

Conneaut School District

PUBLIC WORK SESSION

Minutes

Wednesday, November 4, 2015

7:00 PM

The Conneaut School Board of Directors met Wednesday, October 7, 2015 at the Alice Shafer Annex cafeteria/gymnasium.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Board Vice President Mr. Don Ellis, Jr.,

The following members answered to roll call:

Mr. Boyce	Mr. Burnham	Mr. Ellis
Mrs. Klink	Mrs. Krachkowski	Mrs. Luckock
Mr. Schaeff	Dr. Thomas	

It is noted Mrs. Sperry was absent.

Administrators Present-

Superintendent: Jarrin Sperry

Director of Special Education: Susy Walters

Curriculum Director: Brenda Kantz

Business Manager: Greg Mayle

Director of Buildings and Grounds- Elwood Schell

Technology Coordinator – Rick Kelly

Principals – Doug Parks, Kevin Burns and Adam Jardina.

Visitor Recognition

Mrs. Sperry provided a Visitor Recognition on Agenda Items referencing Policy 903 – Public Participation in Board Meetings. He announced all visitors who are recognized during the Visitor Recognition are allotted a maximum of five (5) minutes to address matters of their concern, unless otherwise determined by the Board President. Visitor recognition is to be limited to thirty (30) minutes unless otherwise decided by the Board.

Kate Hans addressed the Board regarding her daughter's kindergarten class with 24-25 students. She volunteers her time and notes a great deal of students in this classroom to contend with for 5 and 6 year olds. Her previous daughter had 17 in the class and she was amazed at what they learned by the end of the year. At last week's parent conference she found out this current class is 10 days behind and the teacher has had to leave things out. The teacher admitted to needing helpers or fewer students in the class. She (the teacher) even admitted to struggling with simple art projects and suggested parents voice their concerns. Mrs. Hans asked if the class is already 10 days behind and we are only 40 days into the school year, what is the end of the year going to look like. She would like her kindergartner doing what her first daughter was able to do in kindergarten.

Carolyn Simonetta approached the podium. She has twins in kindergarten and agrees the class numbers are too high. The teacher is great and trying hard but there is not enough time to test

students to see where they are at, no one-on-one. She has volunteered and sees it is hard to log-in 23 children during computer lab. This is affecting both the students and teachers and sees them way behind with numbers. She would like to see another section added.

Tammy Moyers approached: she has a son in kindergarten and when the parent/teacher conference was held they discussed some behavior issues. He is advanced in a lot of courses but bored. He is getting his work done quickly so gets bored and bothers other students. The teacher does not have time to work with him individually. I work and am not able to come in and help. It bothers me because I know what he is capable of doing, he is doing what he is supposed to but is not being pushed because she can't get him further ahead with all the other students. The others are not at his level right now and I feel 25 is too many in a classroom. She feels the Head Start students have fewer behavior issues and are better in the halls than the kindergarten students.

Michelle Dilley approached the podium. She is present tonight for her son and other children. She helped at a Halloween party and stayed an hour later to help get the students gathered up, backpacks and coats on as the teacher would not have been able to. The teacher then told me when winter comes and there are coats and boots there isn't enough hooks to hang stuff. She said there are too many students for one teacher, is struggling and she has been teaching for 19 years. She told me she will have to switch to another grade as she cannot focus and get what needs done and feels terrible about it. For my child, we pay taxes and get what they need, work very hard and can't push because there is not enough time. The students that are behind have help to get them caught up but there is no happy medium. The teacher needs more help so can we create another class. She understands it costs money but this is our kids and their education so if that is what needs to be done then lets do it. If no one speaks up and our children get way behind, where are we then. After kindergarten I want my son to learn and go further. She understands the curriculum has gotten harder in 19 years but the help is less and less. She can't see how children are expected to progress and asks to add another class.

Dr. Brittany Mears approached the podium. She is a parent but also has her doctorate and provides mental health services through therapy support. As a kindergarten parent she too is concerned with the class size and the students with special needs. Even with an aide the learning is relatively quickly. She can speak for everyone here that we have a concern for all students. The teachers work tirelessly to get what they need but can only do so much.

No one else approached the podium.

Mr. Schaefer asked for discussion and for the building principals to comment on steps to address these concerns.

Mr. Parks who recently received a title aide transferred from another building and is focusing on kindergarten and 1st Grade. This has been a real help for the students with low testing. He appreciates parents who have come in and the class(es) that are too big. He admits there is not an easy answer and he worries about the students learning. This puts us in a tough spot; ideally it would be great to add another section. He asked if there is anything else we can do that does not cost the District money, can we pull another person. He does not want to cut Art or Guidance but there is only so much money to go around. With Kindergarten it is their first start.

Mr. Schaeff asked, did this personnel move just occur this week? Mr. Parks replied yes. Mr. Schaeff reviewed then that we are looking at three days now of extra help which does not tell us much but are you convinced it is better than it was? Mr. Parks replied that he felt the Title 1 aides are working with the kids who need that extra help, there is a diverse group in the kindergarten, some accelerated and bright and others needing help. Parents here are indicating it is difficult for a teacher with 25 kids to meet all the needs and the title has helped with the lower learning students.

Mr. Jardina has 23/23 and 22 in his sections. Ideally class sizes with 15 students but our makeup is different at the Valley in this situation this year. Demographically we are different with a varying learning levels and challenges. He is fortunate to have a veteran kindergarten staff but as you know one very challenging student can account for three children. So the need to look at the individual makeup is important. He is not looking at adding another section as the title aid that came down from the middle school has been very helpful.

Mr. Jardina was asked if the title aide was working solely in kindergarten; he replied no 2 aides have been helping most of the day. He currently has three Title 1 aides and a specialist who are split in his building. Mr. Parks has the same serving all grade levels.

