

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, June 9, 2021 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug High School.

Board members present: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino (arrived late)

Board members absent: Mr. Hicks

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance, Mr. Brough, Interim Human Resource Specialist, Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Mrs. Keane, Director of Student Services and Special Education, Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Motion carried.

Public Comment

None.

Year-end recognition

A. Board of Education scholarship recipient

Mr. Moore explained that the Board of Education has chosen Maura Zettergren as the scholarship recipient this year. She represented the core ethical values through her four years of high school. Maura has been captain of the volleyball and basketball teams and has shown a huge amount of resilience this year, dealing with COVID and her injuries and acting like an assistant coach. Maura thanked the school and the district for all they have done for her. She will be attending URI in the nursing program.

B. Retirements

Mr. Brough recognized that nine staff members are retiring at the end of this school year, with a combined 218 years of dedicated service to the district.

Mr. Ford started with Mary Johnson and noted that she has been a teaching assistant at John Lyman School for over 30 years. She is creative, fun and has a wonderful sense of humor. She is well-known for her costumes and her willingness to wear them. Mary is someone who cared deeply about the students and was an important part of building a foundation for the many kindergarten students who passed through John Lyman. She retired mid-year and John Lyman hasn't quite been the same.

Mr. Ford then introduced Darlene Allen also started as a teaching assistant at John Lyman and has been their secretary for years. She is highly thought of by the entire school community. She is dedicated to her work and is a consummate professional. Darlene genuinely cares about people and is exceptionally kind.

Mrs. Stone explained that she has had the joy of working with Judy O'Hare for five years, but Mr. Brough worked with her for 17. She has a total of 36 years in education, with 35 of them at Memorial in the 5/6 ID program. This year, she is teaching reading in fifth grade. Mrs. Stone stated that Judy is always concerned about others, kind and loves her students as much as her own son. She always remembers her students and is so proud of the people her children have become. Judy has lived in Hamden for all 35 years she taught at Memorial and moved to Middletown only last summer. Mrs. Stone isn't sure they will be able to fill Mrs. O'Hare's shoes and she will be missed.

Mrs. Keane introduced Jean Myers and noted that she has been a special education para in the district for 19 years and her students loved her. Her service to the district has been exceptional. She is loving, caring, kind and patient with all of the students and staff. Mr. Sadinsky sent a message that he wishes Jean peace, happiness and health in her retirement.

Kathleen Davidson has been with the district for 18 years as a speech and language pathologist and has worked in all of the buildings except Lyman. Mrs. Keane noted that she is a true professional and has learned so much from her. She has an intense passion for her work and it shows every day.

Mrs. Keane introduced Penny Sawicki, who has dedicated 22 years to the district as the districtwide physical therapist. Mrs. Keane explained that she learned so much from Penny about bringing physical therapy to the kids in the district and teaching the kids and the staff about their needs. She wished Penny many happy years in retirement.

Terry Reilly is the speech and language pathologist for the littlest learners at Brewster. Terry has been the speech and language pathologist for preschool students for 22 years in the district, which is 22 years of patience, love and more patience. Mrs. Keane noted that she has brought so much joy, hope and education to the young learners and have given them a good foundation for their education. She is appreciated, loved and will be missed. Mrs. Reilly stated that the support in the district has been amazing.

Mr. Brough introduced Paul VanSteenbergen and Steve Rand. Steve has served the district for 17 years as a second-shift custodian at Coginchaug since 2004, retiring last December. Steve always performed his job with great enthusiasm and professionalism. He worked above and beyond the call of duty and was always available to assist staff when necessary. He often volunteered to maintain the high school's saltwater fish tank on weekends. He continues to work two nights a week as a custodian at John Lyman and performs building checks when school is not in session. Mr. Brough also noted that Steve was a member of the CRHS baseball team that won the Shoreline and state championship in 1972.

Paul VanSteenbergen started his career with the district as a second-shift custodian at Brewster School in 1992 and relocated to Coginchaug in 2010. He retired in January of this year. Paul performed his job to the fullest, always seeking a better and more productive way to do things. He has great fondness for the kids in the district and, while at Brewster, he volunteered his time to read to students. Every year, Paul would bring an incubator with chicken eggs for the students to witness the hatching of the chicks and continues to do that today.

