

Board of Education Meeting
April 1, 2014

Call to Order

Board Vice Chair, Sanborn, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Jeanne Gee, Scott Schneider, George Beiter, Natalie Semyanko, Michelle Zawawi, Mary Roy, Mary Lou Sanborn; Superintendent, Karen Baldwin, Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin, and Interim Business Manager, Phil Russell.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

None

Communications

Superintendent Baldwin received a communication from Renz America of Agawam who wanted to donate plastic comb binding and cover stock materials to McAlister Intermediate. The value of the donation is \$350.00. In Board members' packets are a copy of the letter, the Superintendent's letter of recognition and appreciation, and the completed form as required by Policy #3280.

Approval of Minutes

Roy moved, Schneider seconded to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2014 Board of Education meeting as presented. All members voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #14-16: Beiter moved, Zawawi seconded to approve the following item on the Consent Agenda:

1. Field Trip Request – SMS LEO Club – Boston, MA – May 9-10, 2014

All members voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Board member Gee requested members of the Leo Club to come and report out on the trip in order to highlight the service and volunteerism at Suffield Middle School. Board member Zawawi spoke of the tremendous amount of work that the service organization accomplishes citing several of the activities. In addition, she expressed her appreciation for their guidance by teacher, Mario Carullo.

Discussion/Action Items

- Full Day Kindergarten Presentation
Superintendent Baldwin introduced Scott Dunn, Principal of Spaulding School, and Martha Wassall and Megan Blais, both kindergarten teachers at Spaulding who were present to give a mid-year review of the full day kindergarten program instituted this school year. Mr. Dunn said the full day kindergarten program is grounded and aligned with the theory of action. The full day model allows for the workshop model to be implemented with fidelity and for an increase in differentiated instruction. He said many people are involved in making this model a success; Krys Price, Reading Language Arts Consultant, the district supervisors, the teachers, administrators and parents.

Ms. Blais highlighted that full day kindergarten allows for more time for exploration and constructing knowledge to develop creativity, critical thinking skills and problem solving. Ms. Wassall said the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has required the need for increased instructional time, which the full day program has provided. She noted the full day program allows for more opportunities to differentiate instruction for students. Board member Sanborn asked for an example of higher level thinking skills. Ms. Wassall said a good example of this is in writing. Students are researching a subject to write about and are learning the difference between informative writing and fiction. They are also learning how to create a table of contents. Typically these skills are not taught until first or second grade. Ms. Blais reviewed a typical day schedule for kindergarteners. Mr. Dunn added this is a current snapshot of this year, but the schedule will be different next year. He said the reader's and writer's workshop are central to the schedule, and with the current schedule the workshops get broken up by one of the recess times. Next year the classroom teachers will determine when the second recess will occur to best fit their classroom schedules.

Board member Zawawi asked when teachers have collaboration time. Mr. Dunn said team meetings occur for 40 minutes one morning a week, with Kim Loveland and Sophia Gintoff alternating meeting with the team every other week. There is also a faculty meeting held each Tuesday afternoon. A question was raised relative to time designated for science each day. Ms. Blais said science is incorporated throughout the entire day. For example science is incorporated into reader's and writer's workshop. Mr. Dunn said next year's schedule will accommodate a rotation of social studies and science into the ELA workshops. Board member D'Ostuni asked for information on writer's workshop. Mr. Dunn said it will be shared further in the presentation. Board member Semyanko asked who is with the students when teachers are in their morning team meetings. Mr. Dunn said paraprofessionals are in the classroom with the students during that time.

Ms. Blais explained the reader's workshop model. Small groups of students work with the classroom teacher, academic support staff or parent volunteers during reading instruction. Mini lessons occur as a whole group. She showed the comparisons of what is taught and accomplished in a half day model versus a full day model. The guided reading groups focus on children's needs and are based on their reading level. She has seen an increase in the students' confidence and independence in their reading ability with the full day program.

