

WEST NORTHFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT 31
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Per SP2135 the District 31 Board Meeting was held electronically and in-person in the
Field Learning Center, 3131 Techny Road, Northbrook, Illinois
February 25, 2021 at 7:00PM

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Board of Education was called to order by Vice President Laura Greenberg at 7:00pm.

ROLL CALL

Board Members:

Present:	Laura Greenberg	Virtual
	Robert Resis	Virtual
	Jeffrey Steres	In-Person
	Maria Vasilopoulos	Virtual
	Nancy Hammer	Virtual

Absent: Melissa Choo Valentinas
 Daphne Frank

District Administration:

Present:

Dr. Erin K. Murphy, Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Catherine M. Lauria, Asst Superintendent Finance & Operations/CSBO

Virtual:

Dr. April Miller, Principal Field Middle School
Mrs. Shaton Wolverton, Principal Winkelman School
Dr. Janine Gruhn, Director of Special Education
Mrs. Becky Mathison, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction

Arlana Bedard, Director of Consortium for Education Change
Terri Carman, Consultant of Consortium for Education Change
Julie Stone, K-8 Math Coordinator
Jacquelyn Le-Mon, 5th -8th Social Studies and ELA Coordinator
Leslie Redmond, K-4 Social Studies and ELA Coordinator
dismissed after the Curriculum Audit.

A quorum of the Board was confirmed by Vice President, Laura Greenberg

COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE

None

PRESENTATION

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Becky Mathison and the staff from the Consortium for Education Change (CEC) presented the curriculum audit results wherein they stated the following: [Curriculum and Instruction Link](#)

- Summarized the Audit Process
 - Rating Rubric which shows an improvement process.
 - Continuum of progress and growth for each of the different areas that are included in the audit. It shows a continuous improvement process and it starts with an awareness level and moves up to sustainability level where practice has become part of the school and the district culture.
- Reviewed the finding the three main focuses on learning: Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction
 - Curriculum - What is being taught and how it is planned out.
 - Strengths of the district for curriculum:
 - The district is in the process of building a standards-based written curriculum that will eventually be in place for all grade levels with unit plans, pacing guides and common assessments.
 - Curriculum coordinators have been hired to support teachers and students and are developing curriculum maps.
 - Some grade level teachers (and co-curricular teachers) feel good about the work they have done. These teachers report that their instruction is more aligned with their grade level teams.
 - Teachers in the grade levels where the maps are further along believe they flow better and are more user-friendly than the old ones. It is easier for those not teaching the particular subject/grade level to see what is being taught.
 - Arts Plus/Co-Curricular/Algebra classes that are taught by the same teacher over multiple years seem to have spiraling curricula that build upon previously taught concepts.
 - Some teachers communicate frequently through e-newsletters, including the use of recordings to show parents what and how their children are learning.
 - Staff members recognize that the district's curriculum development process is heading in the right direction with qualified support personnel in place and it's just going to be a matter of time.

- Opportunities for the district for curriculum:
 - There is little to no consistency with how the Curriculum Maps are designed and vary between subjects and grade levels.
 - There isn't a cyclical process in place for curriculum review.
 - Curriculum Maps/Units of Study aren't formally shared between grade levels and across schools so vertical alignments can take place.
 - Specialists find it challenging to push into classrooms when they don't know what the teacher is doing and each teacher is at a different place teaching different things.
 - It can be challenging for parents to know what students are doing in certain subjects.
- Assessment - What formal assessments are given and what in house formative assessments are being used and how are these results being used to adjust teaching and planning?
 - Strengths of System Assessment
 - Students report that their teachers make sure everyone understands the concepts before taking the test.
 - Some teachers use a variety of methods including study guides, polling of the students, reteaching of the whole class or in small groups to determine what students know.
 - Prior to COVID, there were scheduled Data Days and there was an on-going effort to teach teachers how to interpret data.
 - Prior to COVID, practices were in place to use assessment data to identify students who needed additional supports or enrichment.
 - Opportunities of System Assessment:
 - There are limited to no common assessments or individual goal setting.
 - General assessment data is used for initial placement but ongoing formative assessments are not used throughout each unit of instruction.
 - There are limited conversations between teachers and with students about their assessment results and growth targets.
 - Parents understand letter grades on the report cards more than the standards-based descriptions. They believe that almost all students receive "Meets Expectations".
- Instruction - Master teachers design lessons and adjust them as needed so students can learn and grow in that year.
 - Strengths: Instruction
 - Prior to COVID, students were placed into higher level/fast paced classes for math in the elementary school.
 - Some students use online resources such as Khan

Mappers that correlate to their MAP scores for extra help.