Mr. Brough also relayed a story from Jim Croteau about Steve Rand and Paul VanSteenbergen about a leak at Coginchaug. He then thanked all of the retirees for their service.

C. CRHS student reporters

Mr. Moore thanked Noelle, Cady and Jaden for all of their hard work this year.

CRHS student reporters - Jaden Astle, Cadence Hurlbert and Noelle Sorensen

Cady Hurlbert thanked the board for having them back one last time. Jaden Astle reported that scholarships were awarded earlier today in the auditorium. The event was held in person for students only and was live-streamed for the parents to watch. There were a total of 142 scholarships awarded and every student received \$150 from the general scholarship fund. Jaden thanked the Coginchaug Scholarship Committee for all of their hard work. Noelle Sorensen reported that spring sports were very successful this year. The girls' tennis team had a member place first at Shorelines in singles and eighth at states. Collin Murphy from the boy's golf team was two strokes away from qualifying for the state open and the team placed eighth in Division IV. The state opens will be held tomorrow for track, with 13 individuals competing from the district. The baseball team is competing in the state championship on Friday for the first time in 49 years and the softball team will compete in the state championship on Saturday.

Cady Hurlbert explained that all seniors will sit together at graduation and the chorus and band will perform live music. The graduation celebration will be held at the Shelton Sports Center, organized by Project Graduation. Cady then went on to introduce next year's board reporters, starting with Rebecca Tobin.

Rebecca Tobin will be a senior next year and is part of many clubs and programs, including Ecology club, Book club, Class Council, School Council, National Honor Society and French Honor Society. She also participates in the music department and is part of a cappella, Show Choir, Chamber Choir and the Drama club. Rebecca is grateful for the opportunity to represent the study body next year.

Jaden Astle welcomed Logan Palardy to the student reporters. Logan will also be a senior next year. He is part of the cross country and track teams and will be the cross country captain next year. He is also involved in student body government and is the secretary of extracurricular affairs. He has been a part of the Ecology club for two years. Logan also thanked the board for this opportunity.

Noelle Sorensen introduced Nora O'Connell. Nora will be a senior next year and is a three-season athlete as well as a part of the music department, including a cappella and Show Choir. She belongs to various clubs, including being president of Class Council, treasurer of the Ecology club and SHS.

Noelle thanked the board for allowing them to report all year. Noelle will be attending Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania, playing soccer and majoring in elementary education. Jaden will attend UCONN, hopefully joining the track team and majoring in cognitive science. Cady Hurlbert will be attending Oberlin, studying anthropology.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education District meeting - May 26, 2021

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2021 Board of Education District meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of the June 9, 2021 Board of Education District meeting, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Dr. Friedrich abstained. Motion carried.

Next Board Meeting - June 23, 2021 at 7:00 PM

Mr. Moore explained that there may not be a need for the meeting, but he will let everyone know by the end of next week.

Committee Reports

A. Well-Being Committee Meeting - June 1, 2021

Mrs. Caramanello reported that they received a staff and student well-being update and each of the administrators talked about their individual schools. The teachers appreciated having Wednesdays for collaboration. The committee also talked about the next steps on equity and Dr. Schuch shared that much of the work they are doing on re-imagining education may line up with the district's expectations for equity. Dr. Friedrich added that they also talked about the board members getting a better understanding of the training that the teachers are getting and possibly offering the training to board members on Courageous Conversations. Mr. Roraback also commented that attendance on that committee has gotten quite large.

Communications

Mr. Moore received letters about elimination of the Latin rotation in sixth grade. Jenny Lussier also wrote asking for assistance with transportation for an ACES course in New Haven and Mr. Moore spoke with her to let her know that the district is not providing that transportation.

Mr. Moore encouraged everyone to enjoy the track meet, baseball championship or softball championship.

Mr. Yamartino also reported that Middlefield held their Town Meeting Monday evening and nobody was nominated for the open vacancy on the Finance Committee.

