

Minutes
Board of Education Meeting
June 1, 2020
6:30 p.m.

Board Members Present: James Chakulski, Jr., Linette Dooley, Chairman Christopher Lent, Michael Maziarz and Joseph Napolitano

Board Members Absent: David Crim and Kathy Tolsdorf

Others Present:

Patty Bode, Karen Caputo, Finance Director Beverly Ciurylo, Superintendent Maria Geryk, Alyssa Gwinnell, Amy Lapsis, Gillian Lyon, Katherine MacDonald, Kristen Maltese, Brenda Morey, Kate Rutledge, Michelle Shive, Christine Sposito and Alexis Stolarun

I. Call to Order

Chairman Lent called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Comments from the Audience (Bylaws of the Board #9300)

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes.

Chairman Lent welcomed all present and opened the floor to comments from the audience.

Principal Alyssa Gwinnell said she wanted to thank everyone once again for this past great, but difficult, month. She spoke to and heard from many families, children and staff. So many have come together in ways we would not have expected. She can personally attest that everyday presented new challenges. She looks forward to what lies ahead.

IV. Presentation

Art Integration – Google Slideshow, Kennedy Center, Defining Arts Integration – Dr. Patty Bode – Art Integration Consultant, Ms. Katherine MacDonald and Ms. Michelle Shive – Art Teachers

Superintendent Geryk said it is amazing to have such a wonderful staff who are very creative and jump into something new with enthusiasm. Art teachers Kat MacDonald and Michelle Shive have been working with Patty Bode, a consultant to integrate art into content. When we talk about arts it is a visceral reaction. It pulls on a part of us that isn't always accessible. Porter is open to these exciting opportunities and Kat and Michelle jumped right in.

Dr. Bode said she has been an art educator for many years. She has worked in public schools with very young children through high school. She has also worked with Tufts University and Ohio State. She will be running an art ed program at Connecticut University. It has been a great honor working with these two art teachers this past year to provide support with this art integration initiative.

The Kennedy Center defines art integration this way – Arts integration is an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding (learning) through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meets evolving objects in both.

Ms. MacDonald said she'd like to thank both Superintendent Geryk and Principal Gwinnell for time being built in the schedule to allow them to plan. She is very passionate about making connections with academic subjects. This has been a focus of hers since she started 13 years ago. She spoke about the Altered Book Project (eighth grade ELA and visual arts project) and StoryTeller Dolls Project (fifth grade honors art class first or third person narratives). Eighth grade students had a science/art integration project. They created alien art families and their habitat, which was displayed at an exhibit. This inspired another teacher to craft curriculum on the narrative.

Seventh grade ELA used visual art integration to illustrate and study Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech. In this project descriptive language was given to each child, who then connected emotionally. There was an eighth grade social studies/art integration collaboration project to honor the contribution of African Americans in our society. These were to be in the art show we planned to host.

Ms. Shive continued with the presentation by speaking of a living biography project in the elementary level that uses core subject knowledge being taught in the classroom. Examples also include a butterfly lesson and a fire prevention poster contest. Another example is a project first grade students completed using information they learned about the lives of owls as well as the phases of the moon.

Ms. MacDonald said community collaboration is a strength of the visual arts. There is a collaboration with the Columbia Historical Society. There has also been a Lions Club International Peace Poster contest. These, with the Fire Prevention Poster contest, all address community minded goals.

Art integration deepens and broadens academic understanding. Students at Porter love the arts.

Successful art integration requires strategic co-planning; adequate time to implement unit; consistent, intentional communication through the duration of a project; flexibility on the part of co-teachers; clear objectives; and student engagement.

Dr. Bode concluded the presentation by saying there are three variations in the arts in schools: arts as curriculum, arts-enhanced curriculum and arts-integrated curriculum. In arts-integrated curriculum, the arts become the approach to teaching and the vehicle for learning.

Superintendent Geryk thanked them for the work they have been doing with our students. The level of collaboration to integrate is extensive. Dr. Bode will continue to work with us again next year.

Chairman Lent thanked Patty, Kat and Michelle. It is a wonderful approach that teaches creativity and provides a completely different perspective of arts. Ms. Dooley thanked them, saying they are awesome, as usual. This approach keeps kids well rounded. Mr. Maziarz said the arts teachers have done an excellent job. It has been difficult figuring out how different subjects can support other areas. The more and more you dive into student interests, the more invested they become. Ms. MacDonald said they see kids' faces light up when they know they are going to do an integrated arts project, knowing their teachers will be working together. They are excited.

