

An open work session of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held in the Board Room, 625 Plum Street, Vineland, New Jersey, Wednesday, February 5, 2014 at 7:00 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Medio presiding and the following members present: Mr. Baruffi, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. English, Mr. Jennings, Ms. Morello, Ms. Rios and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: None.

Also present: Dr. Gruccio, Superintendent, Mr. Frey, Assistant Superintendent, Mrs. Polof, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Schectman, Board Secretary, Dr. Rossi, Executive Director of Personnel, Mr. DeSanto, Board Solicitor, press and public. Absent: None.

Mr. Medio announced that in compliance with the New Jersey meeting law commonly referred to as “The Sunshine Law,” the Vineland Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be sent to the following, announcing time and place thereof, agenda, etc.: The Daily Journal, the Atlantic City Press, Clerk - City of Vineland, and Administrative Office Public Bulletin Board.

Flag salute: Students from Petway Elementary School led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Special

Presentations: Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB Report), Suspension Report, Cunningham Alternative School Report/Average Daily Attendance – Mrs. Polof presented the report.

Mr. English asked if we continue to give professional development to staff members and administration on this. Mrs. Polof said yes we are required to do this annually.

Comments by
Board Solicitor:

None.

Public Comments:

David Downs

Mr. Downs said his grandson has been impacted by bullying. He expressed his concern in regards to a comment made by a school nurse in regards to his grandson being overweight.

William Shorter

Mr. Shorter discussed the Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) Report that was filed on behalf of his daughter, Chloe, a student at Wallace Middle School.

Carolece Shorter

Ms. Shorter expressed her concern for her son and his family in regards to a bullying incident that happened to her granddaughter at Wallace Middle School.

Eric & Asia Gould

Mr. Gould expressed his concern that his daughter, Asia, was bullied last year and nothing was done about it.

Ms. Gould said she attended Wallace Middle School last year and was bullied.

Mr. Medio said the bullying issue will be discussed in tonight's executive session.

Items for Review:

A. Superintendent

1. **PERSONNEL**

1.1 **Personnel Items** – Mr. DiGiorgio asked for an explanation on the meaning of cognitively mild. Mrs. Godlewski said the cognitively impaired program is a specialized program where children are taught functional academics as well as life/social skills. Mr. DiGiorgio asked what does the term “off of the guide mean” that is listed under salary adjustments. Dr. Rossi explained that it refers to a guide maximum already obtained that results in a defined contractual amount. Ms. Morello asked if this cognitively moderate aide transfer is just a transfer on the salary guide. Dr. Rossi responded yes.

1.2 **Withholding of Salary Increments for Certificated Employee** – No discussion.

2. **PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS**

2.1.1 **Travel – a. Field Trips, b. District Travel, c. Spring Athletics** – Ms. Morello asked if there will be two substitutes in the building for the two nurses from the same school going to the same workshop on the same day. Mr. Frey responded yes.

2.2 **Discussion of Second Reading of the following Policies:**

Policy 3431.4 – Donated Sick Leave (Teaching Staff Members) New

Policy 4211.4 – Donated Sick Leave (Support Staff Members) New

3. **BUILDINGS & GROUNDS** – None.

4. **FINANCE**

4.1 **Budgetary Transfers** – No discussion.

4.2 **Placement of Special Education Students** – No discussion.

4.3 **Submission of the following grant:**

Kohl’s Department Store

Johnstone Elementary School (field trips)

In the amount of -----\$500 from each participating store

No discussion.

2. ITEMS PROPOSED FOR REGULAR AGENDA:

- a. **Report by the Secretary of the Board of Education September, October and November 2013** –
- b. **Monthly Bills Incurred** – No discussion.

B. Proposed for review or discussion or adoption by Board Members: None.

Public Comments: John Morris, Attorney retained by Mr. Shorter
Mr. Morris said he reviewed Board Policy #5512, Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying and questioned if there is continued professional development with staff members in regards to this. He said the Board Policy provides that the schools responses should be directed to the students explaining acceptable uses of electronic and wireless communication devices.

Lisa Miles, Parent
Ms. Miles expressed her concern in regards to Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying at Wallace Middle School. She said as a board and district we need to look at every school in this city and review how administration handles bullying.

Chris Picardim

Mr. Picardim expressed his concern as to what is being done by the parents of these girls and where are they learning this type of behavior.

Lanya Solomon, Danyzha's Mother

Ms. Solomon said her child made a mistake and was wrong making the video. She said when her child was in the third grade Chloe bullied her all the time. Ms. Solomon feels her child should not be kicked out or transferred to another school.

Mrs. Shorter, Parent

Mrs. Shorter said as a parent if you knew your child did something cruel to someone why did you not bring your child to apologize.

Carolyn Ross, Danyzha's Grandmother

Ms. Ross said she feels her granddaughter was led the wrong way. She said that she does not teach anyone in her family to bully and her family is sickened by this incident.

Bryant Thompson, Danyzha's Uncle

Mr. Thompson said he does not condone the language used by his niece and feels that was not a form of bullying. He expressed his concern that this entire incident has been blown way out of proportion.

Anthony Blackwell

Mr. Blackwell said they are here tonight because on the internet these girls directed racial slurs to his niece. He said the Wallace Middle School did not handle this matter in a professional manner and pushed it under the rug.

Mr. Medio said this is the first time this issue was brought to the Board. He said the Board will act on it and hopefully it will be resolved.

Committee Reports: Mr. DeWinne said a Finance Committee meeting was held and when he receives the draft of the minutes he will share it with the committee members and provide it to the Board.

Unfinished

Business: Ms. Morello requested an update on the high school discipline guide and electronic device use.

Mrs. Polof said she along with Mr. DeSanto have reviewed the policy, regulation and guide. She said that she revised the guide as directed by the Board and put electronic cell phone use back.

Mr. Medio said on the advice of the attorney we will hold off on discussion of the discipline guide.

Ms. Rios expressed her concern that the discipline guide needs to be addressed as soon as possible because this has been an issue for the past three to four months.

Dr. Gruccio said it has been addressed and maybe it would be best if we emailed the actions that took place to the Board.

Mr. English expressed his concern that the Policy & Personnel Committee has not met for 118 days, which is not acceptable to him as a Board Member. He feels a lot could be accomplished through committees working together with administration. Mr. English asked if committees will be appointed this evening.

Mr. Medio appointed to the Personnel & Policy Committee the following Board Members: Ms. Morello, Chair, Mr. Baruffi and Mr. Ulrich. He does not want to mislead the public to believe that Personnel & Policy is going to solve any of these problems. Mr. Medio said the job of the Personnel & Policy Committee is to look down the road to the future to see what directions the Board and district should be taking. He said in regards to discussion earlier there has to be a very clear delineation between the jobs of the administration and board.

Ms. Rios said the committee reports need to be read to the public because the public needs to know what is being discussed in the committee meetings.

Mr. English asked when the other committees such as the facilities buildings and grounds will be appointed. Mr. Medio said that is currently under finance as last year. Mr. English questioned why the bylaws were not changed. Mr. English said there was also discussion about having an Ad Hoc Transportation Committee. Mr. Medio said we will be addressing all of those things.

New Business:

Mr. English asked how the safety patrol trip is being funded and what the costs are of the elementary and middle school trips. He said that he received a couple phone calls from parents who cannot afford the trip and are struggling to sell the sub tickets. Mr. English said the concerns of the parents are if their child will be excluded from the trip if they cannot afford to go. Dr. Gruccio responded no.

Dr. Gruccio said a meeting was held today in regards to the safety patrol trips and there is a new process in place for next year.

Board Member

Comments:

Mr. Ulrich said his experience has been when there is an issue it comes down to a lack of communication. He said when the perception is someone is not doing something you get a mob mentality on social media. Mr. Ulrich said the Board is not charged with the day to day operations of the Vineland Public School system. He said when a Board member does involve themselves in the day to day operation of the school system it is an ethical violation. Mr. Ulrich said putting things on social media will never solve an issue it is only going to incite it. He said it is important to understand that not one person on this Board is going to disagree that bullying should not be directly dealt with in our public school system because it should be. Mr. Ulrich said he thinks that a rush to judgment and not getting everyone together is a mistake. He said there is resolution to all matters in a peaceful way. Mr. Ulrich reminded everyone to save your judgments, do not post on facebook and allow the professionals to handle it.

Mr. DeWinne said he was impressed that Asia Gould spoke and is sorry what she went through. He said he does not tolerate anything that will affect learning and is about zero tolerance. Mr. DeWinne said Sergeant McLaughlin, who works with the district, does a great job in presenting a seminar about electronic devices and the danger. He said as parents we have the responsibility of monitoring our children's phones and to take back control.

Mr. DiGiorgio thanked everyone for speaking and voicing their opinions.

Ms. Morello said the lesson we can take from this is we need to have consistency, better communication and to make sure things are followed as precisely as possible. She said you can never make too much time for parents regardless of whatever the situation is. Ms. Morello agrees with Mr. Ulrich and thinks cooler heads need to prevail at this point. She said there will be a resolution to this but as adults we need to be calm, take our time and get to the bottom of this. Ms. Morello said every story has multiple sides and we need to all work together and look for fairness, consistency with a lot of communication.

Mr. Baruffi thanked all the parents and grandparents for coming out to discuss the problem. He said as a Board member and former educator he is going to try to do his best and make a good decision for everybody who is involved.

Mr. English said social media is through the roof and when a situation occurs like this there is going to be two sides to every story. He trusts the process and that protocol have been followed properly. Mr. English said that cooler heads prevail which is the approach he is taking because he has heard all the sides.

Board President

Comments:

Mr. Medio said the Board received a lot of information tonight but he would like a little more information. He said some of the things he heard tonight troubled him. Mr. Medio asked if the parents are willing to meet face to face with or without their children with the Wallace School administration to see if any of this can be worked out. The response was yes.

Dr. Gruccio thanked the Petway students for the flag salute. She wanted parents to be aware that the March 21st in-service day will now be a half legal attendance day for students and there will be professional development in the afternoon for staff members. Dr. Gruccio said we are excited that the Governor has approved a new middle school for Vineland. She thanked Mr. Weaver and Mr. Merighi for all the work they put into this.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by voice vote at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Herbert G. Schectman
Board Secretary

HGS:df

