

Orange Southwest School District (OSSD)
Regular Board Meeting on Wednesday September 11, 2024
Randolph Union High School Media Center
6pm

I. Opening (6:00 - 6:05)

- Board Attendance: *Ensuring a quorum* Meeting called to order by chair Hannah Arias, 6:05
Board members attending – Hannah Arias, Anne Kaplan, Aimil Parmelee, Rachel Fish, Rachel Gaidys, Sarah Haupt. *Attending virtually* – Sam Hooper. *Other attendees* – Michael Clark, Heather Lawler, Robin Pembroke, ORCA Media, Kyle Southworth. *Public* -- Curtis Koren.
- Meeting Purpose: Financial and Facilities Monitoring, Negotiations – Facilities report deferred to Oct '24
- Review and Accept Agenda

II. Ownership Linkage (6:05 - 6:15)

- Public Comment: *Board welcomes comment but is not able to take any action. Comments limited to 3 minutes per speaker.*
Curtis Koren spoke to express concern that voting for the upcoming presidential election will be moved from the school to the church in Brookfield. They stated the school is a good community location enjoyed by the town, and voting is a good lesson in civics for the students.
- Welcome Rachel Fish – official welcome to new board member Rachel Fish as they attend their first board meeting

III. Board Process (6:15 – 6:25)

- Approval of Annual Agenda –Hannah Arias notes that the board's annual agenda has a format change, ENDS has been moved, EL monitoring has been modified as discussed at last month's meeting.
Vote -- Motion to accept and approve new format and changes by Aimili Parmelee, seconded by Sarah Haupt, motion passes unanimously.
- Reminder to sub-committees to schedule meetings – Hannah Arias notes this will be a standard slot for report outs from various sub-committees, reminds committee members to warn meetings with a simple agenda.

IV. Board Education (6:25 – 6:35)

- Report on VSBA Regional Meeting – Anne Kaplan reports on their attendance at the meeting. The Agency of Education is adopting new district quality standards (DQS) in which they expect districts to be proficient and compliant as of July 1, 2025. Anne believes if the board's own policies are being followed, those quality standards will be met. Heather Lawler comments that the AoE is also revising educational quality standards (EQS) effective the same date that will include ethnic studies across the curriculum.
- VSBA Annual Conference – this meeting is to be held October 24 and 25 in Lake Morey, all board members are welcome and encouraged to attend. Heather Lawler will provide the link for registration to members, each member would register independently, applicable discounts would be applied by the VSBA to the district's invoice to reflect discounts – those savings range from 4150 for 4 attendees up to \$300 for a team of 7.
- Report from Michael Clark re Policy Governance training opportunities – Michael leads discussion of EXCEerator training offered by the VSBA and the Policy Governance Maintenance Program, also through the VSBA. Both training have savings for multiple attendees, but the EXCEerator training is designed to be taken as a group, while the Maintenance program is able to be worked through independently. Board discusses the need for education on policy governance, the number of new board members, and the importance of using their budget prudently.
Vote – Anne moves to use funds from the Board budget for training, requesting Michael Clark to register for such trainings, up to \$3,000. Motion is seconded by Aimil Parmelee, motion passes unanimously.

V. Monitoring the Organization (6:35 – 7:00)

- Financial Update from Robin Pembroke – OSSD Business Manager Robin Pembroke spoke about the surplus reported in the June financials, noting the district didn't spend as much as budgeted in several areas. Difficulty finding and hiring personnel and the impact less-experienced, lower paid professionals can have on the budget was explained, as well as the impact of grants and supplemental funding. Robin explains how the district budget is constructed using the previous year's data as a starting point, as well as how to read the financial reports and compare the current to the past. Discussion of the food service deficit and the effect the shifting of certain cleaning duties from custodial staff (and budget) to the food service staff (and budget).
- Quarterly Facilities Monitoring Report, including report from Facilities Staff – extension requested. Move to October 2024 OSSD meeting
- Review, Discuss, *and possible Vote to Approve* Executive Limitation 2.0 (3.4) – 2nd read – Much discussion surrounding proof of compliance, and the necessity of naming any policies that are referenced in the report. Michael says they feel the global report should actually be the *last* report, Anne says the policy should be revisited after all other policies have been reviewed.
Vote -- Motion by Rachel Gaidys to approve 2.0, seconded by Sarah Haupt. Motion passes unanimously.
- Executive Limitation 2.1 (3.4) – 1st read – Michael Clark reviews definitions and interpretation of EL 2.1, Anne Kaplan questions how compliance will be proven, Heather Lawler comments that Provision #3, ADA Compliance is the best exemplar as the district is either adhering or not adhering to standards. Rachel Gaidys expresses concern that providing such robust reports may take time out from other necessary functions of the superintendent. Conversation about how the board wants/needs to see these reports, and how Michael can best calibrate them to those expectations.

VI. Policy Decisions for District Governance (7:00 – 7:15)

- First read of Revised ENDS Policy (enclosed) – board agrees there is still work to be done, the ENDS committee will meet and continue revising the policy.
- First read of Video Surveillance Policy (enclosed) – Heather Lawler comments that there are still things to be addressed before adopting the policy – signage and log storage will require procedures to assure privacy and confidentiality are protected. Michael Clark states any procedures will be shared with the board.

VII. Monitoring the Board (7:15 – 7:25)

- Board Self-Evaluation: GP 4.2 (enclosed) – Hannah Arias explains what Ownership Linkage is, and who the stakeholders are. Conversation about the board's responsibility for messaging budget decisions, education advocacy, meeting with legislators. Michael Clark suggests the board may move in a direction to advocate for the schools, for the community, at the state-level. Rachel Gaidys suggests consideration of forming a subcommittee to examine public policy.
- Board Self-Evaluation: GP 4.3 (enclosed) – No board comment

VIII. Consent Agenda (7:25 – 7:35)

- OSEA Side Agreement – discussion and vote
- Approve minutes from August 14 board meeting
- Approve New Hires (enclosed)

Vote - Motion to approve all Consent Agenda items made by Sarah Haupt, seconded by Anne Kaplen. Motion passes, unanimously.

IX. Closing/Incidental Information (7:35 – 7:50)

- Superintendent's Report – Michael Clark requests the community letter following Monday's incident be included with minutes.

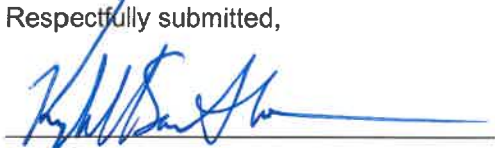
- Intro to Parent Square – Heather Lawler briefly presents the newly purchased communication platform that combines text, email and messenger as a way to communicate with students, parents and staff. Preferences may be set for each account, teachers and paras can receive communication without using their personal devices and maintain legal compliance.
- Action Item Recap – reminder to members to check calendars and register for the VSBA conference, Michael will advise on cost of training, sub-committees to schedule meetings
- Meeting adjourned by chair Hannah Arias at 8:09 p.m.

X. Executive Session *If needed*

Future Meetings

- Agenda Planning Meeting: Monday September 30, 2024 @ remote
- Regular Board Meeting: Wednesday October 9, 2024 @ Brookfield Elementary

Respectfully submitted,



Kyle Southworth, Admin. Ass't



Orange Southwest School District

24 Central Street Randolph Vermont 05060

Telephone (802) 728-5052

Michael J. Clark, Superintendent

Heather Lawler, Assistant Superintendent

Robin Pembroke, Business Manager

Kayla Link, Director of Special Education

Proudly Serving the Towns of Braintree, Brookfield, and Randolph

9 September, 2024

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Community Members,

This morning, the Barre Emergency Dispatch notified the Randolph Union Middle High School office of a bomb threat targeting both RU and RTCC. As a precautionary measure, we promptly evacuated the school and rerouted the buses. Chief Scott Clouatre and the Randolph Police responded swiftly, with the Vermont State Police arriving shortly thereafter.

Law enforcement conducted a thorough evaluation of the threat and searched the premises. They determined that several details of the threat were false and confirmed that no actual danger was present. During this process, we communicated updates to parents, guardians, and the community through both our School Messenger and Parent Square systems.

Once law enforcement assured us that RU and RTCC were safe, students, faculty, and staff returned to the building. A follow-up communication was sent to confirm the all-clear. During Advisory periods today, teachers checked in with students to ensure their wellbeing.

On behalf of the Orange Southwest School District, we extend our gratitude to law enforcement for their prompt and comprehensive response. We also commend our students, faculty, and staff for their calm and supportive behavior throughout the incident. We appreciate the cooperation of parents, guardians, and community members as they waited for updates. After the conclusion of the incident a school safety team met to debrief and identify what went well and identify how to improve our response in the future.

We are sorry that such incidents occur and understand the stress situations such as this cause to our students, families, and staff. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the RU or RTCC Guidance departments if you or your student need support or assistance.

Warmly,

Michael J. Clark

Michael J. Clark
Orange Southwest School District
Superintendent

Heather F. Lawler

Heather F. Lawler
Orange Southwest School District
Assistant Superintendent

Monitoring Report

Policy 2.0 Global Constraints

The superintendent shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision organizational circumstance that is unlawful, unsafe, imprudent or in violation of commonly accepted educational and professional ethics and practices.

Interpretation

The statement is broken down into three main parts

1. **"Shall not cause or allow"**: The superintendent is responsible for ensuring that certain negative conditions do not occur. They must take action to prevent these situations from happening.
2. **"Any practice, activity, decision, organizational circumstance"**: This refers to all aspects of the superintendent's role, including how they run the organization, the decisions they make, and the activities they oversee.
3. **"That is unlawful, unsafe, imprudent or in violation of commonly accepted educational and professional ethics and practices"**: The superintendent must avoid practices that are:
 - **Unlawful**: Break the law.
 - **Unsafe**: Pose risks to safety, whether physical or otherwise.
 - **Imprudent**: Show poor judgment or lack of foresight.
 - **Violation of ethics**: Disregard widely accepted standards of professional behavior and educational practices.

Rationale

The superintendent serves as the leader and role model for the organization. As such, their behavior sets a standard for others to follow. The Global Constraints establish the minimum acceptable standard for the superintendent's conduct. Failure to meet these standards can lead to a loss of trust and respect from faculty, staff, the board, and the community. This erosion of trust and support can undermine the effectiveness of the Orange Southwest School District, negatively impacting its ability to provide quality education to students. Maintaining adherence to these standards is crucial for sustaining organizational integrity and operational success.

Evidence

Given the short tenure of superintendent, evidence available is limited.

All complaints filed under Board Policy B27 have been fairly addressed and have not needed to advance to the board level.

No complaints have been filed with the Vermont Agency of Education

Monitoring Report

Policy 2.1 Treatment of Students, Parents/Guardians, and Community

With respect to interactions with Students, Parents/Guardians Community or those applying to be Students, Parents/Guardians and Community, the Superintendent shall not cause or allow conditions, procedures, or decisions that are arbitrary or capricious, untimely, unclear, undignified, or unnecessarily intrusive. Further, without limiting the scope of the foregoing by this enumeration, the Superintendent shall not:

- 1. Elicit information for which there is no clear necessity;*
- 2. Use methods of collecting, reviewing, transmitting, or storing student/ family information that fail to protect against improper access to the material elicited;*
- 3. Operate facilities without appropriate accessibility and privacy;*
- 4. Allow Students, Parents/Guardians and Community to be unaware of what may be expected and what may not be expected from the District; or,*
- 5. Leave Students, Parents/Guardians and Community uninformed in writing of this policy or without a way to be heard for persons who believe they have not been accorded a reasonable interpretation of their protections under this policy.*

Definitions:

Interactions refer to the ways in which people or entities communicate, engage, or influence each other. These can involve various forms of exchange, such as verbal communication, actions, feedback, or collaboration. The nature of interactions can vary widely depending on the context, but generally, they encompass:

