

Seneca Valley School District



SCHOOL BOARD WORK SESSION Seneca Valley Senior High School Auditorium - 7 p.m.

Minutes

January 8, 2024

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Mr. Eric DiTullio, President, called the meeting to order at 7:21 p.m.
 - A. **Moment of Silence** – The meeting was opened with a moment of silence.
 - B. **Pledge of Allegiance** - Maddox Pindroh, a second grader at Haine Elementary School, continued the board initiative, “I Led the Pledge” by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.
 - C. **Roll Call** by Ms. Julia Benson, School Board Secretary, showed the following members in attendance: Ms. Leslie Bredl, Mr. Nick Brower, Mr. Eric DiTullio, Ms. Susan Harrison, Mr. Tim Hester, Mr. Mike Jacobs, Mr. Fred Peterson, Mr. Jeff Widdowson and Ms. Kari Zimmer.

2. **INFORMATION REPORTS**
 - A. **Student/Staff Recognition**
 1. Recognized for building a more inclusive, engaged and equitable school community, Ms. Michele Russo, English teacher at Seneca Valley Intermediate High School has been selected as a recipient of the Antisemitism Civic Courage Award by the Shine A Light organization. Shine A Light is a national, purpose-driven convening platform for organizations, companies, institutions and individuals to unite in shining a light on antisemitism in all its modern forms. Ms. Russo has traveled to Poland with Classrooms Without Borders to gain more knowledge about the Holocaust, and she also traveled to the south to expand her knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement. Ms. Russo is also the Education Initiative Coordinator for Leadership through Innovation in Genocide and Human Rights Teaching (LIGHT), a network of students, teachers and community leaders working together to bring innovation to human rights advocacy and genocide prevention.
 2. Twelve Seneca Valley students recently had their artwork accepted into Slippery Rock University’s (SRU’s) 16th annual Regional High School Art Exhibition. The exhibit featured student artwork from 15 local high schools which culminated with a reception and award presentation on Thursday, Nov. 16, at SRU’s Martha Gault Art Gallery. Students were led by Megan Bonistalli and Jason Woolslare, senior high school art teachers.

- B. **Dates to Remember** – Ms. Linda Andreassi announced the following dates to remember:

January 1-31	School Board Director Recognition Month
January 11	SV End of First Semester, Grades 7-12
January 12	Staff In-Service Day, No School for Students
January 15	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Act 80 Day – No School for Students
January 22	School Board Regular Meeting, 7 p.m., <u>Senior High School Auditorium</u>
January 23	Report Card Release, Grades 7-12

With January being School Board Director Recognition Month, Ms. Andreassi shared about the important role that the School Board Members play and thanked them for dedication to the district.

C. **Agency Reports**

1. Vo-Tech - Mr. Fred Peterson, Jr. reported that the next meeting is at the end of January and there will be more to report at the February School Board Meeting.
2. I.U. IV - Mr. Eric DiTullio reported that the next meeting is Jan. 24, and he will have an update at the February meeting.

- D. **Legislative** - Mr. Eric DiTullio reported that the House of Representatives will be on an extended holiday break until March 18. The Senate will reconvene on Feb. 5.

The House is at a 101-101 partisan tie following the resignation of Democratic Representative John Galloway who resigned due to being elected as a magisterial district judge in November. A special election for Feb. 13 has been scheduled by the speaker.

He also reported that the governor signed into law Act 26, which repeals a law that barred public school employees from wearing any dress, mark, emblem or insignia inductive of their faith. This comes following a 2003 Federal Court decision siding with an Indiana County teacher who was fired for refusing to conceal a small cross on a necklace. Every other state legislature has removed the ban from its school code. Pennsylvania was the final state to eliminate the ban, more than 20 years after it was found to be unconstitutional.

Additionally, Mr. DiTullio reported that the Governor's budget address will be in February, and it is expected to focus heavily on education funding.

Mr. DiTullio also reported on the Pennsylvania Public School Employee's Retirement System (PSERS) sharing that there were meetings held on Dec. 14, 15 and the reorganization meeting on Jan. 5.

At the Dec. 15 meeting, the 2024-2025 Employer Contribution Rate of 33.90% was certified, a decrease of 0.1% from the current year of 34.00%. In 2016, that rate was projected to be 38.24%. This is the seventh year in a row the contribution rate has been lower than forecast.

Additionally, it was voted to decrease the current rates to the basic T-E member contribution rate of 7.5%, T-F member contribution rate of 10.3%, T-G member contribution rate of 8.25% (defined benefit rate 5.50%; DC rate 2.75%) and T-H member contribution rate of 7.5% (defined benefit rate 4.50%; DC rate 3.00%) for the three-year period from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2027. This was removing the shared risk provision that was implemented in 2021.

