

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 6:30 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy (by phone), Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone

Board members absent: Ms. Betty

Administration and staff 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, Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology, Mrs. Quarato, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Development, Mrs. Siegel, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Accountability, Mrs. Murray, Principal of Brewster School, Mr. Fitzgerald, Coordinator of Student Affairs, Strong Middle School and Mrs. Penney, Teacher, Strong Middle School

Mrs. Dahlheimer called the regular meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked to add item 8D under New Business, Discussion and Possible Vote on Facilities Planning.

*Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stone, to amend the agenda, as above.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

### **Presentation**

#### **A. Strong Middle School - Learner-Centered Math**

Mr. Fitzgerald noted that it was his privilege to present the board with things that have been happening in Mrs. Penney's classroom. In the last few years, Mrs. Penney has shifted the nature of her classroom to embody more of the learner-centered model.

Mrs. Penney explained that in the summer of 2022, she read "Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics" by Peter Liljedahl. He had done studies and found that students were not thinking, but were mimicking. With the support of her coach, reading the book and watching podcasts, she began to implement some of the practices last year.

A student explained that they choose a card when they walk into class and go to the corresponding group. This allows the students to work together with different people. Sometimes they work on white boards to complete challenging problems as a group. Another student added that they never know who they are going to sit with. This teaches them how to learn with others and it has turned out to be fun and they make new friends. A third student explained that they create index cards with key terms which are great tools for studying.

Mrs. Penney reviewed the random grouping concept and learning how to work with people they may not necessarily choose. She has sets of vertical white boards all around the room and thinking tasks available. This year, they are working on meaningful notes. There are 14 practices and they have implemented about five so far. Mrs. Penney invited the board members to visit her classroom. She gave examples of the problems she gives the students and explained that she facilitates the groups and helps out.

Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that she has twins in eighth grade who learn very differently. One of them has told her he no longer dislikes math and this type of learning meets every kid where they need to be and helps them work through things with their peers. Mr. Roraback added that the applications of math and why they need to know them are very important. Dr. Schuch added that Mrs. Penney is now focused on learning, rather than teaching. Mrs. Penney added that she shared the book with her colleagues and had a workshop as well.

## **B. Auditor's Report**

Mrs. Neubig introduced Dave Flint, from CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) who has audited the district's books. Mr. Flint explained that the federal government now has an Inflation Reduction Act. A lot of their clients are receiving tax credits for school construction and he is willing to help the district with that.

- a. SSA Report
- b. Governance Communication
- c. FSA Report
- d. Financial Statements

Mr. Flint reviewed that the district has received an unmodified opinion for 2023 which is the best that can be received. They implemented GASB statement 96 this year which has to do with IT subscriptions, such as educational software. Statement of net position is performed on the full accrual basis of accounting, including capital assets and long-term debt, which brought the district to a total net position of \$23.4 million, most of which is net invested in capital assets. The district had a change in net position of \$1.8 million for the year.

Looking at the general fund which is based on modified accrual basis of accounting (no capital assets or long-term debt), the assets were \$293,000, liabilities were \$79,000 for a fund balance of \$213,000, of which is assigned or encumbered in FY24. The general fund actually had a \$567,000 deficit in FY23 which was a budgeted deficit. The total assets in the pension fund for the year were \$11.36 million.

Looking at long-term debt, the total bonds outstanding are \$7.5 million that includes \$680,000 of pay downs for the year. Mr. Flint then directed everyone to the budgets vs. actual for the general fund. The budgeted deficit was \$874,000 of fund balance used to balance the budget. Looking further at the pension fund, it has a net potential liability of \$1.45 million and the pension plan is 88.62 percent funded which is a great funded ratio and more than most other districts. The plan received an 8 percent return for 2023 compared to an 8.2 percent loss.

Moving on to the federal single audit, Mr. Flint stated that the district received an unmodified opinion. He then noted that the district had expended a total of \$1.3 million in federal grant money in 2023. They also did a state single audit for state grants and issued an unmodified opinion. The district expended \$800,000 in state grant money.

Mr. Moore asked about uninsured cash and Mrs. Neubig explained that above the \$250,000 FDIC level, they are in a pool of districts for collateralization and all cash is fully covered. Mr. Moore asked about the different credit ratings for bonds and explained that they are looking at a large bond coming up. Mr. Flint explained that the ratings of the specific bonds he was looking at were the bonds that the pension fund is invested in and nothing to do with what the district is rated. Mrs. Neubig added that the district is currently rated Aa3 for bonding and added that the pension advisors will be in to talk with the board next month.

Mr. Moore asked if the fund balance is dropping too low and Mr. Flint felt it was a lot different for a school district than a town, as they are expected to spend everything and more or less operate with no fund balance. Mrs. Neubig felt that they should have three months' expenditures for emergency purposes and the district doesn't have that. Mr. Moore wondered if they need to look at the fund balance in the budget for next year. Mr. Flint agreed to look at neighboring districts and see where they are.

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

**A. In-person public comment**

Steve McGeoghan, from Durham, stated that he is a parent with children at Brewster, Strong and Cuginchaug. He felt that they are in a Catch-22 with the new state law regarding eligibility for kindergarten. The uncertainty of knowing whether their November 1<sup>st</sup> child will begin kindergarten or repeat a preK-4 program has been lingering for months and will continue to do so. They believe their child is academically and socially prepared for kindergarten. He noted board policy 5111 which has now been amended to account for this statutory change. The lack of timely action on this is highly concerning to him as is the lack of public discussion which suggests that the youngest students have not been a priority. Parents have done their due diligence and investigated comparable alternative options. They must first wait for Brewster's preK3-4 lottery in early April and would have an option to fall back on, if selected. If not selected for the lottery, their next option would be in direct competition with other families from the district and surrounding towns seeking space for their students. He reviewed that the first option is to repeat the preK-4 program with a nonrefundable deposit of \$100 plus the first month's tuition of \$640 due June 15<sup>th</sup>. Option two would be to pay a nonrefundable registration fee of \$75 plus the first month's tuition of \$574 due in early July. Option three would be to pay a nonrefundable registration fee of \$100 plus the last month's tuition of \$1,278 due June 1<sup>st</sup>. Option four would be to keep their child home, relying on his wife, as a former elementary school educator, to prepare their child for kindergarten. The last option fully eliminates the social aspect of participating in a formal education setting with age-based peers. He feels that component is paramount, especially considering students in this age group may have had social limitations due to the pandemic. A gap year heading into kindergarten doesn't seem to be in any student's best interest. He reiterated that any deposits they make would come with the intention of not occupying the space if kindergarten comes to fruition for their child. He added that it would be disheartening to have to tell their youngest child that he will not be going to school in the district in the Fall. He doesn't presume that his comments will incite any short-term change, but encouraged the board and the administration to take this into consideration.

Mrs. Dahlheimer encouraged him to stay for the agenda item regarding kindergarten and will also have someone follow up with him.

**B. Remote public comment****Approval of Minutes****A. Board of Education Special Work Session - January 10, 2024****B. Board of Education Regular Meeting - January 10, 2024**

*Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Special Work Session of January 10, 2024 and Board of Education Regular Meeting of January 10, 2024, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education Special Work Session of January 10, 2024 and Board of Education Regular Meeting of January 10, 2024, as presented: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.*

**Superintendent's Report****A. RSD 13 2024-2025 Budget Proposal**

Dr. Schuch reiterated that they can do their best job on the budget, but bringing costs down to where they should be is very difficult while continuing to operate five schools. The three-school option provides a future-ready school for preK-5, aligns with learner-centered education, limits transitions, provides balanced experiences for the children, and greatly reduces operational costs. State funding is available and they want to maximize that. Dr. Schuch also believes that it will unify the district.

Dr. Schuch reviewed that the district has class size guidelines and that will require an additional teacher at one grade level and downsizing of a teacher at another grade level. The budget also supports all of the current programming as well as some multiple-year initiatives. Inflation is still a big deal but not as high as last year. There has also been growth in the multi-language learner population and that will require additional staffing. Dr. Schuch reminded everyone that they made a commitment to take advantage of the 2 percent set-aside for capital and this budget continues that.

