

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
December 16, 2024

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Present: Board members Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry, James Mol, Gianna Rossi, Maureen Sattan, and Sam Toskin (via Zoom); and Superintendent Matthew Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: Josh Barrows and Greg Sparzo

Board of Education Workshop

- A. PSAT Results: High School Principal Anthony Hibbert, 6-12 ELA Curriculum Coach Samantha Schrager, and 6-12 Math Curriculum Coach Domenico Casolari presented the results of the Fall 2024 PSAT testing for students in grades 9, 10 and 11. Overall results for both the Evidence-based Reading and Writing (ERBW) test and Math test show Suffield students are performing above state and national averages in all three grades. On the ERBW test, 72% of ninth graders, 76% of 10th graders, and 73% of 11th graders performed at or above the benchmark goal. On the Math test, 40% of 9th graders, 48% of 10th graders, and 41% of 11th graders performed at or above the benchmark goal. The curriculum coaches also presented strategies to improve outcomes going forward such as enhancing the rigor of coursework and building understanding about test taking strategies. They mentioned a need to revise expectations and instructional practices particularly for academic courses, as students taking honors courses tend to retain more information and perform better on the exam. They also noted a correlation between performance on the SBAC test in 8th grade and performance on the PSAT in 11th grade, which could help to inform future instructional practices and interventions for those who do not meet goals on the SBAC. Superintendent Matthew Dunbar noted that the district is always exploring strategies that can be implemented to enhance student learning and retention of information, which would also serve to enhance outcomes on such tests. Board members asked questions related to whether test results can be used to determine if higher-performing students in academic courses could be moved into honors courses, which populations of students are meeting benchmarks, what can be done to ensure students retain information taught in 8th or 9th grade, whether students have been exposed to all of the content they need to know prior to taking the PSAT 11, and whether math labs would be beneficial to middle school students if the SBAC is a predictor of success on the PSAT.
- B. Special Education Disproportionality: Diana Kelley, EdD, presented about disproportionality in Special Education as determined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which is a federal law that guarantees a free and appropriate education for eligible students with disabilities. Suffield received citations during the 2021 - 2022, 2022 - 2023, and 2023 - 2024 school years for disproportionately identifying students for special education services who identify as Black and are part of the Specific Learning Disability category. As a result of

receiving citations in the same category for three consecutive years, the district is now working to complete a self-assessment and must redirect 15% of its IDEA funds for early intervention services the following year. Superintendent Dunbar noted that Dr. Kelly is doing a great job addressing what the state labels as a disproportionality. He also mentioned that district leaders are looking at current practices and continually reflect on how they can do better for all students. Board members asked if such citations could prompt districts to under-identify students for services and were assured that Suffield will continue to identify and address the needs of students while focusing on improving their practices in this area.

- C. Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Budget Schedule: Board Chair Maureen Sattan shared the FY25 - 26 Budget Discussion Schedule with Board members, which starts in January with Superintendent Dunbar's budget transmittal to the Board.

Executive Session

At 8:25 p.m., Mol moved and Rossi seconded to go into executive session, inviting Superintendent Matthew Dunbar and Business Manager Eric Remington, for the purpose of discussion and review of the:

- A. Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Suffield Board of Education and the Teamsters Union
- B. Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Suffield Education Association and the Suffield Board of Education.

All members voted in favor and the motion carried 7/0/0.

The executive session ended at 8:57 p.m.

Sattan moved and Toskin seconded to add agenda items related to the potential approval of Collective Bargaining Agreements with the Teamsters Union and the Suffield Education Association. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 7/0/0.

Finnigan moved to approve the Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Suffield Board of Education and the Teamsters Union as presented by the administration. Fry seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 7/0/0.

Finnigan moved to approve the Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Suffield Education Association and the Suffield Board of Education as presented by the administration, and that such agreement be filed with the Town Clerk as per State Statute 10-153(d). Rossi seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 7/0/0.

Adjournment

Fry moved, Sattan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 p.m. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 7/0/0.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of January 6, 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary

