

**BROOKLINE SCHOOL BOARD
OCTOBER 24, 2017
MEETING MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Brookline School Board was conducted on Tuesday, October 24, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy.

Chairman Matthew Maguire presided:

Members of the Board Present: Lauren DiGennaro, Vice Chairman
 Alison Marsano, Secretary
 Kenneth Haag
 Erin Sarris

Members of the Board Absent:

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
 Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent
 Kristen Maher, Assistant Business Administrator
 Dennis Dobe, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy
 Daniel Molinari, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School
 Anne Elser, Assistant Director, Student Services
 Karen Kulick, Special Education Administrator
 Amanda Coffey, STEP Program Teacher

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

Superintendent Corey requested the agenda be adjusted to include, under Deliberations, setting a date for the Annual Meeting.

**MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG THAT THE AGENDA BE ADJUSTED AS REQUESTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER DIGENNARO
MOTION CARRIED
5-0-0**

CORRESPONDENCE/RESIGNATIONS/NOMINATIONS - None

PUBLIC INPUT - None

PRINCIPALS' REPORT

Principals Molinari and Dobe highlighted some of the items in their report:

The Fire Department was in-house, and provided a demonstration on fire prevention. They used a model home in the discussion of how to react if there is ever a fire in the home, and provided a demonstration.

The 3rd grade visited the Brookline Public Library. Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade students will be going soon.

3rd grade students from both Brookline and Hollis will be attending Trebuchet Day at the High School, which is put on by the Physics classes at the High School, and goes along with some of the concepts the 3rd grade students are learning.

Earlier in the day 4th grade students visited the State House.

Principal Dobe spoke of work within the District to sync up with the middle and high school in providing programs. RMMS has had a successful Lego League Jr. for a few years (2 teams of 6 students). At CSDA, there are three teams of 7-8 students.

- Class Size

Principal Molinari spoke of the information provided with the [agenda](#) relative to enrollment projections for the 2018-2019 school year. Policy IIB was used as the divisor for class sizes. Preschool numbers listed do not reflect the identified students that will be coming into the program (rather typical peers that are on a wait list).

- Success Through Engaging Partnership (STEP) Program Presentation

Anne Elser, Assistant Director, Student Services, stated the development of the STEP Program began in late July. The District worked with a consultant from the Southeastern Regional Education Service Center (SERESC) in Bedford. The committee consisted of approx. 6 people who are directly involved in the program. A few students were struggling to access the general classroom environment successfully; had a lot of pull-out time, and a good deal of class and instructional time was lost. The committee worked towards building a program to help these students be successful.

Ms. Elser provided the presentation, and began by identifying the Mission:

“Students learn skills to be fully integrated into the general classroom setting. Staff members utilize reinforcement-based procedures that align with the building expectations, so the student can be successful in all environments and be an active participant in the school community.”

The committee began by looking at the current behavioral expectations within the confines of RMMS and what the students were struggling with when it came to those pieces. Each program is developed for the student individually based on his/her needs. Students who are currently in the program all have IEPs.

The program description was stated as:

- A program which provides instruction, supports, and related services, using a TEAM approach, for our students with intensive special needs.

Ms. Elser remarked if the student is already on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that may include accommodations within the specialized instruction program as well as the regular education classroom program. The supports are whatever the child needs to be successful. They work collaboratively with the speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and the school counselors.

- Each child’s program is individually developed and implemented with collaboration by the TEAM members.

All TEAM members come to the table to discuss what the student needs, and what the vision for them is as they move forward to be successful.

- The foundations for learning are key factors which TEAM members consider when developing and implementing programs.

