

# Seymour Board of Education



## REGULAR MEETING Minutes

March 3, 2025  
Seymour Middle School  
7:00 pm

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chris Champagne, Board Chair  
Kristen Bruno, Vice Chair  
Stephan Behuniak, Secretary (7:05 PM)  
Ed Strumello  
Jay Hatfield  
Lori Nespoli  
Kristen Harmeling

BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: James Garofolo  
Pete Kubik

OTHERS PRESENT: Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent of Schools  
Mary Sue Feige, Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
Paul Lucke, SHS Principal  
Keith O'Rourke, SMS Principal  
Dr. Kris Boyle, Director of Pupil Services  
David Willadsen, Bungay Assistant Principal  
Ed Henry, Director of Security

### I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Pledge of Allegiance - Mr. Champagne called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00PM
- B. Moment of Silence for Lucille McGinn - Ms. Feige said some heartfelt words in her memory.
- C. Introductions

### II. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Bungay Building Committee Update – Mr. Strumello provided an update on the committee's progress. There were some questions from downtown whether to renovate or build new. There is a strong need for community-wide support in favor of building a new school. It is essential to encourage all Seymour residents—including parents, grandparents, and community members—to participate in the voting process. Please vote!
- B. Seymour Champion Recognitions – "Integrity"
  - 1. Bungay School
    - a. Jordan Papadopoulos
    - b. Calvin Oddo
  - 2. Chatfield-LoPresti School
    - a. Giada Kulas
    - b. Drew George
  - 3. Seymour Middle School
    - a. Delaney Christiani
    - b. Olivia Pirrotta
  - 4. Seymour High School
    - a. Scott Demarco

### C. Recognitions

1. Board of Education Proclamation – Dr. Compton

### D. Student Reports

1. SHS Student Representative Report – Kaitlyn Hamilton, Jeremy Tomasheski
  - National Honor Society: Organized a blood drive.
  - Student Council: Participated in the NEASC conference, Powderpuff game
  - HOPE Club planting initiative, assist with the *This Is Me* Inclusion Walk, and filled food bags for students in need.
  - KinderCats: Working on a seeds and planting project.
  - Sports Updates: Boys' and girls' basketball teams competing tomorrow; cheerleading, dance, and swimming
  - Yearbook: Senior portion in progress.
  - Performing Arts & Clubs: Spanish Club activities, Newspaper Club: upcoming newspaper article release on April 4th.
  - FBLA: Preparing for the upcoming conference.
  - Student Representation: Student representatives participating in the Seymour Charter Revision process—early stages, but progressing well.

## III.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Public Comment provides the opportunity for the public to make a comment. It is not a dialogue between the Board and the public. Based upon what is heard during Public Comment, the Board may choose to add a topic to the agenda. If questions are posed that the Chairperson is able to answer, those questions may be addressed under the Chairperson's Comments portion of the agenda. The Board will not discuss personnel matters. Comments should be respectful and no longer than 3 minutes in length so that all who wish to comment may have the opportunity to do so. All the public wanting to comment will need to state their name and address for the record prior to addressing the Board.

- Public Comment called three times, no public comment.

## IV.

### **REPORTS**

#### A. Student Credit Requirements – SHS Student Council

The SHS Student Council proposed adjusting credit requirements to provide greater flexibility for students. The proposed changes include: Freshmen & Sophomores: 7 credits per year. Juniors & Seniors: 6 credits per year. This adjustment would allow students to finish their school day earlier—before 2:00 PM—giving them the opportunity to gain real-world work experience. The council emphasized that seniors taking AP courses face a rigorous workload, balancing academics, homework, sports, and jobs, leaving little time for other commitments. Adjusting the required credits for upperclassmen would help alleviate this burden and enable participation in internships and workforce opportunities. Mr. Lucke expressed support, particularly if a workforce teacher is added in the future, as this change would facilitate students' transition into employment or internships. Additionally, Post University offers numerous online courses, and this schedule adjustment would give students the flexibility to take advantage of these opportunities. The proposal does not reduce the total graduation requirement of 26 credits but aims to provide students with more manageable schedules. Many high schools now offer credits for internships, making this a valuable adjustment. The proposal will first be presented to the Policy Committee before being brought to the full Board for consideration. Ms. Harmeling voiced her full support, stating that the change would help students develop better time management skills and expressed appreciation for the students bringing this forward.