Ms. Wassall reviewed the writer's workshop model, which includes students conferencing with the teacher or academic support on their writing and learn how to edit their work. Writer's workshop starts with a whole group mini lesson. She showed the comparisons of what is taught and accomplished in a half day model versus a full day model. She noted the full day program has helped to improve the students writing skills and they are more independent in writing assignments. She gave an example of a student's significant growth in writing since the beginning of the year. Mr. Dunn added that the academic support in kindergarten is a big part of the success in reader's and writer's workshops.

Ms. Wassall highlighted the comparison in math instruction in a full day versus a half day model. Board member Sanborn asked how technology is integrated into math instruction. Ms. Wassall said there are math websites for students to practice math skills. Ms. Blais

added they use math games to help kindergarteners learn addition, subtraction and less than/greater than concepts. The math instruction is aligned to the CCSS and allows for hands-on learning.

Ms. Blais said the full day kindergarten model not only addresses the academic benefits but also the social/emotional benefits. Kindergarteners have expanded opportunities for structured and free play activities, are able to attend school-wide assemblies and events, and allows them the opportunity to participate in other clubs, such as PALS and Beams.

Mr. Dunn displayed the reading benchmark data for February 2014. He noted a significant number of students were meeting and exceeding expectations. Ms. Wassall added that last year's end-of-year reading expectation was level C. This year the students are well above level C. Mr. Dunn said the data is grounded in academic intervention and the intervention program is the strongest he has seen. He said the work begins with the teachers and specialists, but also with the help of the academic support staff. Board member Zawawi asked how many academic support staff there are and if the academic support staff are in the classroom. Mr. Dunn said they are in the classrooms and the number depends on the grade level. Board member Zawawi asked if these students are also pulled out of the classroom, and if so are the parents informed. Mr. Dunn said yes and the classroom teacher informs the parents. Mr. Dunn showed examples of different interventions used. Board member Schneider, referring to the examples, asked what Lively Letters was. Ms. Blais said it is a letter system to help students learn the letters and sounds of each letter. Board member Schneider asked if this was Tier II instruction. Mr. Dunn answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Dunn shared the results of a parent survey conducted to get parents' feedback on the full day kindergarten program. He said they received a 49% participation rate with 65 completed surveys. Parents were asked specific questions and the degree to which they agreed. He showed the results of parents who agreed or strongly agreed with the questions asked. The overall results were 90% or higher. He shared some of the parents' comments from the survey which revealed strong support for the full day kindergarten program. Board member Beiter asked if the students were fatigued. Ms. Blais said in her experience fatigue has been minimal. Ms. Wassall said there was some fatigue among students in the first few weeks, but that is no longer an issue.

Board member D'Ostuni asked if there was statistical data in reading progress available from February 2013 and February 2012 because three years of data is statistically significant. Those comparisons would be helpful. Mr. Dunn said the reading benchmarks for those years would not be as revealing because those children were leveled in A, B and C. The students this year are leveled higher. Board member D'Ostuni said what is displayed is only the benchmark, having the comparison would be more revealing. She would like to see a comparison to the half day program. Ms. Wassall said three years ago the end-of-year goal for site words was 10 words; currently students know 50 or more site words. She also noted reading levels have increased. Board member Zawawi thanked Mr. Dunn, Ms. Wassall and Ms. Blais for their presentation and asked what the Board can do to further their good work. Ms. Blais said the academic support is crucial for the workshop model because the classroom teacher cannot conference with each student during these times. Ms. Wassall said the classrooms are in need of another teacher since there is a difference between having 19 students in