The goal is to have students be members of this program for as short amount of time as possible. The more time they have in the regular education classroom with their peers the better off they are. That is where they will get the direct instruction from the classroom teacher, that is a line to the curriculum standards and frameworks, and that is where they are going to get the modeling of their peers. They are not going to get that as much in the pull-out program in the resource room. The resource room provides a safe haven for them. The desire is to be able to allow them to save face in front of their peers. If they are dysregulated and cannot manage their emotions, they are given the opportunity to be removed from the classroom to a safe haven where they can manage their emotions successfully and then rejoin their peers when they are ready.

- These foundational-building blocks include the development of:
 - sensory-motor skills, which are overseen by the Occupational and Physical Therapists

- self-regulated skills which underline communication and cognition
 - social-emotional development, which is overseen by the school Guidance Counselors and Psychologists
 - behavior, which is overseen by the Board-Certified Behavior Analyst
- Programming recommendations are made based on objective information, data collection, and knowledge of research-based practices.

Ms. Elser addressed the program entrance criteria noting the committee gave this a great deal of consideration:

- IEP
- Social skills deficits
- Language deficits
- Processing deficits (functional and receptive)
- Sensory regulation deficits
- Significant behavioral issues that have been unable to be safely and successfully managed in a less restrictive environment (history of unsuccessful implementation of strategies)
- Functional behavior assessment/functional analysis
- Student requires constant, proximate adult supervision and interventions
- Requires the detail of a significant behavior/response plan

Over the summer, the District offered registered behavior technician training to paraprofessionals, which consisted of 40 hours of intensive instruction in how to proactively help these students learn to understand how they are feeling and regulate their behaviors. The candidates (approx. 18) that attended the training are currently in the process of getting their certification to be qualified Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs). Part of that certification includes working with the Board-Certified Behavior Analyst very closely. She is looking at the standards, frameworks, and criteria that they need to meet and can demonstrate to be certified. Candidates are also tested. That assessment should be completed by December 1st. The current rehabilitative assistants who are working with the students within this program are all candidates for RBTs.

Also developed were program exit criteria:

- IEP team decision based on student progress toward IEP goals and demonstration of more independent, appropriate behaviors.
- Upon intake, the IEP team will establish individualized criteria that trigger convening of a team meeting to discuss lessening or increasing the placement restrictions.
- Provide the student with skills and abilities to access the educational setting independently; so that the level of supports within the program are no longer necessary.

Ms. Elser remarked they are really looking at this program as a fading support. When the students enter the program a Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale will be administered. This rating scale was agreed upon by all the committee members who helped develop the program. It allows you to develop goals and objectives that are based on the behaviors being exhibited in the home and school setting.

Principal Molinari noted Jane Bergeron, Executive Director, SERESC, helped coordinate some training sessions with staff; teachers, paraprofessionals, and administration to work out any kind of fears, logistics of what happens in certain types of crisis situations so that they all became aligned. He spoke of how well the students in the program are doing. He commented the goal is to transition the students from the program into the classroom, and they are doing that.

When asked, Ms. Elser stated there are currently 4 students in the program and 1 in referral. They will not go for DOE approval until next year; have a year to tweak the program and have some hard data to bring to the DOE to support program approval.

Ms. Marsano questioned if the participants might have otherwise been out-of-district placements, and was informed that is what they are looking to avoid. The need was seen based on behaviors witnessed over the course of the last 12-18 months. The desire is to provide for these students the least restrictive environment in their home-based school district.

Ms. Elser stated she is the out-of-district placement coordinator, and knows a good deal about the out-of-district placements that are offered within New Hampshire and Massachusetts. It is her opinion this school district can do as good of a job if not better than some of the out-of-district placement programs.

Ms. Sarris questioned if the paraprofessionals will be in a different role, professionally, once completing the RBT certification. Ms. Elser responded through the course of the program there is a great deal of data collection and implementation of behavior plans, and the desire is for the implementation piece to be as fluid as possible and as discreet as possible. The training helps with that, but also helps them understand the subtle nuances of the behavior plans that are developed for the students, and really allows them to be able to integrate those behavior plans seamlessly. Right now, the RBT trained candidates are specifically joined to the STEP Program and the students within that program. They are dedicated to the program.