At the Jan. 5 meeting, former Secretary of Banking and current governor appointee, Richard Vague, was elected chair and retiree, Sue Lemmo, was elected vice-chair. Due to the Investment Committee being a committee of the whole, they were able to elect Penn Trafford teacher Jason Davis as chair and treasurer, and Stacey Garrity as vice-chair. On Jan. 19, committee meetings will be held and elections for committee chairs will take place.

E. **Financial Reports**

1. Operations
2. Senior High Activities
3. Intermediate High Activities
4. Middle School Activities
5. Athletics
6. Food Service
7. Tax Collections
8. Capital Projects Funds

F. **Presentation of Program of Studies** – Dr. McKinley reported the Program of Studies (POS) for the 2024-2025 School Year. The presentation focused on the additions/changes in the Program of Studies and the Career Pathway emphasis.

There will be 27 new courses added to the POS for the 2024-2025 school year. Some include Criminal Investigation, Fashion Design and Merchandising, Art Exploration, CHS Business Management and Personalized Learning through Advanced Experience in Creative Wood.

Dr. McKinley shared the 2023-2024 school year student percentages for each career pathway:

Arts, Communication, and Media – 20%
 Business, Management, and Information Technology – 22%
 Industry, Engineering, and Technology – 21%
 Health, Medical, and Human Services – 22%
 Education, Public Safety, and Law – 15%

Mr. DiTullio raised the question as to which pathway students who attend Vo-tech fall into. Dr. McKinley shared that some have chosen the Industry, Engineering, and Technology pathway and some have chosen the Business, Management, and Information Technology pathway.

Dr. McKinley shared that through SchoolLinks, a college and career readiness platform, the counselors have become the experts and that they are training the

teachers who are having conversations with students on a regular basis about their pathway choice.

Mr. Peterson shared that he has read about the national teacher shortage along with the frustration that superintendent's have been having and he asked how we as a District are sparking an interest in students to pursue teaching after high school. Dr. McKinley shared that through the Advanced Experienced Child Development class, in addition to the preschool, these students job shadow our teachers each week. Additionally, job shadow is an option through the graduation project and both options are helping to spark interest in our students to go into education.

Dr. Vitale also shared that although we are hearing about a national teacher shortage, we haven't experienced this at this time. She attributes some of it to strong union agreements, competitive pay and that our veteran teachers are willing to mentor new teachers.

Mr. Jacobs shared that he is encouraged that the additional class list has both cyber and traditional classes and asked if we have the teachers for the additional classes. Dr. McKinley shared prior to adding classes, in addition to student interest, we need strong teacher interest. Dr. McKinley shared that the teachers are excited for the opportunity to offer the additional classes.

Ms. Bredl asked if classes would be dropped to make room for the new courses being offered. Dr. McKinley shared that there have been times that classes are capped or that only seniors are able to take it, but that they are constantly evaluating the demand for classes.

3. ACTION AGENDA

- A. **Public Comment** – There was no public comment.
- B. **Joint Purchasing Agreement AIU** - Approved the Joint Purchasing Agreement Resolution for the Allegheny Intermediate Unit for the 2024-2025 school year.
- C. **Conferences** – Approved the conference requests.
- D. **Settlement Agreements** – Approved the special education agreements with two students.
- E. **Student Adjudication** – Approved student adjudication #2023-24-10.
- F. **Personnel** – Approved the following personal items that were shared in backup and were discussed in the executive session.
 - 1. **Retirement** – *Administration* – Nannette Farmar
 - 2. **Appointment** – *Administration* – Dr. Tina Wentz
- G. **Student Trip** – Approved Ms. Claire Barker, IHS Choral Teacher, and Ms. Bobi-Jean Alexander, SHS Choral Teacher, to take students to Mercer Area Middle/High

School for Pennsylvania Music Education Association (PMEA) District's, January 24-26, 2024. Students will miss two days of instruction.

Mr. Peterson raised a question regarding the number of chaperones that will be attending the student trip. Dr. McKinley shared that there will be two chaperones from SV and that PMEA will also have chaperones at the festival and the hotel.

Mr. Hester motioned, seconded by Mr. Widdowson, to approve the Joint Purchasing Agreement AIU, conferences, settlement agreements, student adjudication, personnel, and the student trip. The motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

Dr. Vitale shared that Dr. Tina Wentz was approved to be the building principal at Rowan Elementary School in the motion that was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Work Session – November 6, 2023
- B. Action Meeting – November 13, 2023
- C. Reorganization Meeting – December 4, 2023

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

6. GENERAL FUND BILLS

Grand Total: \$7,832,567.99

7. CONSTRUCTION FUND BILLS

Grand Total: \$1,213,280.02

8. ADMINISTRATION

A. Board Policies -

- 1. Approve board policy 601, Fiscal Objectives, new, first reading.
- 2. Approve board policy 603, Budget Preparation, revised, first reading.
- 3. Approve board policy 604, Budget Adoption, new, first reading.
- 4. Approve board policy 610, Purchases Subject to Bid/Quotation, new, first reading.
- 5. Approve board policy 613, Cooperative Purchasing, revised, first reading.
- 6. Approve board policy 407, Student Teachers/Interns, revised, first reading.
- 7. Approve board policies, 351 (Administrative Employees), 451 (Professional Employees) and 551 (Classified Employees), Drug and Substance Abuse, revised, first reading.