Mrs. Neubig introduced the proposed gross budget at \$41,193,501, with a net budget of \$39,612,120. The gross budget represents a 4.48 percent increase and the net budget is a 3.82 percent increase over 23/24. Other districts are averaging a 4.54 percent increase. The net budget increase is lower than the gross budget increase due to applying the anticipated surplus from the 2023-2024 school year. That surplus comes from transportation for special ed outplacement and electricity. They could also leave that in the fund balance, resulting in close to an additional 1 percent budget increase.

Mrs. Neubig went on to review the increases and decreases by category and pointed out that salaries show the largest increase because of the vacancy factor. In the past, the district had budgeted at a lower vacancy factor of 96.5 percent and have consistently run over on that line item. She felt that that is too aggressive at this point and suggested a vacancy factor of 98 percent. Most districts don't budget a vacancy factor. Mrs. Neubig explained that the vacancy factor did increase the salary line by 1 percent, but there were also 2.5 new positions. The only new FTE would be a .5 and that is for multi-language

learners. They have taken funds budgeted for outside contractors from purchased services and added the funds as potential FTEs, including one for an athletic trainer and one for a maintenance position. These two positions are offset by direct reductions in purchased services.

Mrs. Neubig noted that salaries and benefits make up 72 percent of the total budget. Out of the 4.48 percent increase, 3.63 percent is salaries and benefits. There were contractual increases in salaries and health insurance has increased as well, with 19 more employees taking health insurance. The state partnership plan has a 5 percent renewal rate, but that could drop to 3 in April. If it drops to 3, that would be a savings of about \$100,000.

Facilities and grounds has increased due to the proposed propane bus lease which is recorded in that line item, but there is a decrease in operating services as a result of the lease. Dattco's contracted daily rate is reduced due to only the operation of the bus fleet, as the district will now lease the buses directly. Operating services does show an increase due to out-of-town tuition and transportation of students with highly-specialized needs, with more students budgeted for 24/25. Purchased services was decreased by the athletic trainer contract and outside contractors were reduced for the proposed maintenance FTE position. The reduction in supplies comes from electricity and fuel oil which went from \$3.10 to \$2.82/gallon and they are hoping to lock in at \$2.75. All departments also received a 25 percent decrease in their supply request, based on historical usage. If there is a need above the reduction, that is handled on an individual basis.

Capital reserve is based on going to a three-school model, but this will need further discussion. There is a real need for new PA systems in the schools and that has been included at \$116,000. They are also continuing funding for infrastructure as well as proposing an athletic field upgrade. Mrs. Neubig added that she has put in \$200,000 for unanticipated repairs and maintenance this year as the buildings are another year older with no infrastructure upgrades or replacements.

Moving on to debt service, a portion of the district debt will retire at the end of the 2024-2025 year. Mrs. Neubig added that the district earned \$59,000 in interest on money remaining in the bonding account that is earmarked for Brewster, but not expended yet. A potential strategy to reduce the annual budget increase for 24/25 would be to apply a portion of the bond premium, contingency and interest income to offset the debt service for the year. This could reduce the proposed budget by .84 percent. This would level fund the debt for the 25/26 year without having an increase in that line item. There is also the option to use more of the bond premium and interest to decrease the budget up to 1.9 percent, but that would result in a line item increase in 25/26 if the amount went below the scheduled payment for that year. Mrs. Neubig was asked to go in to more detail in the work session.

The current audited per pupil expenditure is \$26,253 for 22/23, which is an increase of \$631 over 21/22. \$27,195 and \$27,733 have been estimated for 23/24 and 24/25 if there are not significant changes. Average per pupil cost for regional school districts in the state is \$25,173. If the budget is reduced by \$500,000, the per pupil cost goes down \$364. A reduction of \$1.5 million (approximately the equivalent of closing one school), the per pupil goes down \$1,094. If a reduction of \$3,000,000 (approximately the equivalent of closing two schools), the per pupil goes down \$2,100. Regional districts normally have higher per pupil expenditures than local districts because they do not have a public works department and have to pay for many services others may not, for example, snow plowing and lawn care. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if they could see a comparison of per pupil costs with the district's high-needs population. Mrs. Neubig added that the DRG average is \$21,108.

Town allocations reflect an increase to Durham of 1 percent and a decrease of 1 percent from Middlefield. Durham has 908 students as opposed to 918 last year, but Middlefield is down to 475 from 502. ECS increased slightly, but the governor just proposed some changes today and Durham would go up \$7,000 but Middlefield would go down \$18,000. Durham's increase is \$1.2 million but \$400,000 of that is due to the enrollment shift. Middlefield will actually pay \$40,000 less, but that is due to the enrollment shift of \$400,000.

Dr. Schuch reviewed that they are happy to be able to be responsible and frugal while still supporting the class sizes and programming. The budget is tied to and aligned with the grade reconfiguration next Fall. It also allows for the design and implementation of the pathways at the high school, EL in K-5 and potentially expanded into the middle school as well as competency development for ELA and mathematics. They will also continue personalized professional development and redesign and implement a new teacher evaluation system. They will design and implement a personalized readiness tool at the secondary level as well as working on the core competencies.

Dr. Schuch noted that Mrs. Neubig has created two Google documents for the Board and the Finance committee to submit questions and comments. They also hope to get as much done in the work session on February 21<sup>st</sup> in order to save the next two, if needed, to answer questions. The public hearing will be held on April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 PM. Dr. Schuch thanked Mrs. Neubig and the leadership team for all of their hard work.

## **B. Kindergarten Registration for 2024-2025 Update**

Dr. Schuch reported that at the end of last week they communicated information to families about kindergarten registration. He thanked Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Keane for attending tonight's meeting to answer any questions. He reviewed that all of kindergarten will be at Brewster next year. Dr. Schuch explained that legislation was passed that changed the date of kindergarten entrance in order to align the start date with what most of the rest of the country does. The legislature is also creating a process so that any family who has a child who would have qualified under the old criteria and no longer qualifies can request a waiver from the principal. The legislation also requires the principal to institute some type of assessment of the children who have requested waivers and to communicate the results to the families. Dr. Schuch acknowledged that many people are anxious about this and they would like to hear from families by March 1<sup>st</sup> if they are requesting a waiver. To date, nine families have requested a waiver.

Mrs. Murray stated that she let parents know they will assess by June 30<sup>th</sup> and notify by July 15<sup>th</sup>, but that doesn't mean they will wait until then. She felt that they can assess on one day and let parents know the next. She doesn't expect that a large amount of families will request a waiver. Dr. Schuch noted that they are empathetic and sensitive to the position that these families find themselves in and want to support the school as well.

Mrs. Keane added that the assessments are age-normed so they can't be done too soon. They are trying to do them as soon as possible, but not too soon. They are certainly cognizant of parents' timelines as well. Dr. Schuch added that they are also collaborating with other districts on this.

Mr. Moore asked what the assessments will consist of and Mrs. Murray explained that she would like to focus more on the social-emotional piece rather than academics. She added that if a child is in preK-4,

they can stay in preK-4 without entering the lottery. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that CAFE has done a lot to advocate for districts and larger districts are having difficulty. She felt that the information that has gone out is good. Dr. Schuch added that they understand there could be a financial burden on working families with this and they are sensitive to that. Mrs. Keane added that they also increased the special ed eligibility to 22. Dr. Schuch stated that any waiver requests do have to be in writing, as part of the statute. Mr. DelVecchio asked what the maximum number of students is who are in the pool to get into kindergarten. Mrs. Keane explained that there is no maximum in kindergarten and Mrs. Murray noted that there are 23 children that she knows of who are eligible to request a waiver.

**C. Grade Level Reconfiguration 2024-2025 Update**

Dr. Schuch reported that they will publish preliminary staff assignments later this month for Brewster, Lyman and Memorial. He emphasized that these assignments are aligned with the budget proposal and any changes could impact that. They are drafting an email to staff that will explain that.

They are also beginning to plan for the physical move and are trying to be very deliberate about the moving process not interfering with summer school or cleaning and maintenance schedules. Dr. Schuch explained that they will ask the board later in the meeting to temporarily suspend policy 3260 which speaks to disposing of surplus materials because they feel some purging will have to happen.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that she would like the district to think about doing small group meet-ups with parents along grade levels to hear any concerns. Dr. Schuch stated that they will reach out before the end of the school year. Mrs. Dahlheimer also suggested creating a Google doc for the PTOs to ask questions.

**D. Other Updates (if applicable)**

None.

**Staff Reports**

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

Mrs. Neubig thanked everyone involved for all of their work on the budget process. She reported that the month of January closed at 52 percent expended and 56 percent revenue received. They have encumbered 98 percent of the district's expenditures. She also reviewed that they had significant issues hiring a contractor for an athletic trainer and have been able to cover most games, but not practices. They are presently working with a company to have two trainers that will be available for games and practices on a rotating schedule. For next year, they have proposed hiring an athletic trainer FTE at \$75,000. The yearly cost of a contracted athletic trainer is \$78,500. If the board decides not to proceed with an FTE, that amount will be added back into purchased services.

Mrs. Neubig reported that the Sports Marketing class did a survey about mascots and marketing in the district and 58 percent of students identified with the Blue Devil as being their sports logo and the C as an academic logo. They had a lot of suggestions, including keeping the logo consistent amongst sports teams. The plan is to pursue the Blue Devil on the turf.

Mrs. Neubig received the final paperwork this week for the field house grant for the lights and bathrooms. A call is scheduled for tomorrow about the bid waiver for the lights because they are proprietary. Once that is ironed out and the paperwork is signed, they can go out to bid. Mr. Moore asked if they will get the money up-front or reimbursed and Mrs. Neubig confirmed that it is a reimbursable grant. The grant will be invoiced quarterly.

#### **B. New District Website Update - Ken Pietrasko**

Mr. Pietrasko reported that the new website went live in early January. The content remains the same, but has been reorganized. So far, feedback has been positive. He met with the secondary level principals today and will continue to schedule meetings with each school. They are looking to upgrade each school's website in early March.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that she believes it is very easy to work through. She has received feedback about some broken links from Google to the new website. Mr. Pietrasko agreed that search engines do have historical data and the best way is to go direct to the site. That historical data will come down over time. Mr. Pietrasko will talk to all of the contributors to get the calendar as inclusive as possible, especially with athletics. It was also suggested to include links to the CIAC calendar.

#### **New Business**

##### **A. Board Committee Membership Review and Appointments**

Mrs. Dahlheimer reviewed that there are a number of committees, some that are longstanding and others that have not yet gotten started. There is one opening on the Building committee if the board wants to fill that spot. She suggested Mr. DelVecchio review the committees and let them know if he would like to join any of them. Dr. Schuch felt that whenever the board redoes the by-laws, they need to state whatever the committees are. Shipman seems to favor fewer standing committees.

Mrs. Dahlheimer will send a CABA list of possible well-being/climate committees to the board members for their review and for possible discussion at next month's meeting.

##### **B. Discussion and Possible Vote of Holiday Designations on Approved 2024-2025 District Calendar**

Mrs. Dahlheimer reviewed that they discussed this last month and they now need to approve the calendar.

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to include Indigenous Peoples' Day in conjunction with Columbus Day on the 2024-2025 District Calendar.*

Mrs. Dahlheimer reviewed that they have discussed this issue for a long time and felt it was something they need to do. The calendar would read Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples' Day. Dr. Darcy felt that it was a step in the right direction.

*In favor of including Indigenous Peoples' Day in conjunction with Columbus Day on the 2024-2025 District Calendar: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.*



**C. Discussion and Possible Vote to Suspend Policy 3260 for Brewster, John Lyman and Memorial Schools until September 1, 2024**

Mrs. Neubig suggested the policy be suspended only during the upcoming building and classroom moves. This would give the teachers and administrators professional discretion to discard items that are no longer relevant, deteriorated or broken. The policy has an order in which obsolete items are discarded and is lengthy. Dr. Schuch felt that this move requires a more dynamic process and the policy cannot be honored to do that. Mrs. Neubig added that this would not be filing cabinets or furniture, but deteriorated supplies and books or outdated or irrelevant curriculum that is not usable. Mrs. Petrella cautioned about discarding curriculum materials and Dr. Schuch ensured they will look at that and building administrators will be involved in those types of decisions.

*Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to suspend policy 3260 for Brewster, John Lyman and Memorial Schools until September 1, 2024.*

*In favor of suspending policy 3260 for Brewster, John Lyman and Memorial Schools until September 1, 2024: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.*

**D. Discussion and possible vote on Facilities Planning**

Dr. Schuch asked the board to formally endorse a three-school option and authorize the staff and the architect to continue planning for that option and bring details back to the board and, where appropriate, to the community.

