

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, August 9, 2023 at 5:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Ms. Betty (by phone), Mrs. Caramanello (by phone), Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone (by phone)  
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 Resources Specialist, Mrs. Quarato, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Development, Mrs. Siegel, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Accountability, Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology. Mrs. Durkin, Principal of Memorial School and Mrs. Stone, Principal of Coginchaug Regional High School

Building Committee members were also present for the Work Session.

Mrs. Dahlheimer called the special meeting to order at 5:07 PM.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Approval of Agenda**

*Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, 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.*

### **Joint Work Session with Building Committee**

#### **A. QA+M Presentation on Long Range Facility Planning and Potential Grade Configurations - Rusty Malik and Carson Collier**

Rusty Malik, a principal at QA+M Architects, introduced himself and Carson Collier, a project manager. He explained that they had a preliminary meeting with some of the administrators and the goal was to look at options. They looked at the priorities in the district, including closing schools, as well as appropriate programming. They wanted to make sure safety and security is addressed and that educational specifications are met. They addressed site issues, mechanical and ventilation issues and building codes and accessibility. State reimbursement and cost are also very important aspects of the evaluation.

They then looked at enrollment and found a pretty steady enrollment which is gradually beginning to increase. Mr. Malik added that the more schools the district has, the smaller the schools are and class sizes become an issue. They like to use an 85 percent efficiency factor when looking at capacity. They did have a discussion about adding more preK students to the program.

In terms of programming, they tried to stay as close to K-5 as possible. Looking at state reimbursement, Mr. Malik reviewed the different options available from the state and noted that it depends on the condition of the building for alterations vs. renovate as new vs. new building. He added that code

updates, ADA and HVAC are not impacted by space standards. They did find that many of the district's buildings are oversized for the population which would have an impact on reimbursement rate.

They also looked at schedules for the various projects. Mr. Malik emphasized that they look at all of the buildings in the district and each option addresses deficiencies in all of the schools. They looked at timing for designs, going to bid and construction and the best approach to phasing the various buildings. Mr. Malik explained that there is a lot more detail involved in the budgeting process and a lot of assumptions were made. Escalation factors and contingencies will impact budgeting as well. Once the district has narrowed this to more serious options, they will get into more detail.

Mr. Malik then went on to describe option analysis and prioritization. He then explained that they are up to 14 different options at this point, but felt that that will need to be brought down to two to three options. Option one maintains all five buildings while options two through five involve repurposing John Lyman School. He added that in most cases, people want to know what will happen with existing buildings. Options six through 10 involve repurposing both Lyman and Brewster. Mr. Malik emphasized that renovation can be disruptive. He also noted that some of the options include 7-12 at the high school as there is space available.

Looking at what is existing now, they looked at the capacities for the building and what space is available as well as ADA and code concerns. With all the options, they look for any temporary spaces to be removed. Mr. Malik recognized that John Lyman is being looked at to close and noted several reasons for that. They did note that there is a good amount of site available at Brewster, but there are also a lot of single-loaded corridors which makes the building inefficient. He also felt that there should be a separate gymnasium and cafeteria.

Mr. Malik felt that Memorial has a lot of potential, with lots of acreage surrounding it. There are some issues with access and security. Bus and parking will also need to be considered as does accessibility to fields. Strong School is a very tight site with little room for expansion. The building is in overall good condition, with sprinklers and access to utilities that Lyman and Brewster do not have. Looking at Coginchaug, Mr. Malik realized that the building housed many more students in the past, up to 700+, so there is a lot of space available. That is why they looked at options including seventh and eighth grade in the building. It is not unheard of to have one school with 7 through 12. Mr. Malik emphasized that part of this exercise is to see if there are other options to be considered.

Mr. Malik then asked for feedback about the different options. Mrs. Dahlheimer understands utilizing the space at the high school, but the criticism with 8 through 12 is putting one grade level on their own island, both socially and emotionally. Adding seventh to that would be better, they would still be missing their younger peers. She did not feel that many people would support it without a lot of concrete evidence that it is the safest place.

Mr. Moore asked if they costed out maintenance, replacement of equipment and code upgrades in the existing spaces. Mr. Malik explained that they are still developing those costs, but the challenge with maintaining existing space, the district would get no help from the state. The time period also has an impact and escalation becomes a bigger number. Mr. Moore also asked how they costed out demolition and Mr. Malik explained that they used a square footage cost and will also look at the site itself for hazmat issues.

Mr. Overton asked if all of the buildings that are not identified as being repurposed will be renovated and Mr. Malik explained that that some have been identified for code and ADA upgrades and others for more involved upgrades. Mrs. Neubig asked if the district would be able to do it on a phased basis and Mr. Malik noted that they looked at it holistically, but an individual school can be isolated. Mr. Malik added that he was hesitant about providing any numbers at this point, but each option is estimated in total, not by individual facility. He noted that grant applications are due in June, but approval is not given to the following July which will delay any project and numbers may change.

