

Approved 9/5/2018

**Minutes**  
**Board of Education Meeting**  
**August 6, 2018**  
**7:30 p.m.**

Board Members Present: James Chakulski, Jr., David Crim, Linette Dooley, Joanne Prague Doyle, Chairman Christopher Lent, Gary Littlefield and Kathy Tolsdorf

Others Present: Lol Fearon-Superintendent, Alyssa Gwinnell-Principal, Barbara Wilson-Student Services Director, Jennifer Hill-Assistant Principal, Christine Sposito, Tom Doyle, Karen Butzgy

**I. Call to Order** – Chairman Lent called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

**III. Comments from the Audience (Bylaws of the Board #93000)**

No comments from the audience.

**IV. Presentation – Curriculum Presentation - Science**

Superintendent Fearon introduced the presentation by Ms. Gwinnell. Literacy and numeracy is the focus in 2018/19. Rachel Gabriel (UConn) came in and worked with teachers on creating that focus. Emphasis is on English, language arts and math. Scheduling for PK – 8 was looked at to maintain quality in the classroom and uninterrupted block times. .

Ms. Gwinnell opened with saying every year a number of 8<sup>th</sup> girls to to UConn for MYO - Multiply Your Options. This event introduces girls to female role models in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Operation Egg Drop was successful for kindergarten again this year. The process included looking at the materials involved in creating the protective crate and height of the drop. It was very hands-on. This activity leads into community service day.

There has been an emphasis on science this year. First and second grade bought science materials to go with NGSS standards. Teachers have been working on curriculum. They are ready to begin Bundle 1 instruction in the fall and will continue finalizing the last two Bundles by using curriculum professional days in the fall.

Ms. Doyle asked if we are looking at the topic model or thematic model. Themes are the model. Ms. Gwinnell responded to how far along the different grades are in developing the curriculum. Grades 1 and 2 are three-quarters complete. Kindergarten started at the end of last year and is approximately half-way through. Ms. Gwinnell did not have grade 3 and 4 information with her, but will provide it.

Bundles are units and they are helpful because they have all the materials needed. Ms. Gwinnell said there are curriculum meetings seven times per year. Staff also have opportunities to meet with curriculum leaders separately, creating a better flow in the curriculum.

Middle School was worked on this past year, bringing in science labs. Fifth grade is being added to the STEM lineup. Project O is a seventh grade STEM focus for this year. We have a full membership and there will be up to five trips to Avery Point.

Course configuration was discussed. Changes were made in response to having middle school science and social studies as half-year courses in the past. Now they will be full-year courses. STEM labs have been added two times per week for a quarter for grades 5 – 8. Classes are longer. STEM labs will now be two times per week for 45 minutes and two times per week for 60 minutes, all year long.

Ms. Gwinnell spoke of flexibility in science and social studies in certain standards. We are preparing fifth and sixth grade for Project O in seventh grade.

To accomplish all of this, schedules had to be changed. No additional staff was necessary to address curriculum and the needs of students. Brooke Kleinman will continue as the Science Curriculum Team Leader and Jessica Neumuth will be the Social Studies Curriculum Team Leader.

Ms. Gwinnell discussed Social Studies curriculum. This past year Brazilian dancers came to the school. It was a lively presentation that had the students engaged throughout. With time being allotted to literacy and numeracy, there is a time period for both science and social studies. Elementary teachers will be reviewing the social studies curriculum to identify areas that are clearly units of study that need to occur during blocked time and topics which can be integrated into literacy. Ms. Tolsdorf asked if there would be more reading in the content areas. Ms. Gwinnell answered yes, the students are learning to read for content, which is difficult for some kids.

The format of teaching fifth grade social studies is changing into the 3C format: College, Career, and Civic Life. The objectives of this format are to a) enhance the rigor of the social studies disciplines; b) build critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills to become engaged citizens; and c) align academic programs to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.

Grade 6 – 8 curriculum work was more of a reconfiguration of the curriculum rather than a change in format. With the addition of lab classes the curriculum was reviewed to better access the materials. Geography and current events will be put into the lab. Many teachers wear multiple hats in this new course configuration. Time for teachers to become more familiar with the standards and expectations will be needed. Literacy is a part of the social studies curriculum and will have to be analyzed with the Language Arts teacher.

Ms. Tolsdorf asked if there is enough professional development time for this. Ms. Gwinnell believes there is. They will be bringing in the knowledge of teachers to share with others. A group will be going for reading and writing strategies in November to then share with colleagues. Teaching of teachers to get the best benefit.

Ms. Dooley stated she heard Project O lost funding. Superintendent Fearon confirmed there were cuts at the state level. Project O is looking for foundation grants and corporate funding. There is no impact to Porter at this point.

Superintendent Fearon moved to scheduling, which is an administrative task. Time is needed for the courses to be taught all year, as opposed to the previous half-year model. Ms. Gwinnell said they

looked at a variety of factors to revamp the schedule. At the K – 4 level they wish to provide core instruction in an uninterrupted time, especially in the areas of literacy. They have developed a schedule which does this and maintains common planning time. At the middle school level they wanted to also maintain lab time. A factor in all of this was teacher certification requirements. Nobody is teaching outside of their certification area. A grade 8 English teacher may now need to pick up a grade 7 English class to balance this out.

Professional development was addressed to focus on literacy and numeracy. Instead of giving a large range of activities, PD is really focused on the two areas of change. Trainer of trainers approach will be used. Staff will receive training and come back to share training with their fellow teachers. This will be tied into the evaluation model as well. PD is part of the classroom teacher's evaluation. People are not being asked to go outside their comfort zone without support.

The schedule was quite the undertaking, especially when meeting time constraints of the school day. It will be entered in PowerSchool soon. Ms. Gwinnell reiterated common planning time for the elementary school continues through the middle school. Staff may meet more often if they choose, i.e., during their personal plan time.

Ms. Doyle asked if any teachers in the middle school are assigned to teach subjects they have not before. Yes, Ms. Gwinnell answered, two teachers are impacted. A sixth grade Language Arts teacher is now teaching social studies. A teacher who was moved from Tech to math is now to teach science. All have been contacted and are aware of their assignment and their feedback was used when creating the schedule.

Chairman Lent asked if there would be a presentation to the public, similar to the one done last year. Ms. Gwinnell said it would most likely be done around Open House time. In the interim information about teacher moves will be included in the newsletter. This will inform parents that a teacher who formerly taught fifth and sixth grade science will only be teaching fifth grade science this year, as an example. It is more of a reconfiguration.

Ms. Gwinnell was thanked for her presentation. Ms. Tolsdorf stated she is pleased with the changes and appreciates the flexibility demonstrated by staff. While not wanting to micromanage, she would prefer more advance notice if such a change were to be developed in the future. Ms. Gwinnell responded this was the first opportunity since it came together after the last Board of Education meeting. Based on timing, she had to contact staff prior to sharing this with others. This all had to be done quickly to be in place for the start of school. Ms. Tolsdorf asked that Ms. Gwinnell please let the Board know if they may provide support as this is implemented.

**V. Action Items (Consent)**

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to move V. Action Items (Consent) a) Approval of July 9, 2018 Board of Education Minutes to VI. Action Items (Discussion and Action).  
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED to accept items b and c.  
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

Ms. Doyle asked if the district performs exit interviews for departing staff. Yes, an administrator is assigned to hold an exit interview. Ms. Gwinnell stated it is possible timing will not permit one to be conducted with Mrs. Breither, though she will try. Ms. Doyle thanked Ms. Gwinnell, stating she feels it is very important to hear feedback.

**VI. Action Items (Discussion and Action)**

a. Expenditure Report, 2018/2019

Superintendent Fearon clarified this is actually Expenditure Report for 2017/2018. The report continues to show a surplus, which will fluctuate as there are still some bills to be paid to close out the 2017-18 school year. The surplus is approximately \$285,000 and is due to changes in three out of district placements. Two students decided to take their diplomas instead of continuing their programs, and the other student dropped out of their program. All were formally exited at Planning and Placement Team meetings.

