

Board of Education Meeting  
December 2, 2014

Call to Order

Board Chair Sanborn called the meeting to order at 5:11 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Natalie Semyanko, Mary Roy, Jeanne Gee, George Beiter, Mary Lou Sanborn, Michelle Zawawi, Sue Porcello, Scott Schneider, and Board Attorney, Jessica Ritter

Executive Session

Gee moved, Roy seconded to go into executive session at 5:11 p.m. for the purpose of a discussion and possible action regarding attorney client privileged communication concerning the Superintendent's employment. Board member D'Ostuni left at 6:16 p.m.

Roy moved, Gee seconded to come out of executive session at 6:29 p.m.

Regular Session

Board Chair Sanborn called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni (arrived at 6:57), Natalie Semyanko, Mary Roy, Jeanne Gee, Mary Lou Sanborn, George Beiter, Michelle Zawawi, Sue Porcello, Scott Schneider, Superintendent, Karen Baldwin, Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin and Business Manager, Bill Hoff

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Sue Davis, 42 Wisteria Lane, said she and her family moved to Suffield because of the school system and special education services. She thanked Dr. Baldwin for the many positive changes she has made in the district. She noted she has not always been happy with the special education services her son has received, but at no time were her views or those of her husband not heard by this administration. Ms. Davis said over the past two years she has appreciated the time and commitment the administration has shown to her son. A true partnership has been developed which has produced positive changes in the district, including paraprofessional training, classroom education on differences among children, and teacher-led education on acceptance and tolerance. She thanked the entire administrative staff as well. Ms. Davis stated that Dr. Baldwin's leaving is a loss to the district. Ms. Davis requested that the Board review the district's strategic plan because it articulates what needs to occur to improve the district. With a change in the administration the positive momentum could become stagnate. She asked the Board to look for a new leader that is not afraid to be a champion for change. She also reminded the Board not to lose sight of fact that we are all here for students and not individual agendas. Differences need to be respected so that all can be heard, and it is important to be unified to find a new superintendent. She requested the Board hire a search committee to find the next qualified superintendent and the search should be conducted nationally.

Recognition

Dr. Baldwin recognized Olivia Alfano, Suffield Middle School student recipient of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) Student Award. A luncheon was held on November 21, 2014 in honor of all recipients. Olivia, her parents, Dr. Baldwin and Mr. Pearce attended the luncheon. Olivia received this award for her academic achievements and her service to her school and community.

### Communications

Board Chair Sanborn said Board members received a letter from parents; Ross & Sue Davis, William & Sue Clark, Melissa Finnigan, Pam Hardy, Michelle Morey & Scott Taylor, Tammi Nealon, Ben Rodriguez, Kurt & Kendra Wiesel, and Ted Cutler & Kim Worthington asking the Board to conduct a transparent search process for a new superintendent and that search be conducted by a professional search committee.

### Approval of Minutes

Beiter moved, Roy seconded to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2014 Board of Education meeting. All members voted in favor. The motion passed.

### Consent Agenda

**MOTION #14-53:** Beiter moved, Porcello seconded to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

1. Revisions to Policy #0000 – Missions & Functions
2. Revisions to Policy #0200 – Goals & Objectives
3. Revisions to Policy #5144 – Student Discipline
4. Revisions to Policy #1331 – Smoke-free Environment
5. Revisions to Policy #4118.231 & 4218.231 – Alcohol, Drugs, & Tobacco (certified & non-certified personnel)

All members voted in favor.

**MOTION #14-54:** Gee moved, Zawawi seconded to add Item F, Acceptance of the Superintendent's Letter of Resignation, to the Discussion/Action Items. All members voted in favor of adding the agenda item.

