

Board of Education Regular Meeting
November 6, 2017

Call to Order

Acting Board Chair Beiter called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Auditorium. Present: Board members Kendra Wiesel, Susi Keane, George Beiter, John Richter, Natalie Semyanko, Michael Sepko (6:03 p.m.) Superintendent Karen Berasi and Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson and Business Manager Bill Hoff

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

None

Suffield High School Student Representative

Zachariah Service updated the Board on events occurring at Suffield High School this month. Zachariah highlighted SHS's fall sports teams, a fundraiser for Safe Grad, spirit night on December 1, the fall drama performance last weekend, NHS inductions, a school-wide assembly and community program next month, and Agriscience competition results from the National Convention and its open house this Thursday evening.

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

Semyanko moved to approve the October 2, 2017 meeting minutes. Richter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor except Beiter, who abstained. The motion carried 5-0-1.

Consent Agenda

MOTION # 18-10: The Board unanimously moved to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

- 1 Revisions to Policy #5113 – Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal
- 2 Revisions to Policy #5113.2 – Truancy
- 3 Revisions to Policy/Regulation #4131 – Staff Development
- 4 Revisions to Regulation #5125 – Student Records: Confidentiality
- 5 Revisions to Policy #4111 – Recruitment & Selection
- 6 Revisions to Policy/Regulation #5144.1 - Use of Physical Force
- 7 Revisions to Policy #4112.51/4212.51 – Employment/Reference Checks

Discussion/Action Items

- Next Generation Science Standards

Steve Autieri and Sara Baranauskas, Science Curriculum Leaders, discussed the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Ms. Baranauskas gave an overview for the change to the new science standards. Mr. Autieri said the driver for changing the standards is to prepare students for college and career. Mr. Autieri explained how the classroom instruction will change to an inquiry-based design. All units of instruction are linked to a phenomenon grounded in real world issues. He reviewed the three dimensions to the standards: scientific and engineering practices,

crosscutting concepts and disciplinary core ideas. Ms. Baranauskas reviewed the 5-year NGSS implementation timeline and preparation that has been done in Suffield to be aligned with the NGSS. By the end of this year all K-12 science curriculum will be aligned to the NGSS. Mr. Hendrickson said this coming spring, the Science CMT and CAPT tests are being replaced with a NGSS field test. Suzanne Wosko, first grade teacher, discussed taking part in a consortium at CREC to learn about NGSS. She noted the shift to 3D learning, which encourages investigation, exploration, and evaluation by students and the teachers' role is to guide the process. She thanked the Board for approving the collaboration time and said the time is necessary to collaborate with one another to learn the new standards and the new way to teach science. In response to a Board member's question relative to how the Board can further support this work, Mr. Autieri and Ms. Baranauskas said supporting the budget to allocate the needed resources and supporting collaboration time for teachers to ensure a smooth transition were most needed.

- **Intervention Services Report**

Mr. Hendrickson said providing intervention for students who are performing below benchmark has been an area of focus for the district. The district has developed a procedure for identifying students and putting structures in place to deliver intervention services to students. Board members had several questions about the meaning of rounds, the increased number of students receiving intervention compared to last year, if a similar report had been provided to the Board in the past and specifics on how parents are notified. Mr. Hendrickson explained the process; the different tiered interventions, assessments used to identify students, communication to parents, and implementation and monitoring of the interventions. He said the district is focused on identifying students earlier and providing intervention more quickly to students. Gina Olearczyk, SHS Assistant Principal, further explained that because the identification process has improved, there are more students in intervention, but the goal is to provide the needed interventions and then exit students as quickly as possible. Jack Ferraro, McAlister Assistant Principal, added that the intervention model has been strengthened over the last two years and is a more proactive approach rather than reactive approach. Ms. Berasi said this information was presented once before to the Board last year and noted that in the development of the School Improvement Plans, administration realized there was not a specific process or procedure to effectively identify students and provide intervention services to students. The number of students served was relatively small as compared to the test scores. Ms. Wosko added that teachers also look very closely at each student's performance in the classroom as a means to measure student need for intervention. She noted math standards have changed and how math is taught is dramatically different than in the past, and the math consultant has been extremely helpful to teachers. Kate Sweeney and Chad Sullivan, Spaulding Reading and Math Specialists, respectively, discussed the team approach to identifying students who need intervention and the methods of communication to parents. Cynthia McSheffrey, SHS Reading Specialist, explained the intervention process for reading at the high school and the assessments and student performance in the classroom used to identify students who needed interventions. The Board would like to see exit data, retention rates (students who are retained and those graduating on time), and high school student data on future reports.

