

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, February 8, 2023 at 6:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone.

Board members absent: None

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance, Mrs. Keane, Director of Student Services and Special Education, Mr. Brough, Human Resource Specialist, Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology, Mrs. Quarato, Learner-Centered Specialist and Mrs. Siegel, Learner-Centered Specialist

Mrs. Petrella called the work session to order at 6:02 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Betty, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Presentations and Recognitions

A. Strong Presentation - Technology and Innovation

Mrs. Gonzalez thanked Mrs. Hurlbert for all her hard work on the technology program.

Mrs. Hurlbert introduced herself and explained that she teaches tech ed and Open Studio at Strong. She noted that there is a lot of creativity, passion, collaboration and a sense of community in the program. She introduced Alexa Saraceno, Jeff Brady and Elle Davison who gave a presentation on the program. All three love the program and feel safe and included there.

Mrs. Hurlbert added that they focus a lot on process and progress. The learners then described and passed around some of the things they created.

B. CRHS Reporters - Hayden Gonzales and Christine Waterman

Hayden Gonzales reported that throughout January, winter sports teams have been in full swing. The Unified Sports team hosted a post-midterm pep rally on January 26th. All sports captains gave a recap of their seasons. The cheerleaders performed and a teacher vs. Unified Sports basketball game was held. Two students will be traveling to Berlin, Germany for the Special Olympics World Games in June, representing Coginchaug, Special Olympics Connecticut and Special Olympics US at the global youth leadership summit. The athlete of the month program continues to be successful. Boys' and girls' basketball teams are holding their annual pink-out games and fundraiser on February 10th. Boys' and girls' indoor track teams recently competed at the Shoreline championships, with the girls' team placing third out of 12 and the boy's teams successfully defending their championship title. Coach Ford was

honored as the Shoreline coach of the year two years in a row. The Coginchaug-Lyman Hall swim co-op has had a three-meet winning streak and are in line for the SEC Div. 2 championship title.

Hayden also reported that the rehearsals have started for Matilda. Strong and Coginchaug learners are excited to work on this show together. Pep Band has been busy playing at basketball games.

Christine Waterman reported that all underclassmen will attend a presentation on Monday for next year's school year. Students are participating in Hartford Health Care's BrainDance Award which encourages students to create an academic or artistic project looking at mental health. Coginchaug students have had much success in the past and placed in the top three in previous years. The robotics team meets three times a week with the theme this year being a robot picking up a cone or inflatable cube and place it on a shelf. Open Studio at the high school focuses on creating opportunities for all learners to create a project-based learning environment in tech and art. The lunch and learn series has featured careers in accounting, hospitality, manufacturing and IT. Project Graduation has started their annual raffle, with 100 percent of the profits providing an all-night party for seniors on graduation night.

Hayden Gonzalez also reported that he will be going to Brown University next year.

Public Comment - at the beginning of the meeting, public comment should refer to items on the agenda

A. In-person public comment

Draya Gohagon, from Rockfall, wanted to talk about racism in the schools and the racist things that were done to her. Draya is proud of being black, though she may not look black. Deciding if someone is too black or not black enough is called colorism which is a form of racism. Last year, Draya was black enough for boys at school to hate her and show her the Confederate flag, call her names on social media and brought a black baby doll into the lunchroom. They called the doll by her name and then ripped off its clothes, arms and legs and tried to give it to her. Draya stated that the racism has to stop and the board needs to do something real about it. When nothing is done, it scares and hurts her and makes her feel that she doesn't matter. She is sorry that it scared her mom and dad so much, sorry that it forced her not to be able to go to school with her friends, go to socials, graduate from eighth grade or high school with her friends, but mostly she is sorry for not talking to the board sooner. Draya realizes that she doesn't go to school in the district anymore, but she has friends who are kids of color and mixed races. Her mom has encouraged her to look for the silver lining and try to learn from experiences. Draya has learned that you don't need to keep going to a place that makes you feel sad, scared or not safe. She learned that she is stronger than she thinks she is. She learned that you have the right to stand up for yourself, but you must always stand up for other people. She learned that forgiving people makes it easier to feel better. She forgave the kids at school that did that to her and now she forgives the Board of Education. She forgives the board for not caring enough about kids like her to do anything and for not having enough courage. She knows that fighting racism is hard, but she also knows that you have to welcome people and give them a chance to be better. She encouraged the board to let her know when they are ready to be better and they can fight racism together. Draya wanted to offer some ideas to help fight racism. She felt that the board should have a policy that makes it against the rules for students to wear or bring hate symbols, like the Confederate flag, to school and there should be punishment for kids who use hate speech and racial slurs. While some of the board may feel that punishment may not help them learn to be better, Draya agrees with that but also knows that when kids are punished for things, they usually stop. Kids of

