

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

**COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING
Via Telephonic and Video Conference; Available via Live Stream at www.spps.org/boe**

**May 4, 2021
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

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

Staff: Superintendent Gothard; Chuck Long, 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; Stacey Gray Akyea, Director, Research, Evaluation & Assessment; Kenyatta McCarty, Executive Director, Human Resources; Kevin Burns, Director of Communications; Kaying Thao, Administrator to the Board; Sarah Dahlke, Secretary to the Board

SEAB: K. Ali

III. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA

MOTION: Director Vue moved approval of the Order of the Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Carrillo and Director Allen.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

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

IV. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Superintendent Gothard began the meeting by welcoming everyone on this beautiful Tuesday afternoon. He noted it is Teacher Appreciation Week, and how hard our teachers and staff have worked throughout

this time, and we look forward to the summer, and successful opening for the 2021-22 school year as we continue to work together. He appreciates the excellent teachers in SPPS and serving our community. He also provided a brief update on the preliminary budget figures, and timeline, including that budget allocations have been shared with principals and programs. The budget must be adopted by the end of June, and is typically acted upon at the June Regular Meeting.

Board members then also expressed appreciation for our teachers, and their flexible and adaptive natures of instruction, compassion, and gratefulness and thankfulness for their great work. We appreciate their sacrifices and work, and will continue to find ways to encourage and appreciate them in deep, meaningful ways.

V. SEAB REPORT

SEAB Member Ali then provided a report on SEAB, including that the deadline for students to apply to be a member has been extended to June 1 to encourage more students to apply, and are encouraging counselors and principles to nominate students to these positions. He also extended thanks to our teachers for their hard work over the past year. SEAB has also been meeting with board administration to collaborate with the subcommittee about the future of SEAB and the interconnectedness of SEAB and the Board, and members are committed to extending the work over the summer to hire the next SEAB facilitator and onboarding for new SEAB members. He also requested further information on the District's plans for spring events outside of athletics, as well as further details on graduation ceremonies. He also noted SEAB members have been meeting with Human Resources to discuss the new facilitator role.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

Board members thanked SEAB Member Ali and the team for their ongoing work and commitment to the process and collaboration. Director Allen requested information on the suggestion for the facilitator role, and the conclusion on the finalist. SEAB Member Ali noted that they have not submitted information yet, but are in discussions with HR for the job posting. Director Kopp thanked him for the work of SEAB and is grateful to have been in conversations with SEAB, and appreciates the focus on the present, as well as the future. Superintendent Gothard also provided information on the communication for spring events, including that communication has been sent out in several ways and encouraged discussion with their principal, because it might be different by school and activity. SEAB Member Ali noted that communication such as this is important, and students may not be aware that it was sent out.

VI. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Superintendent Gothard then introduced Mary Dougherty Gilbert, Legislative Liaison, to present the Legislative Update. He noted that she is an advocate for everyone, and is seen as a leader across the state, and we are grateful to partner with her. With the presentation, information was provided on the review of the session, including the budget year, February forecast, conference committees, summer bill and other COVID bills, tax and spending targets and Sine Die of May 17th. The major topics were also reviewed - including stabilize education funding, increase diversity of teacher workforce, enhance local control and reduce mandates to improve outcomes, and provide resources for child and family stability and support. The big picture of the budget was also shared, as well as budget for Teachers of Color, budget for Student and Family Support, and details on other provisions. Details on a few of the new mandates were also provided. Further information was also shared on the Cruz-Guzman litigation. Information for call to action were also provided.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Ellis requested further information on the 266 PreK seats. Response: The total number of PreK seats are allocated throughout the state, and if eliminated, there would be 266 seats less in Saint Paul, but the total number would decrease seats across the state. The VPK seats are targeted for students with FRL.
- Are the mandates funded or unfunded? It depends on the mandates. Some mandates regarding discipline disparities have grant opportunities attached to them; one of the new mandates to require training for paraprofessionals was funded.
- Additional information on the impact of the Cruz-Guzman issue to SPPS was discussed, including that because the bill was recently introduced, a lot of parties have not weighted in yet, and the bill will need to pass the House and Senate, or it will go to the courts.
- Additional information was also requested on the Teachers of Color grants. Response: Some funding is allocated to our teacher residency program, but we also wanted to include another pathway when developing the legislative agenda, where there are pathways for students of color to enter a Bachelor's program and provide opportunities for our own grow-your-own; whereas SUTR residents are staff. We wanted a second pathway for students in partnership with a higher education institution to be able to be a fully licensed teacher, and could partner with the Govie Leaders program, where students earn credits in Intro to Teaching from the University of Minnesota. Through this pathway, it would be possible for students to graduate in less than four years if credits carried over. We are also looking at benefits of the SUTR program and replicate those into best practices into the Bachelor's program for recruiting our own students. There are also scholarships available for students and staff in SUTR, as well as funding for teachers to relocate to Minnesota.
- Director Foster thanks Ms. Gilbert for the presentation.
- Director Brodrick requested further information on Cruz-Guzman and the distinction between charter and public schools. Response: The bill does include information for identified charter schools to go through the same process, submission of the plan, culturally relevant curriculum, integration goals, and to show progress through meeting the plan; students at charter, identifiable, or isolated schools also have the option of going to another district. The integration portion will be a change for them.
- Director Allen thanked Ms. Gilbert for her work, and appreciated the information on call to action items.
- Director Kopp also thanked Ms. Gilbert for the presentation, and noted the call to action items. She also recounted her recent experience with MSBA and conversations with other school board members that what all districts are looking for is more similar than it is different, and it's great to see that in the presentation and the chance to be an advocate for SPPS.
- Director Carrillo noted questions about potential concerns on the omnibus bill and if it is in the same position as the budget in terms of those concerns. Response: Ms. Dougherty Gilbert provided details, including the Governor and House's reliance on the tax increases over \$700M target, and the E-12 bill is with the House and Senate around the tax committee, and with the balanced budget and surplus, and one-time money from the last biennium. Some Senate proposals include a one-time tax for PPP loans. In education, there is the two-and-two, and to carry it into the future, along with SPED and MLL. Inflation isn't tied in the next biennium and the formula. Generally to pay for things, there are the tails, which are spending into the next biennium. The high-water mark may be \$725M and will likely decrease, and will be important to continue to focus on big pieces, such as the formula for SPED and EL, Teachers of Color, and continuation of funding for VPK seats.
- Regarding Teachers of Color and attracting teachers outside of Minnesota, is there any concern in the ability to recruit? Response: Other states are also in the same position, and Minnesota is difficult to

attract to teachers, especially from Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Chicago Public Schools also had layoffs in previous years and it is not easy to transfer licenses. Previously, SPPS would recruit at HBCUs. We also need to provide the support and ensure Teachers of Color stay with SPPS for retention and programs, and focus on the teachers in the District and community.

- Superintendent Gothard thanks Ms. Dougherty Gilbert. He also noted the ESSER funds and structural ways school districts are funded that will allow us to create, sustain, and create visionary programs for the future. We are responsible for producing the future workforce and that requires a substantial investment that we can continue to build so that families know their children have excellent opportunities in our district.

VII. CRITICAL ETHNIC STUDIES UPDATE

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed staff to present an update on Critical Ethnic Studies, and provided a brief overview of the background and timeline of this topic in SPPS. He noted results of a recent student-focused and inclusivity survey with two main areas of concern - students not able to see themselves in the curriculum and the need for more racially diverse teachers. The survey also provided information on visibility, well-being, and strong personal relationships with teachers. He also noted a recent student that shows a strong correlation between CES coursework and increases in all areas, including attendance, GPA, and graduation rates. He noted the interdisciplinary nature of this course and critical thinking.

The presentation focused on course creation in SPPS, including design, develop, deliver, and evaluate, with the current stage between design and development. A recap of the timeline was also provided, starting in 2018 to the current year of 2021 with the Ethnic Studies established in Office of Teaching and Learning, and ongoing collaboration among building administration, teachers, and students. Details on the planning and development to implementation were also shared, with planning and development in SY20-21, Phase 1 of partial implementation elective at participating high schools for SY21-22, and Phase 2 of full implementation graduation requirement (sophomores) for SY22-23. Details were also shared on the engagement in the course development, including regular monthly meetings with steering committee members, course development cohort, and SEAB. The course development cohort timeline was also shared, as well as an example course design. Information on Phase 1 of initial implementation was presented, including the participating high schools of Harding, Como, and Humboldt with the goal of at least 1 section offered at each participating high school. Next steps include to implement initial Critical Ethnic Studies Courses, collect student and teacher input and feedback for collaborative course adjustments, alignment with course offering timelines for SY22-23, and Board action to amend Policy 510.00, which would make Critical Ethnic Studies required for graduation beginning in 2025.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Ellis acknowledged Director Vue's work with Ethnic Studies conversation with our Hmong PAC, and the origin of this request, followed by SEAB's presentation.
- She also requested further information about how families will learn more about the course. Response: Families will be informed through the course catalog, and registration, as well as through teachers and counselors to communicate with students and families, and staff visits to schools to hear what the course will offer. Experiences with visiting senior classes at Johnson were noted and how students expressed interest and sadness that they won't be able to take the class. Teachers have been selected to pilot to share resources in buildings and recruiting in the process. We are also going

to reach out to counselors for sections in the fall and to help students register. Further information on the finalized numbers will be provided.

- It was also noted that teachers have already been selected to teach the course, and the plan is to expand to each high school. We are currently looking at recruitment for teachers when implemented in 2022-23, and how to develop an ongoing district cohort to provide training for teachers and content knowledge. We have heard what it will take for a successful implementation, including funding for collaborate professional development and peer coaching. We also plan to encourage externships with community partnerships to constantly improve the outcomes. In addition, the interdisciplinary nature will allow access to all licensed teachers, which creates a wider net from which to draw.
- Another question noted was about how much of the course has units and themes mapped out, or also in creation. Response: Our goal for the end of this month is to have a draft of the scope and sequence of units, and move to the remainder of the school year, and compile resources for teachers and specific lesson plans, key concepts. This summer will also allow for the syllabus to be crafted and fine-tuning of the curriculum writing. This is an ongoing process and what is implemented in the first initial phase may change due to feedback from community, students and teachers and the nature of this course will constantly change - including with social movements and this course may look different in future years.
- Director Ellis also noted her personal experience in Ethnic Studies as her college major, and how none of the classes were exactly the same, and depended on the students in the space. She appreciates and understands the fluidity of this course based on students in the course and outside variables.
- Director Foster requested information on the challenges and how they are/have been addressed. Response: Initially, the plan was for the course to be under the supervision of Social Studies, but it is interdisciplinary and does involve Social Studies and History, but so much more as well. As it was developed, there was a decision that in order for this to be successful, we need to provide grounding for that work and have Ethnic Studies be its own department, as it will also show up in all content areas. We also need to look at future recruitment for teachers and opening to any secondary licensed teacher, and prioritize the lived experiences of our Teachers of Color. This work will be ongoing and we send gratitude and appreciation to our students and families.
- Director Brodrick provided remarks for the record. He has not heard from a single person who says Ethnic Studies should not be embedded into the entire curriculum of SPPS and noted the diversity of our public schools and our city. Much of it is already being done and done well in schools, and teachers are teaching it and doing good work. However, he has heard that making the course required will certainly have an impact on existing programs and offering, and it will have an impact on offerings and scheduling, and will possibly eliminate some choices for students that they currently have. He is unsure if we have thoroughly listened to students, parents, teachers, and administrators in a comprehensive manner. One concern of the outreach to staff, and most import to our students and parents and families about how their children will be affected. He has heard from many education experts that there is a difference between constructive ethnic studies and critical ethnic studies, and until he learns more about that and has a better idea of the actual course content, he has some real fears that we will be entering into an ideological controversy that will be difficult from which to extricate ourselves. His overriding concern is that parents need to know what their child is going to be taught, and this is absolutely a requirement of us as a district. He noted his personal experience as a retired social studies teacher of 34 years in the district and the importance of balanced presentations. As elected officials, the school board must be careful to listen to all voices and perhaps compromise. His concern is that we have not heard from all voices as we contemplate this part in the course. True collaboration and transparency takes time, but more importantly, it takes an

attitude of willingness to listen to all voices, some of which may be dissenting, but if we do that, in the end, it will make the decisions last longer.

- It was noted that it sounds like there is a request for evidence of further engagement, and we have a communications plan to reach out to families and students, with 10th grade as a requirement for students who will graduate in 2025. The process for engagement has been with students, PACs, and schools have specific actions to share information, and letters that are sent by counselors with course outlines and requirements, and progress letters, especially around the graduation requirement piece. We continue to engage, get feedback, and recognize that there will be a much stronger course in the end, with a stronger group of teachers ready and equipped to teach the course. We have also directed the team to be listeners, and there are a lot of conversations with teachers and administrators who have agreed on certain elements, but disagreed with others, and continued conversations to come to a consensus. We will be listening to all the input about the course, and use that for improved outcomes for students.
- Director Brodrick noted that in his experience, when some conversations have taken place between central administration and teachers, there has been a concern that it is said all voices are listened to, but then when a decision is made, it is strictly-top down. He noted there is a very heated controversy about critical race theory and that is why he wants to ensure parents know what their children will be taught.
- Director Allen noted this is an opportunity to close the achievement gap, and to engage students. She noted this is long overdue and will be an opportunity to truly engage students early. Within the example, she noted questions on the immigration and emigration unit, and it did not include Native American and Black communities. Response: In looking at units, those were examples, and will depend on the construction of the course. Human Geography also touches on topics, and we want to be careful that we are not repetitive, and that was simply an example model for reference, as some content subjects may be taught in other classes. We want students to be the driver of their own learning and experiences, and their identities to create change and space for healing. Director Allen further noted that that we need to intentionally ensure that these particular experiences are included, so they are not lost within the content.
- Director Kopp noted her personal experience in writing curriculum for a course, and it was deeply gratifying and exhausting, and appreciated the work, with deep respect for the energy it takes within this interdisciplinary course. She also appreciated that in this work we are able to bring in Saint Paul stories, activities, and identity to become a part of the curriculum, and appreciates the flexibility of this course that that it will remain fresh, and this is the type of class we want for all students to show up and apply what they learn.
- She also noted questions around the interdisciplinary nature of the course, and how topics are maybe lifted out of other courses and put into this one. Will students need scaffolding to apply other topics to this course? Response: There are some technical aspects by MDE, including to have a licensed teacher and prepared to share the coursework. The Ethnic Studies required elective has a lot of choice and expansion on standards taught in required courses. We likely will not lift topics out of another course, because they will be already covered. This is an elective requirement that we believe is a great experience for all students in SPPS to examine themes and become more knowledgeable, and critical thinkers about who they are and how they interact with each other and the world.
- She also requested further information on required electives in SPPS. Response: This will be a course that will be a requirement as a one semester elective and that can take place in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade, and we are working on specifying that language. The excitement about this class is a way to begin to think about other classes, with a critical lens, and students making meaning of their classes, and the opportunity to have a collective experience to learn together, ask questions, and find their own answers as an empowering experience as they go out into the world.

- Director Carrillo thanked the team for their work on this topic, and taking charge of something that is important to him and students. He noted as a graduate of a Masters in history, a lot of the work he did was cross-sectional and interdisciplinary, and this course in SPPS will touch on a key component of high level master work and bring it to our students. He noted this is an opportunity to raise the bar for all students. He noted that core concepts of history can be challenged.
- He requested information on the development of the course to avoid being “watered down” and how issues will be addressed. Response: More information was provided on the requirement, and also the roots of culturally responsive teaching, and the team was directed by the Superintendent to work within culturally relevant teaching and the adopted framework, and to look at the future, where in 5-10 years, students are growing and flourishing and learning through amazing projects, and identifying who they are and their passions, as a result of a PreK-12 shift in our language in how we teach, lead, and recognizing the wisdom and independence.
- He also noted a recommendation that this may be a good seed of interdisciplinary work and if it is possible in other areas of study as well. Superintendent Gothard noted a course audit of the high school course guide, and sustainability of courses.
- SEAB Member Ali requested further information on the timeline and action in policy change from the Board. Response: We do have the necessary next steps regarding board action, including action prior to December to act on the policy amendment to add critical ethnic studies within the required courses. It will need to be process through the Policy Work Group and three-reading process.
- SEAB Member Ali also noted his involvement in the CES Steering Committee and invitation for others to listen. He also noted the experiences of students this past year and the teaching of history. Requiring this course helps students to dig deeper than what is taught and research from their own perspective, and allows students to research. This is a layer of the cake, and we are on track to change the way history has been previously taught.
- Director Vue requested more information on the use of the word “Interdisciplinary” and how that might impact other courses students might be taking. Response: We want to be sure to reiterate that Ethnic Studies and Social Studies are not the same, but connected. Ethnic Studies will be its own department, and more details were provided on the intersectionality of other topics as they relate to Human Geography and location, and the beauty of Ethnic Studies about what it means to be in this space and in the SPPS community. The intersectionalities of projects were also notes - such as art to express identity and in social justice movements. The staffing for Ethnic Studies was also noted with experiences social studies teachers interested in exploring this work further, and working alongside teachers of AP and IB classes. We will continue to work together between Ethnic Studies and Social Studies, along with other subjects like Art. Previous examples of interdisciplinary work were also shared, including with performing arts partnering with ELA teachers. This is an interdisciplinary opportunity for the entire system to respond to questions based on students’ learning and how information is presented to them, to give space for questions, and pathway to learning.
- Director Vue also noted he highlighted this question because the content will change, and will be based on the students and teachers in the classroom, but the interdisciplinary nature won’t change. This will be a skill that students will walk away with, and take those skills into their professions and life.
- Superintendent Gothard thanked the team and the Board. This is the sixth time Ethnic Studies has been brought before the Board and appreciated the conversation. We need to embrace this as an opportunity, and for those concerned about this work, there is an opportunity for all to be involved, with examples provided. He noted the linkage in this work together with how we are interacting on a regular basis with all students. He noted the December timeline is important for a few reasons, including the printing of the course guide, and preparation for counselors with course information. He also noted the communication with students and families about this course and how it may look at

different schools. He also noted the additions of other classes since his time at SPPS, and there are new teachers of courses, sharing, new curriculum, and this is something that schools have experiences. This will be the first new required course in about 10 years, with the last being the CTE requirement. This change will symbolize something different, and we will continue to offer relevant and responsive teaching to changing ways of preparing graduates for the future.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Director Vue moved to adjourn the meeting. Director Ellis seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

X. WORK SESSION

Staff then provided a brief update on graduation ceremony details, and board members discussed their attendance at the ceremonies for both the greeting message and conferring of diplomas.

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