

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

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102, and**

**Telephonic Phone and Video Conference
Available Streaming Online at www.spps.org/boe and Saint Paul Cable Channel 16**

**March 1, 2021
5:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. by Jeanelle Foster, Chair.

II. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: J. Kopp, Z. Ellis, J. Foster, J. Brodrick, J. Vue, C. Allen

Staff: Superintendent Gothard; Chuck Long, General Counsel; Will Forbes, Assistant General Counsel; Cedrick Baker, Chief of Staff; Dave Watkins, Chief of Schools; Marie Schrul, Chief Financial Officer; Jackie Turner, Chief Operations Officer; Kate Wilcox-Harris, Chief Academic Officer; Kevin Burns, Director of Communications; Kaying Thao, Administrator to the Board;; Sarah Dahlke, Secretary to the Board

II. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA

MOTION: Director Foster moved approval of the Order of the Main Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Vue.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Kopp	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. SPPS Calendar Committee Recommendations

Superintendent Gothard then introduced members of the Calendar Committee to present two recommended motions to the Board. The presentation included information on the members of the committee, as well as recommendations.

In SY 21-22, PreK will be full day in SPPS. The first recommended action is to remove and replace the PreK conference days on 11-18-21 and 3-24-22 with instructional days.

In SY 21-22, Rosh Hashanah falls on the first day of school in SPPS. The recommended motion is to change the first day of school to Thursday 9-9-21 for grades (1-12) and change the first day of school to Monday 9-13-21 grades (Pre-K and K). Tuesday 9-7-21 and Wednesday 9-8-21 will be used for staff Professional Development days.

Engagement details were also shared. Committee next steps include drafting recommendations for the next three years of calendars using feedback received from the engagement activities. These calendar recommendations will be presented in the Fall of 2021, and include 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-2025.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Kopp thanked staff for the presentation and to the committee members. She thanked the committee for considering the importance of the first days of school, and also aligning for full-day PreK, and continuing conversations with religious observances and showing respect and honoring our community.
- Director Ellis had a question about how we are receiving feedback, and input from families and community? Response: We have not designed that yet, but for the last 3 year cycle, we went real broad and narrowed it down. We employed surveys to 10,000 students and families. Then we went more narrow to talk specifically to religious communities and community leaders about religious observance days, and heard that families didn't have broad knowledge and understanding that their students were able to take an excused absence, and worked to ensure families knew that. Our stakeholders noted they didn't see the need to take off religious observance days, but happy to know the absences were excused. We envision that we will go back in more small group sessions to dig deeper and ask more questions, specifically, religious observances. We will share more about the design once the committee has determined.
- She also noted questions on the reduction of professional development days. Response: There is a reduction of two student days, and replacing them with two professional days for staff. The days aren't going away, especially for contract staff.
- Director Brodrick noted he is glad to hear the committee will be talking about e-learning days and their affects on the calendar next year. He requested more information on ideas about how to incorporate e-learning days, and what takes place during those days. Response: MDE has 4 designations of digital days can look like, and one is e-learning days. There are also distance learning days, and also digital days to plan ahead for, and the calendar committee can choose to add those digital days and did that for Election Day in 2020. The last type of e-learning is that full-time distance learning, e-learning, and digital learning school, and the approved application for that type of learning. As a calendar committee, we are talking about those e-learning days that could help us in certain situations, and considering those, and bring those before the Board beforehand. The e-learning days for inclement weather will be discussed within the next topic as well.
- Will the committee and the outreach to parents, students and teachers be involved in those issues? Response: Yes, and will come to the Board for anything regarding the calendar and e-learning days. Because it is so complex, we want to take it one step at a time. The calendar committee is requesting these two changes, and discuss the e-learning days later. We also approved digital

learning days for our 6-8 students in a K-8 schedule. This year, we had to add a few minutes to ensure we met the required hours, and did see those students and approve digital learning for that conference day to bring them on par with their middle school peers.