Mr. Moore asked Mr. Malik what option he found to be most cost effective. He felt that several of the options are in a good range but added that sometimes the right thing to do is just much more expensive. The question then becomes whether the next step down is that different. Mr. Overton appreciated the numbers that he provided and also asked what Mr. Malik believes is the most cost-effective option, regardless of programming. Mr. Overton felt that the district may need to spend \$70 to \$75 million to have meaningful improvement. Mr. Malik added that that number will also depend on how many schools they want to upgrade. Mr. Overton felt they needed to tie in the long-term maintenance costs of the buildings as well. Mr. Malik felt that the best scenarios are to build a new building, even at less reimbursement, because there is the least amount of disruption to education. He felt that preK-5 is the driving factor in all of this, so he would choose that option if money was not an issue. He recognized that some buildings are more important to townspeople and that the district needs to look at parity of the buildings as well. Mr. Overton agreed that if the district is going to maintain two elementary schools, they should be equal.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the district is taxpayer-funded with minimal help from the state and to update five different schools would put the district in a really bad position. Mr. Moore asked about furniture and Mr. Malik explained that an allowance was included in a project that required major work, but not in ADA and code updates.

Mrs. Neubig explained that the reason for the expanded preK is because they feel that universal preK is not too far down the road. Mr. Malik added that if the district is going to maintain a school in each town, they will want to have preK at each facility. There are obvious advantages to having all the grades in one school.

Dr. Schuch reviewed that once the board gets this list down to a smaller number of distinctly different options that Mr. Malik can dive deeper into the options and start to engage the community. The leadership team had chosen three different options, including a 3-school, 4-school and 5-school option. Mrs. Dahlheimer would be careful about putting out an option that the board doesn't like. Dr. Schuch noted that the leadership team liked the idea of a 7-12 better than an 8-12. Mrs. Dahlheimer would rather see the board provide options that are very close.

Mr. Malik noted that construction projects that used to be \$15 or \$20 million are now \$60 million and added that there is a big difference in net costs to the town vs. project costs. Districts no longer have to provide all the money up-front because the state now pays as you go. He felt that the right approach would be to consider the net costs, while keeping all of the requirements in mind. On the project where work is done at the high school, one thing that drives the cost up is the square footage.

Mrs. Neubig asked if the 7-12 options include separate wings for the younger grades and Mr. Malik felt they would work with the existing floor plan to see where they can be best isolated. The common spaces would be shared.

Mrs. Petrella felt it is very important that everyone knows that the costs in the presentation are estimated and do not include any savings from closing any of the schools. Mrs. Neubig felt that they should combine this with Ed Aram's presentation to show how the savings would offset. Mrs. Petrella was very impressed with the report and felt that the board should have a special meeting to discuss the options. Mr. Malik offered to participate in the meeting. Mr. Mennone and Mr. Roraback both emphasized that the anticipated savings needs to be stressed and state why this is the best thing for the students and the community. Mr. Roraback added that people have asked the board to make a decision and run with it. Mrs. Dahlheimer also felt it was important for people to understand that this is a long-term solution for the district. She also felt it would be important to show how students will be affected during any construction.

Mr. Overton felt that the 13 options fall into three categories and that options 1, 2 and 2A are not cost effective long-term. He noted that option 1 maintains five buildings and options 2 and 2A will underutilize Brewster yet still have to maintain it. Options 3, 4 and 5 are the options to consider if it is important to maintain two elementary schools. Beyond that, 6 to 10A are all options for three buildings and comes down to a matter of programming. He felt that option 10A is not viable because it would be a \$10 million premium to have a new Memorial School vs. a renovated one.

Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested anyone who has questions put them into a Google Doc and they will put together a special meeting to discuss them. She then thanked QA+M for their incredibly detailed report.

The board took a short break at this point.

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

**A. In-person public comment**

Patrick Holden, from Durham, stated that he didn't believe the status of the current Strategic Plan required any action at this time. He believes that Reimagining Education is a massive asset, focusing on individual students' needs, interests and skills through competency-based learning. Educators can meet students at their own level. The alternative to that is something most in the room are familiar with and that is broad-stroking methods that focus mainly on test scores and cater to others' ideas of what a successful student is. He recalled many instances when he felt left behind in school. The plan has been in place for two to three years even though they do not see every single outcome yet. He hoped that the board understands that it is too early to make a change and maintains the current Strategic Plan. He felt it would be a shame to have the program diminished at all before students can benefit from it.