Mr. Moore noted that a meeting will be set up in July with the Benchwarmers to talk about advertising at the athletic fields.

Dr. Taylor also received communication from high school students about Latin in the high school and trying to coordinate the Latin V schedule with AP physics. Teachers and counselors have been involved, but it seems to still be an issue. Mrs. DiMaggio will look into the issue.

Superintendent's Report - Transition Plan Presentation

Dr. Schuch began by sharing his presentation, "Reflections, Hopes and Dreams." He stated that he will talk about why this information is important, a backdrop on the context and process he used to develop it, that there are still opportunities to add more voices to the conversation, what he has learned since arriving here, potential next steps and then open it up for questions or comments.

Dr. Schuch felt that doing all of this work got him out in the community, meeting people. He added that it is rare to get an external perspective which is also an internal perspective at the same time. He attempted to pull together some of the past, the present and the future. Most importantly, Dr. Schuch felt that this work can anchor a lot of the future efforts in planning and budget, educational programming and other things.

Dr. Schuch reviewed that this report covers the period from November to May. Many people willingly gave their time during November and December, before he even started in the district. Most of the interactions were through Zoom, due to the pandemic, and he also looked at data and written material. Dr. Schuch also noted that Meg Maloney is amazing and none of this work would have happened in the way it happened without her. Dr. Schuch has had almost 100 school visits since January and about 200 individual interviews or focus groups were done. He's had 48 public meetings and events and many, many informal conversations.

Dr. Schuch talked to many learners, recent graduates, parents and families, employees, the Board of Education, town officials and boards, other superintendents in the area, local realtors and businesses, the president of Middlesex Community College, the support organizations, state officials and health departments and others. Written materials he reviewed were planning documents, things related to board meetings, policies, the district charter, state accountability metrics, membership history and forecast, budgets, capital improvements, debt services, the website, communications and lots of emails and other written materials.

Dr. Schuch reminded everyone that what is being presented is from his perspective. He tried to be objective, but recognizes that he has biases. He also noted that he hasn't talked to everybody and the biggest limitation was the COVID restrictions. He was not able to see all of the work being done in normal circumstances.

Dr. Schuch explained that he created a Google site to archive all of this information and they will publish that site. They will also launch a ThoughtExchange tomorrow to invite people to give input and agree or disagree with what he is sharing tonight. He will also continue conversations.

Looking at what he learned, Dr. Schuch reviewed that he will talk about people, educational programming, planning, budget, communication and competing visions of success. He felt that the district is best-defined by its strong commitment to learners and learning. There are a multitude of academic and extracurricular opportunities, especially given the district's size. Despite successes in a number of areas, the district is at a critical juncture with a number of major challenges related to planning, annual budgets and communication. It is equally, if not more, important to rectify the competing visions of success in the schools to empower the learners to thrive and contribute as global citizens.

Starting with the people, Dr. Schuch reviewed the demographics in the district and noted that 88 percent of learners are non-Hispanic/white and only 16 percent qualifying for free and reduced lunch and only 1 percent English language learners. There is a relative lack of racial, socioeconomic and language diversity which concerns many people. He felt it was important that all learners and families feel safe at school and are fully included in all school-related functions. Most people did not characterize the district as being overtly racist, but shared concerns about systematic inequities that have existed for decades. They also worry that learners may be somewhat unprepared to successfully navigate life in places that are much more diverse.

There has been a 34 percent decrease in enrollment since 2005. The two major drivers of that are lower birth rates and a steadily increasing percentage of learners that don't remain in the district for high school. That decline is forecasted to continue until 2026-2027. The enrollment at the high school is forecasted to decrease to 300 over the next nine years, with many students choosing private high schools.

The learners expressed a high degree of loyalty and pride in their schools and community, with a high degree of public service and community outreach. Many older learners feel the size of the district is an overall strength, with close relationships with their peers and teachers as well. They do have a caveat that sometimes being a smaller district does limit the scope of events and school spirit. They also feel that the size of the district eliminates cliques and stereotypes associated with larger schools.