color also need to be protected. Draya thanked all of the kids at the high school who took a stand for her. It meant a lot to her that they stood up for her when the grown-ups didn't. Draya encouraged the board to care enough to help kids of color in the district because they deserve it.

B. Remote public comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Regular Meeting - January 11, 2023

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Betty, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Meeting on January 11, 2023, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Meeting on January 11, 2023, as presented: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Superintendent's Report (if applicable)

A. 2023-2024 Budget Proposal

Dr. Schuch thanked Mrs. Neubig, her staff and the entire leadership team for their hard work on this budget proposal. Digital copies were sent to the board members and hard copies were available. No time for questions or discussion was built into the agenda tonight and Dr. Schuch asked board members to save their questions or comments for the budget work session.

Dr. Schuch felt that the annual budgets will continue to be a challenge until facility planning is dealt with. That plan is to expand and renovate Memorial School to serve learners in grades K-5. That plan aligns with learner-centered education and items in the strategic plan. It also limits transitions for learners and unifies the district. The plan will also balance experiences for the learners between Durham and Middlefield. This plan will also greatly reduce operational costs and improve efficiencies and the ability to serve learners. It will require an up-front investment, but should also qualify for a 52 percent reimbursement from the state.

Dr. Schuch explained that inflation is the biggest factor with this new budget. The expenditures are significantly impacted by inflationary pressures that are out of the district's control. It also challenges the citizens and taxpayers because they have those same pressures as well.

Dr. Schuch summarized that the proposed budget does maintain all of the current programming. It aligns with the strategic plan and also recognizes inflation and declining enrollment.

Mrs. Neubig noted that the gross budget proposed increase is 4.59 percent and the net budget increases 5.35 percent. Looking at the gross budget, the 4.59 percent increase is primarily made up of salaries and benefits (1.07 percent), operating services (2.05 percent), capital and debt (.58 percent) and everything else is .89 percent. The gross total expenditures of \$39 million are offset by revenue, however revenue is

down from last year by .76 percent which increases the amount that the towns need to pay. Most of that decrease in revenue is from outside tuition.

The top three areas of the budget increase are operating services, benefits and supplies. Salaries and benefits together make up 72 percent of the total budget. Salaries are budgeted at a vacancy factor of 96.5 percent. Health insurance has been budgeted at a 10 percent renewal rate and the state plan is now indicating an 8 to 10 percent increase (\$405,000). The differences in salaries are from contractual obligations. Benefits also include actuarially-determined pension contribution (which went up \$7,000) and the plan is funded at 87 percent. Worker's compensation insurance also increased. Contractual course reimbursements are also included in benefits.

Mrs. Neubig noted that Operating Services has increased \$776,000 over last year. There has been a significant increase in tuition and transportation to state-certified special education programs, vo-ag schools and magnet schools. Three new students were included in that this year. The district does receive a Special Education Excess Plus grant under revenue (\$546,000). The Dattco contract is also included in Operating Services, as is diesel fuel. There were some increases in property and liability insurance as well as the prepayment for the energy lease based on the payment schedule.

Supplies have an increase of \$257,000 which is primarily due to inflation. They did cut supplies that were requested across the district, but could not cut in Facilities and Grounds. The fuel consortium locked in prices on Monday (at \$3.10/gallon for heating oil) and that was up as of today. The biggest increase in this line item is electricity. Strategies have been implemented to get these prices down, doing an energy audit and updating equipment as well as adjusting temperature set points in all of the buildings.

Mrs. Neubig reported that the last teachers' contract was very responsible which helped to reduce and eliminate overages. The budget also reflects some reduced staffing levels.

Moving to Capital Reserve, Mrs. Neubig explained that the proposed budget includes the full 2 percent reserve (\$778,000). It includes equipment, such as a new dishwasher at Cuginchaug, basketball shot clocks, outdoor track high jumps, defibrillators, keyboards and new software. Mrs. Neubig noted that Pickett Lane paving will finish the paving but does not include drainage or sidewalks. The estimated cost of that is \$600,000, but some of the culvert grant funds may be reallocated to that project which brings that number down to \$300,000. The second item is HVAC at Strong, which includes replacing 27-year-old chillers and chill pumps which are failing (\$243,000). That number doesn't cover the full replacement of \$385,000, but will be a start.

Turf replacement is almost fully funded, however the amount was set almost 10 years ago. Mrs. Neubig put in \$80,000 for that which will allow the district to do that project in the summer of 2023. They are hopeful that they can get another year out of the turf, if necessary, but they would like to pay a deposit to the vendor to buy a slot in the schedule. Indoor air variable frequency drives regulate the air handler motor speeds and are crucial to air quality. Four of the 30 drives at the high school have been replaced (\$5,000 each) and were funded through Unanticipated Buildings and Repairs. Unanticipated Repairs and Maintenance has been proposed at \$100,000 because of unexpected repairs at Lyman School as well as the chiller at Strong.

Debt service falls down at the end of 2024-2025, leaving just the \$6.9 million bonding. Mrs. Neubig noted that if the district level funds the debt service, they can bond money to pay for projects and not

increase the budget in this line item. She also noted that any bonding does not hit the budget until the year after.

Mrs. Neubig reviewed the per pupil expenditure and noted that the most recent audited number was \$25,622 per student in 2021-2022 which was an increase of \$1,130 over the year before. Mrs. Neubig anticipates that the per pupil cost in 2022-2023 will be \$26,188 or an increase of \$566. In 2023-2024, she anticipates it to be \$27,807 or an increase of \$1,619. Mrs. Neubig explained that the only way this number will fall is significant expenditure reductions (in the millions of dollars).

Mrs. Neubig noted that the proposed ECS number is a little bit higher than she had included due to the Governor's proposed budget released today. Town allocations are based on a 4.59 percent gross number and a net of 5.35. The net budget is proposed at \$38 million. Durham had an increase in population of .15 and Middlefield experienced that same reduction. With the ECS, the net cost to Durham is \$21 million and \$11 million to Middlefield. Comparing that to 2022-2023, the increase to Durham is \$1,307,000 for Durham and \$593,000 for Middlefield. Mrs. Neubig explained that the governor just proposed an increase to ECS funding by another \$25,000 to Durham and \$28,000 to Middlefield.

Dr. Schuch then noted that the district is transforming professional learning as a result of the calendar, the bargaining agreement, the proposed budget and support for personalized, relevant, job-embedded professional learning. It is shifting funds historically paid to consultants to individual teachers to use for their professional development. Dr. Schuch believes that professional learning is the absolute most important first step. The district is also developing a competency-based framework and learner profiles. They are also developing learner-centered mini sessions which they hope to roll out to various organizations. They are also in the process of reaching out to a number of schools around the world in an attempt to build partnerships. Some school-level things are also in the works and Dr. Schuch mentioned redesigning advisory at the high school for ninth grade next year. They also want to back up the Capstone program to the 11th grade year and they are expanding opportunities for internships, job shadows and tours. The district also plans to increase access to college course offerings and have signed a new partnership to offer courses through Southern and more through the community college system.

Dr. Schuch also highlighted that the programming they are considering for literacy at the elementary level is also aligned with learner-centered education. They are also working to increase learning opportunities at Strong as well as committing to an expansion of Unified Sports to all of the schools.

Dr. Schuch then moved on to things happening at the state level, including shoring up the ECS funding, requiring the district to provide free lunch which would be an unfunded mandate, and pursuing state funding for lights and restrooms at the Cuginchaug stadium. Governor Lamont presented his proposed budget this afternoon and they will certainly try to reflect that by the next work session.

Dr. Schuch explained that they are creating a Google Doc and asked the board members to put their questions in the document. Budget work sessions are scheduled for February 22, March 1 and March 22, deliberately trying to not combine budget work sessions with regular board meetings. They hope to focus on staffing on February 22, including class sizes at the high school and coaches and interventionists. This will also allow time to do further reductions in staffing, if needed, and to notify staff who could be potentially impacted. The public hearing will be held on April 5th, with the referendum in May.