Comments from the Superintendent- he is continuously looking at the numbers and will continue to do so. This is hard on the budget which has been very tight, in three years we are looking at a 1-4 million dollar deficit so are trying to balance and project at the same time. With a declining enrollment and in a year or two more elementary teachers than we will need to include a rapid 2-3 section of classes in the K-4. With that said and the pension crisis not fixed or basic funding in three years if there is no raise in taxes we are out of money. The hole that we are in is dependent on the state, this equates to 52 staff to cut which is more than one building. Thirteen people equate to 1 million dollars. If we can obtain aides in there it allows a more traditional way to deal with a declining enrollment, on an average we loss 70-90 students a year, with last year as the exception of 40-50. There is a huge graduation class right now pushing 200, once they are gone we should lose 2-300 students in the next several years.

Mr. Schaeff then asked, in looking at numbers and title 1 aides shared throughout the building, knowing that 22-25 students are a push to teach fully is there a way to look at additional aides to work with kindergarten before we add another section or two. Mr. Sperry replied; as with PSERS there is less money in Title next year so may look at not paying them as Title teachers. Ideally he would love to have four sections each year but we will be looking at too many teachers in a year or so with declining enrollment.

Board Discussion included asking if in looking at upper level classes are there any smaller classes that could be combined with a teacher then moved to kindergarten. Mr. Sperry replied; the high school is maxed out, for example the 9th grade History has 30 in the class. In looking at the middle schools we are already two less teachers at Valley. Both of the elementary have 360 enrollments. The smallest teacher specific class size in the district is at CVE with 4 sections of 18 students each. Conneaut Lake Elementary 2nd grade has 18/19 in 3 sections.

Mr. Sperry added that the district can furlough aides, but we cannot a teacher once hired unless the program is ended.

Mr. Schaef then replied; on the horns of a dilemma it is financially difficult to add a couple classes with costs and so forth. So if we can add two aides in two classes at each school we are looking at \$200,000? Mr. Sperry replied \$180,000 at step 1. If aides are added now, more than likely we will not need the individuals next year. Mr. Schaef felt that in knowing it is critical to kicking off a child's education, then what is the alternative, is it hiring additional aids to work in classrooms? Mr. Sperry replied yes that is the best bet at this time, we can basically hire four aides for the price of one teacher, two additional aides at each school and dedicate them to kindergarten for this year.

This as a work session the Board cannot take action but can direct administration and have a definitive recommendation at next week's meeting. Therefore, it was the Board's general consensus to post and advertise for 2 additional aides at each elementary.

Discussion Items-

Audit Results/Recap- Mr. Mayle

The original plan was to have the auditors here tonight to review the 2014/2015 school year audit results but they will be here next week with the audit. Bringing it up tonight because the Board typically views the results by now.

Mr. Mayle reviewed the audit with the Board through a Power Point presentation.

Mr. Boyce asked about the Title 1 rollover monies from 2014/2015 school year. If this was rolled over, weren't we looking for monies to use this year? Mrs. Kantz replied that those monies were already spent; we are permitted to carry over no more than 15 percent, of which we carried over 8 percent. Typically it is from November to November so we have to be conservative to carry it into September.

Stadium Sound System – Mr. Sperry

This year it became clear that if one was not in front of the announcer's box you could not hear at the stadium. Levco came in and reviewed the system; they estimated a full sound upgrade estimated cost of \$5,000. We also asked Flicks' for an estimated, they came in at \$2,486 roughly. We would like to put in next year's budget to cover Flick's pricing so that everyone can hear and not just those in one section.

Cyber Numbers – Mr. Sperry

The Board had asked at the last meeting for the number of students enrolled in the cyber program. Mr. Sperry provided a handout indicating 73 students.

Performance Tracker – Mrs. Kantz

Mrs. Kantz presented a curriculum management or performance tracker program indicating it is on next week's agenda for approval. This is a student tracking instrument which will better enable teachers to pull up strengths and weaknesses. Primarily in the hands of teachers for student information can be quickly accessed by viewing their PSSA results, report card scores and more.

She personally spent a good 2 ½ hours looking up the same information using the current tools the district has.

The cost will be picked up by Title and with the difference of her salary and Mr. Hines. The cost the first year is \$12,500 but half of that same cost is setup. The next year the cost goes down by half. In summary, the first year district cost is \$4,000 and \$8,500 out of title and the 2nd year the district will pay no more than \$4,000.

The board inquired why this program, she replied that in polling 17 other curriculum directors the majority are using it and are happy with the program. It also aligns with Sungard. Setup will involve a couple months and she expects to be fully running by fall of next year. The program will not be much help this year but will the new school year.

NSBA Conference- Mrs. Sperry

In Mrs. Sperry's absence this item will wait until next week for Mrs. Sperry to address.

School Performance Profile Scores- Mrs. Kantz

School Performance Profile scores became public today, seven have gone up, CASH one of them. This is good news, goof for faculty.

PSBA Conference and General Updates- Mr. Ellis

Mr. Ellis reminded of general updates from PSBA.

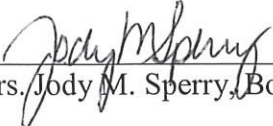
Mr. Sperry indicated he, Mrs. Sperry and Mr. Ellis attended a meeting with state representatives at General McLane High School with State Representatives Michelle Brooks, Park Wentling, Brad Rowe and Fabrizio. They discussed cyber, budget pension and keystone exams. It was nice to see two democrats and 2 republicans whose views were widely different.

Agenda Review-

The Board reviewed the draft agenda.

It is noted there was no Executive Session

The Meeting was adjourned by Mr. Schaefer at 8:20 p.m.


Mrs. Jody M. Sperry, Board President


Mr. Greg Mayle, Board Secretary