

DRAFT
Minutes
Regular Board of Education Meeting
November 4, 2019
7:30 p.m.

Board Members Present: James Chakulski, Jr., David Crim, Chairman Christopher Lent, Michael Maziarz, Joseph Napolitano and Kathy Tolsdorf
Board Member Absent: Lynette Dooley

Others Present:

Karen Caputo, Superintendent Maria Geryk, Alyssa Gwinnell, Lauren McLeish, Kevin Quinn, Rachel Riendeau, Kate Rutledge and Barbara Wilson

I. Call to Order

Chairman Lent called the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Lent said, given the nature of the presentations, he requested the Board move the Comments from Audience until after they are given. This will allow audience members to ask questions about the information presented.

III. Presentations

SBAC Presentation – Review of Spring 2019 Test Results

Principal Gwinnell presented results of the spring 2019 Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC) testing. She said Columbia School District is a highly regarded district which provides a safe environment where a commitment to innovation, creativity and academic excellence ensures that learning comes first. She emphasized these points: Students master comprehensive skills and apply what they learn. Students prepare for a lifetime of learning and engage in positive personal development. Parents are active participants in their student’s education. The district values self-discipline, respect and integrity as essential to creating an effective learning environment.

A prominent core value of Columbia School District is having high expectations and a commitment to continuous improvement. Ms. Gwinnell said this may be the most important statement tonight because we focus on what we have done, and what we can do, to improve. Goal areas are strengthening and norm a model of high quality instruction. Evidence-based academic interventions was highlighted. Additionally, strengthening and aligning programing and interventions to improve school-wide and classroom climate, which provides correct and appropriate interventions for our students.

The SBAC was given last spring. It is meant to help make decisions on programing. A score of 3 is goal. Ms. Gwinnell spoke of vertical scale scores for each level, which is used to determine growth rate and percentage achieved, which provides a more accurate indicator for individual growth expectations.

When reviewing the percentage of students achieving ELA levels 1–4 by grade, she pointed out our student enrollment is such that each student is about 2- 3 percentage points. Two students equal

DRAFT

BOE MEETING MINUTES 11/4/19

Page 2 of 7

almost six percent. Therefore, while a percentage may seem like a large percentage, it is not a large number of students.

Ms. Gwinnell is proud that every single cohort increased. Grade 3 has 78.4% of students at Level 3, a significant increase over last year's 29%. Great increases were also noted in grades 5, 7 and 8. She said ELA program changes had been made as well as benchmark changes.

Growth rate, the percentage of students meeting their respective growth target, is a new concept. The percentage of students who showed growth is very good. Growth target is determined by the state based on statistics. The percentage of students at level 3 or above shows an upward trend.

Math has been lower than English statistically. While reviewing the results, Ms. Gwinnell again stated each student equates to approximately 2-3 percentage points. For the middle school, grades 6 and 7 increased and grade 8 decreased slightly.

Ms. Gwinnell said the district is now using K-8 Ready Math, changing the benchmarking system. Among all grade levels, grades 4, 5 and 8 are below the state average of percentage of students who are at level 3 and above. She is confident the change in program will result in improved test scores. Overall, 53.9% of students showed growth in math from last year.

Mr. Crim posed a question about the decreased percentage of students who achieved the target. Ms. Rutledge this is the concern which drove some of our changes in programming. Superintendent Geryk agreed, saying this is the impetus of change. Ms. Gwinnell discussed the Ready Math program and the iReady benchmark program and how they complement each other to achieve results. The trend shows if the way we are teaching our programs is working or if we need to make changes.

This is the first year we are receiving results on Science. Both grades 5 and 8, the only grades tested in this area, had a higher percentage of students who performed at level 3 and above.

Continued changes are being made. We have hired Teaching and Learning Specialist Dr. Kate Cunningham Rutledge, to facilitate alignment of curriculum and implementation of programs. Ms. Gwinnell spoke of the addition of PLC meetings for curriculum and instructional strategies.

Ms. Tolsdorf said she is very pleased to see grade 5 science scores. Students did well. Superintendent Geryk agreed, also stating these results are a snapshot, a moment in time, of how our students performed on a test. However, she said children are not scores. It is important to remember we don't always have the formal measurements for how our students are developing in different ways. Chairman Lent agreed, thanking Ms. Gwinnell for her comprehensive presentation.