Ms. Marsano questioned if there is a general goal in terms of time for the students to transition out of the program. Ms. Elser remarked the program is so new that, at this point, there isn't data available to provide so much as a general guideline.

- Fall NWEA Testing

Principal Dobe displayed charts detailing "NWEA % At or Above Norm Grade Level Mean RIT > Reading and Mathematics (can be viewed [here](#); tape counter 28:21). He commented on efforts to track cohorts to understand what happens and understand and explain why; how students are responding to the programming being offered, how the initiatives are affecting the learning experience.

The NWEA assessment was given last year in May after administering the Smarter Balanced Assessment. It was then done this fall. There are minimal weeks of instruction between the two administrations. He stated the desire to highlight what they are seeing as a difference; positive trends occurring. He noted the column in red "Spr.-Fall Cohort", which is the change from the spring to fall within a cohort, e.g., a group in reading where, in the spring, 92.1% were at or above the national norm, in the fall assessment, it was at 89.7% or a loss of 2.4 points. There is generally a slide that can occur over the summer. The take-away from these results is that the District is maintaining at a very high level. What is most remarkable looking at the data is what has happened in Mathematics. What can be seen is progressively, in each of the areas, students have continuously scored stronger and stronger.

Principal Dobe noted presently the District's average in Mathematics is 82.4% and in Reading 82.7%. The District has generally been lopsided, which is not uncommon for elementary schools. Students score higher in reading/language/arts. There is typically a deficit in Math. As we have adopted new programs, made Mathematics a real priority with the STEM initiatives, etc., you see very strong gains here. From spring to fall you see the incoming 4th grade class moving from 86.8% to 96.2%. There are only 2-3 students in the 4th grade that were not at or above the national average. Grade 5 is maintaining, and the Administration continues to work with the 5th grade teachers and students with a goal of seeing the kind of growth that was seen in grade 4, and particularly in grade 6. Grade 6 has been discussed in the past; the needs the faculty witnessed for this cohort of students. In doing so they realigned, adjusted, and re-assigned some staff members to get the class sizes down in Mathematics. There are some teachers who are teaching Math for the first time, but they are very talented teachers. Even in 4 weeks the students are responding very well. Overall in this period there is almost 20 points of growth across all 3 grades.

Ms. Sarris questioned, with the addition of the teachers, is it making the regular math block smaller than the standard class size for the 6th grade students or providing extra opportunities. Principal Dobe responded class sizes are lower everywhere, but they are particularly low in Mathematics because of the added sections. Most of the classes are heterogeneous in their grouping as far as ability. There are a few where they are configured such that students (at either end of the ability spectrum) are really going to get what they need. There are some groups that are moving through the curriculum at a different pace, and those groups are smaller at both ends than the other more heterogeneously grouped classes.

Ms. Marsano remarked during the open house, teachers talked about two separate math blocks coming through, and questioned if that will continue throughout the school year. Principal Dobe stated they have had their typical math core block, which is an hour in length, and then they have an additional half hour of what they call math centers time. The math centers time is basically like the WIN Block. With this group, because they did not have the advantage of a portion of the enVision program, that is what is largely being taught at that time. Students are getting math and more (6th grade program and last of the 5th grade program). They do not want to lose students by over-burdening them with mathematics and are sensitive to that. He commented when visiting classes both in math core and math centers there is a very good feel in the classrooms. Students are feeling more capable than they have ever felt, and that is seen in those scores too. The students are not afraid by what they are seeing in those problems because they have been well supported. Nobody can hide either, which is a big difference this year. When you have smaller groups like we have they really receive a lot of personalized attention and support, so they are really coming to understand the material. They are getting a lot of math right now, and they will be scaling back on the 5th grade curriculum soon.

