

Board of Education Meeting
May 6, 2014

Call to Order

Board Chair Eccles, called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Scott Schneider, George Beiter, Bob Eccles, Natalie Semyanko, Mary Roy, Mary Lou Sanborn; Jeanne Gee, Michelle Zawawi, Superintendent, Karen Baldwin, Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin, and Interim Business Manager, Phil Russell.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

None

Recognition

Superintendent Baldwin said tonight was an opportunity to recognize a member of our community, Mr. Joe Blake, Suffield High School Assistant Principal and the following are her remarks. Mr. Blake was chosen as the 2014 Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) Assistant Principal of the Year. Mr. Blake is very visible in the high school and successfully makes meaningful connections with students, staff and parents. Mr. Blake was nominated by Donna Hayward who nominated him for his strong sense of professionalism, and his supportive work in helping teachers implement the instructional shifts of the new standards. High School Counselor, Ned Sullivan wrote comments to CAS about the tremendous impact Mr. Blake has made at the high school in the three years he has been Assistant Principal. Superintendent Baldwin noted that Mr. Blake's leadership skills translate into his community work as well. Mr. Blake was presented with a plaque to acknowledge and honor this achievement. Mr. Blake said receiving recognition is difficult for him, but he thanked Ms. Hayward for nominating him and for all that she has taught him. He wanted to especially thank the students and staff because they are the biggest piece of his and the school's success. Mr. Blake closed by thanking the Board.

Communications

Superintendent Baldwin said the district received a donation from Praxair, Inc. for two Greenspire trees, mulch, fertilizer and the manpower to plant the trees at Spaulding School. The value of the donation is approximately \$500.00. Board member Gee said Praxair has donated trees in the past, and it is very thoughtful to not only donate the trees, but also provide the labor to plant them. Mr. Dunn added that representatives from Praxair really engaged with the students during the planting.

Approval of Minutes

Roy moved, Sanborn seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the April 22, 2014 Board of Education meeting as presented. All members voted in favor except for Board members Gee and Zawawi, who abstained. The motion carried.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #14-21: D'Ostuni moved, Gee seconded to approve the following item on the Consent Agenda:

1. Field Trip Request – SHS Agriscience – National FFA Convention – Louisville, KY – 10/28/14 – 11/01/14.

Discussion/Action Items

- Appointment Of Suffield Middle School Principal effective July 1, 2014
Superintendent Baldwin said the finalist candidate, Damon Pearce, spent 40 minutes with the Board this evening. The process began on April 4th with the first round of interviews. The committee was comprised of Middle School teachers, district administrators, parents and Board member Semyanko. The performance task took place on April 25, where Mr. Pearce did an outstanding job. She said the Board got a good sense of Mr. Pearce's leadership skills and experience, and how they will translate to the change agenda in the middle school. Mr. Pearce comes to Suffield from New Britain High School where he serves as Associate Principal. Dr. Baldwin shared comments from some of Mr. Pearce's reference letters extolling his leadership ability, character, and work ethic.

MOTION #14-22: Semyanko moved, D'Ostuni seconded the motion to appoint Mr. Pearce as the Suffield Middle School Principal effective July 1, 2014. Board member Gee said Mr. Warrington has been the principal for 19 years, and she was grateful for his service. She said change can be difficult, but someone like Mr. Pearce will make the change easier, and she welcomed him to the district. Board Chair Eccles added that after the Board interviewed Mr. Pearce, the Board discussed his candidacy in executive session. Board Chair Eccles called for a vote. All members voted in favor, except Board member Zawawi, who abstained. Mr. Pearce thanked the Board for the opportunity and said he felt honored and humbled by the responsibility the Board had placed in him, and that he was eager to start.

- Technology Integration in the District
Superintendent Baldwin said this presentation has been on the Board's future agenda list. In the fall, Ms. Osleger presented to the Board the transition to Finalsite and the digital learning environment. Dr. Baldwin said tonight's presentation represents progress in three of the district's goals: transitioning to a digital learning environment, implementing a plan for professional learning, and creating curriculum that embeds 21st century skills. The presentation will also highlight student involvement and leadership opportunities for students, district level leadership, and classroom teacher's work (5th and 6th grade). Superintendent Baldwin said the change will be impactful to the district.

Dr. Collin said the work of Ms. Osleger, the SWAT team, and the classroom pilot programs has made the shift to digital learning come to life in a meaningful way. He is impressed with the progress made to date. This presentation is about giving the Board a good sense about where we are, and where the district is headed. He said it is a moving target since technology is constantly evolving. The move to the 1:1 digital learning environment at the high school next year will be a tremendous learning opportunity. He said the district conducted a survey with teachers about Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT). 103 teachers participated in the survey. He said the results of the survey give the administration concrete guidance into transitioning from the eChalk environment, which was basic and limited, to the BYOT environment. Administration is using feedback from teachers to develop the next steps in the process. For example, how to

change practice in classroom and what professional learning needs are required. This feedback is the driver for what we are going to do in the future. Board member Sanborn inquired as to who is using district iPads. Dr. Collin said they are being used across the district. Board member Sanborn asked if iPads were included in this survey. Dr. Collin said this survey is about students bringing in their own devices. Superintendent Baldwin said all teachers in grades 6-12 have laptops. iPads are used by teachers in K-2. Knowing how many students in the high school will be bringing their personal devices will help with the roll out of the 1:1 digital learning this fall. Board member Sanborn noted that based on the survey, very few students are bringing in their own device. Dr. Collin said that students may not be bringing their own devices because right now students may not have relevant learning need for the device in a course. Board member Sanborn asked what resources will be used. Dr. Collin said the Board will see some of those resources in the presentation tonight. Some examples are typing programs, encyclopedia resources, and other tools teachers post to help students.

Karen Carpenter-Snow presented the results of the 5th grade Chromebook Pilot. She said Ms. Tosone's and Ms. Larson's classrooms were selected to pilot the program. The selection was based on teacher's interest in integrating technology into the curriculum, their interest in technology, and the need to be flexible. The use of Chromebooks in the classroom has helped to build background knowledge, has enriched students' learning, and has improved communication and collaboration between home and school. The students used the Chromebooks for about 40% of school day and across curriculum. Students used Google Docs for writing assignments, which they were able to share with their teachers, other students and at home. Ms. Carpenter-Snow said parent feedback was positive, and parents noted they could see the progression of their student's work and liked that students could work on assignments at home and school seamlessly. Online articles such as Scholastic News are up to date, engaging, and meaningful to students. Students were able to build background knowledge, spark conversations, and find text evidence to support their writing with online articles and videos. Chromebooks also allow for differentiated instruction. An example is a spelling application the students used to practice and study for spelling tests. Dr. Collin noted the pilot was intended to be integrated into a typical class experience. Ms. Carpenter-Snow emphasized that the use of Chromebooks was not an add-on, but embedded as part of the curriculum. Ms. Tosone researched the blog component, and Ms. Larson had her students writing pen pal letters with children in Spain, integrating the use of Spanish. Ms. Carpenter-Snow highlighted other uses of the Chromebooks in the classroom: typing programs to increase keyboarding proficiency, online math sites to introduce and reinforce concepts, and the use of online resources to enhance science and social studies. The use of Chromebooks also was used during transition times where students could complete a quick spelling or typing lesson, allowing for individualized and meaningful use of time. Ms. Carpenter-Snow said through the pilot program they learned that they like having the Chromebooks incorporated into classroom instruction as well as the speed of the Chromebooks. The wireless network worked really well. Google Apps is great for sharing work from student to student, student to teacher, and student to parent. Chromebooks were easy to use at home, and the students were very motivated and engaged to use them. They had difficulty giving them back.

Board member D'Ostuni asked if an exit survey was conducted. Ms. Carpenter-Snow said an exit survey was not conducted. Board member D'Ostuni said a survey would be helpful to measure the increased student engagement comment and referred to other increased comments in the board presentation material. She also asked to what extent instructional time increased. Superintendent Baldwin said the increase in instructional time mentioned was the use of Chromebooks during transition times in the day. Board member Gee asked if all teachers were included in the conversations of how the Chromebook Pilot worked. She noted the whole team could benefit from what worked, what did not and other information Ms. Tosone and Ms. Larson could share. Superintendent Baldwin said the upcoming professional learning days on June 16 and June 17 may present the opportunity for them to share out with other teachers their experience in using the Chromebooks as part of the classroom experience. Teachers can talk about impact, what is going well, what is not, and professional learning needs. Dr. Baldwin also noted the work of the new SWAT team will help play a role in this and foster growth and collaboration among staff and students to promote change and improvement.

