

**MEETING MINUTES
COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING
June 28, 2011**

PRESENT: Board of Education: Jean O'Connell, Elona Street-Stewart, Jeff Risberg, John Brodrick, Keith Hardy, Anne Carroll

Absent: Kazoua Kong-Thao

Staff: Superintendent Silva, Denise Quinlan, Julie Schultz-Brown, Andrew Collins, Tracy Gauer, Michael Baumann, Suzanne Kelly, Jesse Marz, Joe Munnich, Dan Mesick, Matt Mohs, Mike Kremer, Michelle Walker, Sharon Freeman, Barb Curtz, Lorrie Snow, Kathy Lombardy, Mary Kelly, Jackie Turner

Other: Tom Weber, Daarel Burnette

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:33 p.m.

II. AGENDA

A. Policy on Dangerous Weapons Relative to Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp. (JROTC)

The Superintendent stated the purpose of the discussion was to determine if the Board would consider making an amendment to the Student Handbook that would address the use of Daisy Drill Rifles for JROTC practice and competition. Currently, the use of the drill rifle would be in contradiction to the Student Handbook under the Violations and Potential Interventions, Possession/Use of a Dangerous Weapon Other Than a Firearm, (6) any replica firearm, BB gun or pellet gun.

The Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Schools provided some background on the JROTC Program. The program was established in 1995. Humboldt (Army), Como Park (Marine), Harding (Navy), Johnson (Air Force) and Arlington (now Washington Technical [Navy]) all have programs as noted. The objectives of the program are to develop:

- Leadership and character
- Informed and responsible citizenship
- Community service
- Life skills for college and careers.

The JROTC curriculum allows students to earn elective credits toward graduation. Classes are offered during the school day like other classes. The curriculum is diverse in that it incorporates leadership, billets, team tasks, academic instruction, assessment, evaluation, physical fitness events and training, uniform wear and formation drills.

The JROTC training philosophy supports a military leadership model that emphasizes respect for authority and the chain of command; personal responsibility for actions, words and appearance in military uniform or civilian attire. It integrates leadership theory with practical application. It also allows for:

- Application of physical and emotional stress in team and individual leadership events
- Exposure to challenging experiences (leadership camps, competitions)
- Earning respect of peers and promotion to higher rank, responsibility and expectations

- Participating in community service (volunteering) and extra-curricular activities

Schools with JROTC offer local, regional and national competition teams, community service opportunities (academic tutoring, life-skills mentoring, carnivals, community beautification projects, official school functions and local ceremonies), summer leadership camps, orientation tours to national and historical sites, personal and program awards, recognition and scholarships.

The Drill Rifle Program is for the JROTC Drill Competition Team, the JROTC Color Guard, for parades, regional and national competitions and marching band. The program is fully funded by the Department of Defense and there would be no cost the SPPS.

Inert replica drill rifles and air rifle competitions are unique to JROTC where the competitions promote an intense dedication to mastering skills of precision, coordination and self-control that further bolsters self-confidence and achievement in the students participating. Opportunities to participate in these competitions will provide students with greater opportunity for college scholarships, travel experiences and the opportunity to compete regionally and nationally with other JROTC units that have no restrictions.

Benefits of the program include a new hands-on activity for students; development of motor skills and dexterity; improved posture, body-control and self-image; team training and competition stress management; and opportunity to win regional and national drill competitions. The program would allow two additional 15-cadet teams to be formed: "armed" drill, exhibition, and team captains/leadership development.

SPPS has done a risk assessment/mitigation review that included such issues as weapons glorification that would require a public safety brief at JROTC schools and a brief to cadets and families. Prior to drill rifle activities SPPS security and school leadership would need to be notified (day/hour), a school-wide announcement would be needed over the loudspeaker, signs would be posted and cadets would be required to wear identifying JROTC T-shirt/uniform. The JROTC instructor would be present at all times when the replica rifles were in use. The replica rifles would be transported only in school buses or JROTC-instructor vehicles and be concealed in carrying cases or boxes. Rifles would be secured in the JROTC storeroom within a locked cabinet. The District would be required to develop a drill rifle policy memorandum that outlined all concerns.

It was noted that SPPS Policy 903.00 already has exemptions and allows for a blanket exemption by the Superintendent. The current language is consistent with all large urban schools in the country. Two examples of "exemption" language were provided as examples of what could be used for modifying Policy 903.00.

- This does not apply to school-sponsored programs related to JROTC or Marching Band.
- Non-functional/non-firing (facsimile) drill rifles are approved for practice, competitions, demonstrations and ceremonies in conjunction with SPPS school-sponsored activities only and according to risk-mitigation parameters.

Parameters for successful implementation and use of the inert replica rifles would need to be developed.

Administration's recommendation was to amend SPPS Board Policy 903.00 Dangerous Weapons, Firearms to include under Exceptions the statement "include Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) members to use inert replica drill rifles in the conduct of official activities supervised by JROTC personnel." Additionally to revise the Student Handbook (part of the SPPS Board Policy under 506.00 Student Discipline) with language that aligns with Policy 903.00.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- The Board expressed its appreciation that this issue was brought to the Board directly from a student group.
- The request was made to keep the discussion to the subject of the use of replica rifles for JROTC. It was also noted it would be important that the JROTC group develop practices and procedures around use, transport and storage of the replica rifles.
- The other schools in Twin Cities who allow rifles, do they have a similar risk mitigation process? How is it working out with community? Response: The school districts that have programs are North St. Paul and Woodbury. They do have a protocol and risk mitigation in place and they will provide copies to SPPS. Minneapolis does not have JROTC.
- Have the rifles created a problem at the schools that have them? No response:
- What has been the impact at Como High School? Response: There have been no negative impacts at Como. The people at school have thought about the program, it has been kid initiated. There is the news worthiness of having replica rifles and the possibility of an accident. However, the rifles will be kept in a locked room in a locked cabinet. They will be transported in cases or boxes and will not be visible until drill/competition occurs.
- Have there been concerns from kids? Response: JROTC participants are respected by the rest of the students and the JROTC members are treated as part of the regular population
- Has the issue of adding rifles to the JROTC group been discussed with non-ROTC groups? Response: No, however it is common knowledge that this request has been made.
- So this requires a change to policy with exception language; implementation within buildings would require a procedure? Response: The policy does not need to be changed as the Superintendent can grant an exemption. Should there be specific exemption? If there were additional procedures needed, it would be appropriate to make a procedure plus building-by-building protocols for storage and securing rifles.
- What is in the buildings now? Response: Nothing is used currently, not brooms, sticks, etc. The competitions they participate in now are precision marching.
- It was requested that an image of the rifle be put on the screen. This was so the group would realize the drill rifles look like real guns and they would be in the buildings, students would be handling them and they would be seen by students, families and the community. The Board must attend to the image this would convey to the community and attentive to issues of weapons in the schools. Does this align with SSSC vision or goals?
- It was noted that what could be beneficial about this opportunity is a continuation of education for students in JROTC and for them to talk about how to handle situations with peers. There are programs at some schools for archery and sabers are used for some JROTC units. JROTC supervisors would be very careful in leading students in the use of the drill equipment. It is also an opportunity to be seen in the context of competition. This is an opportunity for cadets to learn and share with peers and the community.
- National competitions do they use Daisy drill rifles or another weapon type? Is there another item that would meet the requirements for competition? Response: The Daisy Drill Rifle is designed to look like a fake weapon that is clearly identifiable as a drill weapon. The Daisy is a replica of a 1903 bolt-action rifle. The JROTC Program specifies a specific type of weapon. This weapon cannot accept a cartridge, it is designed only for drill. In drill, the weapon is always associated with uniform. What is key for mitigation is that an instructor is always present, the weapon is never visible in the open in public except where it is associated with a ceremony, drill or with uniform or associated clothing.
- Students would not take the weapon home individually, correct? Response: No, weapons would be secured and under supervision of a JROTC instructor.
- Is there a difference in scholarship availability by adding this type of competition? Response: Drill develops character skills but there are some scholarship incentives that go along with it. Two additional 15-cadet units would be formed, the armed drill team and captains/leadership opens up another access to scholarships.
- Back to the image SPPS is trying to convey to the community, leadership can be taught in many, many ways. Adding guns does not convey the right image.

Motion: Ms. Street-Stewart moved the Committee of the Board recommend the Board of Education amend Policy 903.00, Dangerous Weapons, Firearms, with an exception, based on the models provided, permitting drill weapons for the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC). It should include a specific reference to the Daisy Drill Rifle and be followed by a statement that any violations with the weapons or threats of violence must be reported to the Superintendent and failure to report such would be subject to disciplinary action. Mr. Hardy seconded the motion.

Motion passed 5 in favor 1 opposed (Ms. Carroll)

A friendly amendment was suggested that a periodic review of Policy 903.00 be included in order to assess how the policy and procedures are impacting the program and the community view. It was noted by the maker of the motion that she preferred a clear, separate directive to administration that SPPS implement an annual evaluation process of Policy 903.00 within the procedure specific to it. It was requested that the monitoring specifically include community concerns.

B. Bullying

Will the discussion be framed within Minnesota Law? Do SPPS policies meet state requirements regarding bullying? Yes, actually SPPS is an example policy used by other districts in modifying their own.

SPPS has a number policies addressing bullying in its various forms. The most specific is the *Student Behavior Handbook: Rights and Responsibilities*. That contains a definition of bullying which relates directly to the State statute: "*Bullying/Other Harassment: participating in, or conspiring with others to engage in bullying or other acts committed with the intent to injure, degrade, disgrace or intimidate other individuals. This includes sending or posting harmful text or images using the Internet, wireless phones or other communications.*" (MN Statute 121A.03, SPPS Policy 415.00 and 520.00).

Violations and potential interventions are outlined in a chart within the Handbook on pages 18-20. Bullying can be a Level 1-4 offense depending on the frequency and severity. This makes it clear to administration and staff what is required to define and deal with bullying.

SPPS's policy is one of policies in the State that is best aligned and is most broadly representative of State law as being more inclusive of all types of bullying with consequences stated for various level of bullying along with a requirement to report all types of bullying for staff and students.

What is the District doing about proactively educating students about bullying? The elementary counselor stated that the counselors have provided a curriculum unit for K to 8th grade entitled "Steps to Respect" and "Second Steps Program" that provide specific lessons on how to handle conflict, manage anger, get along with others, etc. It is taught in classrooms by either counselors or social workers, depending on which school has. It is a research-based curriculum which if embedded into classroom lessons for the whole school community is more effective. It is not stand-alone lessons but language the entire staff uses. There is a staff and parent component as well to teach the parents what the kids are receiving so there are no mixed messages and they can reiterate that language regarding bullying. This curriculum is a Tier I curriculum for all students and it will be moved up to the junior high level next year as well as to middle schools moving up to 8th grade.

The Lead Social Worker said the social workers and counselors are working together on these issues to share resources and build capacity to address the issues. They are also working with students with disabilities who are very vulnerable to bullying and developing relationships with parents and families so they know who to go to if bullying occurs. They provide strategies

around self-advocacy and self-determination. There are some social skills curriculum used within special education to work with students to improve skills in addressing bullying, anger management, etc. They are also participating in supporting PBIS.

At the secondary level, school counselors respond to bullying on a needs basis. In middle school and junior high, there are opportunities for students to be part of counseling groups to learn skills and strategies to deal with various situations. At the secondary level, students are mostly supported on an individual basis and in collaboration with administrative teams to respond to situations that come to their attention. One area to strengthen is in middle school transitions, some schools have used WEB (We All Belong) where peer mentoring is incorporated and culture-building programming works to promote a safe culture for all students.

The District provides additional professional development to new administrators on all policies with emphasis on this one particularly so kids can feel safe and learn. The District is trying to develop consistency across the district in how principals handle these issues.

A portion of the ARRA money was targeted to special education and a couple of schools implemented Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) which has since been expanded to many more schools. PBIS gives schools the ability to collect data on student behavior. Schools have been collecting and analyzing data about when and where misbehavior is occurring and looking to find ways to intervene before the behavior occurs. Each school has selected two to three expectations that are school-wide for consistency of behavior and expectations. PBIS helps in finding ways to change a situation to enable students to be successful.

In terms of the PBIS framework, it is finding ways to increase learner engagement with a focus on the achievement piece in a climate where students feel safe. PBIS provides a way to have clear articulated visions with articulated expectations. Each building needs to own the process and apply it consistently across all grades levels in the school. It has both a horizontal and vertical articulation. The challenge is not only how to identify the curriculum but how to operationalize that across the entire system and engage parents and students in self-management of learning. There also has to be the data management piece that looks at and analyzes the data along with the performance management perspective about how to hold everyone accountable to do what they are expected to do.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- With practices and policies in place, at the elementary level how realistic is it that the District can contain 90% of the bullying practices before students move on to high school? Response: The elementary kids get the Tier 1 curriculum immediately on entering school. Even with this there is always a group of kids who do not get it. The data collected around behavior and bullying to track office discipline referral sheets define the issues more closely and accurately. Those kids move into the Tier 2 intervention piece. This works to find why the behavior is happening and provides them the skills or knowledge to address the issue. In PBIS, behavior is not punished, it is taught. It is about skill building, identifying the issue and providing skills to deal with it. The goal is to be sure by the time the kids move from 6th grade and transition into junior high that they have the right skills. It is about the training of students and staff in defining issues and modeling behavior. Part of professional development is the knowledge that adults influence kids' behavior either positively or negatively. The staff is educated about mental health issues with kids, why they are doing the things they do and how to modify behavior to remedy the issue. It is the District's responsibility to get to the point where there is no bullying as students move through grade levels.
- What specifically is being done on a case-by-case basis for individuals in high school who are bullied (verbal, social media bullying within school, waiting for bus and taking the bus, etc.)? Response: The District needs to bring all staff in on the information about bullying.

As kids get older, they are more able to hide behavior and/or the effects of other's negative behavior. There is a need to find ways to identify and report incidents accurately and to have procedures in place to deal with the issues on a one by one basis as incidents come to staff's attention. In other words to recognize it is happening and to address it in a proactive way. Cyber bullying is the most difficult to address as it takes place outside school time. Parents need support in how to deal with the issue.

- PBIS is powerful and is working. However, in grades 6 through 12, adults particularly are in denial, a definitional denial. There is too much tolerance and acceptance of poor behavior; it is quite widespread. How is the District moving more aggressively toward telling staff what is or is not acceptable and how to deal with it? These issues belong to all staff. How is the District ensuring staff know what is working and what is not working and how the kids perceive it. If kids do not feel efforts are making a difference it just will not work. How aggressively is the District moving to include students and families in defining what bullying is and what needs to be done classroom by classroom to address the issue? Response: SY 11-12 is the third year middle schools will be involved in PBIS. Every school must supply a clear, well laid out plan for the first week teachers are back and the first week students back. These must set expectations, reinforcement of those expectations and provision of rewards. These plans must be revisited periodically throughout the year to ensure they are being effective. Middle school will be engaging in a six step data approach which specifically looks at behaviors that lead to dismissal or suspension and what are the causes of that and what strategies can be specifically applied to reduce the behaviors.
- Administration was asked to follow this on over time from the kid's perspective. Is anything getting better? Response: SPPS used to do a student survey, it is a Minnesota State survey. It measures more what staff and students are feeling around relationships, safe and secure environment, etc. The reports are received from the counseling department. The reports are used to define patterns and provide data that can be used to indicate where changes need to be made.
- How can real counseling be done for silent victims? What strategies are provided for students to use to avoid becoming victims?
- What about inappropriate behavior in hallways? Every teacher should get involved and intervene. What is being done to find out why teachers do not intervene? How does the District convey administrative support to teachers for intervening? How does administration make teachers comfortable in intervening? Response: First of all, kids need to be taught about appropriate behavior in the halls. Secondly, there is active supervision when staff helps the kids to move along and demonstrate expectations of proper behavior.
- How does the system help victims/kids cope and feel safe, but their peers who observe bullying, how does the District help them feel safe to support their peers being bullied? How do they get the tools to talk to adults about the situation? Response: It is about relationships, one adult to one student, a positive relationship between adults and students. The problems will not stop until there is a relationship for each student with an adult.
- Again, how do you give teachers strategies to use in the hallway if they do not know the kids involved? Response: You need to establish expectations and patterns of behavior and give staff strategies to deal with students who are not known.
- How do you help secondary students deal peer to peer? Response: Again, relationships are critical and they need to know what avenues/mechanisms are there to help deal with the issues.
- Areas to consider were brought forward in a couple of categories that could be rolled out over the coming year: (1) The intention on the individual reaction: behavior modification and professional development for staff in relationship to assessment of incidents. Students have indicated there is no time when all students get together to address the issues, an assembly convened for the purpose of discussing bullying. (2) In general, the parents and public are not as informed about what SPPS is doing with technology and training actively engaged in addressing issues and in policy implementation.

- The proposal was made that SPPS find ways to assemble students in their school sites with an agenda that is student directed. A time when they can talk about this and bring their own solutions forward. What is the impact of the training that has altered the environment in the schools and what still needs to be addressed. Secondly, the reality of respect – respect for property, language, dress, etc. Have a conversation at the student level and with the broader public. An intentional facilitated discussion and as recommendations or comments are made, they can be incorporated into something that can be addressed by the Board. Next, how does SPPS equip individuals to report accurately on bullying issues, to help students to speak to adults who are authority figures and move past the intimidation of power and report on what happened. In the end, adults are not always helpful, group norms need to be addressed and have to be agreed to. There is a need to find, within the student body, leaders who are key to the solutions. Peer leadership with official recognition – visible, identifiable and trained.
- Other items to be considered at future COB meetings:
 - An indication of how PBIS has been implemented and where schools are in the process.
 - A breakdown of the latest Minnesota State Climate Survey – level by level for elementary, middle and secondary
 - What can be done at the student level with a severe punishment for bullies and some sort of consequence/accountability for staff for not being effective in intervening?
 - Interest was expressed in having data about climate on all students every year so the implications of what is working can be known. This should be in sufficient detail to isolate what the remaining issues are. It needs to be in enough detail to isolate where it is not working in order to allow interventions (both student and staff). It also needs to get at specific populations – color, poverty, protected class, LGBT, short, tall, fat, etc. – all the kids to find ways to improve climate.
 - Where is SPPS on the restorative justice programs?
 - For parents how do they recognize bullying behavior in their own kids or as victim, what tools are available, whom do they contact, etc.
 - Cyber bullying issues
 - Are there “subgroups” within the district that establish a specific set of rules or a culture that is creating issues?
 - What about bullying among staff/adults – adult peer bullying.

C. Standing Item: Strong Schools, Strong Community Update/Program Changes

1. **Update on Action Teams**

The Chief of Accountability, Planning and Policy stated teams are into round two meetings; they are in the forming stage, starting to dig into and refine their charge and, for some, narrowing the scope of work (or expand). Administration is looking at reaching out to find out why there has been a shortage of attendance so absences do not affect the dynamics of the groups. There have been meetings with co-chairs and note takers to discuss logistics. There have been some schedule changes for teams to address summer issues. A web page has been established for each team. Staff will provide regular updates on how the process is working..

It was noted there needs to be an understanding of what kind of product administration is looking for in the end. Understanding that would help the focus and get expectations aligned. That needs to be clarified to the groups. It needs to be specific in order to help participants. Perhaps take the charge and turn it in to a question or questions, define what area(s) need to be focused on.

D. Standing Item: Policy Update – No report.

E. Work Session

1. **Access to 360**

As of July 1, 2011, alarm monitoring for the buildings will be automated. Access for the buildings will remain 24/7 but the entry call is being directed to the monitoring company. Board members were informed about the changes and given information on how they would access the building.

III. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: **Mr. Brodrick moved the meeting adjourn. Mr. Risberg seconded the motion.**

The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m .

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Polsfuss
Assistant Clerk