her class this year and 15 students last year, and higher level books since the children are progressing so much in their reading skills. Superintendent Baldwin stated that both items are in the budget for next year. Mr. Dunn said this is a welcomed effect of the full day kindergarten program. Mr. Dunn said he feels very fortunate to be a part of Suffield and specifically the principal of Spaulding. He is excited about the sincerity of collaboration that is taking place in the school at the team level and at the administration level in the district. He is grateful for the amount of supports that are in place for the students and staff. Having this collaborative environment as well as the district supervisors' support has been instrumental in making full day kindergarten a success and he wants to see that continue. Board member Roy asked if they have seen a drop-off in parent participation. Both kindergarten teachers said their parent participation has remained constant. Ms. Wassall said she has two parents in her classroom every day. Board member Gee said she was thankful for the change to full day kindergarten and there are so many people to thank. She said the process included looking at what the children needed, talking to parents and involving the entire staff at Spaulding to implement the program. The process should be a template for how the district approaches everything it does. Board member Sanborn asked if there have been any challenges to the full day kindergarten program. Mr. Dunn said he has not experienced any and that is due to a purposeful plan that was in place before he arrived and the engaged and enthusiastic kindergarten staff that has supported the implementation. He also noted the tremendous support of the Central Office and district supervisors.

Board member Schneider asked what the next steps are for continuous improvement. Mr. Dunn said currently the focus is on interventions for struggling students. The next step would be to look at enrichment for those students who are doing well. Superintendent Baldwin thanked Mr. Dunn, Ms. Wassall and Ms. Blais for their presentation and their commitment to quality teaching and learning for their students. The presentation was very thoughtful and much appreciated. Board member Roy said she was pleased at how the teachers have embraced the full day kindergarten program. Ms. Wassall said she has a better sense of accomplishment at the end of each day because she has more time with the children. Ms. Blais added the full day program allows teachers to get to know their students and parents sooner, and the students get to know each other better, creating stronger bonds.

- February 2014 Financial Report

Mr. Russell said there is not much change in the financials from the January report. The cold weather is still negatively impacting the budget. He pointed out an error in the fourth paragraph of his report; the expended amount is \$29,541,159 not \$20,541,129. He noted the February shortfall is similar to last month's shortfall, \$17,246 versus \$19,657, respectively. He said Central Office is looking at other areas, specifically in special education excess costs. He said there are positive impacts for excess cost sharing and those have been submitted to the State. The Superintendent said in January the Board asked administration to provide a report on how to end the year without a shortfall. Dr. Collin has conducted an analysis on students within the district with special needs and identified students who met the excess cost reimbursement. This is one strategy being used to eliminate a shortfall by the end of the year. Another strategy is to examine the controls that have been in place since July 2013, and the third is the district received the second installment of \$72,000 of the agricultural (ASTE) grant. The district can use

that grant money to offset equipment and service costs. Board member Gee asked about the process to identify students in district eligible for excess cost. Board member Gee said this practice should be done annually. The Superintendent agreed and said typically when we talk about special education, tuition and transportation costs, very often it is associated with out of district students. We are trying to keep more students in the district, so it is a good practice to examine students in district who qualify for excess cost reimbursement and the district will continue to do that. The district has created a spreadsheet that monitors the data. The March financial report will reflect added excess costs coming back into the district. Board member Sanborn noted that excess cost sharing changes based on the State. Board member Schneider asked if this spreadsheet had been presented to the Programs and Services subcommittee. The Superintendent said it was presented to the Budget subcommittee.

Board member Sanborn asked if the ASTE grant has to be used for Agri-science students only. Mr. Russell said the money has to be used for the program but not only for the students. Superintendent Baldwin added the grant money could be used for equipment needs, consultant fees, etc. The Superintendent said she is confident the budget can be reconciled without a shortfall. Mr. Russell also noted the electricity generation rate has been reduced through November 2014, which will positively impact this year's budget. Board member D'Ostuni gave kudos to the individual who thought outside of the box to look into the excess cost sharing for in district students.