- Director Vue noted a question about the timeline on these recommendations. It's important for community members to know more about the background on these kinds of decisions. Response: We have ongoing meetings once a month, and the calendars have been discussed and community input asked for, and now asking for three years of calendars in the past two cycles. It is about helping families plan and be ahead of the schedule. In deciding on three years in advance, we know there will be changes along the way, and open to making the calendar work for everyone. When setting the three-year calendar, we also try to do the deeper dive with communities, and recounted the engagement of the previous cycle. It was also noted that the calendar cycle is fluid and ongoing, and take feedback year-round, and there may be changes or items that are missed, or need to be changed.
- How long did this process take? Response: From feedback, the OFECP first received feedback in late December with mainly emails and phoen calls from families asking to consider moving the first day du to Rosh Hashanah, and we explained the process to bring forward this consdideration to the calendar committee in January. Then drafted the recommendation in February. Principals and other administrators may have heard earlier as well.
- Director Allen appreciated that we are taking into consideration taking the entire day off instead of only excusing it. Glad that we will be looking at the calendar and give consideration to have the entire day off, and culture of teachers giving the option to take a test early, and start conversations and culture of respecting religious belifs and celebrtions. We have 144 languges in our distrct, and this is a good first step, and glad to hear to keep moving forward.
- Director Foster added her thanks, and in talking about a year-round calendar and to make more aware, and school-site based celebrations with schools, and this is sparking the conversation about how to be aware, see a problem, realize it, have conversations and adapt so we are accepting and appreciating allf families in our district, and staff.
- To reiterate and clarify, we are not taking away any days, and will stll be conferences for PreK, and they will be retooled in a different way to support this transition and align with conferences.
- Superintendent Gothard thanked the committee and the Board, and noted that several neghboring districts have also made this change, and noted the continued conversations around Eid and other religious celebrations, and we need to reflect and work with communitites about how we can work together, honor, and celebrate, and to ensure there a way that families and young people do not need to balance the duties of school and their religion celebrations.

MOTION: Director Foster moved to amend all district calendars for the 2021-2022 school year to change the Pre-K conference days on 11-18-21 and 3-24-22 to instructional days. The motion was seconded by Director Brodrick and Director Ellis.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Kopp	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes

MOTION: Director Foster moved to amend all district calendars for the 2021-2022 school year to change the first day of school for grades (1-12) to Thursday 9-9-21, change the first day of school for grades (Pre-K and K) to Monday 9-13-21 and change Tuesday 9-7-21 and Wednesday 9-8-21 to staff Professional Development days. The motion was seconded by Director Allen.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Kopp	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes

B. SPPS E-Learning Days

Next, staff introduced the 2021-2022 e-Learning Plan. The considerations were reviewed, including that the current calendar has 175 days for secondary students - 5 days more than required by MDE; reducing the calendar days by 2 for Rosh Hashanah will leave us with 173 days; SPPS has used up to 7 inclement weather days in the past and next year, any days past 3 would need to be made up; and e-Learning days keep learning continuous.

MDE key terms of “distance learning,” “e-learning,” “digital learning,” and “online learning” were reviewed, including definitions by MDE or state statute, and potential use of each.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Kopp asked if e-learning days effectively means no more snow days? Response: It means that if ready, we can have continuity of learning, and ensures District is ready for continuing learning. When taking away 6 hours for 38,000 students in one snow day, it is over 200,000 hours that are lost in one school day of learning. Our job is focused on teaching and learning, and know there is nostalgia with snow days. We don't lose our ability to choose a snow day, but provides an option. E-learning days provide that cushion for excessive inclement weather days. It's a both/and.
- Know our younger learners are option not bringing their device to and from school. How might that play into decision making? Response: We are planning to move to a practice to encourage all learners to bring their iPad daily, and have encouraged this this past summer. It will be a change of behavior and reminders, and encourage learners to bring their iPad back and forth each day, and looking at a different bag to keep iPads safer and encourage students to take their backpack back and forth.
- Director Ellis noted questions on e-learning as middle/high school focus - is that shifting to include K-12? Response: It has always been available for any grade that a District asks for it to happen, and many times, are running closer to the number of days at the high school level. Prior to this year, SPPS wasn't ready to be e-learning fo younger students as iPads were not sent home with younger students. Now that we are able to do that, we are ready for PreK-12 learning, and able to offer e-learning for inclement weather or school closures.
- In previous years, we have not used e-learning days? Response: We have not used e-learning days because the Board has not authorized them - the Board must authroize e-learning days by statute. The Board did authorize a digital learning day for Election Day in 2020 and 11 hours for students in 6-8 as park of the K-8 schedule. E-learning days are unplanned, and digital learning days are planned.