- There are many physical resources available.
- Students and parents expressed positive feelings toward the teachers and school.
- Curriculum coordinators meet with grade level teams to improve instruction and work on curriculum and assessment.
- Meetings are held at the beginning of the year where individual “IEPs -at-a-glance” are shared to help co-curricular/Arts Plus teams learn about students who have IEPs or 504s.
- Prior to COVID interventionists were used to support student’s learning in the classroom through a push-in/co-teaching model.
- An awards program is in place at the middle school (LEAF) to recognize a student's academic growth, effort, and/or leadership accomplishments.
- Some teachers believe their student’s scores went up as a result of team collaboration and analysis of assessment data to create student goals and adjust instruction.
- The Rotation Schedule of teaching the same group of students in art, music, STEM and Family/Consumer science for a consecutive number of days/weeks seems to help with instructional continuity and relationship building.
- Opportunities for Instruction
 - Differentiation of instruction is not systematic to address the needs of all learners and the understanding of whose responsibility it is, varies between teachers.
 - There are limited enrichment opportunities within classes.
 - It is difficult for teachers to plan together since the curriculum maps, pacing guides, common units or assessments are not defined for all grade levels.
 - Specialists do not have collaboration/common planning time with classroom teachers so it is difficult to support instruction effectively and or efficiently.
- Focus on Learning: Support
 - Opportunities: Support
 - Time is not designated for all teams of teachers to work with the curriculum coordinators to develop curriculum and assignments.
 - Initial training is given for new programs or resources but ongoing systemic support for curriculum, standards and assessment does not appear to be present.
 - The district schedules times for professional learning teams to meet but most teachers don’t meet in addition to that time to support grade-wide needs, review data, plan instructions, etc.
- Possible Next Steps:
 - Curriculum Work:

- Identify a common Curriculum Map template to use across subject areas. Include common vocabulary, identified assessments, differentiation strategies for struggling/advanced students for each grade level/subject area.
- Create an on-going schedule for implementing a cyclical process for curriculum review. Prioritize the content areas by need.
- Clarify and/or examine systems for identifying and providing Tier 2 and 3 students with research-based interventions as part of the MTSS in the district.
- Consider adding a goal-setting process for students to select attainable targets determined by their individual assessment data and for teachers/schools based on group assessment data.
- Look into offering/expanding upon summer intervention and enrichment programs for students.
- Social Emotional Learning:
- Three Recurring Themes:
 - Consistency
 - Constancy - rebuilding trust and avoiding the idea that this will pass.
 - Communication - stability. In the past there has been a revolving door with administrators. The audit team commended the work of this new team.

Superintendent Erin Murphy summarized the initial plans, proposals and information for FY 2021-2022: [Planning for 2021-2022](#)

- Recognition that unlike many districts, the conversations are not about how to reopen schools this year. Instead we are planning for 2021-2022 six months early.
- Review
 - Field and Winkelman have been open to the in person learning since the first day of school, minus a brief adaptive pause.
 - Concurrent and consistent remote learning for families.
 - Staff has been a key component of our success. Parents showed true grace to support students through the oddness of this year. For the most part, we accomplished this by reallocating staff, adjusting schedules and pausing some programs.
- Key component to the success was our ability to follow 6-feet social distancing. It helped prevent school spread of COVID 19 and keep students and staff safe.
- School Year Planning Goals
 - 2020-2021
 - Create a daily, safe in-school option for students.
 - Create a remote option for all students who prefer to stay home.
 - 2021-2022
 - Ensure that we continue to have SAFE daily in-person instruction with remote options (if required).
 - Begin returning to “normal” programming.
 - Strengthen academic and social emotion support and programming.

