

Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed.

Board of Education Regular Meeting  
Suffield Middle School Chorus Room  
(Public attended Remotely)  
October 19, 2020

Call to Order

Board Chair Davis called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

Present: Board members Jamie Drzyzga, Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry (attended remotely), Glenn Gazdik (attended remotely), Scott Lingenfelter (attended remotely), Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, Michael Sepko (attended remotely); and Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi (attended remotely), and Business Manager Bill Hoff (attended remotely)

Absent: None

Discussion Item

- District and School Advancement Plans

Mr. Van Tassel said the Board of Education goals are the foundation for developing the district and school advancement plans. From the Board goals, district priorities were developed, which focuses on: (1) curriculum and programming; (2) academic achievement; and (3) professional learning. The priorities are aligned and consistent from school to school. Building principals explained the strategies and indicators of success to achieve each identified strategy for each Board goal. Goal one addresses ongoing and consistent communication and engagement with all stakeholders. Ms. Olearczyk reviewed different ways each school communicates with families and staff and engages community groups. Goal two addresses the use of meaningful data to drive and improve student progress and instruction. Ms. Pryce said there is an ongoing review of assessments and data to increase the reliability of assessments. There is also a focus on refining the SRBI handbook and broadening programming to increase the number of students meeting grade level expectations. Goal three is to design and implement an integrated plan for professional learning that is aligned with district needs. Mr. Blain said the administration is working collaboratively with the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) to create professional development (PD) based on current needs, utilize instructional coaches to provide staff support, and provide PD for staff on instructional technologies, social emotional learning and trauma-based instruction. Goal four is revising curriculum and programming emphasizing an alignment and fidelity of implementation. Mr. Smith said grade-level units of study are being reviewed and revised, curriculum is being compacted, pedagogical practices are being enhanced, and engaging certified staff in teacher support and evaluation. Goal five is to engage in the process of a five-year strategic plan. Mr. Van Tassel said the district has engaged the Connecticut for School Change consultant, Isobel Stevenson to develop a strategic plan and a portrait of a graduate, which will develop a system of ongoing improvement. Goal six addresses promoting diversity, equity and inclusion for students, faculty and staff to foster acceptance, mutual respect, civility and non-discrimination. The district has developed a Diversity, Equity

and Inclusion (DEI) council and to date has held four meetings and includes 25 members. The committee has developed a mission statement to guide its work. Its focus is to review diversity, equity and inclusion of programs, practices and curriculum and audit curriculum and report the findings.

#### Board of Education Workshop: Distance Learning Model

Mr. Van Tassel said in enhancing teaching and learning in the distance learning model, the focus is on the instructional core, which consists of students, teachers, and content. Ms. Zawawi described the challenges and achievements in engaging students, providing academically challenging content, and advancing instructional practices during the distance learning and hybrid learning models. Board members discussed the value in providing a tutorial to parents on the use of digital platforms, such as Google Classroom. Board members and the administration discussed the co-teaching model. Mr. Van Tassel said the goal has always been to provide special education students the opportunity to receive special education supports within the general education environment. Resources have already been put in place to support the co-teaching model, such as adding a special education teacher at the middle school and engaging with EASTCONN. Principals shared examples of co-teaching currently occurring in their schools. Board members discussed and asked for information relative to interventions for students who are struggling academically and/or socially and emotionally during distance learning. Teachers, counselors and administrators are monitoring students and reaching out to families. Formative assessments are also being given to get a better understanding of student progress and areas of need. Ms. Zawawi explained the universal screeners that are being used. Board members said they would like to see the actual assessment data to help their understanding and inform their decision making during the budget process, and to also determine the effectiveness of distance learning. Ms. Zawawi shared elementary benchmark assessment data results. Because end of year assessments were not done last year, it is difficult to ascertain if and how much regression has taken place. However, a comparison of student assessment results from last February to the beginning of this year is being reviewed. Ms. Zawawi also analyzed the beginning of school benchmark assessments at each grade level year-over-year, and some of the data shows evidence of regression. She noted that mid-year data will be informative in evaluating student progress and that data can be reported out to the Board at that time. In response to a question relative to whether a standard year's curriculum will be able to be covered this year in the hybrid model, Ms. Zawawi said vertical teams of teachers met last spring to review which priority standards were not met last year. We are looking at the scope and sequence of units of study, and shifts may need to be made. Board members reaffirmed their desire to use data to drive decision making in the district.

#### Adjournment

Finnigan moved, Drzyzga seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 p.m.

*Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of November 2, 2020.*

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Sattan  
Secretary