**B. Remote public comment**

Maureen Funke, from Durham, felt that the plans presented tonight seemed thoughtful and thorough. She saw some options that she hadn't thought about. She also appreciated that the plans will be on the website and noted that the communication of that to the community is vital. She also supported Patrick

Holden's comments and added that she felt the current plan will improve the children's experiences and succession in their educational experiences. Students who master teamwork, project-based learning, self-advocacy and collaboration succeed in the complicated world. This plan allows them to do that. She felt that anything other than a recommitment to the plan would fly in the face of everything the boards says it stands for. She asked what the board members are here for if they can't stand for a plan that supports the students. She felt that it is not a positive message to make a drastic change to the vision two weeks before school starts while no one is paying attention.

### **Approval of Minutes**

#### **A. Board of Education Regular Meeting - July 5, 2023**

*Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Dr. Darcy, to approve the minutes of the regular Board of Education meeting of July 5, 2023, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the regular Board of Education meeting of July 5, 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.*

#### **B. Board of Education Special Meeting - August 1, 2023**

*Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the minutes of the special Board of Education meeting of August 1, 2023, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the special Board of Education meeting of August 1, 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**

#### **A. Discussion on potential interim grade level configuration plan for 2024-2025 Update**

Dr. Schuch reviewed that the board had proposed a preK-1 in Brewster, 2-3 in Lyman, 4-5 in Memorial and keeping Strong and Coginchaug as is. The leadership team met and talked about if that would be feasible to complete by next Fall, as suggested by the board, in concert with eliminating school choice. The leadership team does feel it is doable and practical and would not have an adverse impact on the budget. They are prepared to support and implement that plan, but asked the board to try to make that decision in October/November time frame to help with planning. He also asked if there would be any transition plan in the first year for children who would end up in quite a few schools. The leadership team sees the benefits of an entire grade level in the same building and acknowledges that multiple transitions are not ideal. They also understand the challenges of what is being done now and feel that this suggestion is doable.

Mr. Moore asked how the staff felt about the number of transitions and Dr. Schuch noted that they didn't like it, but felt like it was a choice that has to be made. He felt that it would be nice to know what the prevailing direction of the 14 options is for the board when they let the public know the interim plan.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the board could vote on this at the upcoming special meeting. Mrs. Roy asked about transition planning and asked if families could change their choice of school now. Dr. Schuch felt that they were locked in for this school year. Mr. Moore asked if there would be time for public input as he felt the public would have a lot of issues around moving. He felt that it needs to be tied into the long-range plan. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they could have a community conversation about this after they vote on it. Mrs. Roy agreed with Mr. Moore as most of the people she has talked to didn't even know this was an option. She felt that they needed to get this out to the public as soon as possible. Mrs. Neubig suggested getting a booth at the Durham Fair to talk about the options. Mr. Mennone thought they could develop the options by September. Mrs. Neubig will reach out to QA+M.

Mrs. Caramanello agreed with Mr. Mennone and felt it was important to engage the community, but to be careful to explain that this is a result of not being able to go through with past plans and is in the students' best interests. It should not be a discussion of whether it should happen or not, but how to proceed.

#### **B. 2023-2024 opening of school year update**

Dr. Schuch reported that August 21<sup>st</sup> is orientation for new teachers and employees, with lunch provided. He invited board members to come around noon, with lunch beginning at about 12:30. Dr. Schuch also noted that August 23<sup>rd</sup> will be convocation that will begin around 8:15. They hope to be done between 10:00 and 11:00. School will start this year on August 28<sup>th</sup> with the class of 2035 having their first day of school.

### **Staff Reports**

#### **A. Director of Finance Report - Kim Neubig**

Mrs. Neubig noted that she is now reporting on encumbrances as well as actual expenditures. In July, 5 percent of the budget has been expended but looking at expenditures and encumbrances, it is 94 percent of the budget. That does not include capital.

Mrs. Neubig sent out a Parent Square message regarding lunches. The State of Connecticut has agreed to fund one free school breakfast per student per day and one free lunch per student for any student who would be eligible for reduced lunch for one year or as long as funding allows.

Select Physical Therapy, the district's athletic trainer, has invoked a clause to end their contract with the district because they don't have staffing and are not able to fulfill their commitments. They will cover the district through September 8<sup>th</sup>. In response to that, Mrs. Neubig issued an RFP and they are calling vendors to see if they are interested in bidding. There is a big shortage of athletic trainers and other districts are creating positions for that. Sports will still continue, even if there is no trainer, which can be a little risky.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked about the staffing summary that was provided to the board and asked what the grants were. Mr. Brough explained that there are a number of grants that they divvy up and supplement staffing. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked for more detail on how the grants are used. Mrs. Keane noted that most are under Special Education.

