



Dunlap Education Association president Angie Connor and district superintendent Jay Marino talk prior to the first meeting a week ago of the Dunlap schools strategic planning process.

Dunlap schools to tackle challenges in planning process

By Jim Nowlan
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Thirty-seven Dunlap schools and community activists gathered in the handsome Dunlap Valley Middle School theater last week to hear Superintendent Jay Marino talk about the challenges the high-performing district faces in the coming years—growing student population; facilities management; changing demographics; increasing achievement, and reaching “students we’re not reaching.”

These challenges will be at the heart of a year-long strategic planning process that Marino says will be inclusive and transparent, so that everyone in the district can follow the process and contribute to it.

A series of day-long, small group sessions will begin October 19 at Weaver Ridge with a “data retreat.” The participants will review and analyze school data over the past three years on finance, discipline, staff, demographics and even satisfaction levels among students, parents and staff.

The second session, in December, will provide “the opportunity to dream” about what participants want the district to be-

come.

All materials used by the participants will also be on-line at the Dunlap schools website, www.dunlapcusd.net.

Session three will focus on formulating priorities and “filling gaps” in what Marino declares will be a “continuous improvement process.”

The process will not be about “how to” implement the plan that results from the process, that is, not about whether to build a new school.

“We have specialists on the staff to do that,” explains former Pekin schools superintendent Perry Soldwedel, who is facilitating the strategic planning process.

Instead, the participants will focus on developing the mission, core beliefs, long-term goals and the indicators for measuring progress toward the goals.

Priority setting will be key, says Soldwedel, as “we can’t improve 15 things at once, but we can improve three to four top priority goals.”

The 37 participants include 6 community members, 7 parents, 3 students and 20 staff from the district.