

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

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

**August 10, 2022
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m. by Vice Chair Kopp.

II. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: J. Kopp, J. Vue, J. Foster, U. Ward
Superintendent Gothard

H. Henderson, Z. Ellis, and C. Allen were absent.

Staff: M. Schrul, J. Turner, K. Thao, C. Long, B. Chan, A. Collins, N. Paez, Y. Vang, C. Anderson, R. Schmidt, A. Kunz, E. Wacker, L. Rider, B. Natala, T. Parent, J. Vollmer, D. Abrams, L. Olson, K. Kimani, D. GoodBuffalo, J. Robinson, S. Dahlke

Community: L. Bolton, J. Verges, T. Lonetree

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 acclamation.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Superintendent Gothard began by welcoming everyone to the meeting. He shared that at the August 23, 2022 Regular Meeting there will be a school readiness/back to school report with more information provided, but provided details that it has been an outstanding summer at SPPS, and that thousands of students have been engaged in our summer programs, and staff have spent intentional efforts fostering a love for learning in topics and subject that are relevant to our students. While more information will be provided on 8/23, he noted Freedom Schools, and thanked staff and families for a remarkable summer. He went on to note that we welcome back the Division of Schools this week and there have been two full days of working with staff and leaders, and it is great to be back. Last year, there was hesitation and social distancing measures, so it has felt great to be back this week and focus on preparing for the upcoming school year. He also provided a brief update on staffing, and is grateful for the Human Resources team for their 24/7 work in onboarding, and more information will be available on 8/23 as well.

We are seeing the efforts of that work, and he thanked Interim Director Vollmer and his team for their work. There have been challenges, but we are aware of those and working as hard as possible to ensure we are ready. The culmination of the week of training is a gathering at E-STEM with the learning team and with school leaders, and operations leaders to network, be together, have fun, and ensure we are ready to support each other for our students and families, as well as for each other.

V. COVID-19 VACCINATION AND TESTING RESOLUTION

Superintendent Gothard welcomed Rebecca Schmidt, Program Manager of Student Health Care, Health and Wellness, to provide this report. Within the presentation, details on the current vaccination and testing resolution were provided including the timeline of the initial resolution and revisions, data that 79% of employees are vaccinated, and information on current practice of surrounding districts, city and state agencies. Challenges of implementation were reviewed, including the lack of enforcement capacity, pushback from bargaining groups, test availability, and lack of testing requirements for contractors and partners in our schools. The recommendations regarding this resolution were also shared, including to rescind vaccination and testing resolution effective 8/23/22 at midnight; continue to message out and offer opportunities for vaccination, and continue to offer test kits (dependent on availability from the State).

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- More information was requested on Ramsey County's plan regarding this topic.
- What is the expectation for test availability for the upcoming school year? Response: We have placed orders for tests for schools and the first delivery will be the first week of school, with all sites, schools and programs receiving tests. We currently have an unlimited supply to order from MDH, with their recommendation to be a test for every student and staff member. We are planning to order in smaller quantities to not overload the warehouse.
- Director Ward requested information if proof of vaccination is required for staff in SPPS. They are recommended for individuals in high-risk categories, but are not required.
- Director Ward requested if it would be possible to continue to require vaccination without requiring tests, or acknowledgement of vaccination without testing. Response: We may run into capacity issues if staff members do not report, and potential actions as a result of that.
- Director Ward posed the question if staff could acknowledge if they are vaccinated or not.
- General Counsel Long noted a point of clarification that the resolution does not require vaccination.
- Administration went on to provide details about the model of Confidence, Complacency, and Convenience.
- Director Vue requested information on current practices of surrounding districts and agencies, as well as the implementation of this resolution in SPPS and timeline and actions, including the peaks and valleys of implementation, as well as our partners in this work.
- Director Kopp requested information in terms of education and outreach, and ways in which we are continuing to do that. Response: It will continue, and we will be targeting schools that have lower vaccination rates, and work with HR to determine staff who may need additional vaccines. There will be school-based education focused on school populations. We will also continue to message out with Communications about vaccine opportunities, and address hesitancy issues to provide education on the benefits and importance of being vaccinated.

- Chief Turner also noted that a significant impact are our community partners, who do not currently require vaccinations, and they may not be in a position to sign a contract with SPPS if they are not able to guarantee that piece.

VI. UPDATES TO PROCEDURE 206.01.01 GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Director Kopp then introduced Director Ward to introduce this topic. A brief presentation was shared, which included the rationale for these proposed changes, proposed updates to the procedure, including extending public comment to 45 minutes and incorporating public comment into the regular board agenda. The Board also discussed the timeframe, recognitions within the meeting, official start time of Regular Meetings, and when this change may go into effect.

