

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

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

**June 11, 2024  
4:30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Vice Chair Ward.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Board of Education: U. Ward, H. Henderson, E. Valliant, J. Vue, C. Franco, Y. Carrillo, C. Allen

Staff: Superintendent Thein, C. Long, S. Dahlke, S. Gray Akyea, T. Parent, T. Sager, K. Thao, L. Olson, A. Collins, E. Wacker, J. Danielson, K. Morris, S. Schmitt de Caranza, H. Nistler, N. Páez, M. McHenry, K. Kimani, B. Schmidt, C. Green, D. Moser, P. Pratt-Cook, Y. Vang, C. Anderson, J. Grathwol, J. Pettigrew, A. Vreeland, B. Bergstrom, J. Elling, A. Rios Dessalet

Community: M. Wall, P. Hendricks, K. Marin, S. Rios, R. Salinas, A. Madarvcaesa Rios, M. Higuera, Y. Remedis

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA**

**MOTION: Director Ward moved approval of the Order of the Agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Henderson. It passed by acclaim.**

**4. SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Superintendent Thein noted it has been an exciting week with the Monday as the last day of school full of excitement for the summer break.

**5. POLICY 816 – ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Superintendent Thein welcomed members of the Facilities team to present this topic.

The objective was reviewed and included to provide the Board with an update on the administration of Policy 816 - Environmental Health and Safety and share emerging factors that inform the work.

Policy 816 – Environmental Health and Safety was reviewed in detail, as well as an overview of the Environmental Services Group. Details on indoor air quality were provided, including qualities of good

indoor air quality (IAQ), IAQ management plan, annual IAQ assessments, Testing, Adjusting, and Balancing Program, COVID response, ARP and ESSER funding in IAQ.

The program for Radon was also highlighted, as well as information on Lead in Water with sampling and corrective action details and results, and statute changes. Emerging factors that the Environmental Services Group is also tracking were also reviewed, including ambient air quality issues, heat island effect and tree plantings, and sustainability.

The full presentation can found in the BoardBook.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Henderson requested further information on the threshold for indoor air quality as was noted in the chart in the presentation. Response: While the goal is to be at zero, there are mechanical systems that are not perfect and we are constantly working to catch and fix issues. While there are 3% that are not acceptable, there are 97% that are acceptable. We would be happy to see the numbers decrease, and will continue to work on lowering them.
- Does that mean 3% of our rooms are dangerous in terms of indoor air quality? Response: Many of the rooms are only slightly over the threshold. Higher levels are not harmful, but they may cause those in the room to become tired and can impact alertness if there is not enough ventilation, but it is not dangerous to health.
- Questions were also noted on the timeline for finding and fixing issues. It was also noted that if the initial draw of water is above the threshold, that flushing those fixtures will then cause the levels to be acceptable, and water movement and avoidance of stagnation is important. With corrective actions and automatic flushing system, levels will continue to decrease.
- Director Carrillo noted the coordination with Saint Paul Water Services for lead testing. While the City maintains the lead levels at the water main, we do care for the school lines. There is currently no SPPS site with lead service lines. There was further discussion on the residential lines. It is a coordinated effort between SPPS, our plumbers, and the regional water service.
- Discussion also focused on the issues of air quality and asthma rates near interstate corridors, and preventative measures both inside and outside of our buildings. There are well-documented issues of the environmental health impacts of the interstate system, and the lingering impacts of racial covenants and redlining. We are working to raise awareness and counteract those through partnerships, such as Great River Greening and the Tree Rust, as well as systems operations for indoor air quality for our students to learn in healthy environments. The site of Bruce Vento Elementary was noted that explicitly centered on the role of community health in the design and the urban forest. There are also great conversations with the City and neighbors.
- Director Allen noted questions on the timeline for the tree planting. Response: There were 30 trees planted at Rondo, with another 16 at Txuj Ci, and the partnership is ongoing. Great River Greening did receive a \$10M federal aware to focus on impacted communities in the area.
- Director Valliant requested further information on the impact on health once the trees have matured.
- Director Allen noted the asthma rates are due to the environment and the community around schools. The asthma rates at Capitol Hill and Maxfield may be different, because students who attend Capitol Hill attend from across the city, whereas at Maxfield, many of the students live in the community. It is a community issue beyond the responsibility of the school, and it's important to have a voice in that, especially with the new land bridge within Rondo.
- Director Valliant noted that whatever we do, we need to do now to intentionally protect our students, and not only be performative. We need to be planning, but also working to improve the environment for our students now and into the future.