Continuous Improvement Plan

Superintendent Geryk presented on the draft Continuous Improvement Plan, 2019-2024. She opened by stating the challenge of sustaining the change process is in the challenge of creating a critical mass of educators within the school who are willing and able to function as change agents. Creating this critical mass requires attention to the three Cs of sustaining a change initiative – communication, collaboration and culture. She reviewed the four goal areas, which will bring us from where we are to where we want to be, which involves continuous improvement. This is a five-year plan that will be updated each year. Effecting systemic change takes time.

DRAFT

BOE MEETING MINUTES 11/4/19

Page 3 of 7

Superintendent Geryk provided Board members some resources she finds informative, including “Conditions for School Effectiveness Self-Assessment” and “Introduction to the District Self-Assessment Tool.” She will seek input from families and staff on a draft brochure also provided to the Board members.

Our students are unique individuals with unique needs and unique strengths. We will address student specific needs as well as school-wide trends.

There are four goal areas:

Goal Area 1 – Strengthen the structures and systems necessary to support an embedded professional development model.

Goal Area 2 – Strengthen and align a model of high quality instruction, standards based curriculum, assessment and interventions.

Goal Area 3 – Create a comprehensive framework to ensure a positive learning environment and to improve school-wide climate.

Goal Area 4 – Strengthen communication among and between staff, families and broader community.

A graphic showing Academic and Non Academic Components was shared. In summary, Superintendent Geryk said it displays how classroom teaching is the most important factor to student learning. We have to become a learning organization for this to work well. The Professional Learning Community structure was shared. It displayed meetings that now occur weekly and monthly and the staff involved. Ms. Gwinnell provided more in-depth examples and information on this model.

Feedback procedures, to refine use of observational methods to support teacher improvement, was shared. There are job-embedded professional development to cultivate and sustain shared fundamental instructional practices: walk through, classroom visits, instructional rounds, PLCs, formal observations and informal observations.

Dr. Rutledge spoke more in-depth to goal areas 1 and 2, Ms. Caputo spoke about goal area 3, and Ms. Gwinnell spoke about goal area 4.

Chairman Lent thanked Superintendent Geryk and the administrative team for their presentation. This is a well thought out plan.

IV. 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.

Special education teacher Ms. McLeish thanked Superintendent Geryk and the administrative team for how this is being implemented. She is impressed with this plan and looks forward to the district reaping the benefits from the efforts of all involved.

V. Action Items (Consent)

A consent agenda is presented by the Chairman at the beginning of the meeting. Items may be removed from the consent agenda on the request of any one member. Items not removed may be

DRAFT

BOE MEETING MINUTES 11/4/19

Page 4 of 7

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.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Mr. Crim. SECONDED to re-word item h. to read “Motion to ratify the Agreement between the Columbia Board of Education and Columbia Teachers’ Association 2020-2023 and to authorize Board Chairman to sign;” move item f. Approval of 2020-2021 Yearly Meeting Schedule; and add item i. Approval of the Superintendent’s residency recommendation to Section V. Action Items (Discussion and Action).

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to approve items a. Approval of September 9, 2019, Regular Board of Education Minutes; b. Payment of Bills; c. Approval of 2018/19 Final Year End Transfers; d. Recommendation of Award of Snow Removal Bid to Wrana Excavation; e. Approval of Use of Property for Occum Monument and Garden; g. Approval of Retirement, Dolores Marcous, Grade 7/8 Teacher, effective Dec. 1, 2019; and h. Motion to ratify the Agreement between the Columbia Board of Education and Columbia Teachers’ Association 2020-2023 and to authorize Board Chairman to sign

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

Superintendent Geryk wished Ms. Marcous well in her upcoming retirement. She will be missed by students and staff alike. She also thanked the negotiating team for the Teachers’ Association. She believes they came to a fair and equitable agreement.

V. Action Items (Discussion and Action)

a. Discussion – Board of Education Goals

Chairman Lent has draft changes for their goals. He would like to continue the discussion already started on this matter. He would also like to get Mr. Caruso to again assist the Board in their self-assessment. He proposes the Board have a workshop to help them synthesize what they have and look at what was presented tonight.

It was agreed Superintendent Geryk would schedule a quasi-retreat to help the Board develop half a dozen goals to help the Board move forward. Mr. Maziarz and the other members agreed such focus would be beneficial.

b. Discussion – Appointment of Board of Education Member as CABE Delegate

Considerable discussion on this matter ensued, including issues CABE may address. It was agreed Ms. Tolsdorf would be the CABE delegate from Columbia.

c. Approval of 2020-2021 Yearly Meeting Schedule

Chairman Lent said there is one correction: Change *Monday*, September 1, 2020 to *Tuesday*, September 1, 2020.