- **2016-2017 District Discipline Report**

Mr. Hendrickson presented the district discipline report which is disaggregated by school. Building administrators have worked proactively to monitor discipline protocols and address social emotional learning, which has resulted in positive results. Ms. Berasi said building administrators have created a process and continue to improve upon it.

- 2017-2018 Class Size Report

Ms. Berasi said enrollment has decreased compared to last year as was expected. Superintendent Berasi said strategically reviewing class size has resulted in a reduction of 38 FTEs including non-certified staff in the last two years, yet class sizes are still very reasonable and well under the guideline. The District is taking a balanced approach to reducing certified staff taking into consideration the needs of students. Ms. Berasi said high school enrollment is projected to decline by 150 students over the next few years, while kindergarten students will increase. She noted the district will prepare for both projected and actual enrollment. In response to a board member's question, she said there is no minimum class size specified in the teachers' contract.

- September 2017 Financial Report

Mr. Hoff said the projected year end shows a net surplus of \$258,969. Now that the State budget has passed the district can purchase items it has been putting on hold, however, the district is operating on a very tight budget. He said the Food Service report is concerning because of the lower revenue in all categories, but he is working with Aramark to increase sales. Mr. Hoff said one and half teachers' and some academic support personnel's salaries were moved to the Title I grant, which accounts for \$80,000 of the surplus. Mr. Hoff noted that the Choice Academic Support Grant is expected to be funded but the amount the district will receive is still unknown. In response to a board member's question, Mr. Hoff said he does not believe the Board of Finance intends to re-open the budget except for possibly capital projects. The Town based its budget on the governor's budget which has resulted in the Town receiving \$1.1 million more than they budgeted and the District receiving \$80,000 more than requested. The surplus reported tonight does not include this \$80,000.

- Approval of MOU between Suffield Board of Education and Teamsters Union

Mr. Hoff explained that during negotiations the contract language was changed relative to the funding of the HSA for the purpose of standardizing this language among all union contracts. The Teamsters concern was administration could fund their HSA over the course of year while other union members were receiving the total at the beginning of the fiscal year. Mr. Hoff said administration would not fund the HSA over the course of the year if it was not being done with other unions. The Teamsters wanted it in writing which is the reason for this MOU.

MOTION #18-11: Service moved to approve the MOU as presented. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 6-0.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Berasi said at last meeting we discussed the budget crisis and the need for the Board to write a letter to our representatives. Our Board and particularly our Board Chair have received public criticism over this letter. For the record, as a superintendent of a public school district, she thanked the Board for their willingness to advocate for public education and speaking out against the municipal structural changes proposed. These changes would have had a far reaching detrimental impact on public education in Connecticut. The position taken by our Board was echoed by CAFE, CAPSS, CASBO, and the CT Commissioner of Education, Dianna Wentzel. It is the responsibility of the Board to put students first and advocate for our public schools and she is proud to say she works for a board that does just that.
- Nov 8th and 14th, the SEA in collaboration with the CEA will hold short professional conversations with teachers during their planning periods to listen to teachers' thoughts

about what it's like to teach in their schools and identify teacher leaders. This is being done in 30 other districts in Connecticut and all data will be shared with the Superintendent and she will share this information with the Board.

- Board Chair's Report
 - Acting Board Chair Beiter said he attended the Tri-board meeting which was a good representation of how government works.
- Business Manager's Report
 - None

Subcommittee Reports

October 16, 2017 Policy subcommittee meeting - Board member Semyanko said the revisions to the following policies are due to legislative changes, with the exception of the exit interview policy. These policies are being placed on a 30-day read.

1. Policy #3542.43 – Charging Policy
2. Policy/Reg. #4112.5 – Security/Credit Check
3. Policy #4117.6/4217.6 – Exit Interviews
4. Policy #5145.4 – Non-Discrimination

The next Policy subcommittee meeting is November 13, 2017 at 5:00 p.m.

Future Business

- Board discussion of adding public comment to the end of board meetings

Board member Sepko noted this was Susi Keane's last board meeting and he thanked her for her hard work and said she will be missed.

Adjournment

Semyanko moved, Richter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on December 4, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Guerrette
Secretary Pro Tem