

Board of Education Meeting  
May 19, 2015

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Jeanne Gee, Michael Sepko, Susi Keane, Matt Service, John Richter, and Interim Superintendent Mel Chafetz, Assistant Superintendent Jim Collin, and Business Manager Bill Hoff.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

Mr. Dunn, A. Ward Spaulding Principal, brought two of his students to the Board meeting to be recognized for embodying the STARS program at Spaulding School. Hannah Pixton, a first grader in Ms. Lyver's room, was chosen for her acts of kindness and respect shown to her teachers and community by organizing and running a lemonade stand to raise money for her teachers and school. Mr. Dunn read a letter written by Ms. Lyver who said Hannah consistently demonstrates responsibility, kindness and respect and serves as a wonderful role model for her peers. Joshua Zenczak, a second grader in Ms. Shepard's class, was being recognized for his demonstration of respect and kindness to all. Joshua's positive character traits are evidenced in the kindness he has shown to a new student in his class, and his example has helped his peers to extend the same kindness to this new student. Mr. Dunn read a letter written by Ms. Shepard who said Joshua is responsible with his routines every day, respects his classmates, and serves as a wonderful role model for his peers.

Mr. Pearce and Mr. Moccio presented the CABE Leadership Awards to their students. Camden Miller and Anna Casinghino were the middle school recipients and Zachary Salters and Taylor Schwab were the high school recipients. The CABE Leadership Award recognizes students who exhibit exemplary leadership skills.

Mr. Peter Black introduced Leslie Welker, the recipient of the Outward Bound Scholarship. He said she has received a full scholarship to go to New Mexico this summer for 44 days. He said Miss Welker is resilient and will do well in this challenging program. Miss Welker said the trip will entail several expeditions, but also include living and working on a Navajo reservation where she will learn about the culture, history and ecosystem. In response to Board members' questions, Miss Welker said there will be groups of 8-12 people coming from all over the country, she first got involved in the program two years ago when she attended a wilderness program in Connecticut, and she is most looking forward to living on the reservation. Board Chair Gee invited Miss Welker back to a Board meeting to share her experiences of the trip.

**MOTION #15-32:** D'Ostuni moved to change the order of the agenda to move Item # V – SHS Student Representative before Item # 4 – Public Comment. Richter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

### Suffield High School Student Representative

Taylor Schwab updated the Board on the events at Suffield High School for the months of April and May:

- Seniors are selling prom tickets – Prom is May 29 at Chez Joseph
- Senior Outing to Brownstone Park on May 26
- Senior Banquet is June 4 also at Chez Joseph
- Taylor congratulated the Valedictorian, Sam Cutler, and Salutatorian, Kira Bourret
- Juniors are preparing for SAT/ACT's and college visits
- SBAC testing began today
- Sophomores are holding class elections
- Baseball and softball teams held fundraisers
- On April 2 students were encouraged to wear blue for Autism Awareness month and Best Buddies have an upcoming fundraiser
- The Unified Theater will be putting on a production in June
- The Wildcats Card Co. has begun creating cards; proceeds go to the Kevin Vitale fund
- Suffield Idol was held on April 30
- A-Team is holding their last few meetings of the year and planning to bring diversity awareness programs to the high school next year
- Spring concert is May 21 – some students participated in the CT All State Music Festival
- Students are excited Ms. Holland was selected as the Teacher of the Year
- Underclassmen awards are coming up
- The Agriscience Department held an Expo for younger children
- Taylor thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak at their meetings this year.

### Public Comment

Melissa Finnegan, 50 Cedar Crest Lane, said at the last Board meeting Board members discussed changing the Board's meeting conduct bylaw to remove public comment at the end of meetings, and she was disappointed to hear that a Board member said that eliminating the public comment at the end reduce those who want to air their views publicly. She believed all who attend Board meetings are there for the same reason, the kids. She personally likes having public comment at the end of the meeting because it gives her an opportunity to get clarification or to comment on what was discussed during the meeting.

### Communications

None

### Approval of Minutes

Service moved, Keane seconded the motion to approve the May 5, 2015 Board of Education minutes. Board Chair Gee noted minor revisions on page 3 under Discussion of Policy #9325.2. She called for a vote. All members voted in favor of the amended minutes. The motion carried.

### Consent Agenda

**MOTION #15-33:** Keane moved to approve the request for the SMS Promise Club overnight field trip to Woodstock Valley, CT on June 13-14, 2015. D'Ostuni seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

## Discussion/Action Items

- Update on the High School Social Work Program

Mr. Black said he asked Miss Welker to join him this evening. He started working with high school students under this program in February to support and work with students who feel separated from their peers. His role is to support these students by focusing on what they are doing right and helping them set goals. He said he was very impressed with the high school administration and guidance department. They really care about students, families and education. He suggested developing an alternative program to accommodate students with different learning styles. Miss Welker stated that working with Mr. Black affords students an opportunity to form a more personal relationship than can be forged with a teacher or administrator; it is a more relaxed interaction. In response to Board members' questions, Mr. Black said he envisioned an alternate program where students would work with service organizations in the morning and academic classes would be held in the afternoon. In addition there should be a component towards working with parents. Mr. Black thanked the Board and said he really enjoys the work and reconnecting with the kids.
- Report on the Summer Boost Program