1. **Communication:** Exchanging information through speaking, writing, or other means. This includes conversations, discussions, and messaging.
2. **Engagement:** Actively participating in activities or processes. For instance, students engaging in class discussions or parents attending school meetings.
3. **Influence:** The impact one party has on another's thoughts, behaviors, or decisions. For example, a teacher's feedback might influence a student's academic performance.
4. **Feedback:** Providing or receiving responses that help adjust or improve actions, decisions, or understanding. Feedback can be formal or informal and is crucial for growth and development.
5. **Collaboration:** Working together towards a common goal. This can involve joint projects, team efforts, or collective problem-solving.

Students are Individuals who are currently enrolled in the school or district. They are the primary recipients of educational services and are directly affected by policies, decisions, and procedures.

Parents/Guardians are adults who are responsible for the care and education of students. This includes biological parents, adoptive parents, legal guardians, and sometimes other family members or caretakers who have a role in the child's education

The Community is the broader group of individuals and organizations that have an interest in or are impacted by the school or district. This includes local residents, businesses, community organizations, and other stakeholders who contribute to or are affected by the educational environment.

Interpretation: The preamble is broken into two parts:

"With respect to interactions with Students, Parents/Guardians, Community, or those applying to be Students, Parents/Guardians, and Community, the Superintendent shall not cause or allow conditions, procedures, or decisions that are arbitrary or capricious, untimely, unclear, undignified, or unnecessarily intrusive."

- **Arbitrary or Capricious:** The Superintendent must ensure that decisions and actions are based on rational and consistent criteria, not on whims or personal biases. This means that all procedures and decisions should be fair and reasoned.
- **Untimely:** Actions and decisions must be made in a timely manner. Delays should be minimized to avoid unnecessary waiting and to address issues promptly.
- **Unclear:** Communications and procedures should be clear and understandable. Ambiguity should be avoided so that all stakeholders are well-informed and know what to expect.
- **Undignified:** The Superintendent must ensure that interactions are respectful and preserve the dignity of all parties involved. No one should be treated disrespectfully or with a lack of consideration.
- **Unnecessarily Intrusive:** The Superintendent should avoid being overly invasive. This means respecting privacy and ensuring that actions or inquiries are relevant and necessary.

And

"Further, without limiting the scope of the foregoing by this enumeration, the Superintendent shall not:"

- This phrase indicates that the list provided is not exhaustive. While the mentioned conditions (arbitrary, untimely, unclear, undignified, unnecessarily intrusive) set specific standards, they are not the only standards the Superintendent must adhere to. The Superintendent is expected to avoid any other negative practices or conditions that are not explicitly listed but still align with the overall principle of fair and respectful interaction.

Rationale:

By following these standards, the Superintendent not only ensures compliance with ethical and operational norms but also promotes a healthy, respectful, and effective educational environment. This approach helps in achieving better outcomes for students and maintaining strong relationships with all stakeholders involved.

Specifically:

Decisions and actions based on rational criteria ensure equity and justice in educational environments. It prevents favoritism or bias and promotes a fair process for all stakeholders. This helps build trust in the leadership, ensuring that all students, parents, and community members feel they are being treated justly and that their concerns are addressed based on established criteria rather than personal preferences.

Timeliness in addressing issues and making decisions is crucial for maintaining operational efficiency and ensuring that problems are resolved promptly. Delays can lead to frustration, missed opportunities, and exacerbated issues. Prompt action demonstrates respect for stakeholders' time and needs and helps maintain smooth functioning within the educational system.

Clear communication and procedures prevent misunderstandings and confusion. It ensures that everyone involved knows what to expect and how to navigate processes effectively. When communications are clear, it helps prevent disputes, reduces errors, and ensures that all parties are on the same page. This clarity enhances trust and collaboration between the Superintendent, students, parents, and the community.

Respectful interactions uphold the dignity of all individuals and create a positive environment. It fosters a culture of mutual respect and support. Treating individuals with dignity ensures that their concerns are taken seriously and valued. This respect helps build strong, positive relationships and promotes a more inclusive and supportive educational atmosphere.

Avoiding unnecessary intrusiveness respects individuals' privacy and ensures that actions and inquiries are pertinent to the issue at hand. Respecting privacy and maintaining relevance in interactions helps prevent discomfort and distrust. It ensures that the focus remains on relevant issues, improving the efficiency and appropriateness of interactions.

Upholding these standards demonstrates a commitment to ethical leadership and effective management. It reflects the Superintendent's dedication to the well-being and fair treatment of all stakeholders. When the Superintendent consistently adheres to these principles, it fosters a positive environment and enhances the overall effectiveness of the educational system. It builds confidence among students, parents, and the community, ensuring that interactions are handled professionally and with integrity.

Provision #1 Elicit information for which there is no clear necessity;

Interpretation: I interpret this to mean that current, prospective and former students, families, and the community will only be asked for information that is required for the district or its schools to make informed decisions that support board established Ends, initiatives or mandatory regulations and statutes.

Rationale Collecting unnecessary information wastes resources and time. Doing so places the district in a position of increased liability due to the need to safeguard this information from improper access and use. It can damage the relationship between the district and its constituents who may feel that such data collection is overly intrusive and overreaching in terms of their private lives.

Provision #2 Use methods of collecting, reviewing, transmitting, or storing student/ family information that fail to protect against improper access to the material elicited;

Interpretation: I Interpret this to mean that

- Student information will be safeguarded following all state and federal guidelines primarily the Family education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Access to this information is restricted to authorized personnel who have a legitimate need to know and who if appropriate have been provided properly obtained and completed release documents.

Rationale:

Safeguarding student information according to FERPA and other regulations is crucial for protecting privacy, maintaining trust, ensuring legal compliance, preventing misuse, and upholding ethical standards. By restricting access to authorized personnel and ensuring that proper release documents are obtained, educational institutions demonstrate their commitment to the responsible handling of sensitive information and the well-being of their students.

Specifically

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of student education records. Schools and educational institutions must comply with FERPA to avoid legal consequences and penalties. Adherence to FERPA and other related laws ensures that the institution avoids legal issues and demonstrates commitment to lawful practices.

Students have a right to privacy concerning their educational records. Safeguarding this information protects them from unauthorized access and potential misuse. Protecting privacy helps to maintain trust between students, parents, and educational institutions. It ensures that sensitive information is not exposed or used inappropriately.

When access to student information is restricted to authorized personnel only, it upholds confidentiality. Properly handling release documents further ensures that information is shared only when necessary and with proper consent. This approach builds trust among students and parents, who are assured that their personal and educational information is treated with respect and care.

Unauthorized access to personal and educational records can lead to identity theft or fraud. Safeguarding this information helps prevent such risk. By ensuring that only those with a legitimate need to know can access the information, schools reduce the risk of misuse and potential harm to students.

Educational institutions have an ethical obligation to protect the privacy of their students. This responsibility reflects a commitment to high standards of professional conduct and respect for individual rights. Adhering to ethical standards enhances the institution's reputation and demonstrates respect for the personal rights of students and their families.

Implementing procedures for accessing and sharing student information ensures that data management practices are consistent and secure. Proper handling of information contributes to the overall integrity and efficiency of the educational system, reducing the risk of errors and misuse.

Provision #3: *Operate facilities without appropriate accessibility and privacy;*

Interpretation: I interpret this to mean that the district's facilities are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Acts' (ADA) standards for accessibility design and state law. Further that the districts will comply with the confidentiality requirements of the ADA when it comes to providing accommodations to students and employees who need assistance entering/exiting and/or moving about within the district's facilities.

Rationale:

Compliance with ADA accessibility standards and confidentiality requirements includes legal obligations, the promotion of equity and inclusivity, respect for privacy, the effectiveness of accommodations, the enhancement of the district's reputation, and the fulfillment of moral and ethical responsibilities. These factors collectively ensure that the district provides a supportive, respectful, and legally compliant environment for all students and employees.