B. Memorial Expansion/Renovation Update

Dr. Schuch gave credit to Mrs. Neubig, Mrs. Petrella and Mrs. Dahlheimer for their help with communication around this topic. The Thought Exchange is still going on for about another week. Dr. Schuch felt that participation has been great, but he would like more. To date, there has been 170 participants sharing 101 thoughts, with a total of 3,335 ratings. The top thoughts are actually questions with the top one being what is the time frame and what will it cost. The second thought was what is the cost vs. leaving it the way it is. The third was what about Lyman and Brewster becoming vacant. Others included sharing estimated costs and time line, how Brewster will be repurposed and what will be needed at Memorial and whether the towns will get to vote on it. Dr. Schuch is happy that people are asking questions so that they can provide the answers.

Dr. Schuch stated that they believe this is a very good plan and the best opportunity to get a bonding referendum approved would be to get it on the May referendum. If that is to happen, they need to work on communicating as well as technical things that need to be done. He would like board consensus on this because the district would not have to pay anything additional to add the question to the referendum. It would also be the first opportunity so that if it isn't successful, there would still be time to bring it forward again. They have until November to get this passed in order to get the bonding application successfully approved by the state. Dr. Schuch also noted that the question has been raised as to whether the district can bond for an expansion/renovation of Memorial without first having a successful amendment to the Plan of Regionalization. He stated that they do not need to amend the plan to go for bonding and do this project. They initially need the public's permission to borrow the money to do the project, but they do not need permission to execute the plan. Down the road, they will need to get permission to close Brewster which would require an amendment to the Plan of Regionalization. No amendment would be needed to close Lyman as there would still be an elementary school in each town.

Mrs. Neubig explained that they should receive the figures by the end of February and would need to hit the ground running in March. Informational sessions would be held, drawings and designs would be presented and pricing and debt service numbers would be available. A public hearing would need to be held on March 29th, followed by a district meeting so that it can be sent to referendum in 30 days. If it fails at referendum, the clock starts over which would mean the option for maybe three to four potential referendums before November 15th. Each referendum costs ~\$15,000 each. There are additional rules for the election in November.

Mrs. Neubig would need to apply for the grant in June for a specific project with a specific price tag. If that doesn't happen, it could be pushed out another year.

Mrs. Petrella summarized that they would want the board to agree to a referendum in May for this project. Mr. Moore felt that they may want to see the costs before agreeing to that and Dr. Schuch explained that this wouldn't be a commitment to the project, but more of a commitment to trying to get to the timeline. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they were asking for consensus on something they just barely heard and thought that a lot of discussion needs to happen. Mrs. Caramanella agreed and wondered what happens if Brewster can't be closed and the savings aren't produced. Dr. Schuch reviewed that they had originally talked about repurposing Brewster.

Mrs. Neubig felt that March 22nd would be the last date to be able to keep the time line. Mr. Moore noted that the budget has a fairly significant increase and the debt service would be \$1 million a year more, even

if the project is only \$10 million. He felt it was premature to ask for a consensus on this and thought it may be better to separate the bonding from the budget. He noted that one of the issues with the grant is the space that is available in the district and he would like to see those numbers. Mrs. Neubig explained that Silver Petrucelli would not determine if there was space at other schools, but the state oftentimes allows expansion if it improves the educational aspect.

Mrs. Dahlheimer would also want to see the make-up of the grant and how it actually changes the educational design. The board acknowledged that the timing will be tight, but is something that is probably necessary. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that giving consensus tonight goes back on their commitment to engaging the public and they don't want to repeat past mistakes. Dr. Darcy added that one thing they don't want is to have this misconstrued as approval of the project. Mrs. Neubig stated that they can do a referendum at any time if they don't make the May date.

C. Elementary Literacy Program Decision Update

Dr. Schuch reported that, whether they elect to move forward with the program that was presented last month or not, if they are seriously considering implementation next Fall, they would like a decision either way no later than the next regular board meeting on March 8th. He suggested scheduling a Student Achievement Committee meeting, a work session prior to the March 8th meeting or both.

