

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
January 21, 2025

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

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

Also in attendance: Brian Kost, Board of Finance Liaison

Absent: None

Board of Education Workshop - Proposed 2025-2026 Budget Presentations

● Curriculum and Instruction

Michelle Zawawi, Assistant Superintendent, reviewed the Curriculum and Instruction proposed budget. Current year program highlights included science based experiential learning, successful implementation of new elementary math and reading programs, curriculum re-alignment of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming, and year one of social emotional learning program at McAlister. Budget requests included maintaining social emotional learning programs throughout the district, purchasing new elementary math and reading program textbooks/resources and professional development, renewing/replacing texts and workbooks, and continuing professional learning to support MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports). Assistant Superintendent Zawawi reviewed the reductions and/or omissions from the FY26 budget and discussed future needs.

Board members and Board of Finance Liaison Brian Kost discussed reducing program contracts as a cost savings versus purchasing multiple years upfront. They also discussed the instructional needs of students who are English Language Learners (ELL) as well as the need for certified staff to administer LAS Links testing. The majority of ELL students will be in the middle school in 2025-26.

● A. Ward Spaulding School

Gina Olearczyk, A. Ward Spaulding School Principal, reviewed A. Ward Spaulding School's proposed budget. Current year program highlights included the accomplishments of the full time reading specialists, the implementation of a new math curriculum, and the success of community and school connections programs. Budget requests included supports for the new reading and math curriculum and implementation of the Fly Five social emotional learning program. Principal Olearczyk reviewed the reductions and/or omissions from the FY26 budget and discussed future needs.

Board members discussed the yearly cost of Fly Five, the reduction of library books and instructional supplies, unfilled certified vacancies, and student enrollment. The importance of sharing thoughtful supply lists with families was also discussed.

- **McAlister Intermediate School**

Kris Pryce, McAlister Intermediate School Principal, reviewed McAlister Intermediate School's proposed budget. Current year program highlights included the accomplishments of the full time reading specialists, improvements to the math curriculum and instruction, social emotional learning programming, improvements to band instruction, and the success of community and school connections programs. Budget requests included literacy program instructional needs, locker replacements, and cafeteria table replacements. Principal Pryce reviewed the reductions and/or omissions from the FY26 budget and discussed future needs.

Board members discussed funding for School Connections and the possible expansion of the program. Data from Fly Five shows a positive impact. The definitions of math consultants and math instructional coaches were discussed.

- **Suffield Middle School**

Ken Smith, Suffield Middle School Principal, reviewed Suffield Middle School's proposed budget. Current year program highlights included the continued improvement of student engagement and academic achievement across grades and increased STEAM-focused learning opportunities. Budget requests included textbook renewal and increased supply budgets for STEAM-focused courses. Principal Smith reviewed the reductions and/or omissions from the FY26 budget and discussed future needs.

Board members asked for information on the cost and implementation plan for RULER at the middle school.

- **Suffield High School**

Anthony Hibbert, Suffield High School Principal, reviewed Suffield High School's proposed budget. Current year program highlights included high impact instructional strategies and CollegeBoard recognitions. Suggested improvements to the math intervention program were discussed. Budget requests included new texts, a digital textbook subscription, and set costs to cover testing and scoring. Principal Hibbert reviewed the reductions and/or omissions from the FY26 budget and discussed future needs.

Superintendent Dunbar thanked the principals for their work on their budgets and for reducing their budgetary requests. Board members questioned if the automatic curtain machine was included in the ACCE budget. Implementation of the math intervention program and issues encountered over the last few years were reviewed. The need to focus math intervention support on ninth grade with potential course credit was discussed.

- **Agriscience**

Principal Hibbert reviewed the Agriscience Department's proposed budget. Current year program highlights included national recognitions, an increase in UConn Early College Experience (ECE) courses, and international field trips. Budget requests included an increase in instructional materials and consumables, as well as purchasing the Bovine Breeder artificial

insemination simulator and an ultrasound teaching machine. Principal Hibbert reviewed the reductions and/or omissions from the FY26 budget and discussed future needs.

Superintendent Dunbar shared reasons for the reductions to the Agriscience budget requests. Board members discussed the ASTE Grant and questioned if the Bovine Breeder could be purchased with ASTE funds. Board members and Board of Finance Liaison Brian Kost discussed the reimbursement of non-resident agriscience students, and Mr. Remington clarified the process.

Discussion/Action Items

- Kindergarten Waiver Update

Principal Olearczyk provided a presentation on the Kindergarten Age Changes Update for 2025-2026. Principal Olearczyk reviewed Public Act 23-208 and said there were no additional legislative updates. Impacts on the 2024-2025 kindergarten classes were discussed and data was reviewed. Principal Olearczyk explained the steps of the waiver process, discussed assessment areas, and reviewed what other districts are doing for the 2025-26 school year before recommending the continuation of the waiver process for next year

Board members discussed the timeframe of the waiver and questioned if cost was involved in assessment of waiver students. Board members agreed to follow the waiver process as presented by Principal Olearczyk.

Adjournment

Dudack moved, Mol seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of February 3, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary