

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, March 2, 2020
Stella Library Media Center

CALL TO ORDER: Dr. Fleischman, Chair called the meeting to order (6:04 PM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Steven Fleischman, Chair, Mr. Dan Cowan, Ms. Maegan Genovese, Secretary; Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Vice Chair; Dr. David Ross, Ms. Joyce Shavers and Dr. Michael Strambler.

STAFF: Mr. Robert Gilbert, Superintendent; Cheryl Mammen, Special Services Director; Analisa Sherman, Principal; Doreen Merrill, Assistant Principal; and Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Kim Franklin, Nancy Smerekanicz, Cathy Zdrowski, Teachers.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

ANNUAL SURVEY

Each survey, Staff, Student and Parent was reviewed. The Board discussed and reviewed questions submitted to determine possible best placement and/or change. As historical data comparisons would be compromised if individual categories were modified, there was agreement for adding questions in a separate category at the end of each survey. Concern was expressed for how questions are interpreted and the usefulness of the answers garnered when phrasing/wording is confusing. Panorama is endorsed by the CSDE and is a nationally recognized survey organization with inordinate expertise. It is possible that questions are formulated in a specific fashion to obtain certain outcomes.

Student Survey – There was general agreement that questions pertaining to the PTO, inclusive of BoosterThon, would not be beneficial as the Board did not have governance over the PTO. Further, the PTO was supporting children and various initiatives through their fund raising efforts and there should be no intent/perception created to negate their efforts. The Board chose to add two questions regarding safety.

- *How safe do you feel in your classroom*
- *How safe do you feel on your bus*

Suggestions were made for including anecdotal questions pertaining to the math curriculum in efforts of obtain quantitative data to validate or invalidate concerns that have been brought to the attention of the Board. It is important to know the full range of math ability, differentiation and whether students are being challenged enough. It was noted that individual student skill level is not known and asking these types of questions does not provide for an accurate assessment on each child so it is likely answers will be all over the place. Further, SBAC scores clearly indicate that math is a challenge.

Teacher and Staff Survey

There are two surveys one for teaching staff and one for support staff with a total of 51 questions. It was suggested that questions regarding leadership be included as we are unique in that we are a one school district. It was noted that there is building leadership and district leadership and there is no delineation within the context of the questions being asked. The Board was cautioned against framing questions pertaining to evaluations.

It was agreed that the following questions would be added to the Teacher Survey with a caveat stressing that no identifiable nor personal information should be included.

- How satisfied are you with the performance of the Board of Education – response categories should be *Extremely Satisfied, Quite Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Slightly Satisfied, Not at All Satisfied*.
- How satisfied are you with the performance of the Superintendent – response categories should be *Extremely Satisfied, Quite Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Slightly Satisfied, Not at All Satisfied*.
- If you had concerns about leadership, how comfortable would you be communicating your concerns without fear of reprisal – response categories should be *Extremely Concerned, Quite Concerned, Somewhat Concerned, Slightly Concerned, Not at All Concerned*.

It was noted that there is very little data on the validity of Responsive Classroom, its implementation nor success and/or failure. While the majority of staff is trained, it does not mean teachers are vested and it is important to know why this program is not working. Where are the questions that would provide that type of feedback. Perhaps we should be asking more general questions regarding classroom management, how teachers manage the behaviors in their classroom, whether additional supports / training are required, and/or how useful this program is in addressing student outcomes.

This program is a philosophical and consistent approach to classroom management that utilizes similar language that can be implemented across all grade levels. It is not a program intended to address the most significant / severe student behaviors, which inherently require different interventions and levels of support. While some teachers embrace it fully, others do not. Administration is aware of which teachers adhere to daily promulgation as well as those who choose alternate measures. Responsive Classroom is not the solution for all areas of concern. It was noted that there is an overall climate change among students with a growing level of disrespect in both their tone and actions. If students feel they can swear and/or gesture at a staff member without repercussion, what are the next steps in discipline to prevent the escalation to physical aggression, which is occurring. Discussion ensued for whether this program is being utilized to its full potential and whether we have identified the competencies we are trying to develop through its use.

Dr. Ross left the meeting (7:42 PM).

Agreement was reached to include additional questions for student behavior.

