

## **BOARD NOTES:**

### **April 14, 2020, Regular Board Meeting:**

**Consent Agenda:** The Board agreed to remove the minutes from the March 10<sup>th</sup> Education Committee meeting and the April 4<sup>th</sup> Policy Committee meeting from the Consent Agenda, as these should be approved at their separate respective meetings. Within the monthly bills, there was an item describing the purchase of two backpack misting sprayers. Director of Buildings and Grounds Mr. Corey Dreher explained that these improve the District's ability to disinfect the buildings and outdoor equipment by spraying an even layer of disinfectant on surfaces that then does not need to be washed or wiped off. This process, recommend against COVID-19, allows us to be better prepared for the eventual re-opening of our buildings. After this discussion, the Board approved the Consent agenda, which included the minutes from the March 10<sup>th</sup> Regular Board Meeting, the monthly bills and salaries, and the first reading of Section 200 of the revised Board Policies as completed by the Policy Committee.

**Communications:** Superintendent Dr. Ed Stange shared that District 29 has been honored with the Best Communities for Music Education designation from The NAMM Foundation for outstanding commitment to music education. This is the third year in a row that District 29 has received this recognition! Superintendent Dr. Ed Stange congratulated the staff on their well-earned achievement.

**Board Policy Revisions:** The Board had a second reading of Board Policy 465.02 (Criminal History Searches for Employees, Visitors, Students, and Private Contractors). It was agreed that more work needed to be done before approval.

**Old Business:** Dr. Stange updated the Board on the status of the Legislative Focus Group engaging in advocacy towards clarifying mandated contract language regarding vendor employee background checks. While meetings have been postponed due to the pandemic, there is every intention to pick up where it was left off as soon as possible. Board member Mr. Rory Welch updated the Board on the Policy Committee's work, which is to go through each policy section with the intent to bring reviewed sections to the Board for readings and approval as they are completed. The next anticipated sections are 300 and 800. Chief School Business Official Mr. Tom Beerheide updated the Board on the status of bidding out our custodial and food service contracts. While the pandemic has inhibited our ability to hold bidding meetings and facility tours, he is brainstorming ways to keep the process moving forward and is confident we will have a successful, competitive bidding process completed by June.

**New Business:** Dr. Stange profusely thanked all of the district's teachers and staff for mobilizing the eLearning plan so quickly and implementing it with such expertise. The effort to offer such high-quality online curriculum requires all hands on deck, and our entire staff rose to the occasion with aplomb. This is particularly impressive as staff are literally reinventing the educational system at the same time they strive to implement it, all while balancing their own family and personal needs. The task seems impossible, yet they continue to take it on with positivity and creativity every single day. Board President Mr. Adelbert Spaan added that he and Board member Mrs. Nancy Detlefsen met with the SREA representatives to understand how teachers are managing this situation, noting that although they are juggling a thousand tasks, racing to meet student needs, and striving to work at the highest levels, they are meeting this challenge with patience, flexibility, and grace.

### **The Board heard a brief description of District eLearning plans from each principal:**

**Middlefork:** Dr. Mary Frances Greene described an effort to find balance and be flexible. Focusing on math and literacy, each child has their "must" activities for the day, but is also provided with a few opportunities to choose others. Students are greeted with an audio/video message every day, which hopefully helps to capture their attention and signal that it is time to engage. They are using See Saw, Google Classroom, Zoom, and other online platforms that most easily facilitate their tasks. Some challenges so far include trying

not to get too far ahead of ourselves, managing parent/guardian expectations that are juxtaposed with what teachers know is feasible, and how to better work with students that are disengaged for various reasons. Dr. Greene went on to describe the herculean effort the staff is putting forth in their endeavor to reach out to each and every student, making sure that each one knows that they are loved, valued, and deeply missed.

**Sunset Ridge:** Dr. Ivy Sukenik described efforts to provide continuity, maintain balance, and prevent educational gaps. Students are using Google Classroom, Screen Castify, Flip Grid, and other online platforms that help them complete their tasks. Zoom meetings are taking place, and we continue to work out the kinks. Teachers strive to be creative in their approach, trying Zoom as a way to facilitate office hours and break-out groups during class discussion, which students seem to be enjoying. Everyone is very impressed with how the students are taking on the challenges of online learning, the level of work they are doing each day, and their ability to adapt in such a changeable environment. A survey given to students revealed their positive feelings towards eLearning so far, while also disclosing that the needs they feel they have may differ from what their parents are voicing to staff. Some challenges include being able to replicate the way teachers interact with students in the small ways they would in person that don't translate to an online format, finding balance in parent/guardian expectations, and working against potential gaps for disengaged students. Dr. Sukenik praised her staff for their unprecedented dedication, elite level of professionalism, and deeply empathic approach to a situation that seems so impossible.