Attending a four-year college immediately after graduation seems to be an expectation, especially for learners who perform well and gaining admission to college appears to be their primary goal. The learners feel that the majority of their school experience is being programmed for them by others, especially those enrolled in challenging academic programs. Those who attend college generally feel prepared academically, but wish the district would provide learners more ownership of their education to assist with planning future careers. Some learners are involved in multiple extracurricular and community-based activities, while other learners have limited or no involvement. This involvement also reflects their sense of belonging and connection to school and its employees.

Looking at parents and families, they are generally supportive of the district. Many parents want their children to be accepted into four-year colleges, however they expressed concerns about the high cost of college and whether a college degree is actually the best way for their children to reach career and life goals. Parents and families clearly view distinction between educational programs, describing a systematic distinction between standard and advance level learners, labels that emerge in the secondary levels and follow them to graduation. A second distinction is between learners with disabilities, whether formally identified or not, and their non-disabled peers. They generally speak highly of services provided by the district, but they also indicate that there are lower expectations for learners with disabilities. Parents and families have historically been divided by the program choice model that was initially driven by the Integrated Day program at John Lyman and other schools. Even though that has technically been eliminated, that division still resonates today.

Every school has a core active group of parents and families and the high school has a number of organizations that support specific activities. Those that serve indicate that volunteerism has steadily declined over a number of years. Families who are newer to the community are very willing to give financial support, but not actively participate. It appears that there is a trend of families moving into the community when their children enter school and move away after their children graduate from high school. Local realtors termed this as "20 years and out" and attribute it to the high-quality reputation of

RSD 13 and the local property tax rates. Families are willing to pay the taxes so that their children can reap the educational benefits, but seek other places to live after those benefits no longer apply.

The district has approximately 300 full-time employees, with the majority being teachers and other licensed professionals that provide direct support. Employees are generally regarded highly by learners, parents and families as well as the communities. They are viewed as talented and caring professionals. Differences in attitudes towards learners and teaching styles, especially at the secondary level, impact educational processes and the district's overall reputation. Some teachers get to know the learners as people and leverage those relationships to motivate learning. In most cases, those teachers also create learning environments and take risks to engage learners in creative ways. Other teachers do not appear to value that relationships and instead focus primarily on subject matter. These teachers tend to be more autocratic, tightly controlling the environment with little or no collaborative practices.

Another defining characteristic of RSD 13 employees is loyalty and longevity. Many staff remain in the district because of their dedication to the learners as well as the support they feel from the organization, parents, families and the community. This district has high performance expectations for employees at all levels and typically attracts quality applicants. Administrators and other office staff provide tremendous support and are responsive to employee needs. The district enjoys a healthy working relationship with unions and maintains open lines of communication.

Some employees do feel inhibited by the organizational structures in place and feel powerless to make positive changes to improve learning. Many want a greater ability to drive their own professional learning. They are very cognizant of their relative status within the team and, while there is generally a sense of trust, areas of distinction are clearly present and extend to the Board of Education, State Department of Education and other external entities. They feel that the unions contribute to highlighting some of these differences, but other factors also contribute. The working relationship between administrators and other staff is divided by title and decision-making authority. The distinction between licensed and non-licensed employees is also part of the district's culture. The majority of licensed employees receive higher salaries and better benefits. Many non-licensed staff have not earned college degrees and some feel undervalued by other employees and within the organization as a whole.

Professional learning appears to be a strength and an area of growth. The program itself is of high quality and well-planned. The limitations are rooted in a model designed for engaging large groups of employees by a single facilitator. The employees do appreciate some of the choices that have recently been available, but many still seek more personalized, relevant and job-embedded experiences. Many employees also report that curriculum, especially at the elementary level, has drastically improved during the past several years with a concerted effort to develop more consistency and expectations.