Superintendent Fearon emphasized the fact that this surplus did not impact student programs or staffing. The funds were originally committed for out of district tuition. He recommends returning the funds to the town and request anything above \$200,000 be deposited into the non-lapsing account.

Superintendent Fearon recounted the process of how this surplus was realized. When the 2017-18 budget was developed and approved, there was uncertainty surrounding the Excess Cost Sharing formula. The town would face a deficit of approximately \$175,000 - \$200,000. A statute allowed the town to take a waiver on the ECS. The budget was substantially less than the year before. ECS monies were then authorized by the legislature back to the town and now we are under the MBR by \$175,000. The question at hand is do we restore the \$175,000? Superintendent Fearon has been working with Mark Walter and Bev Ciurylo trying to get specific answers from the state on how they will handle the waiver. He recommends returning the surplus and request any amount above \$200,000 be deposited into the non-lapsing account, which has a current balance of approximately \$110,000.

Chairman Lent confirmed a decision did not have to be made at tonight's meeting, but a general consensus will be garnered. All agree with Superintendent Fearon's recommendation.

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to approve the expenditure report 2017/2018.  
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

b. Payment of Bills

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to approve payment of bills.

Discussion:

Ms. Tolsdorf asked the time limit for bills to be received. Superintendent Fearon stated it is usually 30 days, but we allow them until we file ED001.

Ms. Doyle asked what ESY 2018 tuition is. Ms. Wilson responded it is outplaced student tuition costs.

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to approve payment of bills.  
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

c. Superintendent's Evaluation

Chairman Lent shared copies of the draft. It incorporates all comments received to date. It will be shared with Superintendent Fearon so he may make comments. Chairman Lent asked that all comments/feedback from Board members be received by this week so they may be incorporated in the final draft. Chairman Lent agreed with Ms. Tolsdorf's statement that this process should not be held up due to not receiving requested feedback.

Chairman Lent stated that, as in the past, the Superintendent's evaluation will be made available to the public once presented.

d. Approval of July 9, 2018 Board of Education Minutes

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Littlefield SECONDED, approval of July 9, 2018 Board of Education minutes.

Discussion:

Chairman Lent stated there is one correction to be made on page two, fourth paragraph, fourth sentence. It should read, "Since the school . . . . (**though** leveling off) leads . . . ." instead of the word "through." No other edits were requested.

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to amend the July 9, 2018 Board of Education minutes to read, "Since the school . . . . (**though** leveling off) leads . . . ."  
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Mr. Littlefield SECONDED, to approve the July 9, 2018 Board of Education minutes as amended.  
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

## **VII. Reports of Board Committees**

### Policy

Superintendent Fearon stated we are now signed up for Shipman and Goodwin's policy service. We continue to be a member district with CAFE for professional development activities.

### Budget

The 2019-2020 budget development starts in September. The Budget Subcommittee will meet in October to discuss priorities and factors to be considered.

### Teaching and Learning

Members thanked Ms. Gwinnell for the great presentation on the social studies and science curriculum changes and the schedule changes.

#### Ad hoc Committee on Future Needs

There is no update at this time, but discussion ensued regarding Superintendent Fearon undoubtedly bringing the new Superintendent up to speed when the transition occurs.

#### Search Committee Update

Chairman Lent stated the committee met earlier this evening. The process is moving forward on the Superintendent search. It is hoped we will have a new Superintendent in the next few months or so. Superintendent Fearon has agreed to stay for the time being.

### VIII. Welcome New Board of Education Member, Joanne Prague Doyle

Ms. Doyle stated she is delighted to be on the Board. She believes the Board of Education plays a very important role in the community. When the vacancy became available she discussed this opportunity with her family, knowing it is a very large commitment. She looks forward to being active on the Board.

### IX. Correspondence/Communications

- a. Mrs. Barbara Wilson, Congratulations on Reaching Tenure

Chairman Lent and the entire Board congratulated Mrs. Wilson for attaining tenure.

- b. Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education, Mr. Fearon's eligibility for appointment as Superintendent approved.