It was generally agreed to bring this subject to the Student Achievement Committee first. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that there were 22 questions asked on the document and she was a little taken aback by not getting some responses. Mrs. Caramanello asked if anyone has looked into Wit & Wisdom which correlates with Foundations. Mrs. Quarato explained that they have looked at all the state-approved programs and went on a site visit today to Guilford. She has spoken to four districts and they have all stated that they used Foundations in the past and have decided to move away from that as it teaches the skills in isolation and in a whole group setting. Mrs. Quarato reviewed what they saw today in a kindergarten classroom. The teachers that made the visit today all would like to start with the skills block.

Mrs. Caramanello felt that the skills block is really just good teaching and has been happening for a really long time. She was a first-grade teacher who had done that all along and didn't need a program to show her that. She noted that it sounds great, but not any different than what good teachers have already been doing. Mrs. Quarato explained that it is a program, not a script and has to be adjusted based on the learners' needs. She has gotten all positive feedback from the districts she has spoken to which include Westerly, RI (for seven years) and North Middlesex in Massachusetts (for two years).

Mrs. Petrella felt that they need to delve further into this at a Student Achievement meeting and encouraged all board members to attend. She encouraged everyone to look at the breakdowns provided on the document. Mrs. Dahlheimer will schedule a Student Achievement meeting.

Staff Reports

A. Director of Finance Report - Kim Neubig

Mrs. Neubig reported that the general fund is 54 percent expended and 58 percent of budgeted revenue has been received. MTA has expended 35 percent, with 31 percent budgeted revenue received.

Mrs. Neubig reported that the support staff remote grievance hearing has been rescheduled to February 22nd. The district's attorney has a lengthy list of supporting documentation which has been submitted.

The Building Committee has suggested that they have an estimate appraiser for the Silver Petrucelli estimate to be sure the numbers are accurate. They also suggested a construction manager for the project as well as a land appraiser if they were to try to purchase land from the church. Dr. Schuch added that they would need to jump on that right after numbers are received from Silver Petrucelli. The Building Committee's suggestion will help provide the right number for the referendum.

Mrs. Neubig reported that lunch participation has increased at Cuginchaug, but the other schools have remained flat. Effective 7/1/23, Senate Bill 929 would require districts pay for lunch for all students out of their general fund. This bill has not passed as of now, but the estimated cost to the district for one year would be \$355,000. Mrs. Neubig noted that the proposed budget does not include that cost. The Governor has also proposed free lunch for the rest of this school year for everybody and Mrs. Neubig assumes that the state budget would cover that. Mr. Moore noted that the state budget will not be adopted until July 1st at the earliest.

Mrs. Neubig added that another round of security grants have come out and the district would be eligible for a 52 percent reimbursement. It is limited to first responder communications. She noted that the district hasn't had a lot of luck getting these grants in the past. The RFP for paving Pickett Lane is being opened on March 3rd and we should find out by the end of February about the HVAC grant through the state COVID money.

Mr. Mennone asked if the district was losing money on food services and Mrs. Neubig explained that they were getting reimbursed at a higher rate than they were spending during COVID. Now, they are losing money but are sustaining from those higher funds.

B. I-Ready/PSAT Data - Liza Siegel

Mrs. Siegel explained that the I-Ready diagnostic is a benchmark assessment to determine learners' strengths and needs in the areas of math and reading so that the teacher can target instruction. The scaled scores show whether a learner is on grade level or not. Learners take the diagnostic in September, December and March. Reading results show that 56 percent of learners are scoring on grade level in winter as compared to 44 percent in the fall and 18 percent of learners are scoring two or more grade levels behind, down from 23 percent in the fall. Learners in grades 2 through 8 took the assessment for reading. There is also a breakdown by grade and there are some areas that need to be looked at more than others. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked for the actual numbers by grade level.

Mrs. Siegel reported that results for math show that 42 percent of learners are scoring on grade level in the winter, as compared to 24 percent in the fall and 12 percent of learners are scoring two or more grade levels behind, down from 21 percent in the fall. Learners in grades 1 through 8 took this assessment in the fall and grades K through 8 took it in the winter. Mrs. Petrella asked if they could see comparisons with other years. Mrs. Siegel can provide the numbers for the last four years in reading and noted that each score is within 0 to 3 percent and has been very steady. In math, the current scores are slightly higher than they were in 2019 and have gone up each year.