Dr. Schuch reviewed that there are about 12,000 residents in the two towns of 37 square miles. The population is aging and the community is even less diverse than the school district. Durham and Middlefield have a somewhat symbiotic relationship with the district. The majority of funding for the district comes from taxes. There is a strong working relationship among the town governments and the district as well as many shared projects. Many school activities are attended and supported by residents and learners and employees actively participate in town events as well. The Durham Fair is the best example of this collaboration relationship, with many learners and employees volunteering. There are a number of civic, nonprofit and other community organizations that support and interact with the district.

Dr. Schuch then reviewed the Board of Education and noted that there are high levels of collaboration, trust and mutual respect among its members. He did state that that is not always the case. Everyone listens to each other and the board works hard to build consensus. All decisions are made in public meetings and public attendance is always welcomed and participation is encouraged. A large number of committee meetings are also held throughout the year. Looking at the last 12 months, there have been a total of 30 board meetings and 45 board committee meetings. Dr. Schuch felt that there is an opportunity to streamline some of that and gain some major efficiencies which may make serving on the board more attractive.

The district is currently in a transition period for educational program designs. They have been working on the Portrait of a Citizen, re-imagining a more learner-centered paradigm and the potential closing of John Lyman Elementary School which he felt will be significant drivers of change in the future. Dr. Schuch pointed out that the grade configurations have recently changed. Families choose between Brewster, John Lyman and Memorial for K-4. This selection has an historical context with program choice model that existed for many years, Contemporary and Integrated Day (ID).

With the anticipated closure of John Lyman Elementary School, the district began the process of merging the two models into a single program and reconfiguring grade levels. Due to the inability to close John Lyman and because of the pandemic, it has been difficult for Dr. Schuch to assess the viability of the single program model. The ID program is largely characterized by learner voice and choice, democratic processes, arts integration, multi-age classrooms and an interdisciplinary approach. Everyone involved in the ID program describe a learning model that was innovative, learner-centered and seemingly aligned with the district's mission and Portrait of a Citizen work. Learners relayed the positive impact that the program has made in their lives. In some ways, ID and program choice distinguished the district from other districts. In fact, some parents enrolled their children in private schools in order to provide them with similar ID experiences through high school.

Program choice also served to divide learners, employees and families and caused significant administrative challenges at Memorial and Strong. Driven by the standards movement, a more uniformed curriculum and an increased emphasis on standardized test performance, the ID program has gradually been dismantled over the past few years. The program no longer operates at Memorial or Strong and many of the core elements at John Lyman Elementary School have been reduced or eliminated.

At the high school, a multitude of course are offered, especially for those pursuing college. A reduction in career and technical education courses has limited opportunities for learners who may not be interested in college. The high school has recently been emphasizing career planning and infusing more work-based learning options, but have been limited during the pandemic. High school staff shared that time and schedule frequently limited work-based learning options and other off-campus opportunities. Some students and families expressed frustrations with the master schedules, especially the unstructured middle school tutorials and high school study halls.

Performing arts is a strength of the district and is supported at every school. High levels of participation in the middle and high school shape the culture and is a source of pride within the community. Sports and other extracurricular activities serve to complement the academic programming and provide many opportunities.

The district has a robust technology infrastructure that supports one-to-one learning as well as many business functions. Technology has been integrated into learning to varying degrees. Support for technology is provided by the district as well. COVID-19 created the need for remote learning technologies, but it is difficult to assess how those technologies will benefit learning in the post-pandemic future.

Dr. Schuch reviewed that the district has a number of planning documents, but really lacks a well-defined strategic plan aligned to its mission and vision. A number of elements influence the district, but very little of them appear in the daily operations of the schools. He does appreciate that COVID-19 restrictions may contribute to this apparent disconnect, but feels that there is still significant work that needs to be done. The district's core ethical values and Portrait of a Citizen can potentially anchor future strategic planning efforts. They are also currently exploring a more learner-centered vision in an attempt to better empower learners for success after high school.

Facility planning and capital improvements is the most immediate challenge facing the district. The combination of declining enrollment, aging school facilities and cost of new construction necessitates the need for a well-defined and funded long-range facility plan. The recent decision to transfer ownership of Korn School to the Town of Durham should relieve the district of a significant financial and operational burden. Determining the status of John Lyman Elementary School is critically important to capital improvement planning and will have far-reaching impact on future budgets and programming.