*Mr. Stone made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to support a three-school option and authorize the staff and architect to continue planning for that option.*

Mr. Moore had a number of concerns, but was willing to move this forward. He felt that they are a long way from getting the cost analyzed and the ability to close two schools. Mrs. Dahlheimer agreed, but added that Mr. Cross had noted that they are under the gun and need to make some commitments. Mr. Mennone hoped that all the questions and concerns will be answered by this.

*In favor of supporting a three-school option and authorizing the staff and architect to continue planning for that option: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.*

**Committee Reports**

**A. Finance Committee Meeting - January 16, 2024**

Mr. Stone reported that the committee met and talked a lot about future planning, but didn't have the budget as of that meeting. They will also reach out to the towns' Boards of Finance.

**B. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - January 24, 2024**

Mrs. Petrella reported they talked about National Honor Society selection criteria and the current application process is outlined in a Board policy. Mrs. Stone reviewed GPA requirements from other schools, ranging from 3.5 to 4.2. Coginchaug's GPA requirement is 3.66. This year, 58 students were academically eligible (44 juniors out of 106 including 12 boys and 32 girls as well as 14 seniors out of 85). Out of the 58 students that were eligible, 35 applied. They discussed the NHS GPA range as well as eligibility requirements being known earlier. Mrs. Stone agreed that the application process should be looked at and invited members of the board to participate.

Dr. Schuch noted that they wanted to make sure the full board wanted to move in that direction and Mr. Mennone added that it is definitely a big source of contention for a lot of people. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that it needed to be done. Mr. DeVecchio agreed that there is no reason not to update it. There was consensus from the full board to move ahead with updating the process.

Mrs. Petrella continued that the committee also had an EL update and the K-5 teachers are into module two and more specific feedback should be available at their next meeting. Mrs. Quarato was going to meet with a Kiddom representative to look at a 3-5 phonics program. They also offered to provide professional development. Mrs. Gonzalez is looking to start the EL program in sixth grade next year and hopes that the program would then continue with those students into seventh and eighth grade. The committee asked to delay approval of that until academic results of the program are examined as well as how scheduling will work.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that the possible expansion of the EL program into sixth grade is included in the budget. Mrs. Quarato explained that there will be a budget impact in K-5 because they will be paying for Kiddom and all of the decodable readers for K-2 and workbooks for 1-5. Workbooks are not needed for sixth grade and up. Mrs. Dahlheimer went through some of the modules and had some concern that they do not align with the sixth-grade curriculum. Dr. Schuch noted that they do feel the sixth-grade curriculum is lacking.

It was agreed that having Student Achievement meet remotely works well.

Mrs. Petrella concluded by noting they had an update on teacher evaluation and a significant amount of progress has been made. The district has a strong PDEC and a subcommittee has selected standards to be used in 2024-2025 while continuing to research other standards. Educators will go through self-reflection, create goals which will be reviewed by their evaluator, a growth plan will be implemented and they will spend time on education and research. They will then do a mid-year self-reflection. The last phase will include self-reflection, thinking about the year as a whole and how to continue moving forward. The evaluator would end the year with a summative report that will be provided to the educator. If the educator has less than two years in the district, they will have at least two observations per year and educators with two or more years will have at least one. There was continued discussion about the evaluation system.

**Board Communications and Professional Development**

Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that she and Dr. Schuch just attended the CAFE legislative breakfast with 44 people attending. All of the legislators from the district attended except one. They spent the majority of

time talking about the ELA mandates. The state has expanded the EL programs from seven to 19 which is a bit unfortunate for our district. Mrs. Dahlheimer also believes waivers will be granted because it is such a huge undertaking.

Mr. Roraback stated that the Ocean Bowl team competed against eight other schools and won the regional competition. Mrs. Dahlheimer reported that both the girls' and boys' robotics programs made it to states. She added that she has attended many sports events and the Pep band performed at Quinnipiac. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that Mr. Schmottlach's plaque has been installed next to the band room.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the board is missing out on reports from the students and would like to get reports to include under communications.

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

**A. In-person public comment**

None.

**B. Remote public comment**

None.

**Adjournment**

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

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

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First