exposure to other places. I live 15 minutes from where I grew up. All 4 of us are still here. Right now, it’s a whole day for animals, vet comes once a month.

Lauren Dwiggins: We advise you to make the best decisions for you. We help advise and build, but they all have multiple points of exit, so if it’s just EKG, ok, or LVN, RN, Med School. If they choose to stay, they’re prepared for a high-wage in-demand job in the region and if they leave, in the state, and if they get a degree, their experience stacks up to that.

Conrad Cantu: Growth… teacher academy! They can work in large districts, get jobs easily, why not help ourselves? Entice people into education. Freer has a facility, I want to start vet tech, there’s a need in our town, but education may be something to put in the forefront over other things because of the demand in Texas and the region. If we can grow our own kids, those are our best teachers.

Dr. Maria Casas: We’re doing it for substitutes and teacher aides, now asking them to look into degrees. We are doing it, but not in an academy.

Conrad Cantu: I heard one valedictorian ever in my long career say they want to be a teacher. We’re not doing enough to promote the field of education.

Shane Thomas: More than 900 teacher jobs in the region. Seth will get you incentive money.
Mike Gonzalez: If we expand, oil and gas (STEM). Addition is education. Freer doesn’t have the room. CareerCraft will help study and build a recommendation.

Conrad Cantu: Very little start-up money, we all have classrooms. Those are labs. We can utilize all of them.

Doug Dawson: Information and transparency is helpful. Which kids are getting which access, accelerating.

Adrian Perez: Can they take education classes at TAMUK?

Mike Gonzalez: Trying to get Dr. Guerrero on board. I have a wannabe engineer but can’t enroll because he’s dual credit.

Doug Dawson: Do we want a policy committee? Yes we do. Seth proposed 3 people, cannot have 4 board members, but can invite other people not on the board to a committee.

- Linda will serve, but Empower should build the framework and present it to the policy committee
- Steve is volunteered in absence

IX. Discussion and Approval to Create Policy Subcommittee

Linda motions that we establish a policy committee with names later but committee is formalized. Waterhouse seconds. All approve.

X. Consent Agenda

Doug Dawson motions to approve consent agenda with an amendment. We are approving Fall High stipends so if they get an A, stipend is set in place, and if B or C, stipend is tiered structure. Mike can choose with the team when to implement it. Other than that, approved as is.

Adrian seconded. All in favor.

XI. Executive Session starts 9:12, ends 9:37pm.

XII. Discuss and Approve RSIZ Executive Director Evaluation Tool/Process/Timeline

Linda Villarreal moves to approve the evaluation tool and authorize Mike to work with Linda V to set the baseline performance measures. Robert Scott seconds. All approved.

XIII. Discuss and Approve RSIZ Executive Director Performance Incentive Package

Doug Dawson motions to approve incentive package but change so solely based on letter grade but all data reported to board. Second from Linda. All approved.

XIV. Future Agenda Items and Scheduling of Location of Future Board Meetings

March 18th is next meeting, no other agenda items.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.