#### B. Special Education Enrollment Report – Dr. Boyle

#### C. Special Education Report – Dr. Boyle

##### **Trend Data & Program Growth**

Dr. Boyle provided an update on special education trends over the past 6-7 years, highlighting departmental growth. The district's special education identification rate remains approximately 1% below the state average. Currently, about 16% of students have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), excluding those with 504 plans. Out-of-district placement stands at 8.8%. He anticipates an increase in these figures next year and will closely monitor the data.

### **Academic Performance & Growth**

- The most significant academic gains for special education students have been observed in third grade, attributed to professional development in reading programs aimed at closing achievement gaps.
- Fourth and fifth grades also show upward trends, though not as strong as third grade.
- Math trends are positive in third grade, with some growth in fourth and fifth grades.
- Middle school performance has been relatively flat, with slight downward trends. Efforts are being made to bolster academic growth through targeted professional development in ELA and math.
- SAT data for ELA and math shows slight improvement, but further growth is needed. Currently, 16.2% of special education students are performing at Level 3 or 4; however, too many remain at Level 2.

### **Program Expansion & Staffing**

- Dr. Boyle discussed the district's efforts to expand special education programs to retain more students in-district, reducing reliance on outplacement. Expansion has included increased staffing to support program growth.
- Total special education expenditures are at 22.5%, primarily funded through LEA funds. Grant funds are not included in this figure. Most expenditures go toward instructional supplies, evaluations, and services.
- Ms. Bruno inquired about staffing increases, which include additional special education teachers, speech and language specialists, and an inclusion facilitator. Each school now has a school psychologist, which was not previously the case.

### **Funding Challenges & Regional Collaboration**

- Dr. Compton emphasized the lack of federal and state funding for special education, noting that while overall school enrollments may decline, special education numbers continue to rise.
- The governor vetoed additional special education funding, though there is hope for an override. CABE has acknowledged the funding shortfall.
- Valley superintendents are planning a regional meeting, to be hosted in Seymour, to discuss collaborative programming to address increasing special education needs.

### **Outplacement Considerations & Future Planning**

- Mr. Champagne questioned the cost of therapeutic outplacement (approximately \$50,000 per student) and whether hiring in-district staff could provide cost-effective alternatives. Dr. Boyle explained that while creating in-district programs can help retain students, some high-needs cases still require specialized outplacement.
- The district has seen outplacement numbers rise, particularly in middle and high school. However, as some outplaced students graduate, there may be opportunities to bring others back into the district.
- Some outplacements are driven by medical decisions rather than PPT determinations. Additionally, transient student populations and McKinney-Vento regulations contribute to enrollment unpredictability.

### **Professional Development & Future Data Analysis**

- Ms. Bruno inquired about professional development initiatives, which have included curriculum updates, intervention programs, assessment training, dyslexia instruction, augmentative devices, SEL systems, and RULER training.
- Ms. Harmeling requested paraeducator trend data over the same time period. Dr. Boyle will collaborate with Mr. Bucci to provide this information.

Dr. Boyle expressed pride in the district's progress over the past eight years, emphasizing that expanded in-district services benefit both students and taxpayers. The district remains committed to improving academic outcomes and supporting students with diverse needs.

#### **D. Financial Report – Salvatore Bucci**

## **V. CONSENT AGENDA**

### **A. Approval of Minutes**

1. Regular BOE Meeting – February 3, 2025
2. Special BOE Meeting – February 12, 2025

3. Finance Committee Meeting – February 27, 2025
4. Policy Committee Meeting – February 27, 2025

**B. Hiring – Non-Certified**

1. Mary Piers
  - a. Food Service Worker
  - b. Chatfield-LoPresti School
  - c. Replacing Nisha Moktan
2. Patrick Taylor
  - a. Armed School Security Officer
  - b. Seymour High School
  - c. New position to replace SRO

**MOTION:** ( Mr. Behuniak / sec. Ms. Bruno) move to approve the consent agenda as presented

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Mr. Behuniak, Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Nespoli

**PASSES:** 7-0-0

**VI. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA**

**VII. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION**

**A. CAFE Policy 3281.1**

1. FBLA Sponsorships

The proposed policy provides flexibility in handling sponsorships while ensuring the Board is informed and that both the superintendent and administration are involved in the process.

- Mr. Hatfield inquired whether this policy might also cover signage. While he supports the policy, he wants to ensure it does not introduce unintended implications.
- Dr. Compton clarified that this is a standard policy provided by CAFE and legal counsel. A separate policy specifically addressing signage will be developed at a later date. Given the complexity of signage regulations, additional guidance from the attorney and input from the First Selectwoman will be required. This policy is solely focused on streamlining sponsorships.

**MOTION:** to accept and adopt policy number 3281.1 (Ms. Bruno / sec. Ms. Harmeling)

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Mr. Behuniak, Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Nespoli

**PASSES:** 7-0-0

**VIII. INFORMATION**

**A. Hiring – Certified**

1. Nicole Fearon
  - a. Social Studies Teacher and Department Chair
  - b. Seymour High School
  - c. Replacing David Willadsen
  - d. Effective Jul 1, 2025

**B. Retirement - Certified**

1. Carol Wood
  - a. Science Teacher
  - b. Seymour Middle School
  - c. Effective end of 24-25 school year

**C. Resignation - Non-Certified**

1. Jared Pettinella
  - a. Baseball Head Coach
  - b. Seymour Middle School
  - c. Effective Feb 1, 2025

**D. School Events**

1. Chatfield-LoPresti School
2. Bungay Elementary School

3. Seymour Middle School
4. Seymour High School

**IX. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS & SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

**A. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS**

1. Chairman's Comments
  - a. Mr. Champagne thanked "the Kristens" and Pete for their participation at the Board of Finance (BOF) meeting last week. The BOF will deliberate and will likely call the Board of Education (BOE) back for further discussion.
2. Board Member Comments
  - a. Mr. Strumello shared that he had a great time reading at Bungay Elementary School (BES) for Read Across America Day. He also noted that the Girls' Basketball game is at 5 PM at Seymour High School (SHS), and the Boys' Basketball game is at 7 PM at Seymour Middle School (SMS). Ms. Bruno expressed her condolences to Lucille McGinn and her family. Mr. Hatfield also shared his sympathies for Ms. McGinn. He thanked board members, nutrition staff, and Dr. Compton for hosting the CAFE breakfast. Ms. Nespoli shared that the SMS cheer team has their last competition coming up. She noted that her daughter had a great experience in SMS cheer and hopes to continue at SHS.

**B. Superintendent's Report**

1. Dr. Compton shared that Read Across America Day at BES was a fun and successful event. She highlighted the This Is Me Walk-a-Thon on Saturday, March 25, encouraging participation and support for the initiative. She attended the basketball games and was proud of the teams for advancing, also commending the cheerleaders and dance team for their wins and accomplishments. She expressed pride in the high school's work on the accreditation process, noting that the official visit will take place on Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling / sec. Ms. Bruno) to adjourn the meeting 8:31 PM

YouTube Link (3/3/2025): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzftLgugLAQ>

**Note:** The next Regular Board of Education meeting will be held on **Monday, April 7, 2025, at 7:00 pm in Chatfield-LoPresti School.**

Prepared by Shannon Levey,  
Board Clerk