## 6. 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION: UPDATE

Superintendent Thein then welcomed Jim Grathwol, District Lobbyist to present this report.

Objectives included a report of the bonding bill, supplemental budget bill, and policy initiatives.

The SPPS 2024 Legislative Agenda Overview included:

- VPK “fix” = A separate VPK seat allocation region for SPPS and MPS relieves administrative burden
- Compensatory “Hold Harmless” Extension
- School Resource Officers Revisions
- Clarify READ Act Definitions; Timelines and use of Appropriations
- Medicaid Reimbursement for School Related Health Services

Details were then provided on each of these overview items.

The SPPS Finance related 2024 Legislative Agenda provisions not adopted due to K-12 target were also highlighted, as well as the Forecast “Article” which included information on Chapter 81 – HF4518. Other highlights of the session were also reviewed including task forces and policies. Reports to the legislature and mandates were also highlighted.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- What is the cell phone policy? Response: It was discussed to provide more information on this item at the upcoming Policy Work Group, and it will be at the Board’s discretion.
- More information was also provided on the redesign to the compensatory education formula and Medicaid enrollment from DHS. It was also noted that school social workers will be helping to support students and families for the connections to be eligible for Medicaid reimbursement.
- Director Henderson requested further information about the VPK seats, with about 261 seats, which are funded at 0.6 ADM, as well as another 1000 seats for PreK students that are not funded, but attracts students and families to SPPS. It was noted that 60% of the VPK seats are funded by the State, with SPPS funding the remaining 40%.
- Is there an opportunity for the state to pay 100% of those seats? Response: Yes, we can have that as a legislative agenda item for 2025, as PreK is universally popular and effective, with data and families to support the program.
- Director Allen noted questions about the allocations for free school lunch. It is fully funded for SPPS. She went on to note that while other affluent districts are also receiving free school lunches, the State is still not fully funding PreK seats, and the school lunch program seems to benefit those middle and upper class families, because other students already had the FRL program. Our inner-city students are struggling with literacy, and it doesn’t feel like a big win to receive a free lunch. Mr. Grathwol noted that there will be better data of the participants, and feels the benefits will be visible for lower income students of color. This is also a topic of national interest, and other states are implementing similar programs. It was also noted that this program funds the basic meal, not a la carte options available. Ms. Koppen also noted that some families are just over the threshold for FRL, and only the full school lunch meal is covered at the free rate.

- Director Carrillo noted questions on the VPK seats into the upcoming budget. Response: No, those additional VPK seats are not included into this budget, but it is another variable that impacts the future budget revisions that are presented to the Board.

## **7. SPPS ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE TO THE 2023-2024 LATINO CONSENT DECREE (LCD) PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (PAC) ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Superintendent Thein then introduced members of the LCD PAC and staff from Office of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships to present this report.

The definition of the Latino Consent Decree was reviewed and includes Latino Consent Decree (often referred as LCD) it is a legally binding court order (Garcia et al vs. Independent School District 625, May 5, 1976) that requires the Saint Paul Public Schools district to provide specific services for Latino/EL students.

Those responsible include the joint responsibility of the Superintendent of the Schools, the members of the Board of Education of Saint Paul Public Schools, their successors, and its employees.

Demographics of SPPS students were also reviewed with 5,026 (15%) of students who identify as Latino/Hispanic; 3,359 (10%); 3,359 (10%) of students with a home language of Spanish, and 2,599 (7%) of students who are LCD/EL eligible.

The SPPS Action Plan was also reviewed, including the LCD Stipulation: Latino/Hispanic Culture, and recommendations including:

- Revise the 2006 curriculum for Embedding Latino Culture in K-3 Social Studies
- Create a K-12 Latino/Hispanic Culture curriculum map that shows parents what, when, and how this content is taught in their children's classrooms
- Create a report detailing how much Latino/Hispanic culture is taught in the academic Social Studies content area from grades K to 12

Details were then provided on the work together, including the initial collaboration with LCD and Objective #1: To create an awareness of culturally responsive instruction (CRI). More information was also provided on Culturally Responsive Instruction. Objective #2 is to engage LCD parents in reflecting on the new first grade social studies standards (strand 1-Civics). Standards and benchmarks artifacts were also shared. The districtwide timeline by years for the standards was also shown.

Further information was then shared on the recommendations listed above, and examples of the elementary and secondary snapshots of the audit.

Phase 2 of coordination was also shared, including six-week updates and timeline, and SPPS administration response coordination and those staff who will be leading this work.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

### **QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Carrillo noted questions on the benchmarks information provided. Response: Those are in response to the new benchmarks that were adopted in 2023, with the current older lessons from 2011.

- Is there a plan to rebuild our lessons to incorporate a wider gambit of understanding of the history of the people, as opposed to nations? Response: We are looking at the many connections with immigration, including programs, and the history of the people who have passed through and lives here. As we work with parents and families, it's important to elevate the voice of the people and to work with them beyond the previously constructed framework of constrained history.
- Questions were also noted on the meeting schedule for recommendations. Response: We are meeting every six weeks to proceed with the most recent updates.
- Who is responsible for teaching the curriculum? Response: K-5 teachers are responsible with secondary teachers in Social Studies. Professional learning development will be provided for the upcoming school year for teachers to understand the expectations of the LCD and the connections to continue to develop this curriculum together.
- Director Franco requested information on the professional development provided for staff. Response: We will be providing the actual language of the LCD with teachers to inform them of the decree. During Opening Week, there will also be professional learning and sharing of expectations and information on the audit and timeline and direction. The metrics were developed collaboratively with the LCD PAC and OFECP, and will engage with them to provide data on the implementation. More information was also requested on the medium in which PD will be offered.
- Superintendent Thein noted that the work will begin now, and the Board will be kept up-to-date on updates as they move forward.
- It was also noted the PAC will also be informed and be partners in this work.
- Information was also requested on the implementation of the new curriculum and timeline. Response: For the 2026 curriculum, we will look at lessons related to the natural alignment with the new state standards, and are planning to work on elementary curriculum writing next summer with MDE timeline recommendations for the new state standards. Other grade levels will then follow.
- Families also requested information on the sustainable process to ensure there is continuous improvement. Response: We will be working closely with the PAC, and there may need to be subcommittees. It will continue to be updated and refreshed, as it must be reviewed by MDE every 10 years with a public comment period, and Administration will inform the PAC of these times. Families then requested to be informed about the state standards and changes to occur and the timeline for those changes.
- For the teachers trained in cultural appreciations and Latin culture – will they know how to do it? Response: Yes, we do have a process for professional learning to provide specific and explicit teaching around the Latino/LatinX experience and ensure it is embedded into the new standards.
- Families also noted a suggestion for communication outside of their monthly PAC meetings, and more insights throughout the year. Response: Yes, we will find ways to communicate with families, especially for those who may not be able to make it to the monthly meetings.
- Director Carrillo thanked the parents and families for the participation and voice, and it's important to continue to work together.
- Director Vue noted questions to the LCD PAC about the presentation of the standards in terms of culture. Response: We believe the best way to address that is in the monthly LCD PAC meetings, which are once a month, and twice per month, and can meet more often as needed.
- A member of the PAC also noted that many families are from different countries within Latin America, and it will be relevant for students to talk about their individual cultures and for that relationship within the classroom to be represented and recognized.

## **8. FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET UPDATE**

Tom Sager, Executive Chief of Financial Services, was then introduced to present this report.

The presentation began with a review of the FY25 Budget Timeline, including that in June, the Budget will be acted upon by the Board. The FY25 budget building blocks, including school needs, requirements, community values and instruction, and essential services were also shown. Details were then provided on each building block.

Within building block 3: Community Values and Instructional Priority, details were shared on the engagement with stakeholders, a review of the 500+ commitments, and the three budget priorities. Programs aligned to Building Block 3: Community Values and Instructional Priority in the FY25 Budget were also presented – topics included Respectful and Reflective Schools, Literacy, and Safety and Sense of Belonging.

Details were also shared on the FY25 investments aligned to board parameters for the FY25 Budget, including:

- Increase expenditures related to early education investments to retain and prepare students for success through their elementary education and to meet third grade literacy standards.
- Include funding for efforts to increase enrollment, and monitor the impacts over the fiscal year.
- Expenditures related to increasing student engagement, decreasing absenteeism, and increasing academic outcomes for students showing areas of great concern as identified by the District, and will be monitored to identify the impacts of such investments.

The key drivers for school district budgets were also reviewed, including state and federal funding formula, student enrollment and demographics, employee contracts, local property taxes, and other economic drivers such as pandemic aid, recessions, housing market, inflation, and others.

The key factors in SPPS budget allocations were also highlighted, including legislative requirements and allowances, student enrollment and demographics, district and school allocation guidelines and procedures, public engagement with stakeholders about values, continued investments and alignment to the district's strategic plan, and compliance with Board policy 701.01 to maintain at least a 5% fund balance.

The FY25 budget drivers and output graphic were also displayed.

The FY25 General Fund revenue sources were reviewed and include:

- State Aid                      69%
- Property Tax                 21%
- Federal Aid                    6%
- Other Revenue                4%

The FY24 to FY25 General Fund expenditures comparison was also shown, as well as additional budget information available.

Figures were then shown for the Summary All Funds – Fund Balance Budget and General Fund Balance for FY25 Budget.

Next steps include the June 18<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of the Board of Education with the presentation of the FY25 budget for Board action.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

**QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:**

- Director Ward noted questions on the enrollment board parameter, and there is \$75,0000 allocated to those efforts.
- Director Allen noted questions about the closing of the East Early Childhood Hub and the partnership with Head Start. We do have a partnership with Head Start, which has been working well, and we anticipate it to be stronger next year. Schools did see an increase in applications for kindergarten at those sites. In terms of enrollment, we anticipated enrollment for future years. There will be one consolidated hub for both programs at the former Galtier school, and the majority of students at the East Hub will now go to the program at Txuj Ci and other schools. We are saving money with the closure of that Hub, but the number of seats did not decrease, but will be embedded into other sites.
- Director Allen requested information on the Safety and Sense of Belonging as a value, and follow-up from the 2021 report from the Equity Committee, and what has been implemented since the report. Response: Administration noted that from the student convenings conducted, the idea of academic safety and safety in identify in the classroom and building was noted, and alliances and clubs have been expanded and solidified, as well as anti-racist practices by teachers. There has also been work with staff recruitment and retention through the SUTR program, and it was noted through the student convenings that students requested staff who look like them in educator roles, and the note about student equity development and leadership based on a student ambassador program in other nearby districts. The systemic equity plan for the district was also noted and to build upon and establish across the district of a new, different, and better understanding of educational academic safety in the classroom.
- Director Allen requested further information on the racial equity professional development, including those who have access to it, with responses about equity development trainings and development, as well as work with Dr. Tracy Benson, principals and assistant principals with training in New Educator Week. Director Allen also noted that isolated racial equity training can be dangerous and is concerning.
- Director Carrillo requested further information on the summary focus for the General Fund and the beginning fund balance of \$158M. Further details were then provided on the ending fund balance.
- Director Franco requested further information on the total number of PreK seats for FY24 and FY25. The Board then engaged in discussion about the board parameter related to this topic.
- Director Franco requested a way for the program budgets to align with the expense codes for easier tracking and understanding.
- He also requested more information for a better understanding of the Administration breakdown for the budget, including the line items for SELT and other administrative budgets.
- Administration noted the role of the UFARS standards in the budget reporting and presentation. More information was also provided on UFARS.
- Director Franco also noted questions about the budget documents and technical questions about the coding for expenses and allocation guidelines based on state of contracts, including percentages of wages and material costs.
- Administration and the Board want to ensure the Board has the information needed to feel comfortable in acting on the FY25 budget at the next Regular Meeting on June 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Director Carrillo noted questions about the 1:1 iPad support and the budget for that initiative, including expenditures and budgeting for the next year.

- Director Franco noted emails from the community about composite classrooms, music and art classes, and information that is provided to the Board about these issues, including the impacts to students, in order to actualize those issues to have conversations in community.
- Director Valliant requested information on the differences in expenses between iPads and textbooks. There was also further discussion on the topic of books versus iPads for students.
- Director Ward requested information on the board policy of at least a 5% fund balance, and the amount of funds that is 0.07% that will be included in the remaining fund balance of 5.07%.
- Director Vue requested information on the “select partnerships” within the community values information within the presentation. Director Henderson also noted questions about the sustainability and decreases of partnerships. Administration noted that staff will be working with our partners on the amounts offered and if they are workable for them. Director Henderson noted those conversations will be important because the reality of the future of the partnership and their infrastructure will be important to discussion with community partners, schools and families in order to prepare. Administration also noted that in meeting with partners in the ARP work, we encouraged them to work on grants and to prioritize themselves in the work.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

**Director Ward moved to adjourn the meeting. Director Henderson seconded the motion. It passed by acclaim.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

## **10. WORK SESSION**

The Board then conducted a work session regarding B.I.G.G: Board Initiated Goals Governance.

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