

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Media Center
December 18, 2023

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Present: Board members Josh Barrows (via Zoom), Tracy Cloyd, Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Glenn Gazdik, James Mol, Sam Toskin and Maureen Sattan; and Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: Brian Fry

Board of Education Workshop

● **PSAT Update**

Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi presented the October 2023 Suffield High School PSAT results, along with Stephannie Holland, the district's 6-12 Humanities Curriculum Coach and Dom Casolari, the district's 6-12 Math Curriculum Coach. Members of the Board of Education requested the presentation after expressing interest in learning about such data closer to the time the district receives the data.

○ **English Language Arts (ELA) PSAT Test Results**

For ELA testing, the data show 60% of 9th graders meeting or exceeding the benchmark, 69% of 10th graders meeting or exceeding the benchmark, and 69% of 11th graders meeting or exceeding the benchmark. All of those grade levels exceeded the percentages of students meeting or exceeding benchmarks across the state. The data show the number of Agriscience and Special Education students meeting or exceeding expectations is substantially lower compared to results achieved among all Suffield students who took the exam. The district noted numerous strategies being implemented to improve the results including revising units of study, revising grading practices and providing students with test taking strategies.

○ **Math PSAT Test Results**

For Math testing, the data show 43% of 9th graders meeting or exceeding the benchmark, 43% of 10th graders meeting or exceeding the benchmark, and 37% of 11th graders meeting or exceeding the benchmark. All of those grade levels exceeded the percentages of students meeting or exceeding benchmarks across the state. The data show the number of Agriscience and Special Education students meeting or exceeding expectations is substantially lower compared to results achieved among all Suffield students who took the exam. The district noted numerous strategies being implemented to improve the results including increasing opportunities for 6-12 department meetings, re-examining curriculum units, and revising grading practices to reflect student learning, and implementing strategies to improve student retention such as utilizing more cumulative assessments.

Board members asked numerous questions about the PSAT results and what the district is focusing on to drive improvement. In response to a question about how teachers navigate

different learning levels, the district noted that assessments are a snapshot in time and it can be helpful to look at a variety of assessments to gauge student performance and that the district is focused on elevating the rigor of classes, which means it will take time for students to catch up. Board members expressed concerns about the number of students who are at grade level as indicated by the PSAT results, why course grades are not more reflective of the struggles students are encountering, the achievement gaps between various populations of students, and the need to get more parents engaged in student learning and success. Board members expressed support for raising the bar with grading, offering more cumulative assessments, refining the curriculum, and making it clear what skills are needed in order for students to move on to another level. They also expressed a desire to learn more about what grade levels the gaps in learning are starting to become evident and what is being done at the lower grades to address such concerns early to prevent students from falling further and further behind as the years go on.

Tracy Cloyd left at 8:35 pm and returned at 8:38 pm.

Glenn Gazdik left at 8:40 pm and returned at 8:42 pm.

- **2023-2024 Class Size, Staffing and Enrollment Report**

Dr. Van Tassel presented the 2023 - 2024 Class Size, Staffing & Enrollment Report to the Board, which provides an exact count of positions in the school district to aid with budgeting and staff accounting. The report notes that student enrollment mirrored the previous year, with a sharp increase in Pre-K students compared to the previous year and a decrease in Kindergarten enrollment compared to the previous year. The report also details class sizes across the district, with lower enrollment noted in some French and Agriscience classes and reduced class sizes also noted in some periods as a result of high school senior privileges. The report notes that high school enrollment is expected to drop by 40 students in the coming year. The report details a decrease in staff this year even though enrollment did not drop. It also notes greater than expected savings related to staff turnover. In response to questions from Board members, the district noted various ways it is looking to address enrollment changes, including exploring ways to combine some sections of academic courses and opening some Agriscience courses to the general student population.

Josh Barrows left the meeting at 9:00 pm when the district's Zoom link experienced challenges.

- **FY2025 Budget Schedule**

Board members discussed adding a third meeting in January for budget presentations, which is likely to take place on Monday, January 29, 2024. A meeting with the ACCE committee, including a walk through of Suffield Middle School, is expected to be scheduled for the evening of Thursday, January 25, 2024.

Adjournment

Tracy Cloyd moved, and James Mol seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:21 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of January 2, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary