

Suffield, Connecticut
Approved by Bd. of Ed. 12/04/2023

Board of Education Special Meeting
Suffield High School Media Center
November 20, 2023

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Board members Josh Barrows, Tracy Cloyd, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry (arrived at 6:03 p.m.), James Mol and Maureen Sattan; Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel

Absent: Jamie Drzyzga, Glenn Gazdik

Board of Education Workshop – Kindergarten Eligibility

Gina Olearczyk, A. Ward Spaulding School Principal, and Nikki Kupec, A. Ward Spaulding School Assistant Principal, presented on Kindergarten Age Changes. Principal Olearczyk reviewed current legislation, Public Act 23-208, that states students must now be five years of age on or before the first day of September of any school year. She said students who are born between September 2 and December 31 will no longer be automatically eligible for kindergarten as they had been previously and would need to potentially attend preschool another year. Principal Olearczyk said the State will allow exceptions for these students based on a written request from the parent/guardian and an assessment provided by the school. Principal Olearczyk said if a child receives special education services and does not meet age eligibility, the child's Planning and Placement Team (PPT) will review/revise the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) to meet the child's programming needs. The preschool program will be discussed with Dr. Diana Kelley when she presents her budget to the Board. Principal Olearczyk said Connecticut was one of a few states that had the eligibility start date of December and is now aligning themselves with the majority. Principal Olearczyk discussed possible options families may be provided if their child does not meet the new age requirement. Superintendent Van Tassel said magnet preschools may offer automatic enrollment into kindergarten which could potentially lower kindergarten enrollment in Suffield. Principal Olearczyk said she has reached out to other districts to learn what type of assessment they will be providing to those who seek early enrollment.

Board members discussed the impact the age change will have on currently identified preschoolers and peer models. Board members discussed how homeschooled preschoolers would meet the readiness requirements, how many fourth quarter birthday babies may seek an exception, and how it will all be communicated to families. Board members discussed the potential frustration families may face due to this legislative change and spoke in support of an approach that makes minimal changes to the currently used process with reconsideration going forward based on how other districts may successfully implement any change.

Executive Session

At 6:50 p.m., Cloyd moved, Finnigan seconded to go into executive session for the purpose of holding Board of Education candidate interviews, inviting in Superintendent Van Tassel and Candidates A, B, C and D.

Superintendent Van Tassel joined the executive session at 6:50 p.m. Candidate A joined the executive session at 7:00 and left at 7:25. Candidate B joined the executive session via Zoom at

7:30 and left at 7:50. Candidate C joined the executive session at 8:05 and left at 8:25. Candidate D joined the executive session at 8:30 and left at 8:55.

The executive session ended at 9:13 p.m.

Discussion/Action Items

- Possible Appointment of Board of Education Member

MOTION #24-16: Board member Mol moved to appoint Samuel Toskin to the Board of Education to fill the vacancy from Terry Antrum's resignation for the remainder of his term ending 11/2025. Barrows seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **6-0-0**. Board members stated they were impressed with all candidates, thanked them for their interest in the position and look forward to working with each of them in the future. Board members congratulated newly appointed Board member Toskin and welcomed him to the Board.

Adjournment

Mol moved, Cloyd seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of December 4, 2023.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maureen Sattan
Board Chair