Superintendent Geryk said this approach allows students to creatively collaborate problem solving skills we need as adults. Mr. Chakulski, Jr. said it is great to see how this is being received in the school.

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V. Action Items

(Consent) A consent agenda is presented by the Chairman at the beginning of a meeting. Items may be removed from the consent agenda on the request of any one member. Items not removed may be adopted by general consent without debate. Removed items may be taken up either immediately after the consent agenda or placed later on the agenda at the discretion of the assembly.

- a. Approval of April 6, 2020 Minutes
- b. Approval of Special Meeting Minutes April 21, 2020 Minutes
- c. Payment of May Bills and June Bills
- d. Approval of the Daena Parmenter Scholarship
- e. Acceptance of Retirement Request, Mrs. Kathy Francis, Elementary Music Teacher
- f. Acceptance of Retirement Request, Ms. Lynn MacMullen, Library Media Specialist
- g. Approval of Purchasing English Language Arts Curriculum up to \$40,000
- h. Acceptance of Resignation of Jessica Atkins, Grade 4 Teacher

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Mr. Maziarz SECONDED to move g. Approval of Purchasing English Language Arts Curriculum up to \$40,000 to VI. Action Items (Discussion & Action).
MOTION CARRIES 5:0

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Mr. Napolitano SECONDED to approve a. Approval of April 6, 2020 Minutes; b. Approval of Special Meeting Minutes April 21, 2020 Minutes; c. Payment of May Bills and June Bills; d. Approval of the Daena Parmenter Scholarship; e. Acceptance of Retirement Request, Mrs. Kathy Francis, Elementary Music Teacher; f. Acceptance of Retirement Request, Ms. Lynn MacMullen, Library Media Specialist; and h. Acceptance of Resignation of Jessica Atkins, Grade 4 Teacher.
MOTION CARRIES 5:0

VI Action Items (Discussion and Action)

Chairman Lent requested the discussion about the English Language Arts curriculum, Wit and Wisdom, be held before the original items on the agenda. All agreed.

- a. Approval of Purchasing English Language Arts Curriculum, Wit and Wisdom, up to \$40,000

Ms. Rutledge is updating the Board on the topic of ELA curriculum since the last time she presented. After the process of reviewing the curricula began, it became apparent we might need to consider if it is more feasible to find a program that is better able to meet our needs than go through the extensive revisions required on what is currently used. Over the past few months we underwent a lengthy and thorough review and decided upon Wit and Wisdom.

Superintendent Geryk expressed gratitude for the substantial amount of time and energy that went into this review. Ms. Maltese said this was a good process with a lot of voices. All are excited with the possibility of a new program to implement next year.

Chairman Lent said this was a rigorous process, where 17 potential programs were initially identified. It was narrowed down by nine teachers who were involved in the recommendation. It is critical that they were part of the process.

Superintendent Geryk responded to Ms. Dooley's questions about budget and roll-out. If approved by the Board, this curriculum will be purchased this year, meaning there will not be a budgetary impact next year. Ms. Rutledge said a day long professional development is scheduled June 10. The publishers will have two staff involved. There will be additional work over the summer, before the new school year.

Mr. Maziarz asked what the ongoing cost will be for the future. He also asked about the mindset of the teachers, the commitment to it. This program was thoroughly researched. It was chosen. He does not want it to be replaced in just a couple of years. Ms. Rutledge said the bulk of the cost is realized this first year for texts. It is necessary to have a copy of the text for every student and teacher. There will be ongoing costs to replace as necessary, which is not expected to be much. In response to his second question, she said it is expected this will be used for many years. Superintendent Geryk agreed, saying we all have a similar philosophy. You need a program in place for a period of time to assess it. She believes the initial commitment should be at least five years.

Ms. Dooley MOVED, Mr. Maziarz SECONDED to approve purchase of the English Language Arts Curriculum, Wit and Wisdom, up to \$40,000.

MOTION CARRIES 5:0

Ms. Dooley said, when reading through notes, it appears we are getting charged 50% for a certain period of time, but then starting June first we are to pay 90% for budgeted transportation. Superintendent Geryk confirmed, saying typically we would pay 100%. We paid the bill for March. The bus company laid off staff. Negotiations ensued and we asked what percentage are paid if they don't have staff. It was agreed March 16 through May will be paid at 50% and 90% of the anticipated bill June 1 through June 16. We will not be spending approximately \$100,000 of the funds budgeted for this year's transportation.

Ms. Dooley asked about the potential of raising pre-k tuition, but she sees that we will not be. Superintendent Geryk said it is possible the discussion regarding preschool tuition occurred at a meeting when Ms. Dooley was not present. It has now been decided that we will not increase it based on not knowing what people's financial situation will be. We had talked about cost comparison to other towns, etc. We are very competitive compared to others but still decided not to increase it.

b. Upcoming Administrators Association Contract Negotiations (7/1/18-6/30/21)

Chairman Lent said the current contract is July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2021. We would commence negotiations over the summer time prior to the end of the contract. He's wondering how we will proceed, possibly holding remote discussions. Superintendent Geryk said we are moving forward with timelines, with discussions starting this summer, either in person within guidelines or remotely. Ms. Gwinnell agreed. Chairman Lent said the committee does not need to be decided tonight, but will be by the July meeting.

c. Superintendent End of the Year Evaluation

Chairman Lent said there have been initial discussions about Superintendent Geryk's end of the year evaluation. We are supposed to have discussions about her contract by July 1. Due to the unusual circumstances, we have not yet done so. Superintendent Geryk agreed to a slight extension, if necessary, and we will now schedule those discussions. Any salary will be retroactive to July 1. Superintendent Geryk will provide self-assessment notes by June 15, as she had done mid-year. Mr. Maziarz offered to help Chairman Lent with tallying the input from Board members.

d. Review Request to Determine Tuition Rate

Superintendent Geryk said she received a request from a family to have their child attend Porter as a tuition student. She reviewed the policy to determine the rate and the policy references per pupil costs. The most recent rate available is from 2018-19, which is \$18,101. Considerable discussion regarding the tuition rate occurred. It was decided Superintendent Geryk will put a proposal in writing to bring forward to the Board for consideration.

VII. Correspondence/Communications

a. Elementary Virtual Student Art Show

Chairman Lent said this is a great presentation. He was very disappointed we were not able to attend it in person.

b. Middle School Virtual Art Show

Superintendent Geryk and Board members agreed the artwork is amazing.

c. Region 19 Superintendent Appointment, Sharon Cournoyer

Superintendent Geryk said she has not had an opportunity to talk with Dr. Cournoyer yet, but is looking forward to it. Sounds as though she is a strong collaborator with a lot of excitement and enthusiasm for the position. She wishes her all the best in this new position.

d. Preschool Update 5/22/2020

Superintendent Geryk reiterated what was stated earlier this evening, the fact that preschool tuition will not be increased this coming year.

Chairman Lent asked about screenings. Superintendent Geryk said we will not be doing screenings for either preschool or kindergarten until we are able to have face to face experiences with kids. Each child already identified comes with a lot of information available for the teachers. Tomorrow kindergarten teachers will send something to parents, asking them to share information about their child. Only 11 students coming to kindergarten are not from our preschool program.

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VIII. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings

- Monday, July 6, 2020, 6:30 p.m., BOE Subcommittee Meeting, Zoom Meeting
- Monday, July 6, 2020, 7:30 p.m., BOE Regular Meeting, Zoom Meeting

IX. Superintendent's Report

- a. Legislative Update
- b. Remote Education Update
- c. Please join me in Congratulating:
 - Brigid Keenan for reaching tenure in the 2019-2020 school year
 - National Junior Honor Society Inductees – Kelly Szegda, Corryn Tarbell, Rachel Buskey, Maya Roldan
 - Lions Club Scholarship Awardees – Alexander Greb and Victoria White

Superintendent Geryk recognized staff members who shared their intention to retire. She wishes Mrs. Francis and Ms. MacMullen all the best.

The students were inducted into the National Junior Honor Society based on what they bring to Porter. She congratulated them for this accomplishment.

The budget passed. It does not increase the mill rate and still meets everyone's needs.

The transportation contract was negotiated. She expects we will realize savings from that contract. It was a challenging process for everyone involved.

For staff, families and students, this has been a pretty challenging situation. People really worked incredibly hard to make this work. We need to have kids back in school. Staff are working on end of year summaries to be provided to families. Not grading, per se, but provide information, documenting where they left off before going remote, and what was covered remotely. This will share information with new teachers next year.

A summer intervention program is being offered to families. Extended School Year for special education students is being worked on.

Devices, i.e., iPads, Chromebooks or laptops, will be coming back. They will be set up to be user friendly. Devices will be assigned to individual students to reduce germs, etc.