Mrs. Siegel noted that I-Ready also provides a growth score and explained that growth needs to increase if learners are three levels below as compared to those that are on grade level, however it does require all learners grow. Growth has been shown in all band areas, including those at the highest level. As far as diagnostic growth in reading, 46 percent of learners have met the yearly typical growth goal by winter and 33 percent have not made more than 20 percent growth. Dr. Darcy asked if that was typical growth to date and Mrs. Siegel explained that those learners have already met their yearly growth rate. Dr. Darcy noted that giving the test so early in the year gives really low goals because they haven't had time to get their learning muscles back into shape. Everyone scores artificially low which means their growth goal will be artificially low. She asked if the district adjusts their goals after the winter assessment and Mrs. Siegel noted that the program does adjust for that.

Mr. Roraback asked if the students will be incentivized by this testing and Mrs. Siegel felt that it was more to inform the instruction for the teachers. The program gives teachers lessons based on the areas of need, so it's not really for the learners to see their scores. Mr. Moore asked if they got information on students exceeding their growth targets and Mrs. Siegel explained that that did not come up on the report, but she will ask the rep for that.

In math, 20 percent have met their yearly typical growth goal. Mrs. Petrella compared that to the 46 percent of learners who are scoring at grade level to only 20 percent of them meeting typical growth. Dr. Darcy stated that those numbers look great, but 58 percent of the learners are not on grade level which is a major concern.

Moving to PSATs, Mrs. Siegel explained that this test is taken by 10th and 11th graders. The three sections are reading, writing and language and math. In addition to receiving the scores, learners can go back in and see every question and answer. They also provide the domain that the question correlates with and they can then go to Khan Academy to review those areas. The guidance counselors went into classrooms and presented information on how to access their scores, how to get to the detailed questions and how to link to Khan Academy.

Mr. Moore explained that the scores are the individual scores and scores compared to state averages and national averages. He asked what goals are being measured and what the actual values of the goals are. Mr. Mennone stated that he had heard the goal was 1050 which he felt was absurd.

Mr. Mennone asked how a student receives follow-up and where the responsibility is of the district or teacher. Mrs. Siegel explained that their English and math teachers or a counselor can follow up with them. There is no documentation of any follow-up. Dr. Darcy stated that there is a professional learning experience that math teachers can take to help dissect the problems that come out on SATs and PSATs to incorporate those strategies into their class.

Mrs. Petrella encouraged board members to email Dr. Schuch and copy Mrs. Siegel and Mrs. Quarato with any further questions.

New Business**A. Vote to approve Strong field trip to Camp Jewell**

Mrs. Petrella asked why the request said there will be no time missed from school when they will be out for a couple of school days. Dr. Schuch explained that they leave on Thursday morning and return Friday night, but it is considered their school day for those two days as it is an entire grade level. Mrs. Petrella noted that seventh grade has about 100 students, but only 80 to 85 will go on the trip. She also mentioned that the Student Activity fund didn't have any additional funds available. Mrs. Petrella added that the instructional objectives are not included.

Mrs. Neubig noted that the permission slip should state that financial help is available for students who need it. She will email all principals tomorrow to make sure all permission slips state that. Dr. Schuch felt that it was meant to say that the school has not done specific fund-raising for this trip. The cost of the trip is between \$210 to \$220 but will increase if the number drops. Mrs. Caramanello also wanted to be sure that special needs students will be accommodated.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the Strong field trip to Camp Jewell on June 1, 2023 and June 2, 2023, with the condition that it is explained to parents that funds are available for students who are unable to afford to go.

In favor of approving the Strong field trip to Camp Jewell on June 1, 2023 and June 2, 2023, with the condition that it is explained to parents that funds are available for students who are unable to afford to go: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Roy, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Update on Board committees

Mrs. Petrella noted that Mrs. Maloney has sent an update on the committees. She explained that there are currently Building, Finance, Policy, Human Resources, ACES and Utilization Committees. It was decided at the retreat to resurrect the Student Achievement Committee. Mrs. Petrella reminded the board members that they can attend any committee meeting at any time. The ERC will meet when necessary. Communications will be an ad hoc committee and only for one year, from January 2023 to January 2024. Ms. Betty, Mrs. Roy, Mrs. Caramanello and Mrs. Dahlheimer are on the Communications committee. The board agreed that Mrs. Petrella and Mrs. Dahlheimer will be District School Climate Liaisons.

Mrs. Petrella reviewed that they discussed having student representatives on the Board of Education and Mrs. Petrella recommended the board attend the Principal Advisory Committee meetings rather than having students come to board meetings.

There was a break in the recording at this point in the meeting.

The Principal Advisory meetings would provide access to 44 students. Those meetings are held during the school day and may limit the ability to attend them during the workday. Board representatives would be there to listen and perhaps bring some issues back to the board. They could also invite the students in to present their issues. Mrs. Petrella felt that the best thing would be to connect with as many students as possible.

Mrs. Roy felt that that would be a viable option to get the board involved but is completely different from having a student rep on the board. She felt that they would be more juniors or seniors to get them involved in the democratic process, not vote but provide input. She felt a student rep on the board would mean they take more ownership in decisions. Districts do it different ways, with a student being recommended by a principal based on certain criteria or actually having the students vote for a representative. Dr. Darcy felt that that sounds to be aligned with learner-centered experiences. Mrs. Roy felt that the board would determine the length of the term for the student rep.

Mr. Mennone felt that they would want the representative to represent the total student population. Mrs. Caramanella mentioned that they have had student representatives on committees, but she doesn't feel like it was a true representation of the student population. She would be more interested in hearing different opinions. Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested they put it on a future agenda, after looking at districts that have done it as a democratic process vs. appointed.

Ms. Betty felt that members of the board were elected by the towns to discuss the decisions, but a student rep would not be. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that if it were done by the democratic process, they would represent the students of both towns and most student reps do not vote. Mr. Mennone asked how that would be any different than having a student come and give an update on school climate. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they hear from students, but don't really have discussions with them. Mr. Mennone felt that they could expand that as opposed to putting somebody on the board.

Mrs. Petrella will send out information that she got from nine school districts to everyone along with a summary of what she received from the middle school and high school Principal Advisory groups. Dr. Schuch will also share experiences that he's had with this and also reminded everyone of the time commitment involved. This issue will be put on the agenda for next meeting.

Mr. Roraback felt that the Devil's Advocate is a valuable resource and they might want to expand that to Strong School as well. Mr. Moore reviewed that they had good discussions with students when they were doing the Portrait of a Citizen work and thought they could do that two to three times a year. Mr. Mennone wants to be sure that they target all of the kids, not just specific groups.

It was agreed to take a five-minute break at this point.

Committee Reports

A. Policy Committee Meeting - January 18, 2023

1. First read:

- a. Equity 0523**
- b. Advertising, Promotion and Commercial Activities 1320**
- c. Automatic External Defibrillators – AEDs 1102**
- d. Concept and Roles in Community Relations 1000**
- e. Distribution of Materials by Students 1140**
- f. Election Activities and Campaign Literature 1326**
- g. Fund-raising Activities 1325**
- h. Gifts to School Personnel and Board of Education Members 1313**
- I. Law Enforcement Agencies 1411**

- j. Non-Discrimination (Community) 1118**
- k. Prohibition Against Smoking 1331**
- l. Public Participation at Board of Education Meetings 1120**
- m. Relations Between Recognized Organizations and the Schools 1500**
- n. School – Community Associations 1210**
- o. Soliciting Funds from and by Students 1324**
- p. Use of Regional District 13 Properties 1330**
- q. Visits to the Schools 1250**

Mrs. Petrella explained that they are not going to read each policy individually. Mrs. Dahlheimer would like to send the Equity policy back to the Policy Committee for another look now that Dr. Darcy is on the committee.

Mr. Moore reviewed that Dr. Schuch and the administrative staff have recommended changes that they brought to the Policy committee. They reviewed the changes and agreed to bring them forward. They did recommend changing the section of the Equity policy to Learning section (6000) rather than having it stand alone.

Mr. Moore went through each of the policies and explained that whether there are changes or not, they will be updated with a revision date of March, 2023. They did recommend deletion of policy 1000 Community Relations as it is not really a policy, but more of a goal and objective. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that there were a number of policies that were not really policies, but more philosophical statements.

Dr. Schuch reviewed that the committee asked them to reach out to the attorneys regarding 1326 Election and Campaign Literature and the attorneys recommend that both 1140 and 1326 be deleted. Shipman also stated that they don't generally recommend having any significant policies that aren't somehow tied to a state mandate. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked that any policies that are proposed to be deleted be reviewed by the Policy committee to see if it could be included somewhere else in a policy. Dr. Schuch explained that a lot of those particular policies have come from CAFE.

