

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

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

**December 5, 2023
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Vice Chair Kopp.

2. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: J. Kopp, J. Vue, J. Foster, H. Henderson, U. Ward, C. Allen, Z. Ellis
Superintendent Gothard

Staff: C. Long, A. Collins, Y. Vang, S. Schmidt de Carranza, S. Dahlke, J. Turner,
S. Gray Akyea, J. Danielson, A. Kunz, E. Wacker, C. Green, C. Anderson,
K. Kimani, K. Morris, B. Schmidt, H. Nistler, T. Parent,, N. Páez, T. Sager,
D. Abrams, M. McHenry, L. Corey, D. Payne, P. VanKirk, C. Anderson-
Manning

Community: L. Bolton, T. Lonetree

3. 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 Foster. It passed by acclaim.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Superintendent Gothard began the meeting by welcoming everyone, and provided a few, brief updates. He thanked the Office of Communications and others for their work in contributing to the Superintendent's Virtual Meeting on Monday, with about 500 community members logging on to view and engage. He appreciated the efforts for that meeting.

He also shared an update on the Right to Read Family Night last week, and it felt great to open the school in the evening for our families to be there and discuss literacy. Families, community partners, board members, and others were in attendance to view this incredible documentary about the ways in which we do our work to improve long-term student outcomes and to change the trajectory of the lives of our students. He also provided an update upcoming Right to Read events, including at Humboldt and Central in the upcoming days and weeks. He encouraged folks to share the online flyers with event information, and thanked the team for the first SPPS Reads event, and looks forward to many more.

Director Kopp noted the documentary is amazing, and recommended others to also view it.

Director Ward noted a question if there is another venue for folks to view the movie outside of these events, and at their own homes. Superintendent Gothard noted it is not available outside of these events without a cost, as SPPS currently has a special license to show it. There is a website with a trailer and others ways to view it as well.

5. SCHOOL YEAR 2022-2023: DISTRICT OUTCOMES

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Dr. Stacey Gray Akyea, Executive Chief of Equity, Strategy and Innovation, to present the three-plan alignment and school year 2022-2023 outcomes. Within the presentation, the alignment of SPPS Achieves, World's Best Workforce, and Achievement and Integration plans were reviewed, including the timeline for each, and goals and outcomes for each plan.

Within the School Year 2022-2023 Outcomes portion of the presentation, data on kindergarten readiness, academic achievement in math, academic progress in math, academic achievement in reading, and academic progress in reading were reviewed. Outcomes for students receiving special education services, students learning English as a second language were also presented. Outcomes related to college, career, and life were also discussed. Work in decreasing disparities was highlighted, as well as work sampling for language and literacy, FAST: Typical/Aggressive Fall to Spring Growth, MCA: Reading, and ACT: Reading were also shown.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Ward requested further information on the negative percentages, and how that number is calculated and what it represents. Response: The number is derived from all the data and the range is then averaged and standardized to obtain the d-index – the dissimilarity index. More details were also provided on the calculations.
- Director Allen requested information on the categories noted within the presentation. Response: Those are based on how students identify in our student system, and each student is grouped into only one of the categories.
- Director Allen also requested information on resources or strategies for the changes, especially due to MCA testing during the pandemic.
- Further details were requested on the benchmarks on Slide 16. Response: They are based on the probability of earning a B or higher grade in a college-level course. It was noted that with the state investment in higher learning, we either need to close the economic gap or increase opportunities for students. Superintendent Gothard noted that there is a new way of looking at skills to succeed in college and beyond. We continue to make great strides and align our career pathways.
- One question noted was the five-year targets based on SPPS Achieves, and it will be helpful to have interim targets.
- Director Vue requested information if we are at a place since COVID and the pandemic, where the data has level-set and collection of data and support of students.

8. BREAK FOR TRUTH IN TAXATION HEARING AT 6PM

Director Kopp moved to recess the meeting. Director Henderson seconded the motion. It passed by acclaim.

The meeting moved to a recess at 5:53 p.m.

9. CONTINUATION OF AGENDA

Director Kopp moved to reconvene the meeting. It was seconded by Director Henderson. The motion passed by acclaim.

The meeting reconvened at 6:29 p.m.

5. BUDGET ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY VALUES

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Erica Wacker, Director of Communications, to present the Budget Engagement and Community Values presentation. The engagement objectives were reviewed:

- Round 1
 - Gather feedback regarding how we can communicate effectively about school and district budgets
 - Gather a set of community values that can be used to inform the resource allocation process
 - Provide a basic understanding of school district and school buildings budgets
- Round 2
 - Build trust between community stakeholders and the district by communicating back how gathered feedback was used to make resource allocation decisions and influence communications around the budget

Details on the engagement summary were shared, including a total of 10,739 participants in engagement opportunities such as Marnita's Table Community Conversations, Student Convenings, Community Values Engagement Sessions, and Surveys. Further details were then shares about each of these opportunities. More information was also shared about the number of participants in the community values phone back outreach opportunity. The responsibilities, members, and schedule of the SPPS Finance Advisory Committee were also discussed. A timeline for budget and community values next steps was also shared.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Henderson requested clarification on Round 2 of engagement, and if that will be a summary of all information learned? Going off the timeline, the decisions will have been made, and at that point, we will be sharing with community? Response: Round 2 will be the compilation of all feedback and sharing. The timeline information is correct.
- She also noted an observation and wondering about how we are continuing to share or think about communications to the Board and community for the rationale of decisions, which will be important in building trust.
- Ms. Abrams noted that allocations will be going to schools and departments earlier than in the past, and that timeline has been pushed to be sooner.
- Ms. Wacker also noted that there is an online form for community members to submit feedback, and smaller touchpoints for families to engage.

- There are also spaces centered around staff and gathering feedback from them, including meetings and surveys that were open to all. Within the summary provided to the Board, there is also a link to a longer summary of each engagement opportunity, with staff in its own section.
- Director Ward noted that in the session he was able to attend, it was incredibly well-organized, and folks felt welcome, and there was space for everyone. He thanked the team for their great work.
- He went on to note that Marnita's Table, while a great event, was not billed as a budget event, and wondering why it is included in this summary. Response: While it was not specifically for the FY25 budget, it was designed to college engagement related to SPPS Achieves, our priorities, instructional priorities and investments. We knew ARP funds would have a sunset date, and combined with our engagement for the FY25 budget, we created a needs assessment for a foundation using community input, to base our decisions from the community values.
- Director Ward requested clarification on the phone bank data.
- Director Ward noted his concerns where the focus is on community values, and not specific input on the budgetary decisions. He noted hearing from folks that they were not aware the survey was related to the budget. He noted anxiety on how the feedback will be used, and is worried the feedback is not specific enough to give folks the opportunity to influence the budgetary decisions.
- He also requested information on the timeline for the budget to be presented to the Board to review. Response: The budget will come before the Board in June for final approval. Prior to that, it will also be presented at Committee of the Board meetings, beginning in May, and will continue to take feedback and refinement. Throughout January, March, and May, the SPPS FAC will also be observing the budget process, with opportunities for feedback, observation and conversation.
 - Director Ward noted that last year, the Board received the budget 3-4 days before they were asked to vote, and it was not a detailed version. Chief Sager provided additional details on the timeline
 - Director Ward noted that he is looking for a more detailed version of the budget and given time to review and make amendments. Chief Sager noted that while amendments to the budget would be somewhat unusual, if there are specific ideas, observations, and feedback, Administration is open to those.
 - Director Ward noted he believes this model is insufficient and needs to be dramatically reworked.
- Director Allen noted she is hoping to have a better understanding of the allocations to schools and departments, and overarching strategies and initiatives to continue to increase academic outcomes for students. She also agreed on the need for a detailed budget and understanding the strategies chosen and which are moving forward and be thoroughly involved in the entire process. Superintendent Gothard noted that our strategies are determined – it is staff who deliver those strategies, and we may not have the same amount of staff for next year, with decisions guiding principals based on projected enrollment and changes. Further discussion will be needed if the Board would like to be involved in staffing guidelines.
- Director Allen noted she would like to be informed about budget decision before meetings.
- Director Henderson noted information on ARP strategies and in talking about impacts and showing what has worked and not worked, and articulation of that information.
- Further discussion on staffing guidelines.
- Director Ward noted he felt the Board is expected to be a “rubber stamp” to the budget, without the opportunity to make amendments and to not see in details to weigh whether or not changes need to be made, and felt a change is needed to that dynamic. He also noted he has outstanding questions from the last budget engagement opportunity, and would like answers to them as well.
- Director Vue requested information on the synthesis of the presentations and engagement sessions for values. Response: Highlights of the summary include:

- Students' overall feeling of safety (both physical safety and emotional wellbeing)
- Students' ability to choose and access learning opportunities they are excited about
- Student voice and perspectives being embedded in school culture and decision-making
- Students are ready for post-secondary education and/or careers
- Inclusive and culturally responsive instruction
- Hiring staff that reflect the student population

This information includes a combination of students, parents, and staff, for a total of 10,739 participants. Director Vue felt this needed to be more condensed.

- He also requested information on how these values will be utilized with examples. Response: Our community has spoken about the value of students feeling safe – that's a non-negotiable condition for learning in our spaces. This includes physical safety, emotional safety, and safety in identity. This then becomes a parallel way in delivering teaching and learning. This then translates to how we allocate our resources and gain high leverage for items that are effective. We also ensure there is equity embedded in allocating resources across the district. Superintendent Gothard also provided information on the budget for Security and Emergency Management and funds in the safe schools levy. He also noted that yellow buses are preferred by students and families, and following Winter Break, Como Park Senior will have yellow buses again. We also have FTEs dedicated to school-based mental health, as we heard loud and clear that mental health is important to our community. The values apply to our everyday strategies and staff and spending resources.
- Director Vue noted that these are all good examples, and the need and value is very specific. While we will not figure it all out at this meeting, he looks forward to future meetings in convening with his fellow board members, and with the Superintendent.

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 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