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Maziarz SECONDED to revise the 2020-2021 meeting schedule from Monday, September 1, 2020 to *Tuesday*, September 1, 2020.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

VII. Reports of Board Committees

Policy

This subcommittee met earlier this evening. There was initial review of weapons and tobacco products in school policies.

Budget

This subcommittee also met earlier tonight. Bills were reviewed. Current status is on track. Last year's budget is in the process of an annual audit. Preparation of next year's budget is in the preliminary stages. Superintendent Geryk is working on it and will present to the Board in the near future. Additionally, there will be a tri-board meeting soon. This is where the Board of Education meets with FIPAC and the Board of Selectmen to discuss the upcoming budget process and procedures.

Teaching and Learning

Two very comprehensive presentations were made tonight.

Ad hoc Committee on Future Needs

Results of the high school negotiations are anticipated to be presented to the Board in January.

Communications and Community Outreach

Superintendent Geryk said they have not met as a group. We are still waiting on the web site. We should have a better sense of how that is going in the next day or so. Brochures will be sent out for feedback.

VIII. Correspondence/Communications

- a. September 20, 2019, Letter from Town Finance Department

This addresses the fact that the Town of Columbia Board of Selectmen and Board of Education have decided to terminate the services with AXA Equitable for the retirement plans 457b, 401a and 403b.

- b. September 23, 2019, Letter from EASTCONN

Chairman Lent stated EASTCONN is encouraging us to participate on the EASTCONN Board of Directors because we are a member school district.

- c. September 22, 2019, The Chronicle, Contest Winner Merges Nature and Art

Members joined Superintendent Geryk in recognizing Audrey Merrill, who was the subject of this article.

DRAFT

BOE MEETING MINUTES 11/4/19

Page 6 of 7

- d. September 30, 2019, The Chronicle, New Approach to Discipline at Porter

This article's sub-headline is "School develops policy based on positive support." This is an article on the behavioral approaches being undertaken.

- e. September 24, 2019, The Chronicle, Smarter Balanced Tests, Results are Mixed for Local Schools

A presentation on our SBAC results was given tonight.

- f. Enrollment Updates

There is very little difference from last month.

- g. CABE/CAPSS Convention November 15-16, 2019

Chairman Lent said this is a very beneficial opportunity. Superintendent Geryk plans to attend the Friday session.

- h. 2019 New Board Member and Leadership Conference December 10, 2019

IX. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings

- a. Future Meeting Dates:

Monday, December 2, 2019, 6:30 p.m. Subcommittee Meetings, H.W. Porter Conference Room

Monday, December 2, 2019, 7:30 p.m., BOE Regular Meeting, H.W. Porter Cafetorium

X. Superintendent's Report

There is no additional Superintendent's Report tonight.

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

No one wished to be heard.

XII. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items

Retreat on goals will be set with Nick Caruso.

An IT security assessment report will be presented to the Board in the near future.

XIII. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

Mr. Chakulski, Jr., shared with the group how easy and user-friendly CABE's app is. He was able to listen to one of their podcasts during his lunch break. He highly recommends this app to others. He also mentioned the successes of Columbia's athletes in the area of running.

DRAFT

BOE MEETING MINUTES 11/4/19

Page 7 of 7

Ms. Tolsdorf thanked Mrs. Marcous for her many years of service to the students of Columbia. She also thanked Ms. Gwinnell for her presentation on SBAC scores. She would like to look at the comparison of Columbia to other communities. It is not the primary goal to compare yourself to others, but it is one way of seeing how we measure up. Emphasis should be on improvement. When our kids go off into the world, they should be ready.

Mr. Maziarz said this is one measure we use. He looks at the work teachers are putting in. The day to day work that is going on in the classroom is key. That is where the real change is happening. The level of work and care teachers are putting in here is outstanding.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. agreed the groundwork we are seeing is great.

Chairman Lent also agreed. He thanked the teams working on the Continuous Improvement Plan. He looks forward to learning more about it and seeing the benefits realized by our students. Chairman Lent thanked the Teachers' Association for what he believes is a fair and reasonable contract for the next three years.

XI. Adjournment

Mr. Crim MOVED, Mr. Maziarz. SECONDED to adjourn.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

The Board adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Lent, Chairman