

**Special Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, January 16, 2018**

NOTICE: A full meeting recording can be obtained from Fairfield Public Schools. Please call 203-255-8371 for more information and/or see the FPS website (under Board Meeting Minutes) for a link to FAIRTV.

Call to order of the Special Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the Special meeting to order at 7:32PM. Present were members Trisha Pytko, Jennifer Leeper, Christine Vitale, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Jennifer Jacobsen, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly, Nick Aysseh and Jeff Peterson. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 30 members of the public.

Presentation: Targeted Enhancements, Pages 3-5

Mr. Mancusi shared a short video showcasing the OHS and RLMS CLC classroom students. Mrs. Schwartz, Elementary Special Education Coordinator, said students in these settings have complex needs ranging from limited communication ability to limited mobility. Highly trained teachers, paras, ed-trainers, and behavior analysts work with students. Mr. Goodison, Special Education Coordinator for grades 6-8, said CLC instruction includes pre-teaching, as many students do participate in general education with non-disabled peers. Skills are reinforced with real-life applications. CLC students also receive Adaptive PE instruction.

Mr. Cummings reviewed and highlighted some of the program initiatives on pages 3-5, focusing on:

- (1) 21st century learning initiatives to promote learning through technology. This will mostly impact grade 7 and high school Social Studies and Science departments. There is a need to build an online collaborative tool.

Responses to Board Questions:

- This includes a new device program for all subjects. The teacher, not the device, will instruct students – it will be important to find the right balance of student time behind the screen. Information sessions will be held for parents and students.
- The plan is to still have a Science textbook, although there aren't many print materials ready for adoption to support the new standards.
- PD will be offered to teachers on the device.
- Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly requested a more thorough explanation of the \$600K financial commitment.

- (2) ELL Program Initiative. The ELL Newcomer Academy will be implemented to assist students needing a high level of services. Certified teaching staff will be supplemented with 3 paras.

Responses to Board Questions:

- Sites for the Academy have yet to be determined, transportation costs must be minimized.
- Entry criteria will be identified with a maximum of 15 students per site.
- There will be one site for the elementary level. Students will be transported outside of their districted school if they qualify. The idea is to have the student returned to his/her home school as soon as possible. The ELL Academy should have a shifting population.
- Current ELL certified staff will teach at the ELL Academies. Three paras will be hired but are not currently assigned to schools.
- There is a higher number of incoming elementary students needing ELL services, but students are entering at all levels. Of noticeable concern are students who enroll and are lacking any formal

schooling. The system will work well when teachers and paras collaborate. Mr. Peterson expressed some concern about paras being overwhelmed if there are large numbers of ELL students.

- Ed-trainers were not considered for the ELL Academy.
- Students who do not attend the ELL Academy will be getting most of their services from paras. ELL teachers will be working very closely with paras regarding service delivery. ELL services at the elementary level are mostly pull-out. At the secondary level, services are built into the schedule. Ms. Leeper asked for the ELL exit rate.
- Mr. Cummings would like the details of the ELL Academy to be worked out by May.

(3) Implement STEAM education in grades 3-5. This will provide greater consistency for Gifted education as well as provide increased instruction on STEAM content areas for grades 3-5. Curriculum will be developed. The Gifted teacher will also teach STEAM; the FTE will be based on number of students in Gifted and for STEAM, the number of sections in grades 3-5 per school. There will be no decrease in the amount of Gifted instruction.

Responses to Board Questions:

- FTE information is on page 8 in the Questions document. On page 49 in the budget, Ms. Leeper asked: How is there a budget decrease, at Burr for example, if the FTE is increasing? Could Gifted and STEAM be broken out similar to page 121? Mr. Cummings said he will get those answers.
- The Holland Hill and McKinley Program Facilitator position is partly paid for with Title 1 funds, and the position therefore appears as .5 FTE. All of the Program Facilitator positions and STEAM/Gifted positions will be posted and current staff may apply/reapply. Hiring will be done collectively and experience will be a factor. Mrs. Gerber noted that the district has some excellent IIT's who have been in their buildings a very long time.
- The understanding is that all CT schools will soon be required to provide Gifted instruction. Integrating Gifted instruction with history and social studies has yet to be determined.
- STEAM instruction will work differently than current specials and will not replace any specials. With STEAM instruction, the classroom teacher will remain in the classroom while the STEAM teacher instructs. The STEAM teacher will be the lead teacher, and the classroom teacher will be there to support current curriculum.