No clear direction/guidance for next year has been received from the state. Various options are being considered, but Superintendent Geryk said not all districts have the same configurations. The goal is to have kids back in school for the new school year. We will be prepared to be partially remote or fully remote if necessary. We are now in a much better position to do that.

She is thrilled Daena Parmenter's family has started the new memorial award in her honor. While she did not know Daena personally, she knows Daena was a beloved student and heard a lot of wonderful things about her.

Eighth grade graduation. Teachers are working hard to create a graduation ceremony. We are thinking of having families come in cars to Porter and staff be out front to give each a celebration bag that includes wonderful things as well as their diploma. Photos may be an option. We want something that is festive and celebrates kids, but mindful of health and safety.

Field Day experience. More to come. A team is working very hard to develop this fun activity.

Food Service. Superintendent Geryk is not certain if this service will be extended through the summer. She hopes it continues, but has not had formal notification of that yet. The mobile food truck is there every other Thursday.

Facilities projects are in progress. New ceiling tiles are being installed. Summer cleaning will be done soon. For future planning we will have to figure out things like temperature checks, how many kids per room, sneeze barriers, etc., for next year.

We are exploring FM systems in the classrooms. This will make sense, especially if we anticipate people wearing masks, making them more difficult to hear. If this is determined to be viable, the purchase will be made by the end of this school year to be in place before school starts.

Superintendent Geryk said families have been incredibly supportive during such a difficult situation.

Chairman Lent asked about transportation. Will we need to discuss additional buses to accommodate social distancing? Will we change routes? Can M&J meet these potential changes? Superintendent Geryk said she talked about this and they are aware and will work with us. We may need to work on flexible hours. We are negotiating contracts. Depending on what comes to us in the next few months, there is a lot of work ahead on multiple fronts.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. said a lot is up in the air. Potentially there will be multiple days and bus runs. Superintendent Geryk said that until we hear from the state, we are looking at personal protective equipment. Will we need more nursing staff? Will we need more teachers? We will figure it all out and provide discussions and forums for families to discuss how we can implement it well. Mr. Napolitano strongly encouraged Superintendent Geryk to not wait to order PPE. He also suggested face shields will be a perfect barrier for certain staff, i.e., speech pathologists who work so closely with children.

Ms. Dooley asked about summaries being used in place of grades. Superintendent Geryk said guidance from the state regarding grades was unclear. We opted to use summaries and feedback on individual assignments.

X. Comments from the Audience

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes

Christine Sposito, 62 Doubleday Road, asked about posting for a grade 4 and long-term substitute in grade 3 next year. Superintendent Geryk said these are positions for music and the library media

center. She wanted a better idea of the enrichment program for next year. She is looking at the library as a hub for the enrichment center. She will provide an update in July.

Ms. Sposito wanted to compliment Laura Lawton for her hard work throughout the school year and remote learning. Her son benefited from Zoom class.

Ms. Sposito asked about the status of the website. Superintendent Geryk said she believes it will be ready to roll out this summer.

Ms. Sposito asked about the grade 5/6 science position. Ms. Gwinnell will send out an announcement in the very near future.

XI. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

Mr. Maziarz congratulated Mrs. Francis and Ms. MacMullen on their upcoming retirements. They have served the students well and they will be missed. He also said that his children have participated in the distance learning, finding the activities engaging. The live video conferencing meant a lot to his children.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. thanked all staff who have been working so hard during this difficult time. All the work done has been very impressive.

Ms. Dooley also thanked everybody for their continued hard work. She specifically acknowledged how difficult this has been for parents of young children and children with special needs.

Mr. Napolitano said the amount of work that goes into distance learning is incredible. He, too, thanked everyone for their hard work.

Chairman Lent thanked Superintendent Geryk, staff, and everyone who has been keeping the learning moving forward. He spoke of the scholarships in memory of Daena. She touched the hearts of a lot of people. An award for someone who is a great person who is encouraging and a positive model for others is wonderful. Chairman

Lent stated it is with regret he must announce that Kathy Tolsdorf tendered her resignation from the Board earlier today. She served almost 12 years on the Board. This was a hard decision for her. He would like to invite her to be recognized for her many contributions at an upcoming meeting.

Superintendent Geryk also extended her gratitude for all her years of service and dedication. Ms. Tolsdorf has always been very generous in her time and commitments to the Board.

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Maziarz MOVED and Mr. Napolitano SECONDED to adjourn.
MOTION CARRIES 5:0

The Board adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Lent, Chairman