Board member Beiter asked for the end-of-year projection in food services. Mr. Russell said he is working on getting last year's data, but it is difficult since the data was collected and reported differently. Referring to the food service income statement, Mr. Russell noted the positive year to date amount of approximately \$22,000, which includes the \$48,000 Board subsidy. Superintendent Baldwin said the food service RFP is due back April 21 and more information will be available then. She said the RFP requested that respondents give bids on different types of services. This will provide a cost structure which is very timely since we are in the budget process and looking at a \$90,000 subsidy this year. Referring to recent editorials, Board member Gee asked if the Board should reach out to the community once again and get their input on whether they want to continue subsidizing the food service program or not. Board member Roy said it would be helpful to have the bids first. Board member Sanborn asked if that was a question the last time a survey was conducted. Board member D'Ostuni said it was not. Board member Beiter noted that the surplus of \$22,000 is a decrease of about \$7,500 from last month. Mr. Russell said as the year ends, food inventory costs will decrease but sales should stay constant.

Establish Suffield High School 2014 Graduation Date

MOTION 14-17: D'Ostuni moved that the graduation day be June 14, 2014, which would result in the Board waiving two instructional days, making the last day of school June 13, 2014. Gee seconded the motion. Board member Schneider asked for the administration's opinion on the matter. Superintendent Baldwin said waiving the two days makes good sense. With five snow days the last day of school was pushed to Tuesday, June 17. It is difficult to hold graduation four days later. All members voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

- Bus 8 Incident – The Superintendent updated the Board on the March 24 bus incident and the purpose of the update was to highlight the work that has been done since to strengthen and improve communication protocols with M&J. The events of the incident were a bus exited the high school parking lot and was observed to be driving erratically. The bus was in the shoulder on Sheldon Road and crossed the center yellow line on Mountain Road which almost resulted in an accident with an oncoming car. The driver also had difficulty negotiating the turn into the middle school driveway. M&J was first notified by a parent and then shortly after by another bus driver. Neither the Superintendent's office nor the Business Manager's office was notified of these events. The procedures put in place require M&J to contact the Central Office and if needed, the Police Department. The protocols outlined have identified every kind of incident with appropriate steps to be taken in these events, and these protocols will continuously be reviewed. M&J has been cooperative and receptive to working together to improve the situation. Superintendent Baldwin added that M&J has a lab, in accordance with the Department of Transportation requirements, where drivers are drug and alcohol tested in incidents like this. The bus driver tested negative for both drugs and alcohol, but the driver is no longer driving for Suffield Schools. Board member Gee asked if the driver was still employed with M&J. The Superintendent said she could not answer that question since the driver is an employee of M&J not the district. Board member Beiter said he felt the response by M&J to remove the bus driver right after they were notified was done swiftly and was thankful that those steps were taken.
- Middle School Principal Search – Superintendent Baldwin said the middle school principal search has begun with interviews taking place on Friday, April 4, 2014. There will be an orientation session for the interview committee on April 3, 2014. Board member Gee asked how many candidates will be interviewed. The Superintendent said there are five candidates.

- Chair's Report

- None

Subcommittees Reports

- Policy Subcommittee Meeting held on April 1, 2014
Board member Sanborn said the committee met that morning and discussed the home-schooling policy. The policy was revised to be consistent with other hearing policies, specifically the transportation policy. The Superintendent distributed the revised policy to Board members. Board member Schneider asked if there was a liability concern. The Superintendent said the policy places the discretion on the Superintendent but allows for an appeals process before the Board, however, the liability issue remains. The revision aligns the appeals process with other policies. Board member Beiter asked if the 10 days to issue a response was a sufficient amount of time. The Superintendent said the Board's attorney can issue the letter. Board member Sanborn said there are policies recommended for dissolution. One is directory information because with the FERPA policy being implemented last year, the directory information policy is redundant and is

