

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625  
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

**COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING  
360 Colborne Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55102**

**May 9, 2023  
4:30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:37 p.m. by Vice Chair Kopp.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Board of Education: J. Kopp, J. Vue, J. Foster, Z. Ellis, C. Allen  
Superintendent Gothard  
H. Henderson and U. Ward were absent.

Staff: K. Thao, C. Long, A. Collins, N. Páez, Y. Vang, S. Schmidt de Carranza,  
S. Dahlke, T. Parent, T. Sager, J. Turner, S. Gray Akyea, J. Danielson,  
L. Olson, A. Kunz, E. Wacker, C. Green, S. Dahlke, D. Abrams, P. Pratt-  
Cook, K. Kimani, J. Horton, J. Hill, L. Corey, M. Pope, D. Franke, M.  
Bruecken, J. Bobolink, J. Downwind

Community: L. Bolton, M. Wall, S. Bauer, Julia, Isabelle, S. Bledy, Maddie, Brielle,  
Truman, Suzanne, Julie, Aisley, R. Anderson, Ivan, Arbor, A. Bylander, G.  
Egan, Santiago, J. Shenden, M. Fairbanks

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA**

**MOTION: Director Kopp moved approval of the Order of the Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Foster. It passed by acclaim.**

**4. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Superintendent Gothard began by welcome everyone to the meeting. He began his announcements with congratulations to Michael Houston, as Teacher of the Year. Mr. Houston is a math teacher and coach at Harding. We are planning communications and a SPPS celebration for him, with more details to follow. Superintendent Gothard also shared an update that he, in partnership with the Office of Equity, is holding convenings called "How Are The Children?" with high school students. These are all-day sessions with students and it has been incredible to spend time with high school students together in community, and the information will be helpful for us to move forward. Lastly, he shared an update that the Minnesota State High School League has voted to fully sanction boys volleyball beginning in the 2024-2025 school year. There are questions on the impact on other sports, but this will serve a population interested in this sport and may not be participating in other areas, and is a positive opportunity for our students and young people

to build school pride and community. Questions remain, such as the season for boys volleyball, and engagement will continue through MSHSL.

Director Allen noted a question on if information from “How Are The Children?” will be incorporated into a report for the Board, or if it will be separate information. She is also interested in hearing about other board member listening sessions with students. Chief Turner noted that a report will be provided in May to the Board, including information from community meetings, board member sessions, Marnita’s Table events, and others. Information presented will include data, quotes, information, and other information. As it relates to “How Are The Children?” information, that will be available for the Board once complete.

## **5. SYSTEMIC EQUITY**

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Dr. Gray Akyea to present the update on Systemic Equity, including a look back at this work, and setting the stage for the work going forward. The goal of the presentation is to connect the history of Racial Equity in SPPS and the clear direction and guide for the future. Topics within the presentation included a review of the SPPS equity journey, an understanding of context for the new plan, and a review of the new plan, including components, activities, and outcomes.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Ellis requested the impacts of the Gender Inclusion and Racial Equity Policies since their adoption. Response: It is necessary to have the policy and statute that explicitly states our policy and conditions. It sets the organizational vision and standard for that’s expected. The professional development in the Office of Equity stemmed from the introduction of the policy, and some was effective and others not so much. There have been challenges, but also a lot of Equity-related activity and sometimes there is overlap, but there are so many different ways to think about and understand Systemic Equity. The other challenge is that professional development is largely options, and those interested in the work will sustain it, but it tends to be isolated, and islands of excellence.
- Director Foster noted that it’s important that we do not “water down” the meaning of Equity. It’s important to be specific in what we’ve done and areas to support and other areas that were stopped. We need every staff member and bargaining unit to be a part of the understanding of this work, and we need to boldly do this work and label what is not working well. If we don’t label things and not talk about this, nothing will change. We also need to look at how we are scaffolding this work.
- Director Allen requested information on the impact of the implementation of the equity policy, and where the work is being done in those spaces to make our Black and Brown students feel welcomed. Response: The policy does go abck to 2013, and the report from the Equity Committee acted as a precursor to our work and to reorient ourselves within the work.
- She also requested the rationale for professional development to be optional for staff. Response: We needed a larger guidance, and we do believe that many were doing the work well in the meaning of equity, and we were missing the systemic piece. It’s systemic when we all share something. Director Allen then noted the importance of professional development, and that many were not educated in Black history or HMong history, and they need to be trained in ways to teach that are not harmful or continuing to harm.
- What is the function of the equity coaches, and how many are there? Response: There were five coaches, and they are hired within the ARP work. The original plan was for them to work with equity teams in buildings, however, in this iteration, they are pivoting and coaching with small groups and teamwork. They are supporting the movement of the equity work. They are also

facilitating student convenings. One of their main functions is to perform professional development, and equity requests, including the equity request line, where staff and individuals can call and request support for equity. There are about 200 requests each year.

- Director Allen requested further information on professional development sessions with Mr. Benson as mentioned in the presentation. Response: There is one session with him each month at Leadership Academy, where he springs the day with principals and looking at lesson plans and targeted activities, videos, reflections and processing, and learning and talking about biases, and identifying behaviors. He is also following up and checking in with principals and what they are seeing in buildings, and how to be the leader of equity in their building.
- Director Foster noted the importance of adapting to meet the needs of our students - there is not a “cookie cutter” approach to equity in our buildings. The work is continuing, and the seed is planted to continue with systemic equity, and folks knowing the expectations and with our building leaders to pull folks together in this work. Everyone in our buildings needs to be on board with this - and we need to be bold and be okay with some being mad about certain things for this work to move forward. We have heard this district does not feel like a safe space, and we need it to be. We need to talk about what we are doing and eliminate those barriers and to focus on a set of expectations with values of this district.
- A board member also noted that we need to change the language how we address behavior. Behavior occurs because of a lot of factors - inside and outside the building, in the classroom, in the hallways.
- How will this decrease disparities? We know the largest impact on student learning is their teacher, and we know that principles influence as well on the learning environment. Response: If we are about to have instructional staff who are reflective of our students, honor them as individuals and students and families, and would together authentically and collectively and grow together, and meet expectations and build relationships with students, and create environments where students are engaged and required to be - that is a fundamental mindshift. Students don’t get to leave, if there’s a concern, they are pulled closer. Our students can and will perform. We need to stop finding excuses for what they cannot learn. Superintendent Gothard provided an examples of work being done for students of color in advanced classes, and creating the support and wraparound services for them to succeed, as well as practices in reading. Director Allen noted that many AP classes are based on the European perspective of advanced learning, and we need to be equitable in creating classes to engage students in AP areas.
- Director Vue requested information on how we will know that program evaluation and resource allocation will achieve systemic equity, as well as further information on the mid-term, short-term, and long-term work, and examples within each. Dr. Gray Akyea provided details on the 2-day work with SPPS Achieves owners responsible for implementing the work, and indicators of equity, and systemic equity intersections and that work is continuing and will be shared once finalized.

## **6. ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE TO THE 23/24 RESOLUTION**

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed staff to present the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee Administrative Response to the 23/24 Resolution. The structure of the work, as well as response timeline were provided. Responses to key focus areas were also shared in these areas:

- Attendance
- Behavior
- Instruction
- Staffing
- An amendment request for an additional Assistant Principal and AIMS due to MCA Math and Reading scores.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

**QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- What is the timing of the hiring of the intervention specialist? Response: We are hoping to have them hired before the beginning of the next school year.
- To what extent do schools collaborate within this work? Response: We have seen increased collaboration this school year with counselors focused on professional development communities on attendance. Each has done professional learning in small groups, and presenting their work to each other. There is more teaming and sharing of information and learning what has been done and effective in other schools. This is something we can grow upon and increase.
- In terms of knowing students, monitoring progress and interventions - how do schools know how to right-size for their American Indian population and how will they be supported? Response: With collaboration in the Leadership Academy, principals have conversations about what is working, and supported with WINN teachers and interventions with specialists. We are also looking at our work in Achievement Plus schools, and wraparound services for students and families, and it is about knowing our students and their needs. FastBridge is another tool for consistent monitoring.
- Director Vue requested more information on recruiters in the District. Response: There are two recruiters for the entire district, and their focus is on licensed and non-licensed staff, and they are also working with the Indian Education Office in terms of strategizing and collaboration, however there is not one specifically for this population. Director Vue noted the importance of being more proactive in recruiting those we need.
- Director Allen noted that in talking about behavior, it is complicated, and we know our students are young people, who may make mistakes, and it's important how we label and address that, and wishes we used a more restorative approach in both the language around behavior and in our actions. We need to address that some students feel invisible, and that is because they do not see themselves reflected in our staff, and don't see themselves reflected in the curriculum. We have PBIS interventions at AIMS, but not a restorative justice staff member, and that seems to be the reason why suspension rates are high because the way of correcting behavior is very different from the way of their culture, and we need to start to align those things. Students need to take accountability for how they may be bringing harm into situations or spaces, and how to understand that. If we start to move in that direction, the folks we serve will respond to the ways we correct their behaviors. It is important for students to feel seen, felt, heard, and understood.
- She also noted questions on mental health teams in buildings and being intentional about culturally appropriate mental health support.
- Director Foster noted appreciation for watching the relationship grow, and working collaboratively with our PAC members. We have been seeing the changes and hard work from everyone. She went on to note that in reflecting on her career in early childhood, and child guidance and strategies, and that behaviors are subjective to those in front of our students, and labels and words matter. We need an attitude shift of adults in the classroom to expect the best of our students. We need collaborative work and acknowledging discipline in a system that has been considered a system of oppression.
- She went on to acknowledge the work being done, including educator pathways, and utilizing our community partners. This is reflective work, and making it relevant for our students, and tapping into the strengths of our community to support this work.
- The use of ARP funds and the sustainability of those funds was also a point of clarification.
- Director Ellis requested more information on Tier 1 and Tier 2, as well as Tier 3 interventions. Response: Tier 1 interventions are available for all students. Tier 2 interventions include a referral, and connecting with a counselor or social worker, and including the student and family, and

wrapping around the student to determine what is happening. There are steps in Tier 2 interventions that allow the process to slow down.

- Director Ellis also requested information on attendance, and the meaning of attendance for students, and what it means to be considered present in school, and seat time.
- A PAC member noted that school are notorious for dismissals and suspensions, but these are children. They need to sit with groups and their elders, and needs to be guidance. There needs to be others with parents in the referral process, such as mentors and peers, so they do not feel along in situations. Our children can feel when something is not right. We need to engage with parents and have them trust the district - if we continue to do referrals, they will not trust. We need to self-evaluate as professionals and as a district. We also need more supports in buildings, and to be more accountable. We cannot make children feel bad in kindergarten. We need a mindset guidance to guide them and teach them, and include more community folks in the building to do that work. We also need our students have skills to learn.
- Another member of the PAC and staff member at AIMS noted that the school is struggling. We made gains enough to take away the instructional need designation, but that left us high and dry. The principal and intervention specialist are constantly supporting students and behavior, and not working on curriculum or teaching. We need restorative approaches to help those behaviors at a young age to teach children about their emotions. The request for the AP was because the school includes both elementary and middle school students, which is two different mindsets, and the little kids learn from the big kids. AIMS includes the largest population of American Indian students and by improving the numbers at AIMS and focusing on that school, those figures will increase. Teachers need support from administrators, including principals and APs, to reach students in new and different ways and need extra help and support. There is no time to do restorative circles, and other important classes may also be missed. Our principal needs support to focus on their work, instead of behavior.
- Another PAC member noted the relevance of Boys Town, and to borrow their framework, including accepting feedback and following directions, and basic skills. Important aspects may be missing at home, which then carry forward to school.
- Director Ellis requested information on the work going forward without ARP funds, which are set to expire. We need to tap into the knowledge of folks in our buildings and their lived experiences.
- Director Foster also requested information on the partnership with Bemidji State, and because the area has a high population of Indigenous folks, and we are being intentional about going to spaces to recruit folks to support our students.