Mr. Mancusi addressed Targeted Enhancements on pages 3-5 related to Special Education and focused on:

- (1) Elementary Program Facilitator. This person will oversee all provisions of special education, 504 and the SRBI process. This position will ideally be filled with someone who has extensive special education experience and will help to strengthen consistency of service delivery across schools. The current IIT has a split role.
- (2) Implement CLC with social/emotional component. This new program will be at Riverfield with the goal to provide the intensive services that are needed. A Special Education teacher would be hired and maximum enrollment would be 8 students. As the program fills, the proposal is to hire 2 paras, 2 ed-trainers, a full time social worker, and psychological consultation.

Responses to Board Questions:

- There will be a CLC at TMS.
- The CLC is a full-size classroom. CLC students are generally the most impaired, have significant needs and require intensive programming. Some of the instruction is pre-teaching for general education. The

students may be non-verbal, have feeding protocols, specialized medical needs or motor deficiencies. The students take adaptive PE, taught by adaptive PE teachers.

- Preliminary data on teacher caseloads for DRG B and A is available. An efficiency study will be done in the spring that will be centered around caseload; it will cost approximately \$38K and will appear in the consulting services line over a period of 2 years. The programming is solid in Fairfield, but the consistency of delivery is worth review. Ms. Pytko said she will be requesting more information on the caseloads of speech/language pathologists.

(3) Implement a high quality intensive support program at the high school level. The proposal is to replace Effective School Solutions (ESS) with an in-house program by hiring 5 mental health professionals and contracting with Yale Child Study Center Psychiatric and Psychological Staff. Also looking to contract with an expert in the field of strengthening student executive functioning skills. It will include extended school year services and continued DBT training.

Responses to Board Questions:

- Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly requested a side-by side comparison of ESS and the new program and questioned how this would be an improvement over ESS. Ms. Donowitz added that the in-house program will enhance collaboration and offer a deeper level of expertise. Mr. Dwyer asked that the chart include costs of each program.
- Mr. Distefano, Special Education Coordinator for grades 9-12, added that DBT training has been rolled out for PK-21 special education staff. Additional training in adolescent DBT was provided to all staff, grades 6-12/ CPP.
- Mr. Dwyer requested District Improvement Plan implementation costs for pages 3-5.

Instructional Services, Page 33 Questions:

Mr. Cummings responded to Board Questions:

- The program assessment line on page 72 includes STAR, PSAT funding including grade 9, computer assessment, behavioral assessment, WL assessments and post- graduate survey. The increase is related to material costs.
- The Curriculum Development, #60 on page 72 includes summer work for the ELL Newcomer Academy as well as work on content standards related to graduation requirements, and STEAM. Courses may need to be altered or added due to the curriculum timeline.
- Technology integration on page 33 is included in Curriculum Development; the district is looking to identify an ELL learning tool as part of support services.
- There is consideration of a 9th grade assessment to measure content knowledge and mastery-based learning. In the meantime, it is in the budget as 9th grade PSAT. Mrs. Jacobsen requested a cost breakdown of the assessments; if 9th graders were to take an assessment it should be more authentic than the PSAT.
- The headmasters advocated for their current level of 9th grade programming during PSAT testing. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly does not support 9th grade PSAT.
- Page 72, line 303 – why does that show an increase when ESS is going away? Dr. Jones said the best explanation is a chart on page 3 of the Questions document. Excess cost is no longer applied to that line item. Excess cost this year is applied only towards tuition making it very clear, rather than scattered throughout different line items in the budget. The chart shows the true cost of Pupil Personnel Services actually decreased.
- Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly requested Superintendent updates on the budget this spring, particularly when things are going well.

- Site-based budgeting for student activities is at the principal's discretion. See page 5 of the Questions document.

