

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Media Center
and via Zoom
November 15, 2021

Call to Order

Board Chair Mercik Davis called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

Present: Board members Jamie Drzyzga, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry (arrived 6:50 via Zoom), Glenn Gazdik (arrived 6:58 pm), Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, Michael Sepko; and Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, and Business Manager Bill Hoff

Absent: Debra Dudack, Scott Lingenfelter, and Suffield High School Student Representatives Connor Shaw and Sophia Mormino

Board of Education Workshop: EASTCONN Update

Board Chair Mercik Davis introduced Dr. Rose Jaffery of EASTCONN. Dr. Jaffery began by restating Suffield's commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and then reviewed their core values and implementation methods. A needs-assessment and historic school survey results were reviewed. Baseline transition planning survey results from June 2021 were presented. Dr. Jaffery reviewed the program's areas of strengths and areas to improve, which include teaming and coordination, action-focused meetings, scheduling, transition planning on IEPs, person-centered planning, and self-advocacy. To address these areas, the high school created a Transition Improvement Committee for 2021-2022 with focused priorities throughout the year. The priorities tackled so far have included staff trainings, a focus on student-led PPTs, transition activities by grade level, and facilitating the transition from middle to high school. Upcoming priorities for the Transition Improvement Committee (covering December 2021 to May 2022) were also reviewed.

Board members asked questions regarding transitions between all schools for all students, not only the complex learners, and the definition and numbers of complex learners (5-6 at the high school, and 6-7 at the middle school). These transition structures can be applied to all learners, not just complex learners. Board members asked about the numbers of responses on the June 2021 survey (17) and discussed strategies to increase numbers of responses going forward. The surveys were anonymous, so individual follow-up on feedback is not possible. Board members asked who was on the transition committee and suggested a representative parent, student and regular education teacher be considered for addition.

Superintendent Van Tassel stated that EASTCONN's involvement with Suffield has been a two-year body of work that started in the elementary schools and has shifted to the middle school and high school. Systems are being built and expectations are being set, and the district is seeing the fruits of their labor.

Board members asked for the program's biggest challenge, and Dr. Jaffery said tackling the scheduling piece to allow students time to work on skill areas. Board members asked about the separation between special education and regular education---is it siloed? This has been and will continue to be a point of focus. A Board member pointed out that on the survey, many high school complex learners could not list their disability and stressed the need to promote self-advocacy.

A Board member asked about the EASTCONN contract. Superintendent Van Tasel stated charges have been under our estimated costs, as we have scaled back as we have focused our needs. Dr. Jaffery is here two days a week. The status of the contract and associated costs will be reviewed during budget season.

Dr. Kelly thanked the teachers who were in attendance and appreciates the Board support. Board Chair Mercik Davis acknowledged Michael Sepko, as this was his last Board of Education meeting as a member. She has valued his voice and his view on what the district has needed over the time he served. Board member Sepko said he has learned a lot and has grown to respect all views, even if members do not always agree. He complimented the Superintendent and Board Chair and thanked the entire Board for their work. Board Chair Mercik Davis also acknowledged Board Member Dudack and said she did tremendous work during her time on the Board.

Adjournment

Sepko moved, Drzyzga seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 pm. All members voted in favor.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of December 6, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maureen Sattan
Secretary