**B. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Master Schedule Update - Noelle Durkin**

Mrs. Durkin explained that the fifth grade ran an eight-period schedule last year, with each period being 45 minutes, and each child saw five different teachers. That worked to about 3-3/4 hours of instructional time per content area every week. Last winter, there was discussion around structured literacy and curriculum changes. Mrs. Durkin started to meet with the fifth-grade team in January about these issues. She received feedback from faculty, staff, families and learners about the fifth-grade model.

Mrs. Durkin set out to increase instructional time and get the fifth graders an experience that is appropriate to transitioning from an elementary model of one teacher all day to a middle school model of many teachers. The third thing she wanted to accomplish was an enhanced positive school climate and connections and culture within the school building.

The last version that the team worked on included adopting the EL curriculum which would account for 120 minutes of literacy instruction as well as recommendations from the state of about 60 minutes per day in math. They also wanted to take in the recommendation for a comparable amount of time for science and social studies. They also learned that they would share related arts staff across the elementary schools, so there would no longer be one art teacher at Memorial.

Taking all of that into consideration, there will be no periods for the upcoming year. Literacy will be 120 minutes while math and science will each be an hour. Rather than each student having five teachers every day, there will be three. With less transitions, there is more instructional time. With this new schedule, they will have 9-3/4 hours of literacy, 5 hours of math and 4-1/4 hours of science.

The new schedule also proposes a 45-minute block every week reserved for what they are calling Town Meetings and/or Community Clubs for the entire school. The Town Meetings will be large space gatherings, with the student senators working on expectations for common areas. Community Clubs are multi-grade level clubs helping to build connections. These clubs will rotate among every classroom teacher. This time block will be sacred in everyone's schedule, learners and staff. This is very similar to what Lyman and Brewster do with assemblies.

The question then became how they will integrate social studies. Fortunately, with the EL program, interdisciplinary connections are best practice in elementary. The two modules that the fifth-grade team chose to implement are modules that are more focused on the humanities. The themes and standards that are addressed are in line with the social studies curriculum and standards. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked how it will be possible to incorporate items from the pacing guide and Mrs. Durkin noted that social studies is interesting because it has inquiry standards which are things like problem solving, generating a question, research and presentation that fall under the area of social studies. The content standards are broken down into geography, economics, history and civics. At Memorial, they are very fortunate that their instructional coach has a background in social studies. She looked at the content and tried to think about the fifth-grade model and what would make it more personalized. There is a period between an hour-and-a-half to two hours when the instructional coach has laid out a framework where she will collaborate, model and coach the fifth-grade class and students will pick a topic to pursue during Open Studio time. She would also like to bring National History Day into the elementary school by allowing students to investigate a question and create a presentation.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked how each child would be tested on social studies and Mrs. Durkin explained that report cards are inquiry-based, not content-based. The new CT standards that came out in May have it laid out so that the content knowledge is given so that when they get to middle school and high school, they have the background knowledge. Dr. Darcy added that the social studies content recycles so that students learn American History in fifth grade and eighth grade as well as at some point in high school. Mrs. Dahlheimer had a hard time thinking that the district can test effectively on whether they have gained the skills and the content within the pacing guide. Mrs. Durkin noted that social studies has never been tested in elementary school. Mrs. Stone added that SBAC does not test content but instead tests process. Mrs. Dahlheimer read from the pacing guide and would love to see where the instructional coach is with that and the integration of it. Mrs. Durkin felt it was very similar to the K-4 model in that social studies was really not taught in isolation.

Dr. Darcy asked if the two modules of EL will be 90 days or 180 days and Mrs. Durkin felt that they selected two modules so that they could roll it out slowly. Coaches will be having constant conversations with the teachers to reflect on how things are going. The goal is to get the first module done in the first half of the year. Mrs. Durkin also noted that the CT standards may go into effect the following year and they may have to revise the curriculum at that point. Dr. Darcy added that she loved the Community Clubs idea. Mrs. Roy thanked Mrs. Durkin for coming up with all of this for the students.

#### **Draft communication protocol update**

Dr. Schuch reviewed that the purpose of this communication protocol is to establish clear and consistent two-way communication expectations between board members and the superintendent, with a specific focus on emails, texts and verbal communication. His guiding principles were to keep the board informed about issues that impact operations, especially between board meetings; make sure that information that board members request are addressed; honor all existing laws and policies; and incorporate best practices. Dr. Schuch did some research and could not find any standalone protocols that focused solely on board-superintendent communication. It is usually embedded into an overall communication protocol or in board by-laws. His recommendations will all send things back to the Policy committee.

Dr. Schuch recognized that board members want timely responses and for all members to receive the same information. Emails are limited because they are one-way communication and should not take the place of discussion at meetings. Information should be limited to what is necessary to make board decisions and should distinguish between district performance information and privileged management information. When requests come in, the board chair and the superintendent work together to go through those requests and relate them to future agenda items. Time to gather information also needs to be balanced.