### Discussion/Action Items

- 2015-2016 Draft School Calendar

Dr. Baldwin said the revised calendar presented reflects changes in response to Board members' inquiries relative to safety concerns with holding school on Election Day and Board members' concerns about having a full week of school for students at the beginning of the year. Her office contacted the registrar of voters who said they would prefer that school is not in session during Election Day. That day is now a "no school" day and the first day of school was moved to Tuesday, September 1, 2015. Two days were added to the calendar in June to account for those two days. The professional development days at the beginning of the year were also adjusted as a result of the changes.

**MOTION: #14-55:** Beiter moved to approve the 2015-2016 School Calendar as presented, Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Board member Beiter asked when the graduation date has to be set for this year. Dr. Baldwin said graduation dates have to be set by April 1 each year. The March 17 Board meeting is the last regular meeting before April 1 to set the graduation date, or a special meeting could be held later in March to set the date.

- Report on SAT/ACT/AP/CAPT Science Results

Dr. Baldwin thanked the high school leadership team for providing this presentation. Mr. Moccio and Mr. Sullivan, Suffield High School Counselor, worked together to compile the information. Mr. Moccio gave an overview of the SAT test and results for the last five years.

He also shared a comparison of how Suffield scored as compared to other districts in DRG C. He noted there are many changes to the SATs in the near future. Mr. Moccio gave the background of the ACT test and the five year test results as well as the state and national results for 2014. He noted over the last five years the participation rate has increased by 21%. Board members had questions regarding gender gap data and national trends. Mr. Sullivan said Suffield's scores reflect national trends in gender gap results. Mr. Moccio reviewed the AP course offerings. Suffield High School currently offers 14 AP courses. 179 students sat for 18 different AP exams in May 2014. He showed the five year test results and the state and national results for 2014. Board member Gee noted the AP scores reflect mostly juniors and seniors, but one of the AP courses is open to sophomores. She asked if the administration is tracking the success of those sophomores and looking at other classes to open up to sophomores. Mr. Sullivan said AP psychology is newly open to sophomores so administration has not had the ability to track that data. Mr. Sullivan explained the AP test registration process. Board member Zawawi asked if there are scholarships for students who are unable to pay for the AP tests. Mr. Sullivan said the district will pay for AP tests for any student identified in the free/reduced lunch program. Board member D'Ostuni noted that computer science used to be an AP course offering. Mr. Sullivan said they have not had the enrollment numbers to support that offering but students do take the test after self-study. Board member D'Ostuni said students' schedules sometimes prohibit them from taking AP classes and she would like to have a discussion at the middle school and high school level about the school day schedule and providing students ways to be able to take more courses they want. She asked if seven periods in a schedule were normal. Mr. Sullivan said seven periods is typical, but some high schools have eight periods. Mr. Moccio said he will get information from other school districts on the number of periods in their schedules. Lastly Mr. Moccio reviewed CAPT Science background and test results. Mr. Moccio discussed the future considerations to improve results and increase participation rates. Board members thanked Mr. Moccio and the high school staff for their hard work.

- Presentation on 6-12 Data from the 2014 National School Climate Inventory

Dr. Baldwin thanked Mr. Pearce and Mr. Moccio for their work on this presentation and the positive contributions they have made in the short time they have been in the district. Mr. Moccio reviewed the school climate improvement process and the response rates. He noted the participation rates decreased from 2012 for all respondents at both schools. The tables highlighted the bottom two and top two rankings, which were similar between both the middle school and high school. Board member Beiter was concerned that students may not be as thoughtful as they could be in their responses. Dr. Baldwin noted that many students' responses fell in the neutral category. Mr. Pearce shared some of the questions in the survey. Mr. Pearce and Mr. Moccio reviewed the results and trends of the surveys and areas for improvement. Mr. Pearce reminded the Board that this work is a multi-year implementation plan. Dr. Baldwin said this is an authentic presentation of the work that administrators are doing in their buildings to improve school climate. Mr. Moccio shared the school climate goals and stakeholder feedback goals. Mr. Moccio explained the initial steps that have been done since the beginning of this school year and next steps. Board member D'Ostuni asked what kind of measurements could be used to show the results of the implementation efforts. Ashley Molden, the Middle School Interim Assistant Principal, said the first step in implementing the SRBI system is putting documentation in place and getting feedback from parents and teachers. Dr. Baldwin said student performance data, failure rates, and discipline referrals can be used as well.

- Report on Alternative Leadership Structures

Dr. Baldwin said at the request of the Board, she has provided this report which explains the leadership structure that she recommends and her rationale for it, which is the current structure. Superintendent Baldwin noted there were six data points for her rationale for the current leadership structure in Suffield. She stated that changing the leadership structure while searching for a superintendent could make the recruitment of a new superintendent difficult. Dr. Baldwin highlighted the difference in salary structures from the former administrative structure to today's leadership structure. The number of people did not change, but what did change was taking three teacher positions and moving them to administrator positions. The cost difference is between \$58,294 and \$72,029 more but the academic results in district far outweigh the cost. Dr. Baldwin's recommendation is to strengthen the human resources department. The Board should consider shared services with the Town or add an administrator. She also recommended enhancing the technology department by adding an instructional technology specialist to oversee educational programming, assistive technology and professional learning for staff. Dr. Baldwin included in the report alternative leadership structures from two high performing districts in close proximity to Suffield: Simsbury and Granby. She said Simsbury does not have a through line in the core areas of math, science and ELA. Granby is more director-focused and teachers get a stipend to do leadership work in the district. Board member Roy said when the three coordinators became supervisors they went from 10 months to 12 months. She said for the minimal cost increase it was a good investment. Dr. Baldwin noted the teachers were in essence 11 month employees, but it is an additional month, or three months in total. Board Chair Sanborn asked Board members if they were ready to make a decision because there are budget implications. Board member Beiter said this topic requires time to discuss and with the other presentations he wanted to wait to have the discussion it deserved. Board member Zawawi agreed. She would also like to see other districts' structures. Board member Gee said no Board member is interested in dismantling the entire leadership structure, and they are appreciative of the hard work that administrators are doing in the district. And in terms of recruiting a new Superintendent, the District had a different leadership structure when Dr. Baldwin was drawn to the District and worked with the Board to establish a new structure. She also noted the Board has not had a full discussion about this and more time needs to be devoted to it. Board Chair Sanborn said this should be a discussion by the full Board. The Board was in consensus to put this item on the December 16 Board agenda. Board Chair Sanborn said the meeting will be short on the 16th because the Tri-Board meeting is the same night at 7:00 p.m. Dr. Baldwin said the current structure is aligned with accomplishing the four strategic goals and addressed the recommendations of the 2011 CREC report. The leadership structure starts with the assistant superintendent and the five supervisors. This structure supports the vision, mission, and goals of the district. The Board needs to decide what kind of structure they want, but she said the Board should exercise caution on how specific they define the new structure because that will be difficult for a new superintendent. The Board needs to be clear on its commitment of the four strategic goals. The Board does not need to come up with an organizational chart, but it should be clear on what the Board wants for all kids and how a change in structure will achieve that. Board Chair Sanborn pointed out that if curriculum supervisors are eliminated it will be a domino effect. Dr. Collin noted that removing the curriculum supervisors removes the K-12 content expertise that supports teachers and all students. Board member Gee identified that the ELA supervisor was being given oversight of Social Studies and World Language confirming the curriculum work was not restricted by content expertise and noting our teachers were primary in curriculum writing. Dr. Collin noted his belief was the Board has had these conversations. The Board's position on the leadership structure has made it difficult for the administration to

do their jobs. If the Board eliminates the curriculum supervisor positions, then the district is left with an assistant superintendent who will supervise two special education supervisors who will not have K-12 content area support. The assistant superintendent and the curriculum supervisors are linked and that work cannot be done by the assistant superintendent alone. Board member D'Ostuni asked Dr. Collin what made him think the assistant superintendent would be left alone with two special education supervisors. The current structure would be supported through the 2014/2015 school year, pending any change.

Board member Beiter left the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

- Board Self-Evaluation

**MOTION #14-56:** Gee moved to table item D – Report on Alternative Leadership Structures and item E – BOE Self-Evaluation to the December 16 Board meeting, Zawawi seconded and all members voted in favor.

Acceptance of the Superintendent's Resignation

**MOTION #14-57:** Gee moved to accept the Superintendent's resignation, Roy regretfully seconded the motion. All members voted in favor except for Porcello who abstained.

Superintendent's Report

- SMS Continuous Improvement Steering Committee December 1, 2014 meeting – Dr. Baldwin said 10 parents were in attendance at the meeting which was held at the middle school media center. The focus of the meeting was to learn about technology education and what that could mean in the future at the middle school and high school level. Dr. Eric Mueller, a parent, gave a presentation on technology and what steps the schools could take to provide hands-on learning and applications for students. The administration will be looking at this during the budget process in the area of technology education.

Chair's Report

Board Chair Sanborn said Budget subcommittee meetings will start in January. The process for the search process for a new superintendent will be discussed at a later date. She asked the Board to communicate positive messages to the community around the good things going on in the school district so the school budget has a lot of support. She also noted the Agri-Science program is having their holiday sale.

Subcommittee Reports

Dr. Baldwin said the Facilities subcommittee met on November 21 and reviewed the quote to remove the underground storage tanks. Also discussed was a donation by Mark Cervione and the soccer club for lights to be installed on the high school soccer and track field. The proposal was brought to the Town Planning and Zoning department for review. The Zoning Enforcement Officer said the lights and installation were permitted under the zoning regulations. Dr. Baldwin said letters will be sent to all abutting property owners as a courtesy to inform them of the new lights. Board members will receive a copy of the letter when it is issued. Board member Gee asked how the new lights will affect the cost of electricity and if they will be used during peak hours. Mr. Hoff said the lights do not use too much energy and they will not be used during peak hours.

Board Chair Sanborn said the Policy subcommittee met this morning to discuss transportation policy revisions. Mr. Hoff has been doing a thorough review of the transportation policies and has discovered that policy and practice are not aligned. He has made several revisions to the

policies to address the discrepancies. These policies will be put on a future agenda so parents can have an opportunity to give their input. A letter will be sent to parents notifying them of the proposed changes. These policies will not be put on a 30 day read until after parents have the opportunity to express their thoughts.

#### Future Business

Board member Gee asked about the process for retired Suffield teachers going through Kelly Services to be a substitute teacher. She would like to see Kelly Services placed on the future agenda.

#### Public Comment

Melissa Finnegan, 50 Cedar Crest Lane, said she was surprised to hear the district did not have a Human Resources supervisor. She was disappointed that the participation rates for the school climate survey for the middle school and high school were so low. She suggested an incentive to get parents to participate in the survey. She asked the Board to look at instructional coaches. Instructional coaches are effective at keeping children in the classroom. She noted last year there was a proposal to add instructional coaches and reduce the number of academic support positions, but many people were upset that there was a possibility that some may lose their jobs, so the proposal was removed from budget discussions. She reminded the Board that Suffield Public Schools is not an employment agency and should act in the best interest of students.

Kendra Wiesel, 37 Willow Creek Lane, said she was happy to receive comprehensive, detailed information on her children's report cards. She could see where her children were doing well and where they needed improvement. She said this is one example of the work supervisors are doing in the district. She was disappointed that the report on the leadership structure will be tabled until the next meeting since it will be a short meeting because of the Tri-Board meeting. She would be interested in hearing the conversation and believes holding it on that night would be a disservice to the topic.

Semyanko moved, Roy seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m.

*Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on December 16, 2014*

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni  
Secretary

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