Superintendent Baldwin introduced Charles Hershon, 6th grade ELA teacher. Mr. Hershon said when applying here he was attracted to the idea of Suffield working towards being a 21st century school. His students have had Chromebooks for three weeks, but he has been using Google Apps all year. Students are using the discussion board space on LMS where students can create their own boards. The Chromebooks are used for classwork and homework. Students use Chromebooks to do collaborative writing, close reading, group presentations, note taking skills, and to view tutorials/videos. Google Docs can be used on any device, so documents can be accessed anywhere. Mr. Hershon said he is also teaching digital citizenship skills so students will use technology correctly. He showed an example of an assignment where students had to read a passage and write the story from another point of view. Students worked collaboratively with other students, and are able to comment on each other's writing. This resulted in increased engagement among students. He said the students really enjoy commenting on their peers' work, and the comments were appropriate and productive. He displayed Webquest which allows for links to be added in documents to get further information, giving students the resources they need at their fingertips. He asked students to reflect on using the Chromebooks after a week of use. He said overall the students enjoyed the experience and liked how quickly the Chromebooks work. Board member D'Ostuni asked if any students did not like them. Mr. Hershon said no, but there were some challenges, like the Wi-Fi was sometimes slow, citing a recent example towards the end of a day with SBAC testing. However, for the majority of the time, the Wi-Fi worked well. He noted the students are teaching him how to use the Chromebooks more efficiently. Superintendent Baldwin asked Mr. Hershon how much time he has to spend on his own learning to integrate the use of Chromebooks into meaningful learning for students. Mr. Hershon said at the beginning of year it took a lot of time to prepare. Developing webpages is labor intensive and time consuming, but once they are established it is quicker and easier to change the information as opposed to creating them from scratch. He worked on collaborative team to share with other teachers and have found faster ways to create the work. The most time saved is in sharing documents with students, and the LMS has played a great role in that. Board member Sanborn asked if the examples of lessons presented are aligned with the Common Core. Mr. Hershon said

all the lessons are aligned with the Common Core. Board member Beiter asked if there were any issues with access at home. Mr. Hershon said some students do not have access at home, and for those students he offers them time to work on assignments at school. Board member Roy asked if there were any complaints from parents regarding students working too late at night on homework. Mr. Hershon said he has not received any complaints about that, but said a few of his students may be completing assignments in the morning when should have done it the night before. Superintendent Baldwin and the Board thanked Mr. Hershon.

Becky Osleger, Director of Technology, introduced the newly created Students Working to Advance Technology (SWAT) team. She said the idea of SWAT has been in the works for a couple of years now. She gave a brief overview of how and when SWAT got started and introduced the members: Landon Beiter, Jon Hagenow, Thomas Levinskas, and Preston Martinik. Landon said the goal of SWAT is to promote leadership, where students could step up and help teachers or fellow students with technology needs. SWAT's role is to also increase the efficiency and proper use of devices, and increase communication among students, parents and teachers by sharing on Google Docs. Jon said for younger grade levels, students can share their entire drives so parents can see everything in which their children are working. Chromebooks are also smaller and lighter (2.7 lbs.) to carry than laptops. Board member Gee asked if the team had a recruitment plan. Jon said SWAT has created a website which includes an area where students can request to be a SWAT member. He said SWAT is looking for about 15 members, and a Jr. SWAT team is in development at the Middle School. Ms. Osleger is working on marketing campaign to get information out about the team and the website. She said they are looking at other aspects as they grow from the pioneer state. Thomas said upcoming plans are to communicate who they are and what they do to recruit new members. Their focus is to help with the 1:1 digital learning transition at the high school. Board member D'Ostuni suggested having the SWAT team at venues like Partnering with Parents. Superintendent Baldwin agreed that it would be wonderful to have SWAT provide a session and manage kiosks to help parents manage technology. Preston said many classes use the technology, and they can help with techniques such as how to use Google Docs. He noted Google Docs is very user friendly. Ms. Osleger noted that being a member of SWAT has given these students an opportunity to develop their leadership skills. Board member Sanborn asked when SWAT meets and how are their responsibilities incorporated into their schedules. Ms. Osleger said the team meets after school on Wednesdays. She said the team is looking at areas where kiosks can be put throughout the school for students to drop off Chromebooks to get repaired. This would occur before school, after school and during lunches. They are looking at putting SWAT's home office in the ticket booth. During lunch periods, students can ask questions and drop off their Chromebooks. Preston noted that SWAT is a work in progress. Board member Sanborn asked if this will eliminate the need for computer labs. Ms. Osleger said SWAT would not replace the need for computer labs. Board member Sanborn asked if SWAT will keep records of students. Superintendent Baldwin said over time a list of names of current SWAT members will be provided to teachers, so teachers could have SWAT members help them with planning (i.e. set up a Webquest). Ms. Osleger added the SWAT members have been trained in auditorium technology, and they have trained some middle school students as well. In addition, SWAT will be working some town events. Board member Sanborn asked if SWAT was included in the budget.

Ms. Osleger said SWAT is not in the budget, but funded through a SFES grant. The SWAT members closed the presentation by sharing why they joined SWAT.