Chairman Lent appreciates Superintendent Fearon's acceptance to continue in the interim.

- c. Chronicle Article, "A Familiar Name on Columbia Ed Board"

Chairman Lent spoke of the article about Ms. Doyle joining the Board of Education. It was well written and complimentary. It also highlighted Ms. Vertefeuille's contributions.

### X. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings

Future meeting dates:

September 10, 2018, Monday, 6:30 p.m., BOE Building Walk-Through with New Hire Reception  
September 10, 2018, Monday, 7:30 p.m., BOE Regular Meeting

Chairman Lent asked to reschedule this meeting. Following much discussion, all agreed to reschedule the meeting to **Wednesday, September 5.**

The schedule is now:

September 5, 2018, Wednesday, 6:00 p.m., BOE Building Walk-Through with New Hire Reception  
September 5, 2018, Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., BOE Regular Meeting

**XI. Superintendent's Report**

a. Update on Summer Projects

Superintendent Fearon shared updates on the following:

Cabling project is underway. Once pulled, the connections need to be made and the old cabling will be removed. It is anticipated to be finished October 7.

LED project began a couple of days ahead of schedule. It is anticipated to be completed around August 15. A wing is being done this week. Boxes in the hallway are fixtures to be installed.

Painting is proceeding. E wing is completed. The painter is scheduled to come back to touchup the hallway in A wing.

The window project is scheduled for August 13.

A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for Wednesday afternoon for the solar project. Greenskies and town and school officials will meet. The project will not be completed by the end of summer. They expect to have everything staged and begin installing on the roof. The delay is because Eversource put a hold on all solar projects because there were so many in the pipeline. Most were municipal buildings, schools and farms. As soon as the embargo was lifted, Greenskies applied for the permit.

Mike is working on the trim in the balcony. Stairs and door frames are done. Trim around the base is done. Dalene Flooring will do the tiles and treads for the stairs. Mike will do the counter space on the balcony. Railing is up. The project is expected to be done at the end of August/beginning of September.

b. Enrollment 2018-19

Enrollment is running ahead of what was projected. 412 students were projected and there are 430 actual students to date.

Ms. Gwinnell stated that if she is in the office at the time a family registers, she speaks with them. Some of the students being registered are current residents and the children are being re-enrolled in Porter from charter and/or private schools. Superintendent Fearon said the Board's decision to have a third kindergarten and third grade 2 position was good.

Members discussed construction in town and the impact it is having on enrollment. While enrollment is not expected to return to its highest level, it is no longer expected to decline. The demographer used by the district has done a good job, but projections should be conducted every five years or so for best results.

**XII. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items**

Chairman Lent stated the budget will be developed starting October.

Policy Committee will get information from Shipman and Goodwin. They will receive vetted policies specific for Columbia. The Board can then edit them as necessary, but will not have to develop them from scratch.

**XIII. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks**

Ms. Doyle reflected on the horrific condition of the school grounds. Superintendent Fearon stated the grounds are scheduled to get done this month. Discussion is happening with a contractor to do the school and municipal grounds three times a year – spring, summer and winter clean-up.

Ms. Dooley asked the status of applications for the music teacher position. Superintendent Fearon said there are already six applications received. Ms. Gwinnell stated she is confident the position will be readily filled. If necessary, she will arrange for substitute coverage at the start of school. Chairman Lent wants to send Mrs. Breither a thank you for her nine years of service as a music teacher.

Superintendent Fearon stated he invited Ms. Vertefeuille to the next Board meeting.

**XIV. Motion to Move to Executive Session to Discuss Non-Certified Negotiations**

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to move to executive session to discuss non-certified negotiations and to include Superintendent Fearon in this discussion.

MOTION CARRIES 7:0

Chairman Lent moved to executive session at 9:14 p.m.

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to exit from executive session.

MOTION CARRIES 7:0

The Board exited executive session at 9:56 p.m.

Mr. Littlefield MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to adjourn.

MOTION CARRIES 7:0

The Board adjourned at 9:57 p.m.