Instructional Services, Page 41 Questions:

A majority of the Board questioned the 20% reduction to school allocations. Mrs. Leeper said this money will be hard to get back. Ms. Pytko said it was alarming and requested a breakdown of the reductions. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly also requested specifics on the reserve column on page 93, line 401. Ms. Vitale said there should be no pretense that this cut doesn't hurt and requested honest answers from principals on what this means to them. Mrs. Gerber added that the savings from the 20% reduction in allocation will be used to pay for the Next Generation Science Standards materials.

Headmasters Ebling and Hatzis addressed the Board regarding the reductions to school allocations. Mr. Ebling noted that the budget is built by what is needed. It can be hard to predict supplies, as exact enrollment numbers are not known. Elective areas are heavy with allocation vs. other courses. Some examples of being conservative in the area of allocation could be selecting sheet music that has already been purchased and choosing a less expensive design in an art technique or technology class; unable to be more specific than that.

Responses to Board Questions:

- Mr. Hatzis said a reduction in the Library/Media line could mean a reduced choice for various online resources and offerings. Sports is a moving target and depends on the success of the teams. The more wins, the longer the season and more transportation is required. One possible impact could be a delay of uniform replacement. Fixed costs include league membership, transportation, and hiring of officials.
- Mr. Ebling said it would be hard to say if allocation reduction would impact NEASC, but at this time they are only required to report staff changes, not funding.
- Mr. Cummings appreciates the concern of the Board and said the funding should be taken in context. As an example, the district will discourage spending on materials when curriculum will soon be updated.
- Dr. Jones said the increase on page 93, line 401, is due to Science. Line 56165 includes budgeting for high school textbooks. Texts will only be purchased if they meet district requirements. Online resources are also being pursued.
- Mrs. Munsell referenced the chart on page 1 of the Questions document, showing what is included in school allocation; it is more than supplies. The total amount of the allocation reduction equals \$500K.
- Dr. Jones said the district needs to do a better job of tracking PTA donations and will follow up on this. Mr. Hatzis said the high school PTA's do an excellent job of keeping each other apprised and sharing ideas.

Other Purchased Services, Page 39 Questions:

More background information will be provided regarding the increase in copier costs at the high schools. A new copier lease is in place.

Mr. Cummings said the district is still interested in pursuing the K-2 World Language Program. Dr. Jones added that a language immersion program would be very costly to implement, and it may be difficult to find staff.

Tuition, Page 37 Questions:

Board discussion centered on page 154 of the budget book with outplacement tuition information. Mr. Mancusi addressed Board questions:

- The 102 projected outplaced students include consideration of the new TMS CLC class, but not the elementary CLC-S at Riverfield.

- Unilateral Placements do not go through the PPT process, and instead parents file for due process. The amounts listed do not include legal fees, and FPS has the burden of proof from the start.
- Last year's budget reported outplaced students differently, and the number is inconsistent with the number for this year. Dr. Jones maintained that new programming will have a positive impact.

Mr. Dwyer said increases in tuition may be covered using the \$2.3M being held in reserve.

Ms. Pytko shared her view that early intervention with SPED students could be helpful in the long run.

Contracted Services, Page 35:

There is some money left over from consultants Milone & MacBroom, should they need to return and report to the Board. Any additional work needed to respond to Mill Hill and Holland Hill questions would require additional funding.

A legal fees chart will be provided.

Capital Outlay and Technology, Pages 44-45 Questions:

Ms. Byrnes said the technology amount is less than last year partly due to budget constraints and partly due to the technology replacement schedule. The 5-year plan does not have as much scheduled for replacement. Additionally, the Switch Replacement Project is expected to be funded by the Town, as it is an infrastructure investment.

Page 45, 501 has a typo – the decrease of \$40K is not countered with an increase.

Ms. Munsell said the equipment decreases on page 99 are due to the district's efficacy of reallocating furniture.

Mr. Dwyer asked Dr. Jones to review the \$500K allocation reduction to schools, and to provide information on what would happen to the total budget number if the allocation were increased incrementally by \$100K, to reach that amount.

Mrs. Gerber motioned, Mrs. Vitale seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Meeting Adjourned 11:00 PM

*Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica Gerber
Fairfield Board of Education, Secretary*