

Board of Education Regular Meeting
September 16, 2019

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Media Center and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, John Richter, Jamie Drzyzga, James Mol, Brian Fry, Michael Sepko, and Debra Dudack; Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, Director of Special Services Diana Kelley, Business Manager Bill Hoff, Suffield Middle School Principal Ken Smith, and Suffield Middle School Assistant Principal Gina Olearczyk

Absent: Matt Service

BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP #1: MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAM MODEL

Mr. Van Tassel discussed the format of these workshops and asked the Board to consider how future workshops should be structured and presented. He commended Mr. Smith and Ms. Olearczyk for the amount of work, thought and detail that went into tonight's presentation. The final presentation will be posted on the district website to enhance communication with parents and staff.

Mr. Ken Smith and Ms. Gina Olearczyk presented the structure and practice of the middle school team model. They explained the different school models (elementary, middle and high school models), the social and emotional and academic benefits of the middle school model, and the history of changes to the middle school schedule in the last few years. Mr. Smith reviewed the structures of a middle school teaming model which lends itself to small learning communities to foster close relationships among teachers and students. This structure also allows for teacher collaboration time each day to discuss student needs and concerns or curricula work. He showed what a daily schedule looks like at each grade level which includes five blocks of core classes, two blocks of specials and one block of lunch and flex time. He also showed the specific schedule for each grade level. Mr. Smith explained the rationale for the current six-day rotation schedule which gives more continuity and flexibility for students and staff. Mr. Smith reviewed data from other school districts which compared student enrollment, the number of general education teachers, the student-to-teacher ratio, the number of special education teachers and the number of special education students. Suffield has a lower student-to-teacher ratio than almost all of the other districts that were compared. Mr. Smith explained the current service delivery model for special education students. The program is currently an all "pull-out" model where special education students are removed from one of the components of their day to receive services. Mr. Van Tassel said his concern with this model is it is a one-size fits all model and special education services should be an individualized model. For some students there is a need for students to be pulled out but for others the support can be provided in the classroom. All of the administrators were in agreement that the special education program needs to change to an individualized delivery model. Mr. Smith shared the future vision of the middle school, which includes maintaining the interdisciplinary teams, maintaining the six-day rotation schedule, and reincorporating special education teachers on grade level teams. The administration also recommends reducing ELA in seventh and eighth grade to one block a day, adding a school

counselor so there will be one counselor per grade level and they will loop with that cohort of students throughout the students' time in middle school, and adding a reading interventionist, which will allow for students who need a double block of ELA to receive it. Mr. Van Tassel added that there will be an analysis of the special education service hours and needs of students who will be entering the middle school and that analysis may result in the need for another special education teacher or other support service staff. Board members and the administration discussed the logistics of the schedule, the impact of class size and student-to-teacher ratio on student performance, the workshop model, the teacher collaboration time structure, the perception of the small student-to-teacher ratio in Suffield as compared to other similar districts with higher student-to-teacher ratios, future student enrollment numbers, meeting IEP service hours on a six-day rotation schedule, the special education service delivery model, sharing staff among schools to address ebb and flow in student enrollment year over year, obtaining class size data from the comparable districts, the elimination of accelerated classes and the ability to differentiate in the current class structure, and the changes and impact to the world language program due to the elimination of two world language teacher in this year's budget. Board members thanked Mr. Smith and Ms. Olearczyk for presenting the information.

Adjournment

Mol moved, Fry seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of October 7, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary