

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

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

**March 7, 2023
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Vice Chair Kopp.

2. ROLL CALL

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

Staff: K. Thao, C. Long, A. Collins, N. Paez, Y. Vang, C. Anderson,
S. Schmidt de Carranza, S. Dahlke, T. Parent, T. Sager, J. Turner, S.
Gray Akyea, J. Danielson, N. Páez, L. Olson, L. Corey, D. Abrams, A.
Kunz, E. Wacker, C. Green, C. Yang, M. Lochungvu

Community: L. Bolton, J. Verges, M. Wall, M. Arnosti, E. Campuzano

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 Ward. It passed by acclaim.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Superintendent Gothard noted that he did not have reflections to share, but would incorporate them into the meeting agenda items. He also noted there is a professional learning day on Friday, and we are hoping the snow predictions do not cause an issue and the day can continue as planned. There are not a lot of PD days during the school year, and visitors, speakers, and spaces are pre-arranged and we are hopeful for a productive day. He also noted Recognitions at the upcoming meeting for our several teachers who are semi-finalists for MN Teacher of the Year.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- What is the plan for Friday's PD if the weather does not cooperate? Response: The bulk of the day is centered around Teaching and Learning, and the schedule can be slightly modified to be virtual. It is difficult to reschedule these days, and we will work as hard as possible to continue with the day as planned, as there is no back-up date, and we will move it virtually to the extent possible. For elementary staff, it is a conference data, and for middle and high school staff, it is a full day of

professional learning. We are having partners join from across the country, and hands-on, in-person is ideal though.

5. K-12 MATH ADOPTION

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Craig Anderson, Executive Director, Office of Teaching and Learning, and Maijue Lochungvu, Assistant Director, Office of Teaching and Learning to present the K-12 Math Adoption presentation. Included in the presentation were Process Overview Updates, including the timeline, MCA data, engagement sessions and culturally responsive curriculum. Within the K-12 Math Curriculum Recommendations for Elementary and Secondary portion, the recommendations for curriculum were reviewed, including Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) Into Math for elementary, with 70% of K-5 teachers, and details on the program structure and Waggle program within the curriculum. Culturally responsive curriculum examples and EL and SPED supports within this curriculum were also reviewed. Teacher tabletop flipcharts were shown, and support for families was also shared. The middle school and high school recommendation of SAVVAS was also shared, including teacher rankings for this curriculum, other districts in Minnesota who have implemented this curriculum, instructional models for both grades 6-8 and grades 9-12. Details on SuccessMaker intervention support were shown, as well as culturally responsive curriculum examples, and EL and SPED supports, and supports for families. The purchase costs of each were also shown, which is a total of \$10.5M. Each curriculum is a 10 year adoption, and details on the total investment for HMH and SAVVAS middle school and SAVVAS high school were shared, as well as cost per student per year for each. There will be a board agenda item presented at the March 21, 2023 Regular Meeting regarding this item.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Ward noted questions on the language supports available. Response: Many will rely on Google translate, which is not ideal. Both curriculum programs do offer English and Spanish, which will be important for our immersion programs.
- Director Ellis requested information on the use of FAST with this new curriculum. Response: FAST testing will no longer be necessary since HMH has a built-in screener, as does SAVVAS. FAST also does not integrate into the new system and is a separate program. We also make an effort not to overtest students.
- Director Ellis requested information on other ways to screen and assess what students may know in math. Response: There are multiple ways - including MCAs, which does show one point in time, and in every lesson, teachers are expected to assess with formative assessments, and respond to the needs of students.
- How are our teacher providing feedback and how often? Response: For elementary, the professional development plan shows at the end of the school year, and throughout the summer, as well as other opportunities and job embedded PD. For secondary teachers, there will be three times throughout the year where feedback is gathered and PD will be tailored around that feedback. There is also a data dashboard for teachers or families to see the success of their student, and teachers and principals also have access to that, as well as district wide staff who can look at data from a classroom level as well as districtwide.
- Will the data from the dashboard be meaningful for families? Response: We are educating teachers on the new program, as well as ways to engage families in understanding the new programs.
- Director Ellis noted she does not believe Google Translate is a good option, especially for the \$10M investment.

- Staff noted that as we engage with our immersion programs, one of the features of the HMH program is the ability to download materials, and staff at the building can then translate. Through an MOU with immersion programs, there is time built for translations and curriculum writing by staff.
- Director Vue noted questions on the timeline and the 10 year adoption. Response: The 10-year window is around the timing of adoption of new standards again, and we hope to get on a path of a viable curriculum for a period of time and be in a cycle of refreshing. We want fresh, new materials that are ready to go and digital to allow for changes throughout the years. At about year 9, we'll go through this process again to ensure we are on a consistent pathway to have high quality materials for teachers and students.
- What kinds of supports will be available with the purchase of these programs? Response: With HMH, they will be supporting MN standards alignment for teachers. Teachers will also be training in the initial launch, and there will also be "train the trainer" model implemented where there will be a team of math teachers/experts who will become trained and well-versed in the program, and they will then go and support teachers in buildings. There will be 6 full days of that training, and 100 thirty minute sessions online, as well as training in data analysis from the programs.
- How will we know when staff feel comfortable with this new curriculum, if it is a gradual change? Response: We need to assess the systems and structures we have place, and to financially have the support and also be fiscally responsible and support the entire District. We have also learned a lot from the launch of the literacy program with TOSAs, coaches, "train the trainer" to be in a place where we will know if we are ready or not ready. There are different reports and ways to read them, and teachers know the program, and will be able to identify the students who may need additional support. We will follow up with HMH and SAVVAS to determine how to know when we are ready. In our planning, it is about intentional examining of systems and structures to lift this heavy work, and the resources in place as we think about our current resources in the Office of Teaching and Learning, and how to repurpose and reimagine this work.
- Director Foster requested further information on the program assessment from high school staff. Response: The other half did request HMH, however then it would be HMH at elementary, SAVVAS in middle school, and HMH again in high school. We were hoping for consensus across the board, but also wanted to honor what teachers wanted, and used a rank preference voting. It makes sense for us as a district for middle school and high school to be on the same program.
- Board members also noted that we need to be proactive about family engagement and language support about proactive strategies upfront - we cannot wait for families to ask.
- Director Allen noted that the MCA results show that the number of proficiency are low, and requested information on how this program pushes for better student outcomes. Response: The key in research comes in pedagogy, with staff who know how to teach the content and the materials used. In CRI work, with the idea that all students learn in a way that is systemic, and ways to activate their brain, dig in, and understand and own that as an independent learner, and that teachers are there to help. Further discussion also centered on this question, with the importance of the art of teaching, and to build the capacity of teachers in teaching mathematics to bring the cultural wealth and excellence of our students with us, set high expectations, and bring in additional resources. We need to be able to target and connect with students.
- Where does Black Excellence align? Response: Within these programs, students are able to ignite with problems proposed, and use their background knowledge to draw upon to bring into the solution with discussion and knowledge of the students experiences.
- Director Allen noted that the mathematical skills of the Mayans were incredible, and math is rooted in Africa, and giving that knowledge to our students so they will own their learning. When students see Black Excellence in their learning process, and when they own that, we will see their skills increase, and the teachers' job is to push to excellence in the understanding. She also noted the role of chemistry research and skills of members of the Asian community.

- Director Foster noted that we have experts in buildings who are phenomenal math and literacy folks and we need to tap into that knowledge, because teachers learn best from one another and we need to utilize the expertise in the district.
- She also noted issues around the MCAs and if there are any new conversations around the use of them. Response: MDE sets the standards and rules and benchmarks, and this test is nationally required under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and we are trying our best work politically and socially on this topic. MDE ultimately sets the MN Comprehensive Assessment and the comment period for the writing of the test is currently underway at MDE for the new test in 2025-2026, and encouraged all to submit their feedback to MDE. Administration can provide details to the Board on ways for the community, parents and educators to advocate.

6. REFLECTIONS ON FEBRUARY 28, 2023 SPECIAL MEETING AND LISTENING SESSION

Board members then discussed thoughts and reflections on the February 28, 2023 listening session, including what was shared at that meeting, to whom we have not talked to yet, and how to reach out to them.

Director Henderson noted that students were not present, and the few who were were powerful and clear in their messages, and she has also received correspondence from students about spaces for them, and ways to reach them directly in buildings and times that work for them. She also noted that the translators were not well used, and therefore our families who need them were not present, and thinking about that space, setting, and time, and how we are reaching out to families. She also noted that we did not hear from other folks in buildings, including EAs, TAs, and custodians, and if it was the right setting and time for them as well.

Director Foster noted that in thinking about multiple venues and multiple ways to engage, that this is also relevant now and we need to be doing it now, and need to having next steps out there to inform the community and let them know what is next and setting dates. Director Henderson echoed this, and in stressing that this work is not being dropped, and we are working toward and giving folks more time. It was too short of a timeline for when the listening session was announced and when it happened.

Director Foster also noted that in thinking of the size of the city, and focus school areas of A-F, and what engagement looks like in each area, and providing access and opportunities for those who would like to be involved.

Director Ellis noted that many families did not feel safe in the space we were hosting, and that families want to engage and converse. They do not only want to speak at the Board. They want to be in conversation with us. Families want smaller sessions, and to be language-specific. We need to be clear in offerings, and what engagement looks like specifically. Director Henderson noted similar comments, and that opportunities for the community to come together in round tables would be helpful - when it is two groups where one is silent and the other is yelling - there are other ways without the Board only being stoned at a table. Director Allen noted similar feelings, and that community engagement is not only sitting at the front listening and it was no different than public comment at a regular board meeting. We need to go to community and ask them what would be comfortable for them, and how we can engage and have conversations.

She also noted that overall it was a hearing, and a lot of folks spoke on implementing restorative justice and practices, and heard a lot of need for counselors, social workers, and student supports. We have invested in RP in the past, and need to fully implement it across the district. All staff need to be trained and

understand what it means and use RP to resolve conflicts, and allow students to feel heard and seen. Those are important pieces to them in trusting adults. Teachers need to understand RP, and that the circle needs to be a safe situation, and not a punitive response.

Director Ward noted he agrees with more community engagement, and recognizes that the listening session allowed the Board to hear from 63 folks, and it gave the opportunity for folks to express their thoughts, and since it was livestreamed, it was accessible. He noted that speakers spoke at the Board, speakers expressed they didn't have enough time, and concerns they were not hearing from the Board and the reactions from the Board. People were also missing from the listening session. He is interested in more engagement opportunities to reach parts of the district who have not yet had the chance to be heard on this topic.

Superintendent Gothard noted that we heard emotion, fear, anger, sadness, and that our staff are going through a lot, even before the pandemic added more. With the increased mental health staff, SSLs, and dedicated staff, we can and must do more to improve both perceptions and reality of safety in our school. Doing more is up to all of us. There are no easy solutions - throughout the month, we will ensure we are hearing from as many students as possible on school safety with additional sessions planned. While the dates are not yet set, we have heard loud and clear that we need to do more and different things. Board members will also be meeting with students in each high school, as well as through the All PAC meeting coordinated by OFECP on March 22nd. We will also be hosting a Marnita's Table at the end of March with small group conversations, as well as a meal together. Staff survey results will also be available soon, as well as a student survey and one for parents as well. We will be using the input from the listening session, board meetings, public comment and others to determine changes to be made for safety in every one of our schools. He stressed the importance of working together with students at the center. The website is collecting information, and also includes the link to the listening session video. He also noted he continues to have meetings with the City, County, and community partners, for a common language with staff. We are taking the feedback and comments seriously and it is validated. There are themes and additional information, and need to build everyone's ability and willingness to deliver and embrace what we need for safety.

Director Kopp agreed that there are different ways we need to reach folks in the community, and thanked the team for pulling the listening session together, as well as learnings from that format. The engagement with the Board might look different, and there may be 2-3 board members in one space, and the collections of that feedback from our schools and students will need to be shared with the group. The different modes of interaction are also appreciated. She also noted that the Board knows what to do differently and what is possible - one question is Board capacity and how we will know when we have done enough, and targets to set, until we are confident we have heard from all square miles of the city of Saint Paul.

Director Vue noted that we need to continue to demonstrate to community that we are improving safety, and to show we are continuing to improve upon. The outcome is to understand our systems and practices in place to continuously improve, and to communicate about those improvements. Another item is data points and how to know when the Board has thoroughly engaged the community.