The full presentation, including the proposed changes to the procedure, can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Information was requested on the ties of changing the start time to 5:30pm with cable streaming.
- Information was requested on the public notice of the potential changes to the start time.
- Information was also requested on the past data on public comment, including number of times more time may have been needed, and number of times where there was time between the end of public comment and the start of the meeting.
- Director Kopp noted that because this is not a policy change, the question of how to discuss and act on this topic. Director Ward noted that it is a fairly significant change to the meeting, and if possible, would like to discuss at the August Regular Meeting with the full board.

VII. SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Director Kopp then introduced the Summary of the Annual Performance Evaluation of the Superintendent and read aloud the below summary:

2022 Summary of the Annual Performance Evaluation of the Superintendent

At a Special Closed Meeting of the Board of Education on July 20, 2022, board members discussed the annual performance evaluation of Superintendent Joe Gothard. Please note that what follows is a high-level summary.

Overall, the Board is pleased with the performance of Superintendent Gothard and appreciates his leadership during difficult times. The Board also acknowledges continuing work in areas of student outcomes and community engagement. The Board used the Minnesota School Board Association's Superintendent Standards-Based Evaluation this year, choosing to focus on standards evaluated last year (with minor adjustments) to identify progress over time. These standards are related to Implementation of the Strategic Plan, Communications, Community Engagement, Operations, Teaching and Learning, and Ethical Leadership and Equity with a rating scale ranging from ineffective, to developing, to effective, to highly effective. The ratings of participating Board members have been averaged meaning individual Board members' ratings may be higher or lower than the stated average.

The Board would like to offer the following observations as it considers the overall performance of the Superintendent.

Considering the standard focused on the Implementation of Strategic Plan, the Board rates the Superintendent as highly effective. The Board appreciates the inclusion of systemic equity in the strategic plan in the Fall of 2021, placing it among other district priorities and providing a framework for making progress. The Board notes the strength and detail of the strategic plan provided a clear roadmap for aligning and making the best use of ARP funding in a timely manner. The Board also notes growth in specific initiatives within SPPS Achieves, including plans for the district career center, middle school model, ready for rigor framework, and the Culturally Responsive Instruction Expo held in June 2022. The Board looks forward to continuing efforts to make the strategic plan easy to read and understand, using specific examples to make the work increasingly more visible. The Board also encourages the development of a tool to measure the cost benefit of individual initiatives.

Considering the standard focused on Communications, the Board rates the Superintendent as highly effective. Across multiple platforms the Board notes the increase in proactive, positive, and engaging storytelling from district administration and is eager to see continued expansion in a variety of cultural media outlets. The Board is also pleased to see an investment in full translations in major SPPS language groups of the Students' Rights and Responsibilities Handbook, providing students and caregivers equitable levels of detail and explanation. The Board recognizes the challenge of balancing speed and accuracy in communications, while honoring the need to be inclusive of multiple language communities and is interested to see how strategies in this area continue to evolve.

Considering the the 2021 Key Area for Growth related to this standard: *Development of a communications framework that serves the complex demographics of our district, with messages that speak with a clear, compassionate voice*, the Board notes the progress that has been achieved and encourages continued innovation in this area.

Considering the standard focused on Community Engagement, which includes Relationships with the Community, Engagement, Advocacy, and Visibility and Approachability, the Board rates the Superintendent as highly effective. The Board appreciates the Superintendent's advocacy for school funding and willingness to speak clearly about the source of underfunding in education. The Board notes with gratitude how the Superintendent works with elected leaders at all levels of government to increase understanding about the needs and aspirations of the education in St. Paul. The Board notes with appreciation the Superintendent's efforts to visit our schools, including a robust schedule at the end of the 2022 school where he visited 40+ schools in just under six weeks. These visits, which the Superintendent noted were valuable to his understanding, included both joyful and difficult conversations with students and staff. The Board would like to see more of these two-way engagement opportunities as they increase understanding, trust, and morale.

Considering the 2021 Key Area for Growth related to this standard: *Explore and implement tools of community engagement that are culturally responsive*: the Board notes progress in this area and wishes to retain this as a key area for growth.

Considering the 2021 Key Area for Growth related to this standard: *Study and expand ways for staff to provide constructive feedback to district administration*: the Board appreciates the Superintendent's honest reflection that more study is needed and supports continued action in pursuit of an effective model.