Superintendent Baldwin thanked the members of SWAT for their courageous effort and their great work in helping to kick off this initiative. She said this work is significant for members of this community and will have impact now and in the future. She also thanked Ms. Osleger for assuming this leadership role. Ms. Osleger outlined next steps.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

- Middle School Improvement Update

Superintendent Baldwin said the Middle School Continuous Improvement Committee met last Tuesday the 29th, led by Dr. Collin. He updated the committee on the new schedule and the next tier of goals. Dr. Collin said the committee has accomplished the goals it had set out to accomplish, which are: aligning the ELA experience in all three grades, reducing the number of study halls to no more than two a week, creating choice in electives in chorus and bands and other Unified Arts, and offering courses in technology. He said the committee was interested in establishing next steps at this meeting. They discussed what technology looks like for the middle school in 2014 and what can we do to launch students in the technology realm. Dr. Collin visited Asnuntuck Community College this week and met with instructors from the manufacturing, design, and engineering department. He suggested the committee visit Asnuntuck and tour the facility to help with planning at the middle school for next year. Board member Schneider asked if the committee was at the hand-off point for the 2014-2015 school year. Dr. Collin said administration is currently hiring ELA and other staff for next year. World language has been enriched to allow 6th graders to experience French and Spanish. Laying out scope and sequence will begin this summer and continue throughout the year. Dr. Collin said the roll out will be done in an incremental way to measure and give opportunities for feedback. Superintendent Baldwin said relative to the hand off question, the steering committee will remain, and the hand-off will be to the administration to help shepherd the transition in working with the new principal. Board member D'Ostuni noted for the record that the Board has previously discussed the concerns of some parents who would like their child(ren) to have fewer or more study hall in their schedules, and that the administration had stated they would work with those individual parents in a supportive manner.

- National School Climate Survey – District Launch

Superintendent Baldwin said a letter to all families was mailed out late last week informing them of a school climate survey that was available for parents, staff and students to complete. The survey is available to take from May 5 through June 13. Administrators will look at the results over the summer. Board member Sanborn asked if the questions were different from the 2012 survey. Superintendent Baldwin said the questions are the same as the 2012 survey. She noted as we move forward there are other instruments that may provide better feedback. Board member D'Ostuni mentioned that focus groups should be used as a follow up to the survey.

- Chair's Report
None

Subcommittees Reports

Budget Subcommittee: Subcommittee Chair Schneider said a budget subcommittee meeting was held on April 29, 2014 to discuss fiscal year 2014-15 budget reduction strategies and impacts. Since that meeting, the Board of Finance met on Monday, May 5 and restored \$250,000 of the proposed budget reduction of \$350,000. The net decrease is now \$100,000. He said both Board party caucuses have been held and have determined some areas where the budget can be reduced. He said the subcommittee will meet again after the Town meeting on May 14 and draft a proposal to present to the full Board. Board Chair Eccles stressed the importance of the Board and community members to attend the Town meeting. Board member Roy noted the Board of Finance cannot increase the budget at that point, but can reduce it.

- Policy Subcommittee: Subcommittee Chair Sanborn said a meeting was held this morning. They discussed graduation requirements for language changes to reflect the new SBAC testing instead of CAPT, and there was a discussion over graduation requirements as it relates to electives. She said the administration will provide data in June to help with decision making relative to the electives. The subcommittee also discussed the evaluation of certified staff policy and changes to reflect the district's adoption of SEED. There will be a survey of teachers for feedback from the first year of using SEED and the subcommittee will report to the Board in July or August the feedback results. Lastly, the subcommittee discussed various curriculum design policies that will also be discussed in Student Programs and Services subcommittee. This will be an ongoing effort.

Future Business

- Substitute Service Budget Study and Kelly Services Data – placed on Budget Subcommittee future agenda
- PALS Program – 2013/2014 student data and parent survey results – June 2014
- LEO Club Field Trip Report – June
- Robotics Presentation – May
- Three Roofs Construction Projects Update – May
- Program Updates - June

Board member Zawawi said she would like to see classroom enrollment numbers for the Middle School and High School for next year, to ensure there are no issues with overcrowding in classrooms. Board Chair Eccles said a definitive number would not be available right now. Board member Zawawi said a projection would be helpful to ensure appropriate programming is in place. Superintendent Baldwin said she would get a projection and relay that information to the Board in a weekly update. Board Chair Eccles said if action is needed it could be brought to the Board, otherwise class sections and course enrollments remains at the administrative level. Board member D'Ostuni said with new principals at the High School and Middle School avoiding this issue would make the transition easier for them. Superintendent Baldwin said the administration will report the information to the Board. She added weekly meetings will be in place with Ms. Hayward and Mr. Blake to help with the transition.

Board member Schneider congratulated Superintendent Baldwin on receiving her Doctorate of Education degree. The board was congratulatory and board member Gee specifically asked if the dissertation was available to read. Other board members echoed interest.

Adjournment

Beiter moved, Zawawi seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary