

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

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

**November 8, 2023
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:33 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, K. Arzamendia, N.
Páez, J. Williams, L. Olson, A. Adams

Community: L. Bolton, T. Lonetree, L. Askelin

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 and Director Allen. It passed by acclaim.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Superintendent Gothard welcomed everyone to the meeting. He shared information about Election Day, and congratulated Director Allen on her victory. He also acknowledged Director Ellis for her eight years of incredible service, through challenging and remarkable times, as a parent, community member and an important member of the Board of Education.

He also shared his experience at the Council of the Great City Schools Annual Fall Conference in San Diego, CA from October 25-29. He noted it was a great conference with staff, and also two of our students. He shared more about them, as well as his role at the conference, including leading a task force meeting. He also shared about the presentation from our MLL team, as well as leading a session with Clark County and Palm Beach County schools regarding security and connections with students to help keep them safe. On Thursday and Friday, he helped to present on the student convenings with Boston and Milwaukee, and shared about the reaction to the student's, Osma's, perspectives in this session. He also shared about Anan's role in the conference, including on the national panel of students. She has a strong voice and is proud of her for stepping into that opportunity to share her experiences, including her experiences shared

in the Superintendent's student convenings last year. He thanked Dr. Gray Akyea for her role in helping to support the students as well.

He went on to provide an update on engagement around the FY25 budget work, and the Start, Stop, Sustain process in place as the expiration of ARP funds and strategic investments to continue. The decisions regarding the budget recommendations reflect the strategic plan, while we are in open negotiations with our bargaining groups, including SPFE, and some of their proposals require a significant investment. We will continue to work in collaboration with the Board and employee groups for a balanced budget and settle contracts for all groups.

Director Foster noted that in thinking about the students at the conference and the overall district voice of students, this is a great model, and to think about elevating student voice and respecting their voice in spaces and places. She also encouraged to continue to elevate intentions as we talk about culture.

Superintendent Gothard noted that he was invited to meet with students regarding air conditioning, and it was great to meet and connect with them.

He also shared his experience in meeting with a Boys Group at a district school, and the recent first meeting. There is one student in the group who was unable to attend for many meetings last year due to suspensions and challenges, and it was great to see him at the last meeting.

5. SCHOOL YEAR 2023-2024 ENROLLMENT OVERVIEW

Superintendent Gothard then welcomed Dr. Stacey Gray Akyea, Chief, Equity, Strategy & Innovation; and Kara Arzamendia, Director, Research, Evaluation and Assessment to present this information. Included in the presentation were details about caution for interpretation of the data, student enrollment figures for SY23-24, which include 32,789 total enrollment for PK-VPK through 12th grade. A K-12 Fall-to-Fall comparison was also provided with details that compared enrollment figures from last year to this year, a graph depicting the gains and losses within grade levels, Fall-to-Fall largest enrollment increases at school sites, and Fall-to-Fall largest enrollment decreases at school sites. Data was also presented on Fall-to-Fall enrollment changes for Envision-impacted schools. Enrollment trends were also reviewed, including the districtwide state funded enrollment decline over time and the decrease in total enrollment is lessening over time. Market share data was also presented, including that in SY22-23, SPPS enrolled 60% of the 51,819 school age students who live in Saint Paul; approximately 20,000 students enroll outside of SPPS each year with most enrolling in charter schools, then nonpublic schools, and other public districts outside of SPPS. Details were also shared (including the trend data from recent years) that:

- About 100 American Indian students enroll in charter schools and other public districts outside of SPPS
- Over 5,000 Asian students enroll in charter schools with about 500 enrolling in other public districts outside of SPPS
- More than 3,000 Black students enroll in charter schools with 832 enrolling in other public districts outside of SPPS
- About 1,500 Hispanic students enroll in charter schools, while almost 800 enroll in other public districts outside of SPPS
- Almost 500 students of Two or More Races enroll in charter schools, while another 373 enroll in other public districts outside of SPPS
- Almost 2,000 White students enroll in charter schools, while 1,000 enroll in other public districts outside of SPPS

Data (including the trend data from recent years) regarding continuation was also shown, including:

- The continuation rate for all grades PK-11 has been around 85%
- Preschool to Kindergarten continuation has the lowest rates of the transition grades
- In 22>23, the grade 5 to 6 continuation rate was 80%
- In 22>23, the grade 8 to 9 continuation rate was 80%

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Ward noted a question within the demographic information – are there less White students overall, or are they choosing to come back to SPPS? Response: They are a smaller population in the district, and White students make up about 15% of the 60% of 20,000 students to charter schools, so about 2,000. As far as if they are coming back to the district, we haven't looked at that or if they are enrolling somewhere else and returning, or if the population has been declining in the city in general.
- Director Henderson noted a question about PreK and continuation rates for sites with PreK classrooms in a building versus a hub. Response: We look at students who continue within the same building site, students who continue at another school in another district, and those who left the district all together for this presentation. Director Henderson noted it would be helpful to see that if families are accustomed to a building, if they continue there for first grade, and what it looks like for the hubs, and the differences in how to address moving forward.
- Director Henderson also requested further information on the continuation rates, and a clarification that the dot-plot graph shown is looking at different grade cohorts year over year, and is not continuation. She also noted questions about the 12th grade figures, and where students are going.
- Director Ward raised a question if the work from the Enrollment and Retention Committee has been seen, and if there has been an impact on enrollment. Response: We haven't looked at that specifically regarding the schools that were targeted, but can take a deeper dive into that. The Board would be interested to determine if the work was effective, and if it is something to continue, and a report back.
- Director Allen noted a question about information from exit surveys. Response: We have been collecting exit surveys from families, and look at that data quarterly, and it is compiled and planned to be shared. Much of the data shows the same 3-5 responses.
- What are the adjustments being made to alleviate some of the problems that families have noted? Response: One in particular is the East African Magnet School, and enrollment would look very different without that school as 80% of students are new to the district. Administration also thanked the team for the PreK initiatives, and investment in that work, including the 80% return rate, partnerships with HeadStart, nature-based PreK, and those students who will be arriving for Kindergarten in Fall 2024. Superintendent Gothard also noted that the market share is going down, while the total number of school age children is going down in the city, and that is impacting everyone. It's a great time for us to regroup and do targeted outreach and ways to draw students back – but there are limitations, such as facility space.
- Director Allen noted the decrease in teenage pregnancy rates, and enrollment at AGAPE. Response: Enrollment at AGAPE is down 16 students. There was further discussion on supports for students with childcare, and the efficiency in supporting childcare at one site or multiple sites across the district, and the history of childcare in SPPS, including with the County.
- Director Foster noted questions about the 6th grade continuation rates and our middle school model.

- She also noted questions on the qualitative data for 12th grade, and which portion of students went to a job or other setting. Superintendent Gothard noted there are bubbles within cohorts, and they may drop or increase from year to year, and this allows us to plan and factor in how to allocate resources at grade levels.
- Director Ellis requested information on tracking families and their Intent to Return Forms, and what are the multiple ways to check into data for continuation. Response: Students are counted when they show up to school, and October 1 to October 1 data, to be counted.
- Director Ellis also requested information on projections and asking families in PreK if they are returning, and how it works at a hub, and where they are being placed. Response: REA does the official count, but we use projections and data to prepare and plan for classrooms, and looking at school requests cards, and the School Choice Fair, or pre-planning.
- How does it work for families with a student at a hub? Response: If a child is at a hub, there is a seat reserved at their community school. We provide options to be welcoming and guide families to stay her, for a great opportunity to go to the hub, and engagement opportunities as well.
- Director Ellis also noted questions around transportation for families if their school they'd like to attend isn't near their home, but is near where they work. Response: It is an option, and transportation depends on where they live and go to school. The average SPPS family has 12-17 kindergarten choices with a bus, and there is a lot of school choice. It's difficult to visit 17 schools, so we encourage families to attend the School Choice Fair and meet with principals and staff.
- Director Vue noted that enrollment appears to be stabilizing, and then we can begin to grow, and requested information on the factors. Response: We did see an increase in enrollment throughout the last school year, so we started the summer in a better place, and with the East African Magnet and enrollment efforts and engagement, those efforts also helped. We have also invested millions of dollars, and are funded based on the number of students we have. Stability is important to sustain models. Chief Turner also noted this is an exciting trend, because as we become more stable, we can then focus on retention, including providing a high quality instructional investment in academic programming, and Student Placement Center placed 3500 students in August. Students are coming here, and we need to keep them – whether it's at School A or School B. That's where we'd like to see our efforts continue in helping schools with marketing and recruitment, and keeping the students we have. Increase in enrollment plus higher retention rates equals higher enrollment. Superintendent Gothard also wondered about the increase in yellow buses and their effect on enrollment, and we are not able to say that yet, but those are the kinds of things the community feels heard and options to provide support that's important to the whole picture.
- Director Ward noted it is interesting that a lot of different things contribute to stabilization, and he's interested in evaluating what's working and which had the largest impacts. He also stated that the committee set goals of a decrease of no more than 2.5%, which was reached, and the second phase is to increase for next year, which he hopes we are also able to accomplish.
- Dr. Gray Akyea noted that there have been many causes of disruption for families, from class size agreements, policies that require split classes, start time changes, and then distance learning and a strike, which is another cause of decrease in enrollment. Stabilization is a positive, and the ability to stabilize and have consistency is of the factors that helps. Consistency for the district, but predictability for families and students.
- Director Ellis noted it would be helpful to see information on the impacts on enrollment from start time changes. Dr. Gray Akyea noted that families already in the district tended to stay, but we did see Kindergarten cohorts decrease. They are matriculating back to SPPS, and we do have that information to share that Kindergarten students are coming back.

- Director Kopp noted question on how schools are faring due to multiple disruptions. She reiterated the information from the hubs, and family choice in schools for their students, and how families are using hubs effectively.
- She also raised a question on patterns based on geography, and those families who live close to a border, if we are seeing those families enroll in a district near the border.
- Superintendent Gothard noted that for stabilization and then growth, that we will need to expand and utilize the space we have and the different processes to think about that. It can be a challenge – including at the hubs, where we may not have space at a school building, but have space at another building and ways to navigate building enrollment in SPPS.

8. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 5:48 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