- Begin looking beyond the COVID years and begin building for the future.
- Remote Learning Conundrum:
 - Need commitments from parents as to whether they prefer to be remote or in person.
 - People need to know information:
 - Class sizes
 - Safety protocols
 - Enrollment information makes better plans and schedules that can be developed. However, parents want/need that information to make decisions.
 - Unsure of how guidelines may evolve.
 - Schedules cannot be made until we know our sections and staffing.
- Remote Learning Questions:
 - Will it be required in Illinois or is it a choice that the District 31 Board can Make?
 - What will remote learning look like?
 - When will we know what it looks like?
 - How long is the remote learning commitment?
- What does this mean for Winkelman:
 - Restore Accelerated Programing
 - Restore Elementary Intervention Position
 - Restore EL Program
 - Assume Management of EC and 3-5 SEL
 - Determine Classroom Sections
 - Impact of Increasing Sections
- Winkelman decisions:
 - Do we restore programs?
 - What sectioning guidelines do we use?
- Three possible timelines for Winkelman sectioning decisions:
 - Make a decision to plan for six feet social distancing now - or
 - Plan for Normal - or
 - Delayed Decision Until April/May when we get more information- or
- Field decisions:
 - Social Distancing
 - Additional Section of ELA/SS/SCI
 - Additional Sections of Spanish
 - Bring Back Math Minutes
- Timeline challenges:
 - Big financial commitment if guidance changes to less than six feet.
 - Ultimately would prefer to go back to normal staffing/scheduling.
 - Math positions are extraordinarily difficult to find as well as Spanish.
 - Creating a schedule that will work is time consuming.
- Considering cost:
 - Worst case scenario 14-16 additional FTE at a cost \$1,122,130 - \$1,282,433 assuming \$65K Salary plus benefits.
 - Includes restoration of programs, absolute needs, and

- accommodating small class sizes.
 - Adjusted timeline may reduce “worst” case scenario.
 - We did not have the worst case scenario in FY21.
 - District Needs:
 - Reorganize Technology Department
 - Manager of Infrastructure
 - Managing devices, security, repairs, copiers, printers, phone, internet, etc.
 - Manager of Data Systems and Reporting
 - Managing rostering, assessment management, Skyward, CIS/state reporting, etc
 - Instructional Technology Coordinator
 - Help teachers effectively use tech, help with integrating technology, professional development, etc.
 - How do we pay for this change:
 - Eliminate other positions in order to create a cost neutral scenario
 - Field Secretary position
 - Technology Clerk position
 - Stipend work for current data management overage
 - Science lab support position

Superintendent Erin Murphy stated that some questions need to be answered this evening:

- Do we reinstate programming to normalize schedules moving forward?
 - Board agreed to reinstate Winkelman Programs
 - Board approved one additional Field Math teacher and will delay decisions on the other two until a later time
- Do we plan for social distancing?
 - Board agreed to the delayed decision making that would result in fewer RIF's but would not move to the process of hiring new classroom teachers at this time.
- Do we move forward with technology reconfiguration plan (with science coordinator)
 - The Board agreed to move forward with the cost neutral plan.

CONSENT AGENDA

Member Jeffrey Steres made a motion to approve items A-K of the consent agenda.

Member Maria Vasilopoulos seconded the motion.

Final Resolution:

Aye: Maria Vasilopoulos, Robert Resis, Jeffrey Steres, Laura Greenberg, Nancy Hammer

Nay: None.

The motion passed 5:0.

Member Maria Vasilopoulos made a motion to approve the following policies:

1. [Student Activities and Fiduciary Funds](#)
2. [Accounting and Audits](#)
3. [Student Fundraising Activities](#)
4. [Student Testing and Assessment Program](#)
5. [Extracurricular Activities](#)
6. [Health, Eye and Dental Examinations; Immunizations, and Exclusion of Students](#)
7. [Substitute Teachers](#)

Member Nancy Hammer seconded the motion.

Final Resolution:

Aye: Maria Vasilopoulos, Robert Resis, Jeffrey Steres, Laura Greenberg, Nancy Hammer

Nay: None.

The motion passed 5:0.

ACTION ITEMS

Member Nancy Hammer second the motion.

Final Resolution:

Aye: Maria Vasilopoulos, Robert Resis, Jeffrey Steres, Laura Greenberg, Nancy Hammer

Nay: None.

The motion passed 5:0.

Superintendent Erin Murphy read the Resolution Recognizing the District 31 staff.

Member Robert Resis made a motion to approve the resolution recognizing the District 31 staff. Member Jeffrey Steres seconded the motion.

Final Resolution:

Aye: Robert Resis, Maria Vasilopoulos, Jeffrey Steres, Laura Greenberg, Nancy Hammer

Nay: None.

The motion passed 5:0.

Assistant Superintendent Catherine Lauria summarized the Annual Determination of Transportation Fee Subsidy wherein she stated that it is recommended that the Board of Education approve its annual determination for the free and reduced cost of transportation services for the 2021-2022 school year. The numbers have been consistent for the last three years regarding the number of students qualifying as free or reduced. We are recommending the Board approve the same pattern of waivers as we have done for many years. Based on all round trip routes and FY21 fees, the cost of the waiver would be approximately \$66,270.

Member Maria Vasilopoulos made a motion to approve the Annual Determination of Transportation Fee Subsidy. Member Jeffrey Steres seconded the motion.

Final Resolution:

Aye: Maria Vasilopoulos, Robert Resis, Jeffrey Steres, Laura Greenberg, Nancy Hammer

Nay: None.

The motion passed 5:0.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Superintendent Erin Murphy briefly updated the Board of Education on the return to school update changes and offered updates on vaccination efforts and current travel guidelines.

[Dashboard](#)

Finance

Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, Catherine Lauria, stated that the Monthly Budget Reports for January 2021 were included in the packet, however, some comments were made:

- Treasurer's Report, which includes the Bank Reconciliation Summary, shows a cash balance, shows our fund balance, is \$13.6 million which is \$800,000 less than December, which is typical.
- The investment summary shows \$11.7 million invested and we can expect \$1,400 in interest through May. The district is taking a hit on the interest income like everyone else.
- The General Ledger Summary- We have all positive fund balances in the operating funds and the net of the funds for debt service are also positive. Capital projects show we have a balance of \$459,000 and \$183,000 left to pay for the projects we have not been billed for yet. Working cash fund balance is \$5.8 million which is post the abatement to complete capital projects.
- Monthly Budget Summary - the operating revenue received to date is similar to prior year except for working cash which is due to the interest income. The capital projects are completed so there are no longer any funds to invest from there. Refunds to taxpayers are 23% higher than last year. When the larger refund that is anticipated is returned, that is excluded from this calculation, but when counted it will result in a 35% decrease in refunds. For the nonoperating revenues, the percentages are quite different than the prior year for our capital leases and capital projects. If you look at the prior year for capital projects and excluded the \$1 million for the abatement, the percentages would be within 2 percent of each other. The expenses are also similar to prior year with the operating expenses with the exception of transportation which has been discussed. We have less with both general ed and special ed transportation due to hybrid programs instead of the students being transported to the buildings. For capital projects, we are at 33% for this year and were at 81% last year. If we make the outstanding payments as well as possible camera purchases we would be meeting the

expectations.

- The Linear Chart - The percentages show similarities with the expenses but the revenues have caught up which is due to our property tax receipts, which is a positive outcome.
- The district had one day of distributions that was a larger amount of refunds which was \$88,000 so will check into this with the county. For February, we are scheduled to receive over \$2.3 million in tax receipts
- P-Card statement is available for review.

Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, Catherine Lauria, reviewed the 2019-2020 Audit Review: [2019-2020 Audit Review](#)

- First Four Pages:
 - Independent auditor's review noting their responsibility to assure that the statements are free from material misstatement which was the case. They further their opinion stating that District 31 financial statements are fairly represented in all material aspects. When this happens it results in unmodified opinion which means no changes for FY20. There were also no disagreements with management. Page two has a section on emphasis on the matter of \$858,306. This is in regards to the construction in FY19, which was adjusted (restated) to more accurately reflect construction in progress. This changed what we considered to be a current year addition, to an addition to the prior year. In our books, it is paid and recorded on a cash basis for FY20 but the construction in progress for audit is more accurately reflected in prior year due to the modified accrual process. To avoid this in the future years, a minor change in procedures for capital projects has been implemented by accumulating invoices for a longer period of time in the summer to determine the percentage considered construction in progress as well as the percentage considered as an addition for the next year.
- Page 5:
 - Management discussion Analysis (MD&A) is developed by both the district and the auditors. This part provides financial highlights from the information presented throughout the report.
 - General revenues, which are considered income and are in our ed fund and working cash fund, increased by \$462,000 from the prior year or 2.5%.
 - The expenses related to instruction increased by 8% while most of the other larger operating expenses declined.
 - Our principal balance for long term debt remaining at year end is \$11.8 million.
 - Tax rate went down from 2.8% to 2.57% due mainly to 12.8% increase in the equalized assessed valuation of the property tax base.
 - Operating costs by pupil declined by 6.3% and the tuition charge per pupil declined 5.7% over the prior year.

- Page 7:

- Example Overview of the Financial Statement
 - District-Wide Financial Analysis reports that the Governmental Activities, cash and investments decreased from \$21,907 as of June 30, 2019 to \$15,053. This was anticipated because this was money that was spent in FY20.
- Page 13:
 - Factors bearing on the District's Future
 - This is an important piece for investors to review since they have an interest in our district from the bonds purchased.
 - COVID-19 pandemic year has created unprecedented challenges. The cost of resources were able to partially offset by the funds provided through the Federal CARES Act.
 - Changes to revenues from various sources - local, state, and federal, that we also anticipated due to the economy. This also includes information on anticipating what the CPI may be this year based on economic conditions of the businesses.
 - Efforts to minimize and succeed with minimizing the financial impact of large property tax appeals, which remains a priority for the District. We have had positive growth in the tax base property developments. We have done a comprehensive review to address our buildings and grounds as well as the strategy on how we made those improvements.
 - Also a section on property developments.
- Page 17:
 - Statement of Activities:
 - Under expenses, it has the governmental activity which shows over \$27 million, there is a \$7.3 million dollar state retirement contribution which has to be included in the audit but it is an in and out amount. It is not included in our books. We never receive the money. This has to be completed in the audit piece.
 - The net position at the end of the was a slight decline of 1.2% from the prior year.
- Page 45:
 - Pension liability for TRS which is the pension plan for certified/licensed staff, decreased from last year by \$39,000 to \$884,000. State's proportionate share shows a decrease by \$296,000 to almost \$63,000,000. Also reported was a few of the changes made by TRS to begin reducing this liability.
- Page 55:
 - IMRF is the pension plan for non-certified employees and is reported on a calendar year. In December of 2018, the net pension liability was \$1.167 million and by December 2019 the liability decreased to \$385,000. This was the exact opposite the year before. Some of the calculations are estimated based on calculations and the returns they are receiving at the time.

- Page 125:
 - Shows the last five years of tax levies. It shows the assessed valuation amounts (EAV) for the last five years. It reflects that when the assessed valuation goes up our tax rates go down.
- Page 126:
 - This is a calculation for operating costs per pupil. FY20 operating costs went down from \$19,790 to \$18,534 and our tuition charge per pupil also decreased.

BOARD REPORTS

The Education Foundation:

- They are working on a "Walk the School" fundraiser for this spring at Winkelman. Heather Bordley and Pam Marlantis are leading the organization effort and working with the administration on the structure and time of the event and will introduce the idea at the March Board meeting.
- There are funds left to have a teacher and staff application gift which is a joint effort from the Foundation and PTO.
- The next Zoom meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 9th at 7:30pm.

PTO

- New Spirit wear will be on sale through Tuesday
- Art To Remember is underway. Hang on to drawings and paintings to be on the lookout for the instructions on uploading your artwork to create your memorabilia.
- The Restaurant Fundraisers will continue and will be at Grill house, Tuesday March 7th and Noodles and Company in the Glen on Tuesday March 30th.

NSSSED

- Member Jeffrey Steres stated that from their January meeting wherein there was a lot of discussion around the Northfield Township taking back some of our Early Childhood Programs. At this last NSSSED meeting, they did not discuss that at all. NSSSED is concerned about their deficit spending for the 2020-2021 impact larger due to COVID. They stated that they are not eligible for the CARES funds. They are trying to recoup that wherein they are trying to have a percentage added to the bill of member districts to cover Covid costs and lost revenue due to low enrollment.
- Superintendent Erin Murphy stated that the superintendents were shocked. Essentially this was a 2.5% COVID tax and a 3.5% percent for declining enrollments to recoup that loss. It would be about a 6% tax and for District31 it estimates to be about \$150,000. We would argue that we have not decreased our usage of NSSSED. We also have provided PPE to the NSSSED employees that work at District31. The Northfield Township Superintendents met with Superintendent Kurt Schneider from NSSSED wherein they stated that NSSSED needs to use their reserves. Superintendent Kurt Schneider stated that by using the reserves, it would make them low in the

summer and districts may not pay their bills on time in the summer. Superintendent Erin Murphy stated that if they tell us we need to pay our bills on time in the summer, we need to make sure those bills are accurate so we need to review in length due to past errors on them. The Superintendents requested another meeting but there is not a meeting on the calendar. The Northfield Township Superintendents do not approve of this tax increase and Member Jeffrey Steres and Superintendent Erin Murphy will be prepared to express that for District 31.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Superintendent Erin Murphy reported enrollment.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

- Jonathan Fagg, WLS-TV - Enrollment Information August through mid February

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Summer School Plans

Superintendent Erin Murphy stated that it is the intent to offer summer programming this year. We traditionally have not had a summer school program other than the Special Education extended school year that NSSD runs. This is a recommendation in the curriculum audit but we have already started the process of discussion. Some discussion has been:

- This would be an at risk program for our incoming kindergarteners through incoming 8th graders focusing on ELA and Math.
- Would be using winter aims and winter maps scores, teacher feedback, attendance from the school year, possible retention status for the middle school to determine who would be eligible to attend.
- Class sizes would be small groups of 5 to 8 students maximum of 10.
- Busing provided
- Anticipation of 100 students would be invited which would be 25 teachers at a cost of \$3,000 teachers.
- No charge to families.
- Total cost would be \$100,000 inclusive of the teachers salary. This could be an overestimating because we do not have the exact amount of participation.
- Most of the cost can be absorbed by some grants.
- Buses and teacher salary can be absorbed through CARES funds.
- Need to recruit staff.
- Spend March analyzing the data so that we can invite students and get commitments by April.

After further discussion the Board of Education requested to also look into having a bootcamp for certain levels of students along with creating the summer school programming.

Proposed FY22 School Calendar for March Approval

Superintendent Erin Murphy reviewed the draft proposal for the FY22 school calendar. After further discussion the Board of Education wants Superintendent Erin Murphy to provide for the next draft the following:

- Better understand the number of education days from the last three years.
- What it would look like with half days versus full days.

Possible April Board Meeting Adjustment

Superintendent Erin Murphy stated that since the Board of Education meeting calendar was created the school calendar has been amended multiple times in response to this COVID defining year. Thus, in order to be in legal compliance, an adjustment of the Board of Education dates were proposed. After further discussion, the Board of Education moved the regular meeting of the Board of Education to April 15, 2021 instead of April 22. The reorganization would be April 28, 2021 at 8pm.

MOVE INTO CLOSED

Member Jeffrey Steres made a motion to move into closed session to consider pending litigation, collective bargaining, and the appointment, employment, compensation, or performance of specific employees and school security matters. Member Nancy Hammer seconded the motion.

Final Resolution:

Aye: Robert Resis, Nancy Hammer, Maria Vasilopoulos, Laura Greenberg, Jeffrey Steres

Nay: None.

The motion passed 5:0.

ADJOURN

Member Robert Resis made a motion to adjourn. Member Jeffrey Steres seconded the motion.

Final Resolution:

Aye: Maria Vasilopoulos, Robert Resis, Jeffrey Steres, Laura Greenberg, Nancy Hammer

Nay: None.

The motion passed 5:0 at 10:53pm.

Board President

Board Secretary

Date