

Orange Southwest School District (OSSD)
Regular Board Meeting on Wednesday April 9, 2025
Braintree Elementary
6pm

Google Meeting Joining Info
Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/upd-xcaz-qno>
Or Dial: (US)+1 513-472-0826
PIN: 499 934 387#

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

- Meeting called to order at 6:04 pm by Board Chair Hannah Arias
- Board Attendance: *Ensuring a quorum – Board attending: Hannah Arias, Aimil Parmelee, Ryan Anderson, Rachel Fish, Rachel Gaidys, Martha Hafner, Anne Kaplan with Sam Hooper (remote). Administration: Michael Clark, Heather Lawler, Patti Sprague, Kyle Southworth, ORCA Media. Public attending in person: Norie Belanger, Sharon Rives. Attending remotely: Heather Bowman, Tammy White, Bob Worley, Lauren Futtner, Abby McFadyen.*
- Meeting Purpose: Braintree Report
- Review and Accept Agenda – *Hannah Arias suggests changes to the order of agenda items so discussion segues well into the next topic, notes that the Legislative Update will also include discussion of Title 6 and the Dept. of Education. Heather Lawler points out that the June meeting date may want to be adjusted as that date conflicts with Brookfield graduation.*

II. Ownership Linkage (6:05 - 6:35)

- Public Comment for items not listed on agenda: Board welcomes comment but is not able to take any action. Comments limited to 3 minutes per speaker. Board chair clarifies that all comments, verbal or written, must state name and town of residence. Anonymous comments and/or emails cannot be considered by the Board.

No public comment.

- Braintree Elementary Presentation from Principal Patti Sprague
Patti Sprague welcomes all to Braintree School where they see powerful growth, emphasizing social emotional and hands-on learning. Literacy proficiency is increasing, the school is transitioning to a new assessment platform. Math shows promising gains, with interventionists playing key roles in academically supporting small groups of learners. Behavior interventionists tackle social and emotional matters. Staff participated in Responsive Classroom training in the spring and are working at having a more consistent shared language and students are taking SEL skills seriously. The Farm to School program continues to build strong connections, and place-based work (sugaring, wildlife tracking, apple picking, trout fishing) and residencies with artists from around the world teach students with art, song and story-telling as well as STEM engineering. Hannah Arias and Martha Hafner ask what “shared language” means to staff, and how SEL is integrated into the curriculum. Patti explains that everyone using the same terminology (shared language) enables staff to be clearer about what they are seeing, and what response is needed. SEL is embedded into academic content. Ryan Anderson asks about behavior interventionists assisting teacher (noting Patti’s comment that there had been roughly 100 referrals) and asks if that’s an increase. Patti responds that yes, the number of incidents has increased over the last couple of years, but the need decreases as the school year progresses. Ryan Anderson asks what would Patti attribute this to, and they responded that poverty is a major factor, adding that Braintree School meets a lot of material needs for students – everything from food, to clothes to medical care.
The link to the Braintree School presentation is [here](#).
- Federal and State Legislative Update

- Late Liquidation – *Heather Lawler speaks to the letter dated March 28, 2025 received from the Agency of Education stating that the district's liquidation period for grant funds (approx. \$300,000) was modified to end March 28, 2025. The letter is included in the Board Packet for the 4.9.25 meeting. Heather notes that the actual reality of this is that any grant funds spent since September 2024 must be re-applied for but that reimbursement for these expenses may not be received in a timely manner. Ryan Anderson asks about the impact of this on summer programming. Heather Lawler responds that the only summer programming currently planned is for SPED programming (which is a state requirement) and that this deadline modification is having national impact. Discussion about the impact of this funding reversal on summer and afterschool programs, Heather Lawler notes that they have already had to cut the Arts Bus and yoga and other supplemental programming will be affected as well. They will re-apply fiercely for this funding. Hannah Arias thanks Heather Lawler for all the work.*
- Department of Education and Title VI– *Michael Clark explains that every grant requires assurances from the district that they are complaint with Title VI, and the district has always given those. Now the federal government wants the district to sign off on compliance, but the language has changed and the timeline between the issuance of the document and the deadline is extremely tight. This federal communication has received push-back from districts within Vermont, and other states as well. Aside from potential funding implications, the new languages also references potential personal liability of the district superintendent. Assurances will be given at the state, rather than the district, level. Discussion moves to H454 (see Superintendent's report) Educators want time to collaborate and draw up the best plan for the kids. Ryan Anderson acknowledges an email sent out by the VSBA regarding the issue. Michael Clark advises citizens reach out to House and Senate members, important work needs to be done, and it needs to be done right. The state needs a cohesive vision of education. Ryan Anderson clarifies that any action taken by board members is on an individual basis, and they are not acting as a board.*

IV. Board Process (6:35 – 6:45)

- Plan Staff Appreciation
 - Temporary Subcommittee – *Hannah Arias asks if Sam Hooper is interested in being on the committee to plan staff appreciation and make arrangements to purchase the necessary number of \$10 gift cards. Sam Hooper agrees, and Aimil Parmelee volunteers to assist. It is clarified that all staff received the cards, not just educators. Patti Sprague comments that they believe the gesture is appreciated.*
VOTE: Hannah Arias makes a motion to form a subcommittee to work on staff appreciation. Rachel Fish seconds and the motion passes unanimously.
VOTE: Hannah Arias makes a motion to approve the committee to purchase \$3260 in gifts cards for staff appreciation from the school board budget. Ryan Anderson seconds, and the motion passes unanimously.

IV. Board Education (6:45 – 6:55)

- Excelerator Module 5 (PG Training)
 - What will be the full process follow up – *Anne Kaplan passes on training options for policy governance available to board members only at a cost of \$350 per person.*
Hannah Arias requests an email from any members who want to attend, a special meeting can be called to vote and approve payment. Hannah Arias reminds members to keep up with modules. Michael Clark confirms that the Excelerator contract includes a 30-minute conversation with each board member.
Discussion revolves about the possibility of combining the individual conversations into a single session, perhaps at the July retreat? Further conversation about what the July retreat agenda might include, Aimil Parmelee suggests an ENDS review at the beginning of the meeting with the policy governance conversation following. Anne Kaplan suggests Jeanne Collins may be amenable to 4 hours of coaching for the board. Anne Kaplan and Michael Clark will reach out and coordinate with Jeanne Collins.

V. Monitoring the Organization (6:55 – 7:30)

- Continuous Improvement Plan

Heather Lawler uses a slide show to present data that was worked on collaboratively with administrators. Discussion of the difference between assessment platforms, family engagement, student proficiency and what steps the district plans to improve. Discussion of the availability of McKenney-Vento funds for homeless students. That number currently stands at 10.

VOTE: Aimil Parmelee makes a motion to approve the Continuous Improvement Plan as presented by Heather Lawler, Martha Hafner seconds. Motion passes by majority.

- Review, Discuss, and possible Vote to Approve Executive Limitation 2.8 (3.4) – 1st read
Board questions the use of the word “generally” regarding board communications, Hannah Arias clarifies that any board business belongs in a public meeting, and “reply all” to informational communications should never be used. Anything beyond scheduling needs to be included on the agenda, those requests can be made directly to either Hannah Arias or Anne Kaplan. Any outside emails will be responded to by Hannah Arias as the board chair, and not by other members. Anne Kaplan and Hannah Arias note that there is information in the back of the board binders about how to handle board communications. Michael Clark points out that the board has done well keeping meetings transparent and public.

VI. Policy Decisions for District Governance

- None

VII. Monitoring the Board (7:30 – 7:45)

- Board Self-Evaluation: GP 4.1 (enclosed)
Hannah Arias reviews and clarifies respective roles, emphasizing the collective rather than individual. Anne Kaplan states the board is doing a good job overall, Hannah Arias likes the new format of evaluation that encourages self-reflection, Ryan Anderson finds the access to information is easy but Rachel Fish says the process isn’t intuitive.

VIII. Consent Agenda (7:45 – 8:00)

- Approve minutes from March 12 board meeting
- Approve New Hires
Clarification that board members are listed as new employees because they receive stipends
- Approve Teacher Contracts
Michael Clark states he will sign all contracts after the board has approved them (attached)
- Approve Summary of Account – Trust of Fay A. Cowdrey
- Approve leave request
- Approve Auditor Engagement Letter
VOTE: Anne Kaplan moves to accept the Consent Agenda as presented, Aimil Parmelee seconds, motion passes unanimously.

IX. Closing/Incidental Information (8:00 – 8:25)

- Superintendent’s Report
Michael Clark updates that RTCC enrollment is steadily moving upward, now having 4 programs with 14+ students enrolled. Discussion about the new report cards and how the monthly community Google meet increases accessibility if citizens have questions or comments.
- Resignation Updates
- School Newsletters/Principal Reports
These were provided by Heather Lawler via email to board members
- Action Item Recap
Sub-committee will work on staff appreciation
Michael Clark will coordinate for the July retreat
Kyle Southworth will coordinate special meeting location and make change public
VOTE: Hannah Arias moves to change the June Regular Board meeting scheduled for June 11 2025 to a Special Meeting on June 4 at 6 pm. Ryan Anderson seconds, the motion passes unanimously.

Having no further business, the meeting adjourns at 8:21 pm

X. Executive Session

Future Meetings

- Agenda Planning Meeting: Monday May 5, 2025 @ remote, 6pm
- Regular Board Meeting: Wednesday May 14, 2025, 6pm @ RUHS, RTCC Advisory Committee @ 5pm

Respectfully submitted

Kyle M Southworth

Administrative Ass't, 4/14/25