

BOARD NOTES:

September 15, 2020, Regular Board Meeting:

Consent Agenda: The Board approved the Consent Agenda, which included the minutes from the August 13th Special Board Meeting, the minutes from the August 18th Regular Board Meeting, the monthly bills and salaries, and Board Policies section 700 (Students).

Communications: Superintendent Dr. Ed Stange shared a note from Middlefork Teacher Mrs. Rachel Berkhof thanking the Board for its recognition of her 25 years of service to District 29. Dr. Stange also thanked the Board, staff, and community for their understanding during a challenging period for him and his family.

Board Open Discussion: Board member Mr. Adelbert Spaan asked the Board to review the documents from the self-evaluation workshop in order to understand potential areas for growth. Next steps will include discussing how best to implement the suggestions for improvement that came out of the session. Board member Mrs. Nancy Detlefsen thanked the teachers, staff, and administration for the endless effort they have put forth in order to make our in-person and remote school attempt successful. Juggling the in-person and remote duties simultaneously requires an enormous effort under extremely difficult circumstances, and District 29 has certainly risen to the occasion. Board member Mr. Rory Welch explained the challenges associated with running virtual Board meetings, and is happy to be assisting the tech department as they look into streaming options.

New Business: The Board discussed how best to organize and store our online resources, including Board packets and accompanying documents, agreeing to look further into various software packages to facilitate that. The Board discussed adding a “Strategic Dashboard” to the district website, which was one of the ideas that came out of the Board’s self-evaluation. This dashboard might include the District’s mission, beliefs, and core information, quantitative indicators of the District’s success, and Strategic Plan goals and their progress toward completion. The Board discussed the next Strategic Planning process, agreeing that planning should start during the 2021-2022 school year.

Finance and Facilities: Board member Mr. Scott Subeck opened a public hearing, as required by law, in order to approve the final FY 2021 budget. After no public comments were offered, the hearing was closed and the budget was approved. Additionally, the Board discussed the Compensation Reports that are posted on the District’s website within six business days after the budget is officially approved, as required by law. The next meeting is October 13, 2020, at 6pm.

Education Committee: Board member Mrs. Anne Peterson reported that Director of Technology and Innovation Mrs. Sheri Styzcen and Network Data and Security Manager Mr. Brian Thiel walked the Board through the recent technology security audit, which was done in order to understand where our weaknesses are and how we can improve in areas such as security training, on-site security, device management, platforms, network security, and data monitoring. The next meeting is November 10, 2020, at 6pm.

Policy Committee: Mr. Welch reported that the committee has completed its review of all of the District’s policies, bringing them all up to date. Moving forward meetings will take place quarterly. Both Mr. Welch and Mr. Spaan thanked the members for their hard work. The next meeting is January 5, 2020.

Return to School Task Force: Dr. Stange reviewed the metrics by which the Task Force makes its decisions to move forward or backward a stage, commenting on how fortunate we are to have access to some of the best medical experts in their fields as we make those decisions. One metric that we use is the School Learning Environment Matrix, measuring regional and local positivity rates, our ability to handle and rate of teacher absences, PPE supplies, and student behavioral data. This metric has revealed that our staffing is fragile and we

must do what we can to relieve the pressure teachers and staff are experiencing. In order to achieve this, the Task Force recommended implementing the following practices:

- Allowing students who are quarantining for medical reasons to participate in remote learning. Students whose families choose to travel to a high-risk state as named by the IDPH and the CCDPH, and are observing the required days of quarantine upon their return, shall not participate in remote learning. Rather, they will be counted as absent, or can choose to enroll in the remote learning program for the remainder of the trimester. This is to lessen the disruption caused by students bouncing in and out of remote learning, which has a detrimental effect on both the in-person and remote learning environment for students and teachers
- Observing a non-student attendance day on September 25th, freeing up time for teachers and staff to regroup and catch up
- Allowing the District to remain at Stage 2, rather than move ahead to Stage 3 that would include serving lunch

The Task Force also recommended the District consider the following as we move forward:

- The possibility of going fully remote from Thanksgiving to New Years as a way to allow families to gather across state lines without putting our school community at greater risk
- Study the potential impact of taking one hour off the school day in order to relieve some of the pressure from teachers
- Review expectations for all students who participate in remote learning at any time of the day

Both school principals have met with the Alternate Remote Learner families in order to get feedback on how the experience can be improved. A survey will be sent to all families to gauge progress and satisfaction in both the in-person and remote learning environments.

Some challenges in the classrooms that we have encountered include:

- Understanding how best to use our technology to provide the most productive experience
- Effectively interacting with both remote and in-person students simultaneously
- Redesigning the curriculum to fit this new and ever-changing teaching model
- Managing the use of physical materials in the classroom
- Redirecting remote students who are having trouble focusing

Our priorities right now are to find ways to alleviate the high amounts of stress that teachers and staff are experiencing as they do their utmost to make this experience work, and to communicate to families that their dedication and investment is integral to the success of our program.

IASB: Dr. Stange reminded the Board of their mandatory online training requirements.

PTO: Board member Mrs. Anne Peterson reported they have filled all of the room parent positions, and are planning to sprinkle in teacher and staff appreciation throughout the year. They are considering options regarding fundraising, and hope to host an in-person benefit next year.

NSSED: Board member Mr. Bill Hayes reported they have now shifted to a hybrid learning schedule, and it seems to be going well. They continue to analyze their classroom space needs.

Northfield Park District: Mr. Welch reported that their after-care program is running smoothly with 15-16 kids enrolled. The Clarkson Park renovation project has started and will be wrapping up in the spring.

Village of Northfield: No report.

Foundation Fund: No report.

Administrative Reports:

Dr. Stange: The District has completed the Respiratory Protection Plan training that IL districts are required to implement for any staff that must wear an N95 mask. This includes nurses, custodial staff, and some special education staff. Enrollment remains steady, with 13% of students participating remotely. We need at least three more Teacher Assistants, but are finding it difficult to find applicants.

Mrs. Jen Keidaisch: Club Dolphin is going strong. Middlefork is going through their emergency drills, starting with lockdown drills in small groups. MAP testing was finished, and reading assessments have begun.

Dr. Ivy Sukenik: Fire drills were done one class at a time. Teachers are using “The Distance Learning Playbook” as a helpful guide moving forward, and we hope to provide a similar resource to parents/guardians as well. Traffic is going smoothly, and the staggered start times have provided a general overall improvement in parking lot safety.

Ms. Emily Dunham: Student services assessments are taking place as scheduled. The team is working to collect data on any occurrence of “academic COVID slide” as a result of last year’s closure. The ability to adequately staff TAs is concerning. Special Education teachers are meeting with students during the afternoon. This requires extra flexibility from our Exploratory teachers, which we are grateful for.

Mrs. Sheri Styczen: The team is doing their absolute best to support teachers and students every day with whatever they need to be successful.

Mr. Corey Dreher: There are still two night custodial positions to be filled at Middlefork.

Recommendations: The Board approved the closed Session Minutes from August 18, 2020. The Board also approved the employment of Mr. Sean Hardiman and Ms. Michelle Gidron as Teaching Assistants.

Official meeting minutes will be posted on the website following their approval at the October 13, 2020, Regular Board meeting.