- Director Brodrick noted questions on the impacts on the Superintendent's decision regarding inclement weather to alert students to take their devices home, and teachers expected to do their instructional duties from home? How will that happen? Response: This is going to be new habits and routines, and having students to more regularly tote their devices to and from school. This will require extra reminders, and there are outliers with the weather, including a snowstorm in May 2013. We have advance information, but is not perfect, and days where e-learning may not be practical, such as the day after Winter Break, but to the best of our ability for continuity to be ready to implement an e-learning day during the winter months. For teacher expectations, the way it would work is a teacher would be expected to have asynchronous lessons available for students, and some can be preplanned, and others may need to be in the moment in small groups of students. The majority of it would be items available for students to keep moving forward, and not a full day of synchronous school. It will be as we work together to make work for students and families, and be continuation of school and learning at hand. The state statute is very clear in communication requirements, and also a financial decision to ensure student hours. We want to be sure we are set for ADM at \$40/day per student without adequate minutes. This gives us flexibility, and some parents may not approve of iPads going home, and adjustments and plans in place for students who may not have their iPad at home.
- Will our students have access to year-round hotspots or online availability at their homes? Response: The hotspots and Comcast Essentials will continue through the summer and there are no plans to collect them at this time. It is part of the routine to ensure devices are charged and practices, and evening potential, and have hotspots ready to go.
- Director Allen noted she is in support of this recommendation, but nostalgic for snow days as she was a student.
- Superintendent Gothard noted this is an additional application of the tools available from our community, and many districts now have devices for PreK-12, and do feel this is a way communities are supporting their schools, and schools acting in time of need for e-learning days.

MOTION: Director Foster moved that SPPS will follow the Distance Learning 2.0 plan for instruction and use up to 5 days of e-learning to maintain learning continuity for students on days when there is inclement weather. The motion was seconded by Director Brodrick.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Kopp	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes

C. Student Computers

BF 32343 Student Computers

Superintendent Gothard then invited staff to provide more information on the board agenda item for the purchase of student computers.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Kopp acknowledged Sue Snyder and her advocacy for students with hearing differences and their need for laptops, and thanks for her advocacy and the district for meeting the needs of all students.
- Where is the funding from? Response: This is an allotment from the GEERS funding - Governor's Emergency Relief Fund.
- Are these issued on a semester-to-semester basis, or keep for the duration of the year? Response: These will be issued on a class-basis, or unit of study-basis, and will depend on the situation.
- How will students receive them? Response: Some schools have carts able to be checked out, and similar to library book, use the same inventory system and students are able to check out the device, and bring them back, and look at demand and need and assign to buildings. With in-person instruction, we will be able to assign them at the school. If the student is at home, it will be the student or family to stop in at the school, deliver them, and from a curbside support center.
- Superintendent Gothard thanked the team so we are ready for increased demand and for our students to be successful.

MOTION: Director Foster moved that the Board of Education authorize administration to approve the purchasing of additional computers for students in the amount not to exceed \$350,000. The motion was seconded by Director Ellis and Director Allen.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Kopp	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes

V. ADJOURNMENT

Director Foster moved to adjourn the meeting; Director Ellis seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Kopp	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Brodrick	Yes
Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes

The meeting adjourned at 6:19 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