## **7. POLICY UPDATE**

- a. Update to Policy 204.01 - School Board Meeting Agenda**
- b. Update to Policy 205.00 - School Board Meeting Minutes**
- c. Update to Policy 206.00 - Board Meetings**
- d. Update to Policy 210.00 - Conflict of Interest**
- e. Rescission of Policy 213.00 - Board of Education Professional Development**
- f. Adoption of New Policy 214.00 - Out-of-State Travel for Board Members**
- g. Discussion of Policy 209.00 - Development, Implementation and Monitoring of Policies**

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed staff to present the Policy Update.

Background was provided on the rationale for the proposed changes to various 200-level policies, as well as the date of last update, change in language, reason for changes and if the changes create a change in

current practice for each. The Board then decided to move these proposed updates to the three-reading process.

The next policy reviewed was the rescission of Policy 213.00 - Board of Education Professional Development as it is redundant to Policy 211.00 Board Member Development. The Board then decided to move this proposed rescission to the three-reading process.

A new policy, Policy 214.00 - Out-of-State Travel for Board Members, was also presented. We are required by statute to have a policy on out-of-state travel for board members. The Board then decided to move this proposed new policy to the three-reading process.

The Board then reviewed discussion on the interpretation of Policy 209.00 - Development, Implementation, and Monitoring of Policies. This policy is not based on statute, but is a process developed by SPPS. The question was around the three-reading process, and that policies are presented at a Committee of the Board, then followed by three readings at Regular Meetings of the Board, and one would argue it is a four-reading process. Information was also presented on practices of policy in other districts within the metro area. The Board then discussed moving forward as it pertains to the three-reading process, with the consensus being to keep the current process as is.

#### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- General Counsel Long noted that the revisions for the 204.01, 205.00, 206.00, and 210.00 policies are based on MSBA model policies, and are designed to be more user-friendly.
- It was noted that the rescission process also includes a 3-ready process.
- The process for the three-readings was discussed. Director Ellis noted that she felt the readings should be done at a Regular Meeting, and discussion at the Committee of the Board was also important. Superintendent Gothard noted that policies in the three-reading process could also go back to the Policy Work Group, and then to the Committee of the Board again. We can build in more time for community input if needed.
- Director Allen felt that discussion at the Committee of the Board, and two subsequent readings at Regular Meetings would be sufficient.
- Director Vue noted that he wants to ensure there is enough time between the discussion at the Committee of the Board and the first reading at the Regular Meeting to allow time for questions or revisions. Transparency in this is important.
- Director Ellis, Director Vue, and Director Kopp voiced support for keeping the process as is, with presentation and discussion of a policy at Committee of the Board, and then followed by a three-reading process at Regular Meetings.
- The Board also supported moving forward with the updates to 204.01, 205.00, 206.00, and 210.00; moving forward with the three readings of the rescission of 213.00; and moving forward with the three-reading process of 214.00.

#### **8. ADJOURNMENT**

**Director Kopp moved to adjourn the meeting. Director Ellis and Director Foster seconded the motion. It passed by acclaim.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

For clarity and to facilitate research, these minutes reflect the order of the original Agenda and not necessarily the time during the meeting the items were discussed.

Prepared and submitted by:

Sarah Dahlke, Assistant Clerk, St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education