B. Committee Assignments – Approve School Board committee assignments for 2024.

C. Vision to Learn - Approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Vision to Learn to provide vision examinations and glasses through a mobile clinic to referred students at no cost to the student's family or the District.

D. Transportation Contract - Approve the transportation contract for one family to transport their child to and from Easterseals Western and Central Pennsylvania

Linda Lanham Zeszutek School Program – North Site, 8057 Rowan Rd., Cranberry Twp., PA 16066 retroactive to November 27, 2023, when a nurse is not available.

- E. **Vo-Tech JOC Alternate Representatives** – Appoint Mr. Nick Brower and Mr. Eric DiTullio as Butler County Area Vocational-Technical School Joint Operating Committee (BCAVTS JOC) alternate representatives.

9. INSTRUCTION

- A. **Grant Disbursement** – Grant permission for and disburse, if approved:

1. Holocaust Curriculum Development and Holocaust/Genocide/Rights Violation Resource Center Creation grant in the amount of \$1,000 requested by Ms. Michele Russo. Funds will be used to purchase a set of a classroom books and to purchase Holocaust and other Genocide/Human Rights Violations related materials for the department and for the LIGHT Resource Center.
2. Butterfly Project grant in the amount of \$210 requested by Ms. Victoria Hinchee and Ms. Maggie Mollura. Funds will be used for purchasing butterfly kits. Participants in the Butterfly Project learned about children who died in the Holocaust and received a card with the story of a specific child. The participants then paint ceramic butterflies, inspired by the story of that child. The international movement aims to paint 1.5 million butterflies to honor the 1.5 million children killed during the Holocaust.
3. Ukrainian Refugee School Impact grant in the amount of \$28,180 requested by Ms. Annie Mersing. Funds will be used to provide programming and services to English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, particularly from Ukraine, that support successful integration and academic success.
4. Modern Band Starter Kit grant in the amount of \$5,000 requested by Mr. Kyle Masson, teacher at Ehrman Crest Middle School. Schools that receive the Modern Band Starter Kit receive \$5,000 worth of musical equipment and resources that will be used to empower students to think more critically about the music that they listen to.
5. Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grant in the amount of \$510,705 requested by Ms. Annie Mersing and Dr. Tony Babusci. Funds will be used to provide academic, artistic and cultural enhancement activities to students and their families when school is not in session. If approved, funding will be used for an afterschool and summer program at Ryan Gloyer Middle School that provides an opportunity for students to have access to homework help and tutoring; physical activity; family engagement opportunities; mentoring; remedial education activities; literacy education; English language learner activities; and STEAM initiatives.

- B. **Student Trip** – Approve the Academic Games League to the American National Tournament in Orlando, Florida on April 19-23, 2024, under the supervision of Ms. Julie Smith. Students will miss one day of instruction. The trip is at no cost to the District.

Mr. DiTullio raised a question regarding if the amount of the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grant is correct. Dr. McKinley shared that it is correct and that it will be approximately \$100,000 a year for five years.

10. **BUSINESS/FINANCE**

- A. **Food Service Equipment** - Approve the disposal or donation of an obsolete cooler.
- B. **Budget Transfers** – Approve budget transfers.
- C. **Long-Range Budget Model** - Approve an agreement with PFM Financial Advisors LLC for use of the long-range budget model at an annual rate of \$8,500.
- D. **Finalsite Agreement** – Approve the agreement with Finalsite for a 60-month term effective July 1, 2024, for a Content Management System (CMS) platform for the school and district web sites including theme, design and CMS conversion.

11. **PERSONNEL** – Approve resignations, appointments, leaves, retirements, and affiliation agreement.

12. **LETTERS SENT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD** - The following constituents communicated through the SVSD school board email account after posting the November 13, 2023, public agenda:

- a. Daniel Weimer
- b. Eric Goucher
- c. Jennifer Eaves
- d. Jennifer Fiore
- e. Sarah Cardosi
- f. Helen Testa

Mr. Peterson asked for an update on the Field House. Mr. Miller reported that, at this time, construction is complete but that we do not have occupancy to use it at this time.

Mr. Hester shared that the Rotary Club is holding a fundraiser on Feb. 19, and it will benefit the Hope Squad, inviting all to attend. Dr. Vitale shared that Hope Squad is a suicide prevention program for students in grades 9-12, also inviting everyone to attend the fundraiser.

13. **ADJOURNMENT** – With nothing to come before the board, Ms. Harrison motioned, seconded by Mr. Jacobs to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. The motion carried on a voice vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

14. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** – An executive session was held prior to this meeting to discuss personnel items.

Mr. Eric DiTullio, President

Ms. Julia Benson, Board Secretary