- How respectful are students to the adult in the school – response categories should be *Extremely Respectful, Quite Respectful, Somewhat Respectful, Slightly Respectful, Not at All Respectful*.
- How respectful are the students to their peers – response categories should be *Extremely Respectful, Quite Respectful, Somewhat Respectful, Slightly Respectful, Not at All Respectful*.

Suggestions were made to include two open-ended questions, provided it is clarified that no personal data / identification is used.

- What are the most positive aspects of Beecher Road School.
- What would you change if you could.

Parent Survey

It was noted that the parent component of the survey was created specifically by Beecher and not a national normed standard survey designed by Panorama. Discussion ensued for whether it was in the best interest to utilize the Panorama designed survey. In using a normed survey, it could help in engaging the community to assess how well aligned family and school expectations are. It was agreed that we would use the Panorama normed survey inclusive of *School Fit, School Climate, School Safety and Family Support*. There was agreement that under *School Safety* the question on drugs would be eliminated and substituted with:

- How safe does your child feel on the bus – response categories should be *Extremely Safe, Quite Safe, Somewhat Safe, Slightly Safe, Not at All Safe*.

Agreement was reached to maintain the first two questions on our survey and incorporate them into the Panorama Survey. Question 9 would be rephrased as follows and Question 10 would be deleted:

- How challenged does your child feel in his / her class – response categories should be *Overly Challenged, Quite Challenged, Appropriately Challenged, Slightly Challenged, Not at All Challenged*

The Board agreed to keep Questions 37, 12, 22, 29, 37, 39 and 40 rewording them as questions instead of statements when necessary. Question 50 would remain as is and Questions 51 and 52 would be changed switching “leadership” for “performance”. Questions on School Calendar and the Open Ended questions would all remain as is.

There was general consensus that parents should not evaluate the Superintendent nor the Board. It was noted that the parent population is not necessarily aware of Board functionality / responsibilities and perhaps the survey could provide some direction. Administration are the experts. It is the Board’s role to ensure that conversations are occurring. This is a satisfaction survey and the intent should not be to try and fix everything with the survey. It was noted that parents should have the opportunity to provide administration feedback on their child’s teacher. Teacher and administrator evaluations are a detailed process requiring approval by the CSDE for how they are conducted as well as agreement by the respective unions and staff-at-large. Evaluation is not a parent process.

Homework and the amount of homework given at various grade levels was raised and whether a question could be incorporated into the survey. Assorted sentiments were expressed inclusive of, should parents be able to request additional homework, what are the benefits of homework, when and how much should be assigned, should it be a teacher or parent decision and decisions should be evidence based, both academically and social emotionally, in support of student learning. A determination was made not to incorporate a question on homework.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL SEARCH

Superintendent Gilbert apprised the Board of the basic job posting inclusive of a draft timeline, committee structure, job description, leadership profile and posting designation in key organizations – CTReap, CEA, CAPSS, CABE, CIAC, etc. The committee will be chaired by the Superintendent with the following representation (2) Board members, (1) administrator, (2) teachers, (2) teacher assistants, (2) support staff, (2) parents. It was agreed that each group would select their own representatives.

Concern was raised for whether the current administrative structure is in the best interest of the school, roles and responsibilities of the position, quality of potential candidates, qualifications of the individual currently doing the job and whether an interim should be appointed. The school needs a leadership team that is fully committed to being here. Further, the budget does not include the addition of a curriculum coordinator nor any other administrative staff position. Should the Board wish to add another position, it would be in the range of approximately \$150,000. Since the 2020/21 was already submitted to the Boards of Selectmen and Finance, we are constrained by what is feasible in terms of the budget. Candidates are looking for these types of positions now and we either proceed with the current structure of Principal and Assistant Principal or wait another year. A suggestion was made to look for individuals with a strong curriculum background. It was noted that it would be impossible for an assistant principal to perform both the curriculum coordinator and assistant principal responsibilities. In addition, a curriculum coordinator position does not have evaluation oversight and the functionality of each position is distinctly different. It was suggested that perhaps an alternate solution may be to share a curriculum coordinator with the Amity system.

MOTION 1 – ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL SEARCH

Move that we authorize Superintendent Robert Gilbert to conduct the search for the Assistant Principal of Beecher Road School as presented.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Ms. Genovese
UNANIMOUS

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (9:17 PM)

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Ms. Genovese
UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board