Director Henderson also noted the feedback that staff have felt and risen the alarm about safety and did not feel heard, and that speaks to the culture of how we show up and how folks feel in buildings. There are not simple solutions, but it is something we heard and need to think about in our future steps.

7. REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSION ON MARCH 3-4, 2023 STUDENTS OUTCOMES FOCUSED GOVERNANCE TRAINING WORKSHOP AND RETREAT

Director Kopp then posed two questions to the Board on reflections and questions from the Workshop including:

- What is something you learned that you think could be applied to work as a board?
- What is a question or wondering you have after the workshop and would like to be answered?

Director Ward noted that he enjoyed the community engagement portion of the workshop, and in setting goals and guardrails of ongoing practice that needs to be accessible to the community.

Director Vue noted the monitoring progress portion, and showing community how we are moving and the direction. One thing he also noted he is not clear on is the SPPS-way of this work, and a way to find it work for our district and how it looks for us - that work is continuous and will need all seven members of the Board and superintendent in working with the community.

Director Henderson appreciated the aspects pertaining to community engagement and modes of that. Her questions involved other districts that have adopted this, and their progress, as well as overall scope and cost, and their contracts.

Director Ward appreciated aspects of the training and there are great things to use to be more meaningful and effective in this work and elevate how students are doing, but also does not believe it makes sense to go through the Council of the Great Schools for the contract. He feels it would be better to pull items from the training and build our own framework.

Director Allen appreciated the alignment from community and setting guardrails as it is important for the Board to set those, as well as the monitoring. It's a clear way to show community our focus and where we are going. She would also like to see data from districts where it has been adopted and been successful, as well as their size, demographics, location.

Director Foster continues to think about how the Board does not have its own goals, and what it will take for us to set those together. She is excited by the community engagement piece, and also to be realistic in setting the vision and values and directing the working of this district in the way we know community would like and know, how we are doing it, and how it looks throughout the process. We may be able to do that work on our own, but it has not yet happened since she has been on the Board and we need to be clear about our realities. There is a lot of noise that prevents us from doing the work and setting goals and identifying them, and we need to work with the community to show the outcomes that are monitored and deal with the noise on the side.

Director Kopp thanked everyone for their time and engagement at the workshop.

Superintendent Gothard shared similar reflections and appreciated the talk on student outcomes. The goal-setting, monitoring, and reflecting on data and enrollment and trends - this brings a sense of urgency to what the community is asking, and will hold us to improve. It doesn't mean the other work stops - we will continue to do that work and report on it.

Director Allen noted questions about the time spent meeting about student outcomes, including on committees, and the potential restructuring of committee assignments. Director Kopp noted that as board members have questions or reflections to be in touch and keep the conversation going for how we might like that to look, and the contract includes coaching to help as well.

Director Ward requested information on next steps from the Board. The next steps are approving the contract for professional services, highlighting the cost and contract expectations with the Board. Director Ward noted he does not want to pursue the contract. He noted that he doesn't think it makes sense for us, and that some things don't align with how a board should operate. Director Kopp noted that CGCS may recommend certain things, but the Board can align those with the best interests of our students and district, or choose not to use that portion of the framework. In the progress monitoring, someone will need to hold that, and that's where the coaching comes into play, as well as expertise in the monitoring calendar and technical expertise in goals and guardrails. She also noted the agenda redesign as an example of a way in which we took a step recommended by the Council, but made it our own in our own way, and followed a version that made sense for us. We have choices in this work and can choose how it will look.

Director Ward noted that the calendar is a good example of where we can do this work in our own way, and he is not interested in the ongoing coaching.

Will the Board have a contract to look at? Response: There is a standard contract used by CGCS, and we also have our own contract system, and we are currently working on marrying those two, and everyone will have a chance to view it - it will be clear in what we are paying and what we are receiving. We will include time in an upcoming meeting to continue the conversation as well.

Director Henderson noted she recommends not voting on a contract until we have data related to outcomes, and needs more time in conversations with questions raised. She also asked about the structure and what that will mean for voting on a potential contract. Director Kopp noted those will continue as other data requests or questions arise, and the goal is to make an as informed decision as possible, and the Board will continue to talk and be responsive to questions.

8. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:21 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