#### **The Board received reports representing other District perspectives:**

**District 29 teachers:** Dr. Sukenik and Dr. Greene reported that the District 29 teachers strive every day to find balance for not only their students, but themselves as well. The ongoing discussion revolves around finding a system and process that is sustainable in the long term as a way to find success for both students and teachers. Each teacher is reaching the high educational bar that District 29 has always set, just using new and creative ways in their approach. They understand that the at-school educational experience that our students are used to cannot simply be replicated at home, rather it needs to be adapted, changed, and almost completely reformed in order to meet this entirely new situation, and they try every day to meet those new needs. Efforts to keep students engaged in student life and exploratories continue, and teams and clubs are moving forward in their connections. District 29 continues to be a vibrant and caring community, educating the hearts and minds of each student one child at a time more now than ever before.

**Special Education and Student Services:** Director of Student Services Ms. Emily Dunham reported that staff is connecting with students and parents/guardians every day. Noting that eLearning is particularly difficult for our students that experience challenges with executive functioning, Student Services is reaching out with supports and partnering with classroom teachers when needed to offer creative options for assignments. Challenges include managing the special education mandates that are difficult to implement in this environment, rewriting IEPs to incorporate remote learning, balancing parent/guardian expectations, and the logistics of required IEP meetings. Since the IL State Board of Education has not yet provided much direction on Special Education services, Ms. Dunham reports that the staff do their absolute best to find ways to address student needs on an individual basis, while also creating contingencies in order to plan for a sustainable future path. This stay-at-home order is especially challenging for our students who receive special education services, and ISBE has provided little guidance, but the staff continue to go above and beyond for each student.

**Technology:** Director of Technology Mrs. Sheri Styczen reported that her staff continues to respond to daily feedback regarding troubleshooting, working towards a more seamless online experience for students and parents/guardians. Remotely coordinating all of the access, platforms, and network abilities is a massive undertaking, without which our entire eLearning effort could not survive, but the staff has met this challenge head on and stands ready for anything.

**Buildings and Grounds:** Mr. Dreher reported that his staff is engaged in a deep cleaning of all facilities. When that is completed, depending on the stay-at-home order, they will begin work on more involved projects that are usually started over the summer, including painting and regular maintenance. However, he

anticipates opportunities to spend more time on those projects, allowing for even better outcomes, which is difficult to imagine knowing how hard the custodial staff work under normal circumstances.

**Business Offices:** Mr. Beerheide reported that due to the school closure the District is realizing some savings on things like utilities, supplies, and other daily expenses. However, the prospect of delayed property tax payments, or citizens' inability to pay, could have an adverse effect on our funding in the coming years. Additionally, negative CPI would certainly have an impact on revenues beginning in FY22. The Business Office continues to watch these developments with an eagle eye towards protecting the District's interests, as is always the case.

**Finance and Facilities Committee:** The next meeting is July 14, 2020, at 6pm.

**Education Committee:** The next meeting is May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, at 6pm.

**IASB:** No report.

**PTO:** No report.

**NSSSED:** Board member Mr. Bill Hayes reported that the co-op is working on their Remote Learning Plans for students receiving services, and union negotiations continue. A Town Hall meeting was held to get stakeholder feedback on their financial model, which includes the allocation of expenses to member and non-member districts.

**Northfield Park District:** No report.

**Village of Northfield:** Mrs. Detlefsen reported that the Safe Roads grant project is on hold right now.

**Foundation Fund:** No report.

#### **Administrative Reports:**

**Dr. Stange:** There were two FOIA requests this month from CBS relating to the events involving Mr. Garcia-Espinal, one requesting information on our current custodial contract, and one requesting warning alert reports from the student monitoring system Securly. Enrollment is steady, with 50 Kindergarteners officially registered for next year. Dr. Greene is closely monitoring the potential need for another Kindergarten teacher. There are two open positions posted, Advanced Learning Program Teacher and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Services Teacher.

**Recommendations:** The Board approved the Closed Session Minutes from March 10, 2020. The Board also approved Mrs. Caitlin Leary's and Mrs. Kim Albright's Maternity Leave Requests.

Official meeting minutes will be posted on the website following their approval at the May 12, 2020, Regular Board meeting.