in the wrong spot in the 5000 Series. Also the policy on internet use is recommended for dissolution because it is covered in the responsible use policies. These policies will be placed on a 30 day read at the next Board meeting. There are also several editorial changes to policies where incorrect or obsolete references are noted on policies. Board member Sanborn said Donna Hayward was present at the meeting to give a report on the virtual/online learning for credit recovery program. The report was distributed to Board members. Any questions can be referred to the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent. Board member Sanborn said the committee reviewed a head lice letter that will be issued to parents, and the committee reviewed the graduation requirements policy relative to referencing SBAC testing instead of CAPT testing. The Superintendent will revise the policy and it will be placed on the Policy subcommittee's future agenda, which will also look at credit requirements for graduation. Board member Zawawi, referring to the online learning report, asked if that is the program Suffield would be using. The Superintendent answered in the affirmative. Board member Zawawi asked if this program was only for students who have failed a course. The Superintendent said currently this program is for credit recovery only, but administration is looking into credit enhancement. Ms. Hayward is working with her team to determine what the framework would look like and how to implement it. Board member Sanborn said credit enhancement will affect the SEA, so it has to be looked at more carefully. Board member Beiter said he was concerned that the district is rewarding bad behavior. The same opportunities are not yet available to students who want to take advantage of it for credit enhancement. Board member Gee stated that the subcommittee has the same interest he does to use this as an enhancement. However, as a start-up initiative we chose as our area of focus where we had the most area of pressing need, which is with our students at high risk. One way or another we help at risk kids. We are not spending additional resources. This is alternate allocation of the same resources to expand the options of intervention for these students. Superintendent Baldwin said the district needs a policy framework to guide the creation and implementation of an equitable practice and that will be in alignment with the policy. Board member Zawawi asked for the cost of the program. Dr. Collin said there is no per student cost, but the program is \$7,000 for five site licenses, which includes training.

- Budget Subcommittee Meeting held on March 27, 2014 – Board member Schneider reported that a motion was made to reallocate \$80,000 from the 2014-2015 operating budget to the Choice grant. Board member Zawawi asked if the reductions were coming from McAlister. The Superintendent said the reductions were spread across all schools. The Superintendent added those changes were made in the budget book which was sent to the Town on March 31 along with a transmittal letter to the Board of Finance. Board member D'Ostuni asked if the line item detail was included in the submission, which has been the Board's past practice. The Superintendent said the Chair recommended the budget book and transmittal only be sent to the Town. If the Town requests additional information it will be provided.
- Health Insurance meeting with the Town on March 31, 2014 – Superintendent Baldwin said she attended the Board of Finance meeting last night because they were reviewing health insurance, which is a major driver of the Board's budget. Bob Lindberg, the insurance consultant, was present at the meeting and administration had asked him to review the February claims in hopes that they were more positive than in earlier months.

However, that was not the case and the current allocation will remain the same. Mr. Lindberg conducted a market study and several other providers responded. Mr. Lindberg will be sharing the results of the market study at a meeting in the next few weeks. There was no change in health insurance reported at the Board of Finance meeting.

- Regional Calendar Meeting – Board member D’Ostuni attended the meeting on April 1. She said most districts prefer spring vacation to occur the second week of April. In accordance with House bill 5559, the implementation of a regional calendar will not take place until school year 2016-2017. Two regional professional development days were also discussed. Districts will have flexibility in selecting their professional development days. Glastonbury and Avon have opted to conduct SBAC testing during the third week of May. She said she will share the report with the Board when she receives it. Election Day will be a required day off each year. Board member Gee asked what will happen if the district does not comply. Board member D’Ostuni said the State could withhold funding. Board member Gee said that she does not advocate the Board taking any positions that they are being blackmailed into by the State.

Future Business

- Gender Gap Writing/SRBI
- PALS Program – 2013/2014 student data and parent survey results – June 2014
- Learning Management System status & Report on technology integration and BYOT in the district
- Update on leveling in 6th grade
- 5th Grade Chromebook Pilot Presentation
- Presentation of LEO Club field trip

Adjournment

Beiter moved, Schneider seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D’Ostuni
Secretary