When asked, he said the new math program is enormously responsible for the positive progress. There is a lot of buy-in among the teachers. It is as rigorous for teachers as it is for students. It is the way the program is structured, the pacing of the program, graphic or visual nature of the program, blend of the program; students are online seeing videos, doing worksheets, doing interactive activities on the Smart Boards, talking about what they are doing, how they arrived at the solutions to problems. The school is consistently following a program, which makes a huge difference. Years ago, that wasn't the case in the school, and because of that there were gaps, shortcomings, and they were not all on the same page.

Ms. Sarris questioned if there would be a review of the enVision program after a certain point. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated a presentation will be provided on Math K-12 at the November meeting.

Ms. Sarris spoke of the positive feedback that has been received; however, noted she has also received other feedback, and has experienced other things, which she would like to share. She commented it has more to do with providing our great teachers an opportunity to teach their skills and abilities to teach certain concepts above and beyond what the curriculum offers. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug remarked they wanted to stick to the program year one, and very detailed notes were kept of every lesson/topic. They have already made changes and incorporated other resources into centers and the math workshop model, and other resources are being added this year. Some things are a must do and some are optional based on the grade level and what the team feels was valuable.

- Fall STEM-PBL Project

Principal Dobe stated Beth Penney, Science Specialist, will be working with the teachers over the coming year developing plans for the vision of our school; if we were envisioning the school of the future what sort of facility would be required to make that successful. He spoke of the after-school programs that are currently in place and those planned, and how they are an important aspect of the student experience in the District.

DISCUSSION

- Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) – SAU Budget Information, Brookline Staffing and Special Education, FY17 Final, FY19 First Quarter Update

Kristen Maher, Assistant Business Administrator, stated the fund balance that would be used to reduce the overall assessment for next year is \$237,340. Roughly \$35,000 of that is related to expenditures that were anticipated, but have rolled over into FY18. Another portion is the result of expenses for special education being deferred to FY18. Chairman Maguire remarked the key point is the District is fully funding the special education fund and the maintenance fund, and returning \$237,400 to the tax base.

Ms. Maher addressed the report on the FY19 first quarter update noting the negative balance under regular education. She explained that relates to an unexpected preschool teacher needed to keep class sizes down. With the estimates at the bottom of the page, e.g., potential for the voters to fund the special education fund at \$25,000 and the maintenance fund at \$40,000, the estimated fund balance to be returned to the tax base is \$12,386.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the SAU41 Governing Board budget noting the desire for information to be shared at each of the District School Board meetings as the cost of that budget impacts each of the district budgets. A more formal presentation will be made in November. The largest change in that budget is the desire for a new position in the Business Office. The SAU is running what is essentially a \$50 million company, maintains 7 buildings, and is responsible for curriculum and student services. All of that goes through the Business Office. He spoke of the SAU having recently hired for the position of Accounting Specialist. The part-time position that was funded last year to provide administrative assistance across the SAU has not been filled, and is hoped to be filled in the coming months. An increase to the number of cleaning hours is being requested. Currently the SAU receives 6 hours of cleaning/week. That is not sufficient to maintain the facility. Approx. 95% of the other costs in the budget are contractual obligations.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the Brookline School District budget stating the desire to discuss a few items in advance of the presentation of the draft budget in November. The District is currently negotiating with both the teachers' union and support staff union. If tentative agreements are reached, those would become Warrant Articles in March. Those figures are not necessarily factored into the amounts that will be presented next month because they are addressed through separate Warrant Articles.

One of the biggest things being seen is enrollment growth. NESDEC predictions show the SAU growing overall, and identify growth in Brookline. He spoke of the current housing market and increased enrollment that results. Focusing on staying within the teacher/student ratio policy, the Administration will be recommending the addition of two (2) classroom teachers. Based on current projections, the 2nd and 6th grades would have a teacher added. The result would be 4 teachers per grade level. Chairman Maguire conducted research that indicated the District had been at 4 teachers/grade for many many years. It was not until experiencing difficult times in 2008 that the District started to see the ratios creep up.