Looking at the budget, it costs approximately \$37 million to operate the district each year which has remained relatively constant over the past seven years. The vast majority of expenditures are salaries and benefits. Most employees are members of a union that negotiate contracts that specify those salaries and benefits. As a result of that, only a fraction of annual expenditures are discretionary. The district also offsets recurring expenditures with anticipated surplus funds. This practice does keep property taxes as low as possible, but also makes it more difficult to explain budgets to the public. The majority of revenue is generated by Durham and Middlefield, a little bit from the state and very little from the federal government.

District budgets must be approved by a majority of voters each year. Those referenda have been approved on first attempts since the 2015-2016 budget which passed on the second attempt. The percentage of voters approving budgets have ranged from 49 percent in 2015-2016 to 64 percent in 2016-2017.

Communication is both a strength and an area of growth for the district. Written communication is regularly sent to families and employees. Some believe that is it inadequate, while others feel it is too much and a lot goes unread. The Parent Square tool is extremely effective. Other than that, digital media seems to be a relatively untapped communication resource. The website is antiquated and difficult to navigate and there does not seem to be an active social media presence. Parent Square messages do not get sent to community members who are not parents or employees. The district could also improve its marketing to families who live outside of Durham and Middlefield which could potentially improve the ability to attract high-quality teachers as well.

Looking at visions for success, Dr. Schuch felt that it is becoming increasingly challenging to define what success after graduation really means. One definition equates success with gaining entrance to a competitive four-year college and is a powerful driver of educational programming. A more recent

alternate definition of success is characterized by individual fulfillment, citizenship and overall workforce readiness. The traditional definition of success also includes other measures that lead to college admission, including taking advanced courses, earning a high GPA, scoring well on the SAT, participating in extracurricular activities and getting positive teacher recommendations. Learners term the navigation of these measures as “playing the game of school” and admit that school is lacking in some very fundamental ways. Many feel that achieving good grades is directly linked to memorizing content and does not reflect attainment of practical skills. They also feel there is a distinct advantage to earn a higher GPA by those learners who are placed in more advanced courses. This vision of success also comes at the expense of purposeful discovery of interests and passions. Learners describe much of their school experience as boring and having very little connection to their future careers or personal lives. Recent graduates appreciate their teachers and the academic knowledge that they gained in the district, but they also feel that the message was to get into college and then figure it out. They also shared that most of their school time felt very programmed and controlled, but didn’t realize that until they left the district.

The district recently developed the Portrait of a Citizen that includes creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration along with compassion and responsibility. These attributes articulate a very different profile of learner success. The district is also attempting to better empower learners for success after high school. This vision for success may include college, but only as a possible step toward future employment, citizenship and fulfillment.

Dr. Schuch is going to continue to talk with people and gain more insight. He believes that the district needs one strategic plan with the re-imagining work being key to that. They surveyed approximately 38 people who worked on the re-imagining work and just about everyone felt that they needed to do the exercise multiple times and bring more people into the conversation. Dr. Schuch believes that the next leader of the high school will be key as well. He also believes the district’s work with transitioning Korn School and with John Lyman Elementary School are very important.

At this point, Dr. Schuch asked if anyone had questions or comments. Ms. Geraci was in favor of less meetings and more efficient meetings. She feels that would help with community participation as well. Dr. Friedrich added that Mr. Roraback’s observation that the Well-Being Committee benefitted enormously by being on Zoom is not something that should be overlooked. He also felt that they need to continue with what is working best, regardless of what the state says.

Ms. Geraci also felt that they need to continue the equity work and mentioned that it is Pride Month and felt that there should be Pride flags everywhere. She has just gone through equity training at her job and felt that there was so much work to be done to expose the children on so many levels. She also commented about the consistent theme at the high school about learners wanting more ownership and opportunity and felt that was a huge reason why a lot of students leave after eighth grade. She did recognize the size of the district and how the means can only go so far. Dr. Schuch felt that that was why the reimagining work is important. They will need an emphasis that allows the learners to do more exploration but also to transfer some of the power from the district to the learners so they become active partners in their education. Dr. Schuch acknowledged that that cannot be done overnight and more people need to be engaged. He did admit that he didn’t really uncover the reason why eighth graders leave the district, but he was most struck by the fact that there is an increasing percentage in that eighth to ninth grade gap.