Dr. Collin said the letter in Board members' packets will be going home to parents soon. The Summer Boost Program is aligned with the overall summer programming. Also being sent to parents are reading lists, math packets, etc. The program is intended to keep kids reading at their independent level over the summer. Students will be invited to meet with grade level teachers, which is a change from the previous program. He said the program is targeted for all students with special outreach to those below benchmark reading levels. He noted the program is more structured than the former program. In response to Board members' questions, Dr. Collin said two staff members are currently planned for the program, but the administration will adjust the staffing level if more students attend than anticipated. Dr. Collin thanked the Curriculum Supervisors, Sophia Gintoff and Kim Loveland, for developing the materials. Board Chair Gee asked about the Summer Reading Program, noting there had been questions at the Board level around the purpose and effectiveness of last year's program that have remained on the future business part of the agenda. At the Board's request, Dr. Collin said he will provide the materials to Board members.
- Report on Professional Development in the District

Dr. Collin reviewed the critical issues relative to professional development and noted this is a heavy lift. Tonight's presentation is a broad brush overview and will generate future agenda items for the Board. Dr. Collin said this presentation gives the framework and sense of major drivers of the district's professional development over the last three years. The shifts in standards and assessments are monumental. SEED is another significant shift as well as 1:1 digital learning. All these changes need to be accomplished in the current context and it is a challenge. The district provided professional development at the beginning of the year and it also provided professional development days at the end of the year when the Board forgives student snow days. He noted that throughout the school year principals work hard with staff on prioritizing that time so it purposeful and meaningful to teachers. Board Chair Gee asked for an historical timeline on professional development offered in the past and next steps. Dr. Collin said creating a timeline is difficult because it is difficult to separate out issues. The Board discussed alternative

days that professional development could be offered instead of at the end of the year. Dr. Collin said it is an issue many districts face. He added that teachers understand the issue and realize it is a challenge. Our teachers benefit and learn from the year-end professional development and are devoted to coming back and meeting us right where we were, Dr. Collins said. Dr. Chafetz said historically the district had full day releases during the school year and more early release times for professional development. Board members discussed the possibilities and obligations around contractual language and the opportunity to look at that at the upcoming teacher negotiations. In response to Board members' questions, Dr. Collin said professional development is focused in the strategic plan. Administrators work very hard to make professional development meaningful for teachers and collaboratively work with teachers in this area. He added ongoing work around professional development can be evaluated by receiving feedback from teachers. He said the overarching issues are harder to gauge. It happens on a micro level and comes in a more subjective, conversational way. Dr. Collin said this work all happens through collaboration and is critical to authentically engage teachers.

- April 2015 Financial Report

Mr. Hoff reviewed the April financial report. The current budget projection shows a year-end surplus of \$202,325, but the remainder will be spent by year-end. Approximately \$40,000 of the \$140,649 which was frozen in January has been released. The administration is determining priorities for spending for the remainder of the year. He noted pupil transportation expenditures were reduced due to fuel savings and the Open Choice grant fund has increased due to reducing the projected expenditures for equipment. Food service broke even for month of April. Aramark will reimburse the district for any loss, and a year-end meeting with Aramark will be scheduled in the next few of weeks. In response to a Board member's question, Mr. Hoff said the responses to the food service survey were very positive overall. Mr. Hoff will send participation rates to the Board. Board Chair Gee suggested meeting with a group of students to get their feedback of the food service program. Mr. Hoff noted that Sharon Strzegowski has worked diligently in monitoring negative balances in the program. Board Chair Gee said there will be a Tri-Board meeting at end of June and she would like the administration to provide a year-end expenditures report to the Board of Finance.

- Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

- 2015-2016 Agriscience enrollment data – Dr. Chafetz said he was pleased to report that the 2015-2016 9<sup>th</sup> grade class is the largest class coming into the Agriscience program. He congratulated and thanked the high school staff for a job well done.
- 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Private School Enrollment – Dr. Chafetz said currently 10 eighth grade students will be attending Suffield Academy and one will be attending Loomis Chaffee in September; these numbers are typical. A Board member asked for magnet school enrollment data. Dr. Chafetz said the lottery has just begun for magnet schools, and he will get that data to the Board when it is available.
- Dr. Chafetz said Helen Thresher was named Suffield's Paraeducator of the Year and Stephannie Holland was named Suffield's Teacher of the Year. He said the celebration last week was the best one he has attended and was a joyous event. He thanked Christy Baril and Shannon Insero and the entire Teacher of the Year committee for all their hard work.

- Dr. Chafetz reported that Suffield Middle School received a donation of Legos from John Maleyeff. The value of the donation was less than \$2,500, so the donation does not require Board approval, but he wanted to publicly acknowledge the generous donation.
- Chair's Report
  - Board Chair Gee echoed Dr. Chafetz's remarks regarding the Teacher and Paraeducator of the Year ceremony. She thanked the Board members who responded to her regarding an ad-hoc committee. She said the Policy subcommittee is not going to meet until July so Karen Berasi can be a part of the discussion around changing the meeting agendas.

Subcommittees Reports

None

Public Comment

None

Future Business

No new business was added.

Adjournment

Service moved, Richter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

*Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on June 2, 2015.*

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni  
Secretary

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