The budget will reflect hiring teachers with 3-4 years of experience and a Masters Degree. A \$70,000 placeholder will be used for each. The Administration will also make the request for the current STEM position to move from part-time to full-time to support both RMMS and CSDA. The placeholder will be \$34,000. The addition of those positions alone would result in an increase of approx. 2% over last year's budget. Superintendent Corey stated his belief it is what is being looked for, and what people have come to expect out of the District.

In terms of special education services, a moderate increase is being projected. Superintendent Corey remarked looking at the STEP Program just from a cost point of view; if those four individuals who are presently in the program needed to be placed, it would be at about \$80,000/student (tuition plus transportation). First and foremost, the District is of the belief it is offering a much better program, and there is the added benefit of being cost effective. Some of the students may not exit the program. We have that programming now K-12. It is the right move for Brookline and for when those students move to the COOP District as well.

There is the potential the District could experience an unexpected special education cost, which would reduce the balance in the special education trust. Were that to come to fruition, he would come back to the Board

questioning whether the Board wished to make the fund whole again or continue with the estimated allocation amount.

Superintendent Corey noted the Brookline School District budget does not include a contingency fund, which can be found in each of the other budgets within the SAU. That would have to be put forward as a Warrant Article. Contributions to a contingency fund come from year-end fund balance.

In terms of curriculum, the budget will include funds to look at Social Studies, Math, and Writing. The desire is to move forward with some of that work starting next summer/fall. Costs are included for software that would provide further extensions in remediation in Mathematics and STEM. The computer replacement cycle will continue to be followed. There will be consideration of iPads for the Kindergarten classrooms, Chromebooks for grade 2, 6 Chromebooks for the CSDA Library, 6 staff laptops in each building, 3 Smartboards for CSDA, and the wireless network at CSDA is being evaluated. The Administration will look at using the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) Grant to cover the cost of a number of these pieces, and is researching whether the CSDA network would qualify for E-Rate funds.

Both Principals continue to regularly evaluate security and safety. The DOE was onsite earlier in the day reviewing the safety plans and proposals.

In terms of capital improvement projects, two boilers are being looked at for RMMS, regular maintenance to HVAC and air handler systems, and carpeting needs at both schools. The Administration is looking to fund the phone system at CSDA through the maintenance trust. The District hires a company to inspect both playgrounds for safety on a regular basis, and received an audit, which indicates some equipment at RMMS has become outdated. Also looked for are updates to bathroom facilities at RMMS, some of which are original to the building.

Chairman Maguire stated his belief there has been a committee formed to consider replacement of the playground on the Town's field, and questioned whether there could be savings achieved through economies of scale. Superintendent Corey stated he would ask Principal Molinari to reach out to the Town. He noted there are grants available, but they require a significant match.

- A Cooperative District

Superintendent Corey spoke of the question that came up at the SAU41 Governing Board meeting relative to one or both elementary districts joining the cooperative, the first recommendation would be to start those discussions well in advance. He suggested this point in time to be too late as such a change would require a very extensive process to be undertaken, and would be costly in terms of legal fees.

Knowing that we have teacher contracts, and other issues that will come before the voters in March, he would not recommend doing something for this coming March. He recommended a discussion begin next April with the following March meeting including a non-binding Warrant Article to understand whether the voters would be supportive. He provided the example of the Brookline School District wishing to join the COOP School District, and noted that would involve the dissolving of the Brookline District, the dissolving of the teacher and para contracts, etc.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the ongoing activities in each of the districts; seeking two teachers and the increase for science in Brookline, which he believes mission critical, Hollis is in the 2nd year of the energy project, and the COOP District is working on a facilities project that involves the renovation of the weight room space to provide for a 21st Century robotics/tech center as well as a new fitness center and the potential of a new rectangular field. Part of his job is to make sure the SAU does not overreach. First and foremost, he would like to see the teachers' contracts pass as they are the ones in front of our students every day. The second priority would be an increase to teaching staff to reduce ratios, and then the science position. Everything after that needs to be discussed at length.