Mrs. Booth asked if parents could be contacted as to why they are choosing to have their children leave the district at that point and Dr. Schuch noted that he tried to talk to that group of families, but they didn't want to talk to him. He did get a few stories that went back to the ID program and the fact that private schools were offering more of that. He also noted that students that went through the ID program stressed the positive impact it had but also mentioned the division it caused with other students. Dr. Schuch felt that the single program could improve the district's ability to attract people.

Mr. Yamartino felt that the friction that exists between the two programs can be multiplied by a factor of 10 if parents choose to educate their students outside of the district. The reluctance of parents to speak to Dr. Schuch is that they are already feeling pressure from the community and Mr. Yamartino knows that firsthand because his children did go to private schools. He noted that a headmaster that he spoke with would not allow their admission at their high school to go above 325 students because that is the number that they believe that every employee would know the name of every student, creating a relationship that makes every student feel connected. Most private schools require every student to participate in either sports or arts after class. Mr. Yamartino also noted that he was handed a history test during one of his visits that had 100 questions on it and was asked where he thought the test was from and what the passing grade should be. The test was actually what was handed out to the people of South Carolina to allow them to vote and the passing score was 100. This test was only given to black people. He noted that that was the first time he truly understood racial inequities and felt that there was so much more that the district could do to make the subject matter more relevant to people.

Mr. Yamartino agreed that volunteerism is declining and is happening in the towns as well. There are very few new faces involved. Mr. Moore added that parents now both have to work and take care of the kids which is different from a decade ago. He felt that the district was very lucky to have parents on the Board of Education and not just grandparents. He noted that this is a very wealthy community and people are willing to give, but just don't have time to volunteer. Mr. Moore felt that marketing the re-imagining will encourage people to stay and also to come to the towns. He did feel that the focus needs to start at Strong School in order to encourage students to stay for high school. Mrs. Booth agreed and stated that the kids shouldn't sit through three tutorials in one day which makes her child not to want to go to school.

Mr. Yamartino asked if Dr. Schuch knew how long it would take to get where we need to go and Dr. Schuch did not want to limit anything. He felt that the teachers have to be convinced that this is the best direction and it cannot be done by mandate.

Mrs. Booth asked Dr. Schuch if he was happy that he was here. He is very pleased that he was allowed to do the work and present it. He truly believes that the Board of Education is a good group to work with and the conversations need to continue.

New Business

A. Vote to approve CRHS Virginia Beach field trip request

Mrs. Booth asked if this was going to be on the same dates as the chorus trip to Disney World as students would be missing quite a bit of school if they did both, but Mr. Moore thought one of them was during vacation. Mrs. Booth noted that this trip was for five days in May and that would mean five less learning days.

Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the CRHS Virginia Beach field trip request, as presented and per the requirements of the policy adopted by the board.

In favor of approving the CRHS Virginia Beach field trip request, as presented and per the requirements of the policy adopted by the board: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

B. Vote to authorize CRHS textbook donation

Mr. Moore explained that some of the math books are no longer of value, but another school would like them.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve CRHS textbook donation.

In favor of approving CRHS textbook donation: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

C. Vote to accept Student Wellness policy revisions

Mrs. Neubig stated National School Lunch participants are in the process of having a triennial review of their Wellness policies. Mrs. Neubig did state that the district met all the requirements, but certain areas needed to be elaborated on and she reviewed them for the board. She added that this policy needs to be approved by June 30th.

Dr. Friedrich asked to revise the wording to read “maximum student to teacher ratios” rather than “maximum teacher to student ratios.”

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to accept the Student Wellness policy revisions.

In favor of accepting the Student Wellness policy revisions: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Ms. Geraci made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the regular meeting of the Board of Education: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First