Considering the standard focused on Operations, which includes Facilities, Transportation, Food Service, Technology, Maintenance, and Personnel, the Board rates Superintendent Gothard as highly effective. The Board notes with appreciation the Superintendent's leadership in support of the ongoing good work of the Nutrition Services team to meet the needs of community through connection and innovation and working with external partners to solve a variety of operational problems. The facilities dashboard continues to be an important source of information for the Board and the community and

transportation issues related to bus driver shortages continue to require the focused attention of the Superintendent and his administration. The Board notes that the Superintendent named workforce issues as a challenge two years ago and continues to address shortages of bus drivers and substitute teachers with a variety of strategies including wage increases and professional development. After two challenging years for educators and staff, the Board wishes to see continued reflection and implementation of strategies for improving our learning community's morale and addressing workforce issues.

Considering the standard focused on Teaching and Learning, which includes Staff Development, School Improvement, and Curriculum and Instruction, the Board rates Superintendent Gothard as effective. The board notes the ongoing work through job-embedded professional development to maximize the learning and practice opportunities in buildings and is excited about the work underway to explore redesign in central administration to more effectively support equitable education for all students. The Board appreciates the planning and engagement efforts of many at this June's Culturally Responsive Instruction Expo and the focused efforts around critical ethnic studies. The Board looks forward to seeing specific examples and data demonstrating the impact of these efforts on student outcomes.

Considering the 2021 Key Area for Growth related to this standard: *Demonstrate progress towards the implementation of culturally relevant instructional practices and provide an evaluation of their effectiveness and create opportunities for school staff input in implementation and evaluation*, the Board notes the inputs that have been put in place and will retain, "provide an evaluation of their effectiveness" as a 2022 Key Area for Growth.

Considering the standard focused on Ethical and Inclusive Leadership, which includes Ethics and Professional Behavior, Interactions with Students, Staff, and the Community, Professional Practice, Diverse Cultural Competency, and Equity Plan Implementation, the Board rates Superintendent Gothard as effective. The Board notes the considerable effort the Superintendent commits to mentoring and cultivating leaders, assembling a strong team, maintaining relationships within the community, and engaging in thoughtful self-reflection. His professional and ethical leadership sets a standard and is recognized beyond our district as evidenced by his participation and leadership in local and national committees and organizations. The Board also notes the leadership role the Superintendent takes in negotiations and the need to continue efforts to build stronger relationships with district bargaining units. The Board appreciates Superintendent Gothard's reflection regarding the ongoing equity work and supports his framework for implementing an equity plan to remove barriers that are identified. In addition, the Board shares Superintendent's gratitude for the work of the Equity Committee to ask difficult questions provide important guidance and hold decision-makers accountable. The Board asks the Superintendent to continue to be a bold voice for change and to challenge complacency and the status quo.

The board thanks Superintendent Gothard for his time throughout this process which included completing a self-evaluation that included a 28-page executive summary backed by 100+ pages of documentation and additional reflection, and two hours of conversation on July 20th where he responded to board members' questions related to his self-evaluation. The Board notes overall growth in performance from last year. In four of six standards, the Superintendent moved from a rating of effective, to highly effective. Overall, the Board finds the Superintendent to be highly effective in his role and acknowledges more growth is both necessary and possible and has identified the following as Key Areas for Growth:

1. Development of monitoring reports for student outcomes
2. Evaluate impact of implementation of culturally relevant instruction on students
3. Explore and implement tools of community engagement that are culturally responsive

At the conclusion of our deliberations regarding Superintendent Gothard's performance evaluation, the Saint Paul Board of Education unanimously favors entering negotiations to renew his contract and looks forward to continued growth and partnership.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Kopp thanked the Evaluation Subcommittee of Director Ellis and Director Foster, as well as the Superintendent, for their time and engagement. She also thanked her colleagues on the Board for the conversation.
- Director Foster noted that in thinking about the past few years and moving forward, our future should be with Superintendent Gothard. She thanked him for the work, and while some areas were rated as 'highly effective', there is always work to do. She appreciates his knowledge, and that his work is noted and is uncontestable. He has been a stabilizing force for education for students, and it is heartwarming. It is appreciated, and there is respect and gratitude in this community. There is a plan in place, and a roadmap for success for our students, and she enjoys that we are able to see the fruits of that labor. She also noted the significant gains in the district, particularly around equity. She thanked Superintendent Gothard and will continue to push to be bold. She also noted the ARP funds, and the targeted approaches, in order to balance items out and do education differently. She appreciates his humility and growth for strong academic outcomes for our learners.
- Superintendent Gothard noted that it is a great honor, and it is something he does not take for granted, and does work hard as students, families and staff rely on SPPS to be the premier educational institution for the children of this community. That motivates him every day. He also thanked his team, as success is never done in isolation.

X. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 5:26 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