- Transportation

Superintendent Corey stated the SAU41 Governing Board voted to consult legal counsel, and to empower the Board Chairs to act on behalf of the individual boards. He and the Business Administrator met with legal counsel a few days ago, and stated a meeting was scheduled for the following day with the Board Chairs during which strategies received from legal counsel would be discussed. It is expected the Board Chairs will provide direction on how to proceed. Once that is in place a communication will be sent out to Board members and families.

Having met with the bus company, he is aware there are bus drivers coming on as soon as next week if all training goes well. The final driver would be coming on in early November. Superintendent Corey stated he knows, from discussions with legal counsel, that Concord is aware of the problems across the State and is looking to review regulations, etc. around bus drivers to see if the process can be expedited.

He spoke of the 40-year relationship the SAU has had with Hollis Transportation, and what they offer; specifically, one of the things they offer that other transportation companies do not is the practice of bringing a child back to the school if not met at the bus stop. That allows the District to always guarantee that child is safe.

DELIBERATIONS

Principal Molinari noted the Policy Committee has not met recently. There have been no recommended changes to the policies before the Board.

- To see what action the Board will take regarding Policy **EFAA** – School Lunch Meal Payment Policy
1st Reading 8-22-17
2nd Reading 9-26-17
Given its third reading;

**MOTION BY MEMBER DIGENNARO TO ACCEPT THE THIRD READING AND ADOPT POLICY EFAA - SCHOOL LUNCH MEAL PAYMENT POLICY
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HAAG
MOTION CARRIED
5-0-0**

- To see what action the Board will take regarding Policy **ACA** - Freedom from Sexual Harassment
1st Reading 8-22-17
2nd Reading 9-26-17
Given its third reading;

**MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE THIRD READING AND ADOPT POLICY ACA – FREEDOM FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS**

ON THE QUESTION

Ms. Sarris noted the second paragraph under “Procedure” states: “Building Principals, Assistant Principals and Supervisors are urged to take appropriate steps to distribute this policy statement and to inform employees and students of procedures for lodging complaints. Any employee or student having a complaint of sexual harassment should notify the Building Principal.” She questioned if other individuals should be notified.

Principal Molinari commented perhaps it should read “Administrators” noting the District does not have Assistant Principals.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug commented a similar conversation was had in a different district; providing another alternative in case the complaint is against the one person identified. Amending that to read building administrators or district administrators provides additional flexibility. Superintendent Corey suggested it be worded as “any district administrator”.

The Board agreed on using “any district administrator” in that paragraph as well as the third paragraph.

**AMENDED MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE THIRD READING OF POLICY ACA – FREEDOM FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT, AS AMENDED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS
MOTION CARRIED
5-0-0**

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the approval of the budget/Annual Meeting calendar

**MOTION BY MEMBER DIGENNARO TO APPROVE THE 2018 SB2 AND TRADITIONAL ANNUAL MEETING DATES AND DEADLINES CALENDAR AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS
MOTION CARRIED
5-0-0**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Brookline School Board September 26, 2017

The following amendments were offered:

- Page 2, Line 9; add “testing” before “window”
- Page 4, Line 13; replace “problem-learning based” with “problem-based learning”
- Page 7, Line 1; replace “knowing” with “known”
- Page 8, Line 26; replace “commented” with “commenting”
- Page 8, Line 27; replace “process” with “proceed”

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO ACCEPT AS AMENDED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS
MOTION CARRIED
Member Haag Abstained
4-0-1**

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ADJOURN
SECONDED BY MEMBER MARSANO
MOTION CARRIED
5-0-0**

The October 24, 2017 meeting of the Brookline School Board was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Date _____ Signed _____