



Board of School Directors Committee Meetings Minutes

Wednesday, September 10, 2025

Generated by Renai Cardillo on Monday, September 22, 2025

Members present: Nicholas Braccio, William Brong, Janet Flisak, Andrew Landis, Ken Keith, Stephen Nelson, William Formica, Kimberly Wheeler, Michael Barnacz

Others present: Lisa Ball, Todd Burns, Jamie Doyle, Tamara Ferlick, Tom Ferlick, John Franzen, Jon Graf, Frank Gallagher, Sue Hadfield, Laura Heineck, Christopher Hey, Katie Kennedy-Reilly, Fran Masin-Moyer, Katie McCoy, Michael Taylor, Sam Varano, and Megan Zweiback

1. Education-Personnel Committee

Mr. Landis called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Mr. Landis announced that Mr. Nelson would like to read a statement.

Mr. Nelson read the following statement:

Historically, the Administration and Board have chosen not to respond to misleading or false claims in the community, as doing so detracts from our mission. However, some recent statements have distorted reality to a degree that warrants clarification. I offer the following to our residents, taxpayers, parents, guardians, students, and staff - truthful, verifiable facts to help clear the air.

Construction Projects

Claim: Schools opened while under construction.

Fact: Opening schools and having ongoing construction has always been the plan. This phased approach serves the school community well. It minimizes disruption, maintains safety, and is cost-effective. It is not possible to complete the facility projects and improvements during the 2-3 month summer recess, making it necessary to continue renovations during the school year. SASD is not the only school district with facility projects. There are many school facilities across the Commonwealth with the foresight to maintain their facilities, necessitating renovations during the school year.

Claim: Four cafeterias were inoperable at the start of the year.

Fact: Part of the plan over the last year and a half, stated cafeterias may be inoperable or have diminished ability for a period of time. This is consistent with past projects. It must also be stated that the cafeterias were not inoperable. They operate within a limited scope as per the plan which has been made public for well over a year.

Claim: Starting three projects at once was poor planning.

Fact: These projects were publicly shared well in advance. Phased construction over multiple years is the most effective strategy and serves the district well. As construction projects overlap, it makes effective use of resources and time leading to savings for the district and the community. Additionally, tackling each project one at a time would cost the taxpayer significantly more money.

Claim: Not all costs were included.

Fact: Our projects take years of planning with many starting with a feasibility assessment. These are all made public and discussed in public meetings. All known costs are made public according to the assessment. Unforeseen costs may occur from time to time over large-scale construction projects and are usually not noticed until extensive construction is underway. We expect this on occasion. The district has procedures to control change orders in an effective way for all stakeholders with public communication at public meetings. To say not all costs were included is simply misleading and shows a misunderstanding of the construction process.

Claim: The Salford Hills kitchen roof issue was due to poor planning.

Fact: Despite extensive testing, some issues only surface during construction as was the case at Salford Hills. Addressing the roof now avoids future disruption and higher costs.

Claim: The turf field overrun of \$533K was hidden.

Fact: This change order was discussed publicly at the February 27, 2025, meeting and it was noted that \$200K in community donations helped offset the overall cost. In fact, residents requested the ability to know more about future donation opportunities to support SASD.

Legal Matters

Claim: SASD stonewalls Right-to-Know (RTK) requests.

Fact: SASD has responded to over 80 RTKs within legally set timelines. These requests consume time and resources when staff are taken away from their daily district tasks to address RTK. SASD had no negative consequences as a result of the RTKs but did lose valuable time and significant taxpayer dollars which were expended, specifically on these requests. We appreciate and respect the public's right to information, but we again encourage direct communication (phone call) with the district for clarity as an alternative and more productive path forward that provides information without negatively impacting regular school district business.

Claim: SASD is hiding the ACLU lawsuit and disguising negative things as "settlements."

Fact: We do not discuss ongoing legal matters or those restricted by law. Despite repeated clarification, some continue to suggest wrongdoing without evidence. This case has not yet been settled, meaning it is an open and ongoing case. By law, and once the case is final and settled, it will become public information. Any settlements in education that involve children, by law, must maintain privacy and are mandated to be confidential to protect the students and their families.

Student Performance

Claim: The Board and Administration are failing students despite tax increases.

Fact: This too is unfounded. Our district serves diverse learners and uses data-driven strategies to support all students. For example, MAP data helps us respond quickly, unlike state data which often arrives too late to be actionable. Our educators work tirelessly to meet students where they are and help them succeed. Performance results support this position.

Policy Review

Claim: 47% of district policies are 20 years old.

Fact: Policies are regularly reviewed. Age alone does not necessitate change, nor is a notation required to make that assertion. SASD follows state laws, guidance's and update to policies - typically we find ourselves updating for punctuation or state-mandated changes. Claims to the contrary are inaccurate. To streamline this process and reduce administrative burden, we have partnered with the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA), saving time and taxpayer dollars while maintaining a strong policy foundation and freeing up our team to focus on our primary mission to educate our students.

Conclusion

Our decisions always prioritize students - academically, socially, and emotionally. Nearly 75% of our budget comes from local taxpayers, and we remain committed to responsible stewardship:

- SASD tax increases have averaged just about 2% over the last decade - 10% below the county average.
- Academic outcomes are strong, supported by a proven budget model.
- No programs have been cut; several have been added.
- SASD is stronger than ever. Schools are safe are being renovated more cost effectively and with better outcomes than many other districts. Academics continue to improve across a diverse group of students. Taxes, while necessary, are controlled and budgets are scrutinized. Senior Citizens and those who may be economically disadvantaged are being served too. Above all, children are thriving and flourishing.

We honor the public's right to information and ask that facts - not political agendas - guide our conversations. Despite no findings against SASD, some continue to push false narratives. Auditors, legal experts, and the state have proven these claims inaccurate.

Let us come together as a community. Put aside politics. Focus on facts. Stop unnecessary spending on baseless accusations. Let us return to asking about educational outcomes and supporting our students - the future leaders of our community.

Let us reaffirm our shared mission:

"To prepare students to demonstrate competencies needed to succeed in a changing world by building on a commitment to excellence and innovations, working in partnership with family and community, and assuring a quality education for all students in a safe and nurturing environment."

We welcome differing views and understand not everyone will agree. But this Board and Administration will never waiver from our mission, our position on taxation and your rights as present guardians.

Education-Personnel Chairperson, Mr. Landis announced the presentation by the Curriculum Department.

1.1 Growth and Achievement Report

Superintendent Gallagher spoke to the Growth & Achievement Report that was being presented this evening and noted that all school principals were in attendance. Dr. Gallagher introduced Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment & Technology, Dr. Katie Kennedy-Reilly.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly presented the Growth & Achievement Report from the 2024-2025 school year. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly stated that the report is not just numbers, it is filled with stories of growth from our students. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly reviewed a Demographics slide that stated an enrolled population of 5,940 students. She also highlighted the support services for our students that include over 500,000 meals served, 16,000 + health screenings for hearing, vision, BMI, and scoliosis and over 1.6 million miles traveled in school transportation.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly reviewed a slide of MTSS: Multi-Tiered System of Support, explained as a collaborative and systematic approach to empower, challenge, and support all through shared ownership in the growth of the whole child.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly also reviewed a slide that outlined the school assessment system and the tiers of support for intervention and collaboration. She noted the parent and family relationship citing the importance of communication, resources, workshops and reports. A slide explaining Data Review was presented along with the analogy of pole vaulting expectations as it relates to individual student achievement and individual goal setting. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly spoke to the necessary feedback from teachers, counselors, and parents that all assist in helping the student reach their goals.

A slide explaining the metric of the achievement percentile was shared. The metrics of achievement are comprised of Curricular-Based measures, MAP (Measures of Academic Progress), PSSA's and Keystone exams. An Elementary Report was presented showing growth and achievement in Reading and Math. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly introduced the elementary school principals; **E.M.C.**; Tamara Ferlick, **Franconia**; Laura Heineck, **Vernfield**; Jon Graf, **West Broad Street**; Sue Hadfield, **Salford Hills**; Todd Burns and **Oak Ridge**; Tom Ferlick. Each principal spoke about the individual initiatives in their schools that support students, cultivate belonging, parent involvement and reinforce positive behavior. Each principal cited their programs to implement the objectives, while continuing to focus on core values of academic growth and achievement.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly reviewed a slide a Secondary Report slide which showed MAP Achievement vs. Growth and introduced **Indian Crest Middle School** Principal Katie McCoy. Mrs. McCoy spoke about the goals of Indian Crest to increase parental involvement with new opportunities for engagement, as well as their reward program reinforcing positive behavior. In the absence of **Indian Valley Middle School** Principal, Superintendent Gallagher spoke about their school goals to build consistency through shared values and staff expectations. He mentioned the refining of their WINGS program and instructional peer observations. He also commented on the schools' 60th Anniversary. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly shared slides showing Middle School Achievement and Growth as well as Math and Reading scatterplots.

High School Principal, Sam Varano reiterated Mr. Nelson's statement regarding future (student) leaders and commended the 384 members of the graduating class that had completed over 400 mentorships and over 600 job shadows. Dr. Varano praised the faculty and staff for providing these opportunities for students. He noted the increase and growth of the Pathway 360 Program over the course of its 10 year history. Dr. Varano cited student participation in dual enrollment courses, as well as Voices for Education, SouderTHON and volunteering for Project Cure.

Dr. Kennedy-Reilly stated that Pennsylvania Future Ready Data would be available on the PDE website in early October. Dr. Kennedy-Reilly closed the presentation by reviewing the items that the school district will continue to

place focus on including the wellness of the whole child, prioritizing safety, belonging and well-being as well as creating environments where students feel secure and valued to learn and thrive.

Mr. Landis thanked Dr. Kennedy-Reilly for the presentation and commented on having witnessed the thorough student preparation for the Voices for Education. He praised them for their willingness to travel to Harrisburg and speak on behalf of mental illness. Mr. Braccio praised the presentation and its continued focus on the individual child's success. Ms. Wheeler praised the success of the teacher observation and collaboration model. Mrs. Flisak commented on the continued theme of family involvement.

Mr. Keith and Mr. Barnacz commented on the volume of data that is being reported and the ability for teachers to be able to utilize it immediately. Mr. Keith also praised student involvement in the community. Mr. Formica praised the principals for their enthusiasm and thanked them for their leadership. Mr. Brong and Mr. Nelson commented on the effective use of data to support student achievement. Mr. Nelson praised the administration and staff.

Superintendent Gallagher also expressed pride in the administrative team and thanked them for their work.

Mr. Landis adjourned the Education-Personnel Meeting at 7:50 P.M.

2. Policy Committee

2.1 Second First Reading of Policy 102 - Academic Standards

2.2 Second Reading of Policy 105 - Curriculum

2.3 Second Reading of Policy 626 - Federal Fiscal Compliance

2.4 Second Reading of Policy 626.1 - Travel Reimbursement Federal Programs

Policy Committee Chairperson, Mrs. Flisak called the meeting to order at 7:56 P.M.

Dr. Hey stated that there were four policies scheduled for a Second Reading this evening. He also gave an update on the Policy Overhaul Project which was discussed previously. This project would engage P.S.B.A. (Pennsylvania School Boards Association) to review all school district policies. Details are being finalized, and once in place it would review all policies, in order beginning with the zero series.

Dr. Hey noted that much of what is being reviewed this evening are boilerplate revisions, based entirely on the School Code and/or Federal Requirements.

Dr. Hey reviewed Policy 102 - Academic Standards, noting that it was originally adopted in 2022 with standards for the 2025-2026 school year. He also noted that our curriculum has been updated already, to meet these standards. Drs. Hey and Kennedy-Reilly acknowledged that these standards are reflected in the Science, Technology, STEELS curriculum.

Dr. Hey reviewed Policy 105 - Curriculum, noting that it updates special instruction and observances as part of the district's plan in accordance with federal law and the PA School Code. Dr. Hey cited Arbor Day and Constitution Day as examples.

Dr. Hey reviewed Policy 626 - Federal Fiscal Compliance, stating that it updates guidelines for the spending and the auditing of federal funds received by the school district. Dr. Hey also reviewed Policy 626.1 - Travel Reimbursement Federal Programs, stating that this policy firms up the guidelines for travel that is directly related to federal programs. He noted that there is very little travel done by the school district as it relates to federal programs.

Dr. Hey reiterated that all four policies are being recommended to be moved forward for a Third Reading and Final Adoption at the September Board Action Meeting.

A member of the public questioned the wording in Policy 626, stating reasonable security measures. Dr. Hey responded that the determination is often a legal one as stipulated. Director of Business Affairs, Mr. Taylor also responded that internal controls are reviewed by single audit annual review.

A member of the audience asked about Pennsylvania Standards for World Language and Dr. Hey confirmed there are no PA standards, however there are national standards.

The Committee agreed to move forward all policies forward.

Mrs. Flisak adjourned the Policy Committee Meeting at 8:06 P.M.

3. Finance Committee

3.1 Financing Discussion - Upcoming Capital Projects

Mr. Keith called the Finance Committee Meeting at order at 8:08 P.M.

Mr. Keith noted that Ms. Jamie Doyle from PFM, Financial Advisors was in attendance this evening to present information for the potential borrowing for the school district construction projects. In addition, Mr. Keith stated that there would be two discussion items this evening; a Per Capita discussion and a Property Tax Rebate discussion.

Director of Business Affairs, Mr. Taylor explained the proposed borrowing as the third of four phases related to the construction projects at Salford Hills, Indian Crest and West Broad Street. He stated that the administration is recommending for approval at the September Board Action meeting proceed with PFM to prepare for a potential bond issuance in 2026.

Ms. Doyle of PFM reviewed a slide presentation and spoke to that handout, distributed to the Board. Ms. Doyle reviewed a municipal market update and briefly discussed the upcoming Federal Reserve Meeting and its possible impact on borrowing rates. Ms. Doyle reviewed the existing school district debt portfolio along with the four-phase financing scenario that began in 2024. The proposed borrowing is estimated at \$45.5M, as wrap-around debt that would have a settlement date of February 2026.

Ms. Doyle reviewed a sample time line of the financing plan which would include authorization on September 25 for the team to proceed. The competitive internet auction would occur in January 2026 with settlement in February 2026 or later.

Superintendent Gallagher reiterated that this borrowing plan is part of the financing original time line to support these school renovation projects.

Mr. Taylor noted that the borrowing estimate being presented is conservative as rates are anticipated to go down.

Mr. Brong thanked Ms. Doyle for her years of service with PFM, serving the school district.

The Finance Committee agreed to move forward with the authorization to proceed.

3.2 Per Capita Tax Discussion

Mr. Keith introduced the discussion for the potential elimination of the per capita tax, noting that it is informational at this time.

Mr. Taylor reviewed a presentation outlining the Per Capita Tax and its current collection in the school district. He stated that the school district started collecting it in 2003 and it is a flat rate tax levied on all residents above the age of 18. He explained that while it is a stable source of revenue, an across the board tax, it can be cumbersome to maintain accurate records and challenging for the tax collectors to collect. He also stated that there would be public notice should the district elect to sunset and cease collection of the per capita tax.

Mr. Taylor reviewed a slide that showed the current per capita tax collection has a budgetary impact of \$283,000. He stated that a real estate tax increase would be anticipated to recover the amount in a budget shortfall.

3.3 Property Tax Rebate Discussion

Mr. Taylor introduced the proposed Property Tax Rebate program.

Mr. Taylor explained that the program would be based upon the existing Pennsylvania Property Tax and Rent Rebate program which has been in effect since 1971 and is funded by state lottery and slot machine proceeds. Souderton Area homeowners and renters must qualify for the state rebate program to qualify for the district rebate program. He explained the qualifications for the program; to qualify for this discount, applicants must have a household income of no more than \$46,520 annually, and be 65 years of age or older; or be a widow and widower aged 50 years of age or older; or be permanently disabled and 18 years of age or older.

Mr. Taylor reviewed a proposed rebate program of 20% outlining the income criteria for eligibility for homeowners and renters. He also stated that the rebate, if approved for implementation would be a component of the annual school district budget approval process.

A review of the application process and accompanying documents needed was shared.

Mr. Keith reiterated that this was an informational item for consideration. He also spoke about the positive benefits to community members should the Board decide to proceed further.

Mrs. Flisak, Mr. Formica and Mr. Braccio all agreed for the administration to continue to pursue with discussion to implement a possible property tax rebate program.

Mr. Landis also stated agreement and questioned why this discussion is coming up now? Mr. Taylor responded that the community has asked for it.

Superintendent Gallagher reinforced the administration's support for both discussion items.

Comments from the audience acknowledged the need for elimination of the per capita tax and an appreciation for the consideration of a property tax rebate.

Mr. Keith adjourned the Finance Committee Meeting at 8:45 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Taylor".

Michael Taylor, C.P.A.
Board Secretary / Director of Business Affairs