For verbal communications, Dr. Schuch found that two-way communication is important and the majority of that communication should be superintendent-chair, though individual board members may contact the superintendent as well. Again, these individual conversations should not take the place of discussions at public meetings.

Dr. Schuch then reviewed the legal considerations, including the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). That specifically prohibits the discussion of board matters through group emails. Group emails should not state a board member's opinion about something. Emails are public record and should be available to anyone who requests them. Any discussion related to an employee is strictly prohibited in



emails, but can be discussed in executive session. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits names or details related to individual learners from being mentioned in emails.

Dr. Schuch looked for current policies that speak to these issues and found that it was very limited. The policy on Board Member Request for Information was adopted in 2015 and a general policy on Limits of Authority. Dr. Schuch then noted that he found two CABE model policies, on requests for information by board members and email in general.

Dr. Schuch then recommended that the Policy Committee review and considering adopted the CABE policy 9325.5, requests for information by board members, in place of the district's policy 9131 and CABE policy 9327, electronic mail communications. He also recommended that the Policy committee consider whether any additional protocols are needed and how they can be incorporated into the by-laws. Dr. Schuch felt a sense of urgency about this and asked that the Policy committee consider beginning reviewing the 9000 series at the September meeting.

Mr. Moore felt that the verbal part of this is more complex than email and felt that every board member needs to have a personal relationship with the superintendent. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the more information every member of the board has, the more cohesive they can be. She thought that the ask from the board was how the superintendent would communicate with the board in different aspects and not so much on how the board communicates. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that there doesn't seem to be any clear protocol on when a board member is communicating by email that is not governed by these laws and she doesn't believe that the superintendent asking the board member to call and talk about it works for this board. Dr. Schuch believed that this draft addresses a lot of that.

Dr. Darcy felt that they may not have articulated their ask and felt it was to look at the interpersonal exchange, rather than policy, between board members and employees of the district. She wondered what the board has an obligation to be informed of and how that would happen. She is looking for how a system can be created that allows the board and the leadership team to communicate well with each other. Dr. Schuch understood and noted that you quickly bump into the laws but also what information should be out there and what shouldn't be.

Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that this was a draft and the board is happy to review it and give some further direction. She would like to see something in the protocol that allows the board to go into executive session every month to deal with the things that cannot be talked about publicly. Dr. Schuch felt that was a great suggestion as long as they are things that are allowed to be talked about in executive session. Mrs. Dahlheimer emphasized that there is no way for the board to make solid decisions if they don't all know what is going on.

Mrs. Roy also asked if there are categories of information that they are not made aware of and Dr. Schuch felt it was a guessing game as to what the board should be made aware of. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that she is not trying to create a strained relationship and felt that policy may not be the way to go on this.

Ms. Betty noted that she has emailed questions in the past because they receive information so late and mentioned that the draft protocol was only sent to the board members at 7:00 during the meeting. She asked if they are now supposed to wait until the next meeting and wanted to know that when board members ask questions, they get an answer. Mr. Mennone felt that when a board member asks a question, all board members should get that information. Dr. Schuch reiterated that two-way communication can

go a lot farther than an email. He is not sure what to do when a board member asks a question and he realizes that his answer will then become public information. He assumes he should talk to the chair about those issues, but that still doesn't give an answer to the board member.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that timely response is really important and if an FOI request is filed, then so be it. Dr. Schuch noted that all the information he found states that no one should ever reply all because it constitutes a discussion and that would be an FOI violation. He reiterated that he has been trying to use his best discretion and training around all of this, but also acknowledged that there have been board members who have been frustrated.

Mrs. Dahlheimer summarized that they will schedule a meeting to work on the protocol.

The board took a brief recess at this point in time.

### **New Business**

#### **A. Discussion and possible vote to authorize the superintendent to enter into an MOU related to an attendance incentive pilot program with the RSD 13 Education Association**

*Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Dr. Darcy, to authorize the superintendent to enter into an MOU related to an attendance incentive pilot program with the RSD 13 Education Association.*

*In favor of authorizing the superintendent to enter into an MOU related to an attendance incentive pilot program with the RSD 13 Education Association: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

#### **B. Discussion and possible action on the status of the Strategic Plan**

Dr. Darcy thanked everyone for their feedback on the Strategic Plan. She noted that they are not trying to change the direction or the vision of what the Strategic Plan represents and they are on board with individualization, personalization, learner-centered instruction. For Dr. Darcy, her concern and confusion is that the documents don't represent what she perceives to be a Strategic Plan. She felt that it should include action steps, benchmarks, highly-articulated goals, multi-year plans and a blueprint to get to those goals. In order to get to success, there are six different pieces including a vision, which has been very well-articulated and fairly well-communicated. Consensus, skills, incentives, resources and an action plan should also be included. If any one piece is missing, the outcomes get sidetracked. Dr. Darcy felt that there is no action plan in the current Strategic Plan. They have heard hesitancy from some teachers and Dr. Darcy felt that a comprehensive plan will help alleviate some of their anxiety. She also felt that the measurable outcomes are indicators to measure success, but there are no benchmarks as far as what success is. The plan states they will look at graduation rates, but doesn't state what an acceptable graduation rate is to be successful. Dr. Darcy would like to see a plan that is more consistent with standard practice.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that the board members who joined when she did were incredibly excited to see something move forward and two pages were given to the superintendent to engage with staff. She felt that those two pages came along with the understanding that there were still parts of the plan that the board would have final approval on and one of those was measurable outcomes. At that time, many board

members felt that test scores still needed to be highly regarded. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the board has been left high and dry in some ways regarding the Strategic Plan and that is frustrating. She gave an example of a field trip that was tied to the action plan. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that the board does highly support personalized learning, but needs to step back to take all stakeholders into account.

Dr. Schuch noted that he has stopped bringing up measurable outcomes because he felt that every time he has done that, there has been tension around talking about them. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that that was very frustrating and hard for the board to take. Ms. Betty had sent a letter back in January asking about the “newly adopted strategic plan” and noted that that plan would include measurable outcomes which the board had not yet approved. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that Dr. Schuch’s email back to her was dismissive.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that it was very important to look at where this has really worked and the board has asked for that over and over. They have received documents about Idaho, Georgia, Alberta and New Hampshire, but the board needs more than that. She felt that everything needs to align with the Strategic Plan and asked to dig deep and review it.

Mr. Moore asked if Mrs. Dahlheimer wants the board or the administration to write the Strategic Plan. He felt that the board’s role is where they are going as well as how and when they will get there. He has years of strategic planning experience and felt they need to be careful of what the board is expected to do. Mrs. Dahlheimer was not asking the board to do the work and added that there is so much involved with personalized learning that they need to see some evolution and action steps. Mr. Moore agreed that they don’t have a schedule and would like to see progress reports. They also need to know what will be measured and when and how it will be measured. He does not believe the board has the capacity to write the plan. Mrs. Dahlheimer repeated that she is very frustrated and the board wants to be more involved by seeing the beginning to the end.

Mrs. Caramanella felt that this wasn’t the board asking to play a part in writing the plan, but the board wants to really understand where the district is going. She felt that that is well within the realm of what the board should know. Mrs. Caramanella has talked to several teachers and most of them are not in agreement and do not know where the district is going. She agreed that they need to step back and find out what’s working and what’s not as well as where they go from here.

Dr. Schuch stated that they had a group meet last summer about measurable outcomes and he felt that they would be up and running last fall. He added that every time he has tried to present at a board meeting or at Student Achievement, they were asked why they were talking about it. He was frustrated that the board talked about Student Achievement focusing on this at the January retreat. He felt that if the board isn’t fully committed to measures of success, the staff shouldn’t keep pushing it. Dr. Schuch felt that Student Achievement or a working group on this has been historically absent in most districts. The leadership team would love to work on this with the board. He noted that they do care about test scores, but there are no benchmarks.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that this goes back to communication and felt that they were all willing to have a conversation about it.

Mrs. Quarato stated that she sat in the library at John Lyman last summer with a group talking about the Strategic Plan and what they felt it would look like. They took those notes back to the leadership team that same week and created one-year action plans. Part of that was because it was very overwhelming

just looking at one year because of all the change that was happening. They have had conversations with the leadership team and have started talking about the end goal for this year. She felt that it would be very overwhelming to think five years out, with a new literacy program, a new evaluation plan coming and new standards. They want to have teachers and learners as well as community members involved.

Mrs. Dahlheimer agreed that it was important to have both short-term and long-term goals, but the board doesn't have a conceptual idea of where they want to be. They are not asking for specific information, but feel that the concept needs to be there. Mrs. Caramanello agreed that that is the biggest concern. The district has been in this direction for a while and she fears that there is so much time being taken to form these groups and have conversations that she wonders how long this is going to take. She asked if they really felt that the staff understands where this is going.

Mrs. Stone felt that if one of the measurable outcomes was to give students more opportunity for global partnerships, the trip to Guatemala falls within that as a service trip. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that that was something to highlight as going along with the Strategic Plan. Dr. Darcy felt that they should be able to say that, in five years, 80 percent of students will have had that type of opportunity. Dr. Schuch agreed that they do not have that yet.

Dr. Schuch explained that the Strategic Plan has bullet points, but you cannot do them quickly. He gave examples of the new literacy program and the Mastery Transcript Consortium at the high school. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they adopted the EL program because it was on the state list and Mrs. Quarato noted that it was, but they were also keeping the vision and Strategic Plan in mind. Some of the programs they looked at didn't allow for personalization.

Mrs. Roy asked how new hires are introduced to the Strategic Plan and Mr. Brough explained that the Strategic Plan is presented to all new staff. Mrs. Roy asked if the board and/or community could sit in on that. Mr. Brough felt that they really wanted to focus on preparing new staff. Mrs. Quarato added that the Community Advocacy team has already had conversations and the goal this year is to figure out the best way to get the message out to the community, teachers and learners. She did a presentation to the Early Childhood committee in April to introduce the Strategic Plan and why they want to personalize learning. Mrs. Quarato felt that it would be more appropriate for community members to go to those meetings.

Mrs. Keane added that they have been working hard to invite anybody to participate in the creation of the Strategic Plan and the principals all had staff meetings. She was surprised that there were so many questions about it. Mrs. Roy asked if there was a way for them to ask questions anonymously. Dr. Schuch reviewed that he went to every school and met with small groups last October. He acknowledged that there will be a certain level of anxiety about anything different and it is their responsibility to continue to have conversations and make it a safe place to ask questions.

Mrs. Dahlheimer reviewed that the board needs to see a long-term vision and asked what the ultimate goal for the district is when the current kindergartners are graduating. Dr. Darcy acknowledged that that may change, but if there are no goals set, how will they know that they met them. Dr. Schuch added that the district still has a very traditional system in many ways and they are trying to do little bits of this within that system. He agreed that they need to do a better job of communicating.

Mrs. Dahlheimer summarized that everyone is frustrated, but felt that a vision would help everyone. Mrs. Siegel suggested the measures of success be put on the agenda for the Student Achievement committee and if they would like specific benchmarks prior to that, she can work on that. Dr. Schuch would love to see a regular update on the Strategic Plan built into the board meetings. Mrs. Siegel is also working on a schedule for the action teams.

Mrs. Caramanello was unclear as far as where this is going from here and felt that they were just going to keep doing what has been done and that clearly hasn't been working. She can't attend those meetings, but felt that she should get all the information she needs. She added that she needs a concrete understanding of what the plan is, where they are going with it, a time frame, what it will look like and at what point do they go from talking about it to actually doable, measurable outcomes.

Dr. Schuch stated that they have to measure themselves and do a better job of articulating what's in the vision along with some more long-range action plans. He would like to get more of this on the regular agendas so they can explain whatever doesn't make sense. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that Student Achievement should handle this and convey it to the full board due to the length of board meetings. Mrs. Roy asked if they could get minutes of the action team meetings.

As a parent, Ms. Betty would like to see a time frame of when concrete information will be available. She is confused about the Strategic Plan as a lot of other parents are and they have no idea when anything will happen. Mr. Moore volunteered to help turn this into a more structural view. Mrs. Dahlheimer and Mrs. Caramanello felt that the board shouldn't be involved.

## **Committee Reports**

### **A. ACES Update - Lindsay Dahlheimer**

Mrs. Dahlheimer reported that ACES has hired a company to alleviate their sub issues and she will send it to the administration and board members for review. She is proud of the district for being able to fill the vacancies in the district. Mrs. Dahlheimer would also like to designate someone else to participate with ACES and asked for volunteers.

### **B. Building Committee Meeting - July 12, 2023**

Mr. Moore reported that Pickett Lane has been paved and thanked Mrs. Neubig for her hard work on that. The line painting will be done on Friday. The town indicated that they have \$500,000 for sidewalks and will negotiate on the location of them from Strong School to Korn School. There was some discussion about the town taking over the road now that it is paved. They do have to plow out the ambulance and police, so they will plow the road.

The committee does have some concern about the final design of the field house building and it has not yet been approved. Mrs. Dahlheimer reported that Mr. Weissberg has been working with the architect to get some measurements on the slab and they already have a preliminary building permit.

### **C. Policy Committee Meeting - August 9, 2023**

#### **1. Second read and possible vote on remaining series 1000 policies:**

- a. **Soliciting Funds from and by Students - 1324**
- b. **Fundraising Activities 1325**
- c. **Fundraising - Shipman**

Mr. Moore reviewed that there had been concerns about certain organizations having difficulty, but those have all been worked out.

*Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to approve policies 1324, 1325 and the Shipman Fundraising policy.*

*In favor of approving policies 1324, 1325 and the Shipman Fundraising policy: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

- 2. **Second read and possible vote on series 3000 policies:**
  - a. **Accident Prevention and Reporting 3516.3**
  - b. **Authorized Use of School Owned Materials 3514**
  - c. **Board Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers 3160**
  - d. **Budget – Fiscal Year 3150**
  - e. **Budget – Formulation of Tentative Budget 3120**
  - f. **Budget – Setting Priorities 3113**
  - g. **Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers – Shipman**
  - h. **Budget Report 3432**
  - I. **Capital Assets 3322**
  - j. **Code of Conduct for Federal Procurements – Shipman**
  - k. **Contracts 3324**
  - l. **Copies of Records 3250**
  - m. **Disposal of Obsolete or Surplus Equipment or Materials - Shipman**
  - n. **Food Services 3542**
  - o. **Gifts and Memorials 3280**
  - p. **Gifts, Grants and Bequests to the District – Shipman**
  - q. **Hazardous Material 3524.1**
  - r. **Hold on Destruction of Records (Litigation) – Shipman**
  - s. **IDEA Fiscal Compliance – Shipman**
  - t. **Insurance 3532**
  - u. **Monies in School Buildings 3450**
  - v. **Naming Schools or School Facilities 3281**
  - w. **Paying for Goods and Services 3326**
  - x. **Payroll Procedures 3326.1**
  - y. **Purchasing – Shipman**
  - z. **Purchasing Procedures 3320**
  - aa. **Requesting Goods and Services 3321**
  - bb. **Safety 3516**
  - cc. **Sales and Disposal of Books, Equipment and Materials 3260**
  - dd. **School Activity Funds – Shipman**
  - ee. **Security and Safety Plan - Shipman**
  - ff. **Security of Buildings and Grounds 3517**

- gg. Student Activity Accounts 3451**
- hh. Tuition Fee 3240**

Mr. Moore reviewed each of the revisions, deletions and additions proposed to the above-listed policies. Mr. Moore thanked Mrs. Neubig and her staff for going through all of these policies.

*Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Roy, to approve the above-listed series 3000 policies.*

*In favor of approving the above-listed series 3000 policies: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

- 3. First read of series 4000 policies**
  - a. Abuse and Neglect of Disabled Adults – Shipman**
  - b. Alcohol Tobacco and Drug Free Workplace 4118.231/4218.231**
  - c. Alcohol Tobacco and Drug Free Workplace – Shipman**
  - d. Athletic Coaches Evaluation and Termination – Shipman**
  - e. Certified Staff Development 4131**
  - f. Child Abuse Neglect or Sexual Assault Reporting 4119**
  - g. Child Abuse Neglect or Sexual Assault Reporting – Shipman**
  - h. Concussion Training for Athletic Coaches – Shipman**
  - I. Emergency Action Plan for Athletic Events – Shipman**
  - j. Employee Transfer – Reassignment 4214**
  - k. Employee Use of District’s Computer Systems 4132/4232**
  - l. Employee Use of District’s Computer Systems – Shipman**
  - m. Employment and Student Teacher Checks – Shipman**
  - n. Employment and Student Teacher Checks 4112.1/4212.1**
  - o. Employment of Teachers 4112**
  - p. Exertional Heat Illness Awareness – Shipman**
  - q. FMLA – Shipman**
  - r. FMLA 4151/4251**
  - s. Hiring of Certified Staff – Shipman**
  - t. Social Media – Shipman**
  - u. Social Media 4118.51/4218.51**
  - v. Wellness – Employee 4162/4262**

Mr. Moore explained that Abuse and Neglect of Disabled Adults is a new policy and suggested the board members review it. It includes a requirement for reporting any abuse.

The Policy Committee recommended replacing policies on Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Free Workplace be replaced with the policy from Shipman. The policy on Athletic Coaches Evaluation and Termination is a new policy from Shipman and gives a lot of responsibility to the athletic director and his or her supervisor. Policy 4131 has been recommended for deletion as it is in the contract. Policy 4119 was replaced with the current policy by Shipman. Concussion Training for Athletic Coaches is a new policy and is a requirement for all coaches to be trained. Emergency Action Plan for Athletic Events is a new policy from Shipman. Policy 4214 will be kept as is. Policies 4132/4232 has been updated by Shipman. Employment and Student Teacher Checks 4112.1/4212.1 is regarding background checks and will be

replaced with a new version from Shipman. Policy 4112 will be deleted as it is covered in the contract. Exertional Heat Illness Awareness is a new policy from Shipman. Policies 4151/4251 will be replaced by a new version from Shipman. Hiring of Certified Staff is a new policy from Shipman. Policies 4118.51/4218.51 will be replaced by the policy from Shipman. Policies 4162/4262 will be covered under 5135.

Mrs. Dahlheimer thanked Mr. Brough and Mr. Moore for their work on these policies.

**Communications**

Mrs. Caramanello had received communication about Middlefield Park and Rec, in conjunction with Brewster PTO and John Lyman Parent Association, welcoming incoming kindergarten students for both schools at Peckham Park on August 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30 PM.

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

- A. In-person public comment**
- B. Remote public comment**

None.

**Adjournment**

*Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Roy, to adjourn the special meeting of the Board of Education.*

*In favor of adjourning the special 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 9:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First