Specifically

Adhering to ADA standards ensures that the district meets its legal requirements, avoiding potential legal repercussions and demonstrating a commitment to upholding the law.

Accessibility standards help ensure that all individuals, regardless of disability, have equal access to facilities and opportunities. This fosters an inclusive environment where everyone can participate fully.

Confidentiality requirements protect individuals' personal information related to their disabilities and accommodations, ensuring their privacy and dignity are maintained.

Proper compliance with both accessibility standards and confidentiality requirements enhances the effectiveness of accommodations, ensuring that they are implemented appropriately and discreetly.

A commitment to accessibility and confidentiality positively impacts the district's reputation, demonstrating its dedication to inclusivity, respect, and legal compliance. This can attract and retain students and staff who value these principles.

Beyond legal compliance, these practices reflect the district's moral and ethical commitment to treating all individuals with respect and ensuring fair access to educational and employment opportunities.

Provision 4 Allow Students, Parents/Guardians and Community to be unaware of what may be expected and what may not be expected from the District;

Interpretation: I interpret this to mean that students, parents/guardians, and community members will be provided with written and oral information (including electronic) about the services offered by the school district as well as the policies under which it operates

Rationale:

By providing information in multiple formats it ensures accessibility, promotes transparency, enhances engagement, supports compliance, builds a positive reputation, and facilitates efficient operations. These factors collectively contribute to a more effective, inclusive, and well-regarded school district.

Specifically

Different individuals have varying preferences and needs for accessing information. Providing information in multiple formats—written, oral, and electronic—ensures that everyone, including those with disabilities or those who prefer different communication methods, can access the information. By accommodating different methods of communication, the district helps ensure that no one is left out due to a lack of access to a particular format.

Providing detailed information about services and policies helps stakeholders—students, parents/guardians, and community members—understand what the district offers and how it operates. This transparency fosters trust and prevents misunderstandings. Making information readily available demonstrates the district's commitment to openness and accountability, which can improve community relations.

When stakeholders are well-informed, they are more likely to participate in school activities, support district initiatives, and engage with the district in meaningful ways. This can lead to better educational outcomes and stronger community support. Accessible information encourages stakeholders to provide feedback and interact with the district, contributing to continuous improvement and responsiveness.

Many regulations and best practices require that information be made accessible to all stakeholders. Providing information in multiple formats helps the district comply with these legal and ethical requirements. Ensuring that everyone has equal access to information supports the principles of equity and fairness, aligning with legal standards such as those set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Transparent and accessible communication enhances the district's reputation as a responsive and responsible organization, which can positively affect community relations and trust. Clear communication helps ensure that services are used effectively and that policies are understood, contributing to the overall success and effectiveness of the district's operations.

Accessible information helps streamline processes by reducing confusion and ensuring that stakeholders have the information they need to make informed decisions or seek appropriate assistance. By addressing potential barriers to information access, the district can reduce issues related to miscommunication or lack of information, leading to more efficient and effective operations.

Provision #5 Leave Students, Parents/Guardians and Community uninformed in writing of this policy or without a way to be heard for persons who believe they have not been accorded a reasonable interpretation of their protections under this policy.

Interpretation: I interpret this to mean the the OSSD community with have access to the boards governances policies and how they can appeal decisions; especially policy B27 (Public Complaints about Personnel which describes the proper process to challenge decisions and actions made or conducted by district staff.

Rationale

Making governance policies and the appeal process accessible to the OSSD community enhances transparency, accountability, and stakeholder empowerment. It fosters trust and confidence in the district's operations while promoting a fair and effective approach to handling complaints and concerns.

Specifically

The OSSD community—students, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders—will be informed about the district's governance policies. This ensures that everyone knows the rules and procedures that guide the district's operations and decision-making processes. Access to these policies helps stakeholders understand how the district operates and how decisions are made, fostering a transparent and accountable environment.:

Policy B27 specifies the proper channels and procedures for lodging complaints, ensuring that concerns are handled systematically and fairly. This policy details the steps for formally challenging decisions or actions taken by district staff. It provides a structured process for addressing grievances related to personnel issues.