

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

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

**October 4, 2022
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Vice Chair Kopp.

II. ROLL CALL

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

H. Henderson arrived at 4:47 p.m.
J. Foster was absent.

Staff: J. Turner, K. Thao, J. Jonasson, B. Chan, A. Collins, N. Paez, Y.
Vang, C. Anderson, A. Kunz, S. Schmidt de Carranza, S.
Dahlke, T. Parent, B. Natala, D. Abrams, R. Stanzel, J. Vollmer, L.
Doehne, J. Robinson, K. Kimani, P. Matamoros, E. Wacker,

Community: L. Bolton, T. Lonetree, J. Pettey, M. Waters

III. 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.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Superintendent Gothard began the meeting by reporting on the continued wonderful start to the school year, and a brief report on staffing. While there are shortages in some areas, we are working diligently to fill those. He also noted that at no time have we been fully staffed, so the shortage is typical with other years, as well as noting questions that staff have been moved to accommodate enrollment shifts and class size concerns. He went on to note that our first act is to allocate staff in our SPPS system first. We also have a recruiting team in HR who are staffing and recruiting for next year already. He also noted the strategic spending of ARP funds and staff focusing on functions rather than adding more to their job role. He also noted the impacts of the next legislative session, and sustainable funding to long-range plan since ARP funding is temporary.

He went on to note that there is a plus five for enrollment projections for the October count. We've mentioned growing enrollment to stabilize, and to be the kind of school community families want to join. He also noted the Frost Lake Ribbon Cutting event. The plus five in enrollment also happened with Envision SPPS, and he noted directing the team to stay within a certain percentage of students who would be disrupted by those changes for the greatest chance of retainment, which was strategic and to know that our families felt they are cared for and not forgotten.

He went on to share his experiences at a state conference on communications, and "if we're not telling the good stories, nobody else will" as a lead-in for the Communications Overview presentation.

Superintendent Gothard also shared that Pat Pratt-Cook, our new Executive Chief of Human Resources, will be starting on Monday, 10/10. Her office will be on the 5th floor of 360 Colborne, and we are working on a transition plan for her, as well as Tom Sager in our Business Office.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Allen requested a breakdown of licensed teachers and paraprofessionals. Further details were provided, including that EA numbers are doing well, while we are still down in the number of TAs, with a couple dozen openings for licensed teachers.
- Do we have recruitment plans for our paras? Response: We are continuing to have recruitment fairs for TAs, and held two last week at RiverEast and Bridgeview, with additional sessions scheduled. We are also posting on a variety of websites. Our schools are also reaching out to parents and their networks for those who are interested.
- Have we thought about more flexible schedules for paras? Response: We will take direction from principles and other program administrators for those interested in working full-time, part-time or in between. In SPED, we are talking and recruiting at colleges and working to accommodate school schedules for students in training to be teachers, and have accommodate part time schedules in some situations, as well as in MLL.
- Director Kopp noted she is excited about the recruitment, and she started her teaching journey in January as she was finishing her Master's degree, and know so many are also excited to start.

V. COMMUNICATIONS OVERVIEW

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Erica Wacker, Direct of Communications, to present the Communications Overview. He noted that direction from the Board has included to increase and improve district communications, and a strategic direction. He moved Ms. Wacker into her role on the Innovation Team in May 2021 for strategic communications, and in additional working with ARP and our vision, she has also implemented a long-term plan and identified immediate and emergency needs.

The presentation included the variety of communications messages from the District, both written and event-based communications; ways in which we communicate including Blackboard Connect (phone, text, and email), e-newsletters, and social media channels; translation data, social media data, Eduvision video data, and website data; as well as media coverage and example stories. Districtwide events were also shared, including Administrator's Academy, 25-Year Employee Recognition Luncheon, Graduation Ceremonies, etc. The FY23 Strategic Communications Plan was shared, which includes a client-focused outcome, and short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes. Primary activities within the plan were also discussed, including building department and school capacity around communications; consistent, day-to-day messaging; and proactive positive storytelling. Projects in looking forward were also noted, including reels on instagram, and a website for WeAreSPPS that highlights our students and staff. Lastly, she recognized the Communication Team staff.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Allen requested if SPPS uses targeted marketing companies. Response: We do not currently have a budget allocated for marketing, because the budget goes to staff and tools such as Blackboard and the website. Director Allen encouraged the use of targeted advertising, including within Facebook and details on their targeted approaches.
- The differences between reels and videos were shared.
- The timeline for translated materials was also shared, including the differences in planned communications versus crisis letters, which can be done relatively quickly within 1-2 hours. The timing for messages in our multiple languages was also shared.
- Further information on the strategic communications plan was requested. Short term outcomes can show progress within the school year; medium term might be 18 months-2 years out; and long-term are about 3 years out. Each outcome has a set of measures and outputs associated with it. Discussion on the different ways to measure the outcomes was also provided.
- Director Henderson requested information on the rationale for not sending district communications to students. Response: Partly it is based on the tools, such as Blackboard, which connects with Campus which has parent and guardian information. It's also around the ages of the students. Our parents also know and rely on information from schools and teachers, and they typically send information through Schoology, as well as a few other tools for student communications. Further information was requested on urgent information to our middle and high school students, which may come from the school principal directly to students.
- Director Ward also raised further questions on district communications to students, and noted his personal experience in high school of not knowing about happenings in the district, and ways for students to advocate and encourage that advocacy. That is something we can look into, as well as working with principals to send out that information to students as well. Director Kopp noted as a parent of a high-school student, there is a lot of communications, and the potential for an opt-in model for communications for students.
- Director Vue noted the translated messages that are sent out 15 minutes later, and encouraged all messages in all languages to be aligned, and to encourage trust with all families. Director Wacker noted it is a batch issue within the system, and they are set up in 5 minute intervals, and with the large amount of emails being sent, they are sent in batches, and families may receive those emails within a certain timeframe based on when the system sends it and it goes to their email - the timing varies. Director Allen noted that in order to break down white supremacy, we start with the folks with a second language, and release the message in English last.
- Director Vue is encouraged by this work, and noted the continued work of the Board in terms of strategic communication and integrating the Board into the strategic communications plan, including working with the Board as a collective as well as individuals.
- Director Kopp requested information on instances where a school site needs support with translations. The Communications team can help with that depending on the situation and lead time, and there are also EA2s who are able to translate documents at the school level. Our Office of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships is also available as an option to assist with translations.
- She also requested information on website supports for schools. Response: There is one staff member who can help schools with their homepage and principal pages to bring it up-to-date, including the contact information, link to apply to jobs at the school, and supply lists. It is an ongoing process as the website ages, and more pages are added, and more become outdated, and have begun to talk to the vendor about an update. Director Kopp noted that it is a lot of work to keep a

website updated, and her own experience in learning to code for web development at her first teaching position. She appreciates the effort to ensure teacher pages are updated, because parents and families are interested in learning about their child's teachers.

- Director Ellis requested information on how families opt-in for their preferred language. The Campus i-Update is one way, as well as the home language flag in Campus; as well as school-level changes by the clerk and staff.
- Director Ellis also requested information on the engagement of social media posts. There are staff who monitor the page, and are able to comment and respond. While we are unable to see the engagement in terms of positive or negative feedback, we can see how many have shared, liked, or commented on a post, and the top 5 engaged posts over the last month. There is also an Annual Report from Facebook which shows the engagement, including winter weather days and teacher recognition posts as having high engagement. There is higher engagement with student achievement posts, and feel the WeAreSPPS highlights will be popular as well.
- Director Ellis also noted that social media is place where families go to find information, and to continue to plan ahead for events and publicize them for families.
- Superintendent Gothard noted the role of district communications and school communications, and both take all of us to implement.
- Director Ellis also noted the ways to be strategic in communications, including at community events. The challenges of staffing and costs at community events was presented, as well as the goals to be intentional about events such as parades around school areas. Communications at community events is so important.
- She also requested further information on the recording of sporting events. The district provide the subscription to Eduvision, and the school requires the equipment. Further details were also provided on this topic.
- Has WeAreSPPS launched, or is there a launch date? Response: It is not quite branded yet - the website presented was a mock-up, but the 2 stories have been released and happening now.
- Information on crisis communications was also provided, including the critical piece of timing.

VI. RESOLUTION TO DIVEST FROM FOSSIL FUELS AND PRIVATE PRISONS

Director Ward then introduced a resolution to divest from fossil fuels and private prisons for the Board to discuss. The rationale for this proposal was shared, as well as the rationale for the proposed resolution rather than a policy. Next steps were also discussed, including a vote at the November Regular Meeting. A link to the draft resolution was also shared.

The full presentation, including the draft language for the resolution, can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Henderson requested information on ways to invest in items that are sustainable and in line with the values of the district? This resolution is about excluding certain things - is there a way to include certain types of investments? Response: That does become more of a challenge because those technologies are newer, and in private equity, whereas the district current has public equity investments. There could be a thematic focus on the public securities that have a focus on more sustainable and renewable focus though. There is also risk in the newer technologies.
- Director Kopp requested information on the impacts of this resolution on district staff time, including implemental and compliance. Once the instructions are given, Wells Fargo will then take it from there.
- Director Ward also reviewed the portion of the resolution that discusses if a company is making good strides in being more sustainable, they will not be divested.

- It was also noted that the district does not currently invest in private prisons, and that the resolution should clarify that, including the title.
- General Counsel to suggest edits to the title and to include the most up-to-date data referenced in the resolution.
- Director Vue questioned board members if it would be helpful for experts from the field to explain the impacts of fossil fuels or private prisons.
- The Board also suggested additional citations to the resolution including amendments within the Constitution.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Director Kopp moved to adjourn the meeting. Director Ellis and all board members seconded the motion. It passed by acclaim.

The meeting adjourned at 6:22 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