The committee had quite a bit of discussion about fund-raising activities, but decided to leave it as is. Dr. Schuch recommended they move this policy to the 5000 series and review it at that time. There were a number of changes made to policy 1313 which basically states that no one can take gifts or bribes. The committee recommended deleting policy 1411 and left policy 1118 as is. There was a lot of discussion on policy 1120 and it was recommended to move it to series 9000. The committee felt that Robert's Rules govern the meetings and the policy could be deleted. Dr. Schuch felt that it belonged in the 9000 series with the rest of the board by-laws and Mr. Moore stated they will review it at that time.

Policy 1500 was more of a goal or objective and not a policy. Mr. Moore explained that staff added language to Policy 1331 about smoking which has been revised based on a Shipman model policy. Staff recommended Policy 1210 be deleted, but the committee recommended it be kept. Policy 1324 was also recommended for deletion as it is a duplication of wording from other policies. No changes were recommended to Policy 1330 as it was just updated in June. The committee felt that Policy 1250 is inconsistent with security-related issues and was recommended for deletion.

The board will vote on these policies next month and there will be a new list of 2000 series policies for first read.

B. Building Committee Meeting - February 1, 2023

Mr. Moore reported that the Building committee recommended an independent estimator and a construction manager for the Memorial project. Mrs. Neubig already discussed the recommendation regarding the turf replacement. The Memorial roofs are basically done and they are waiting for final

settlement. The test was done for the pump house and the pressure is high enough that a smaller pump can probably be used which will save a lot of money. They are waiting for the Attorney General's office to okay the grant for the culvert. There should be about \$300,000 left over from that project that can be used for road work. They have gone out to bid for reconstruction/rehabilitation of Pickett Lane, cutting out drainage and curbing.

A purchase order was issued to Big Building Direct for the field house at \$101,000. It is a little smaller than what was proposed because of the jut-outs on the pad and measures 46 x 85 feet. Design information and pictures should be received in a few weeks with building to happen this summer or earlier. Mr. Roraback added that this is a low maintenance building. Mr. Moore felt that they need to think about what it will look like and it may be possible to have it a school art project with a mural of all the sporting activities.

Mr. Roraback commented that the district is very blessed to have enthusiastic professionals on the Building committee. Mrs. Petrella added that they are very frugal as well.

Communications

Mrs. Petrella did not have any communications that have not already been sent to the board members.

Mrs. Roy had emailed Mrs. Keane about communication she had received from parents but she had already answered.

Mr. Moore reported that he attended the opening of the Korn School Community Center along with Mr. Stone and Ms. Betty. The people that attended felt that it was a great use of the building. He noted that there is a room there for an after-school program. They had approached Dolphin Days before, but there wasn't enough interest for them to run a program at the district's facilities though it may be worth asking again.

Public Comment - at the end of the meeting should refer to items not on the agenda

A. In-person public comment

None.

B. Remote public comment

Christina Smith, from Durham, stated that the Middlefield Children’s Center will be reducing its before- and after-school offerings for the 2023-2024 school year to kindergarten through second grade. This leaves third and fourth graders with one age-appropriate facility in town, Dolphin Days, which is often wait-listed. Ms. Smith reached out to Dr. Schuch who was extremely kind and responsive. She hopes that the board will discuss this issue further, perhaps soliciting providers or running a before- and after-school care through a Park and Rec department. She has a current third grader and they are on the wait list for Dolphin Days but nothing is guaranteed.

Carl Stoup, from Durham, noted that there is excess space for storage at the high school and Memorial. He felt that the district should make efficient use of the buildings they have rather than trying to delve into elaborate buildings. He asked that they concentrate on the students’ education which is more important than having elaborate facilities. Hearing that only 58 percent of students are up to par and math scores being down with no math coaches at the high school, he felt that that is more important than facilities. Mr. Stoup felt that the storage building is ridiculous and is an elaborate luxury item that will contribute significantly to the operating budget. If the district would get rid of that building, operating costs will go down. He thanked Mr. Moore for bringing up the point about the excess space in the buildings.

Adjournment

Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the regular meeting of the Board of Education: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First