



Missing from Photo: Board Member Melissa Finnigan

"The mission of the Suffield Public Schools is to prepare all students with the knowledge, skills, and attributes required for success in a rapidly changing world."

SUFFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

June 12, 2020

BOARD CHAIR'S MESSAGE

I hope this newsletter finds our Suffield Public Schools families in good health. This has been a very challenging and difficult time in many of our lives, both personally and professionally. However, the Board of Education has remained steadfast in our commitment to our Suffield families, children and community. A year ago, the Board of Education established District goals for 2019-2020 which guided the work of our administration. The number one goal was to establish healthy channels of outreach, communication, engagement, and collaboration with town government, the community and our families.

It is also important that the Board of Education communicates and works collaboratively with all of our stakeholders within the community to ensure transparency of the work being done to move our district in a positive direction and enhance the outcomes of our students. The Board has committed to publishing a triannual newsletter which will update our school community on topics such as the school budget, our subcommittee work, and highlights of special events/people in the "spotlight". The subcommittees have been actively engaged in conversations and work with our district leaders throughout the year which help direct and drive the direction of the district. As the 2019-2020 year quickly comes to an end, we hope this newsletter provides information to our families related to all of the work the Board has accomplished through the subcommittees.

In closing, I am very proud of the accomplishments that the Board of Education, administration, faculty and staff have achieved during this unprecedented time of health care crisis and school closures. It is an honor to serve the community of Suffield and our most precious assets, our children. I wish you all a happy, restful and healthy summer vacation and I am hopeful for a safe return to schools in the fall.

Sincerely,

Susan Mercik Davis
Suffield Board of Education, Chair



BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PUBLIC RELATIONS

We believe effective communication is critical to the smooth function of a school district and will ultimately lead to improved student outcomes. The Board of Education revitalized this subcommittee this year to enhance communication between the Board, Superintendent Van Tasel, the District and the community. Our work this year included:

- developing a plan to produce and distribute a regular Board of Education newsletter to the community regarding Board activities. Additional communication will occur for matters of special interest;
- producing and distributing the 2020/2021 Budget Flyer to detail District finances and to highlight Board initiatives; and
- organizing family conference calls with the Superintendent, the Board of Education, central office administrators, and building administrators to ensure fluid communication to all stakeholders.

We will continue to explore unique and exciting methods of communication such as a new District app, local print-media publications, district website, email, and a presence on social media. The Board of Education makes every effort to engage and inform the community in an open and transparent way.

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

We continue to ensure that our schools provide students with the knowledge, skills and attributes required for success in a rapidly changing world. Our work this past year included:

- adopting the Teachers College Readers and Writers Project for our K-8 classrooms;
- examining standard progression and vertical alignment in Math and ELA to reflect shifts based on best practices;
- developing an elementary STEM program for all K-5 students;
- adopting new courses for Suffield High School: (1) Computer Aided Drafting and Design; (2) Early College Experience Popular Music and Diversity in American Society; (3) Farm to Whisk; and (4) Human Anatomy and Physiology;
- vertically aligning the 6-12 World Languages program to prepare students for success in upper level courses; and
- creating and revising distance learning plans and expectations while also revising grading practices amidst our continuum of learning as students work in digital classrooms.

We look forward to continuing our work in the upcoming school year as we collaborate with our District leaders to provide Suffield students with curriculum embedded in research-based, best practices and will prepare them for success in the future.

FINANCE & FACILITIES

We maintained a sharp focus on our district’s goals through a fiscally minded approach in decision making to maximize student learning. Our work this past year included:

- collaborating with the Superintendent, Board of Finance, First Selectman, police department, fire department, technology stakeholders and citizens of Suffield to adopt a District budget of \$35,901,023, which represents a 0.99% increase over last year. The budget includes the \$400,000 surplus that resulted from our school closures during COVID-19, the addition of two elementary STEM positions, and a continued strong focus on enhancing special education services;
- encouraging technology updates and expanding support for Chromebooks;
- developing recommendations for middle school renovations, including plans to expand the music room;
- modernizing family and consumer science classrooms to enable better career insight and opportunities for students; and
- organizing school walk-throughs to provide insight and support for a town wide facilities study, which will enhance our long-term facilities planning and result in significant efficiencies across the school district and town.

We look forward to continuing to maintain our a fiscally responsible approach in future years.

POLICY

We enjoyed a productive year, in which members revised or developed more than 20 policies and bylaws. Our work this past year included:

- revising graduation requirements beginning with the Class of 2023 so they align with state standards and provide more flexible learning paths for students;
- re-establishing a second public comment period at the end of meetings to encourage additional input from community members;
- updating our Code of Ethics bylaw and our policy related to District goals and objectives; specifying our expectations regarding new board member orientation; and
- establishing a policy to provide guidance on how deceased students will be memorialized.

We are excited to continue our work over the summer and in the upcoming school year to provide optimal direction to District leaders as they strive to advance student achievement.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SUBCOMMITTEES

UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS



- June 15 - Policy Subcommittee Meeting - 5:00 pm
- June 15 - BOE Regular Meeting - 6:30 pm
- June 22 - BOE Special Meeting - 6:30 pm
- July 20 - BOE Regular Meeting - 6:30 pm
- August 17 - BOE Regular Meeting - 6:30 pm
- September 8 - BOE Regular Meeting - 6:30 pm
- September 21 - BOE Regular Meeting - 6:30 pm

BOARD SPOTLIGHT



The Suffield Board of Education is extremely grateful for the generous donations the District received during the 2019 - 2020 school year, which include:

- a private donation to offset lunch balances;
- a baby grand piano donated by the Titterington family in memory of Suffield Middle School teacher Josephine Titterington;
- a monetary donation from the Suffield Elementary PTO to purchase Chromebooks in support of distance learning during the school closure; and
- donations from parents and community members to the Board of Education Book Drive.

SUFFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

[Susan Mercik Davis](#) - Chair

[Michael Sepko](#) - Vice Chair

[Maureen Sattan](#)- Secretary

[Jamie Drzyzga](#) - Member

[Debra Dudack](#)- Member

[Melissa Finnigan](#) - Member

[Brian Fry](#) - Member

[Glenn Gazdik](#)- Member

[Scott Lingenfelter](#) - Member



350 MOUNTAIN ROAD SUFFIELD, CT 06078
P: 860.668.3800 F: 860.668.3805



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