

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, March 4, 2009 at 7:00 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Giordano presiding and the following members present: Mr. Bernardini, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. Evans, Mr. Fanucci, Mr. Franceschini, Ms. Rios and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Mr. Spinelli.

Also present: Mr. Ottinger, Superintendent, Dr. Figgs and Dr. Gruccio, Assistant Superintendents, Mr. Franchetta, Board Secretary, Mr. DeSanto, Board Solicitor, Mrs. Polof, Director of Special Education, Ms. Greenfield, Executive Director of Personnel, press and public. Absent: None.

Mr. Giordano 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.

Flag salute:

Special

Presentations:

Mr. Ottinger introduced Mr. Steve Dantinne to give a presentation on Enhancements to Student Information System.

Mr. Dantinne said he has been asked to do a comparison of the different systems the district is looking at. He said the Vineland School System has evolved to require enhancements to our current system. Mr. Dantinne said we need to enhance our current student information system by adding expanded parent portal to include homework assignments, grade book, and distance learning available in multilingual formats. He said it is important that we keep the system secure so parents have a secure identity management. Mr. Dantinne said the key differentiators are ease of use, data integrity, data security and inner operability with the current related platforms for the grade entry. The applications that were reviewed are Blackboard, K12 Systems, Open SIS, and Microsoft SharePoint. Mr. Dantinne said all systems can be server virtualized, which is a way to save money, energy and reduce costs. In reference to where these particular programs are being used Blackboard is used across the nation mainly at higher institutions such as Rowan University, Cumberland County College and Temple. K12 Systems is a regional company located in Allentown and some of their companies are Boyertown and Conestoga Valley. Open SIS is a reduced scope used at smaller colleges and catholic academies. Microsoft SharePoint is national world wide used at Miami-Dade, Rochester, Philadelphia, Newark, Patterson and Millville. Mr. Dantinne said for the cost comparison Open SIS is on the low end followed by, Microsoft SharePoint, K12 Systems and then Blackboard.

Mr. Fanucci said it seems that Microsoft SharePoint is the better of the four since it has been used on a national level with a good cost. Mr. Dantine said they are all good quality programs.

Mr. Ulrich asked Mr. Dantine what his recommendation or feelings are on the system we should go with. Mr. Dantine said he would defer this question to Mr. Ottinger.

Mr. Giordano said the board would rely on Mr. Dantine's expertise and best professional judgment.

Mr. Ulrich asked out of the four products which could be integrated without increasing the staffing levels. Mr. Dantine explained that all four products have pluses and minuses. He said the only one he has some reservations about is Open SIS because it is not developed in many places but the technology is robust.

Mr. Evans asked if we own EZ Grade Pro. Mr. Dantine responded yes. Mr. Evans asked if an upgrade to EZ Grade Pro would affect anything with SharePoint. Mr. Dantine said right now either Open SIS or SharePoint will work with the version that we have but it would cost \$198 per building.

Mr. Fanucci asked if there will be any additional staff development time. Mr. Dantine said that is one of the positives because the staff already knows EZ Grade Pro.

Mr. Ulrich asked what the negative is on SharePoint. Mr. Dantine said no matter what program is chosen there will initially be a lot of meetings to make sure that everyone works together. He said the process will be to do one school and one level first then work from there.

Mr. Evans said the initial savings over Blackboard is at least \$30,000 on the purchase and \$8,000 a year in support by going with SharePoint.

Mr. Ottinger requested for Steve Goodwin to give his input since he served on the review committee.

Mr. Goodwin said the review committee consisted of RoseEllen DeMatte, Kevin Franchetta, Steve Dantine along with himself. He said their first selection was Blackboard, which handles 1200 schools in the United States.

Mr. Goodwin said forty one of our top one hundred American high schools named by *Newsweek* rely on Blackboard software. He said the odds are that today's college bound graduates will go on to learn Blackboard. Mr. Goodwin said distance learning with Blackboard is a proven product that works and is used in all of these schools. He said distance learning with SharePoint is being developed and will need a lot of work to be up and running. The multilingual support is developed with Blackboard but not with SharePoint. Mr. Goodwin said we feel that this is not where we want to be.

Mr. Evans asked what multilingual support is. Mr. Goodwin said it is for Spanish. Mr. Evans asked at what point multilingual occurs. Mr. Goodwin said it occurs through the web-sites if you are a parent.

Mr. Goodwin said the references given for SharePoint are only doing one small piece, which is not something you want to run a school district on. He said he has no problems with the hardware end but from a software perspective we are in the business of trying to work smarter not harder. Mr. Goodwin said that he knows we have a proven product with Blackboard and he thinks it is great. He said the cost of Blackboard is a bottom line figure and that is what we are going to pay. Mr. Goodwin said with SharePoint we will need to go out and get consultants, which will cause the price to increase.

Mr. Giordano asked why it states that support costs are zero for SharePoint. Mr. Goodwin said he does not know. Mr. Dantine said we are currently doing the support for the online lesson plans.

Mr. Ulrich said that he can say from personal experience that Blackboard is an easy program for the students to use and thinks it is a great product. He asked Mr. Dantine what system he feels we should approve next week and put into play. Mr. Dantine said we use online lesson plans and have spent a small amount of money on the development, which is in place. He said there is no such thing as something that will translate languages 100%. Mr. Ulrich asked Mr. Dantine if he is recommending SharePoint and we can be online in September. Mr. Dantine said that is his feeling.

Mr. Franceschini asked Mr. Goodwin what program he would choose if Blackboard was eliminated. Mr. Goodwin said K12.

Mr. Evans asked if the Vineland School District website is multilingual. Mr. Dantine responded yes it uses a translator that can be used with any program.

Mr. Giordano said Mr. Ottinger will make the recommendation next week.

Mr. Ottinger said that he has the utmost respect for both Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Dantine in their respective fields. He said we will confer with both of them to get a recommendation.

Mr. Evans said the board should consider if we want to save money what would we buy. He said we need a capable platform and have to be prudent with our funds.

Mr. Franceschini said his opinion is that he would gravitate towards Microsoft SharePoint.

Mr. DeWinne asked how much is budgeted this fiscal year for this. Mr. Franchetta said he would look that information up.

Comments by

Board Solicitor: None.

Items for Review:

A. Superintendent

1. **Personnel Items** – Ms. Greenfield reported that there will be some additions next week regarding changes in the coaching staff. She said there will also be employment, resignations and the executive controller position added.

Mr. Evans questioned the salary amount listed for name four under A.1 (e) promotions. Ms. Greenfield said it is Step 1 on VASA scale.

Mr. Ulrich asked who that individual would replace. Mr. Ottinger said Mr. John Fagotti who retires effective April 1.

Mr. Evans asked how many people interviewed for that position. Ms. Greenfield said two or three.

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

3. **Budgetary Transfers** – Mr. DeWinne asked for an explanation on the line items regarding the school sponsored extra curricular activities. Mr. Franchetta explained that this is for substitutes. He said it is drawn down as needed and dispersed into the accounts where it is needed.

4. **Submission of Grants** - Mr. Giordano asked if the New Jersey School Boards Association Insurance Group Safety Program is a new grant. Mr. Franchetta responded yes.
5. **Acceptance of Funds** – Mr. DeWinne asked if this grant money is being received now. Mr. Franchetta said this is the federal grant for special education students.
6. **Bids** – Mr. Giordano asked on (b) what does “subject to legal review of service agreement” mean. Mr. Cox said the agreement was sent to Mr. DeSanto to review.

Mr. Fanucci asked what the E-Rate refund rate is. Mr. Cox explained that it is money the district receives back on the telephone bill from the federal government. Mr. Fanucci asked if SNIP is a reseller of services. Mr. Cox said almost all of them are.

Mr. Bernardini why the amount listed for the YMCA is an estimate. Mr. Cox said because we do not know how many students they will have registered. Mr. Bernardini asked if the YMCA will be responsible for collecting the fees. Mr. Cox responded yes. Mr. Franchetta said we are just opting to renew the contract for another year with no cost to us.

Mr. DeWinne asked for an explanation on the Extraordinary Unspecified Service. Mr. Franchetta explained that both of these schools received SIA, Part G funds, which is No Child Left Behind money. He said these funds were awarded to schools that are in need of improvement to have additional staff development.

Mr. Evans asked if there would be additional costs because there are no materials listed for Veterans Memorial School. Mr. Phillips, Veterans Memorial School Principal, said his school was awarded \$75,000 and they decided to have workshops focusing on special education math. He said they will also focus on target groups to deal with the New Jersey ASK scores and language arts literacy. Mr. Evans asked where the money is coming from to pay for all of the instructional materials. Mr. Phillips said from regular Title I funds.

7. **Travel** – Mr. DeWinne asked when we send someone to a seminar are we putting substitutes in their place. Mr. Franchetta responded yes. Mr. DeWinne asked if we could save costs by sending one person to a seminar to bring back materials to present at an in-service. Mr. Ottinger said sometimes we only send one person but there are times it is necessary to send everyone. He said we do a combination of things.

Mr. Giordano asked if costs are considered for professional development. Mr. Ottinger said we always consider the costs and try to do our best to use our funds wisely.

Mr. Ulrich questioned why we are sending individuals to SMART Board training. Mr. Franchetta said he does not know but they are using their Title I No Child Left Behind funds, which has to be used for professional development.

Mr. Ottinger asked Mr. Dantine if he does any professional development for the teachers with SMART Board. Mr. Dantine responded yes through Southern Regional Educational Technology Training Center (ETTC).

Mr. Ulrich asked Mr. Dantine if he could do a video on SMART Board. Mr. Dantine said absolutely.

Mr. Evans asked if professional development is done in-house would the hours count for the teachers. Mr. Ottinger responded yes.

8. **Acceptance of Results of the Department of Educations review of the Early Childhood Program** – No discussion.
9. **Contract for State Child Study Team Placements** – No discussion.
10. **Catapult Learning Agreement** – Mr. Giordano asked Mr. DeSanto if this agreement is acceptable. Mr. DeSanto recommends a one year agreement with the cancellation of 90 days removed.  
  
Mr. DeWinne asked who our liaison is with Catapult Learning. Mr. Franchetta said he can not remember the lady's name but she is from Jersey City. Mr. DeWinne asked if it would affect our budget if the state gives us less. Mr. Franchetta said yes these are for Chapter 192-193 services.
11. **Teacher-in-Training Agreements** – No discussion.
12. **Elwyn Settlement Agreement** – No discussion.
13. **Approval of Legal Attendance Days** – No discussion.
14. **Secret Service Band Contract** – Mr. Evans asked if this was for the funds involved. Mr. Ottinger said no it is because a member of the band is employed by the school district.

B. Board

1. None.

Review of Bills: No Discussion.

Public Comments: Rahim Caldwell  
Mr. Caldwell asked for the board's view on how they support parental rights.

Mr. Giordano said the board can not answer questions during the public portion of the meeting and he needs to speak to the superintendent.

Committee Reports: Mr. Bernardini reported that the next Buildings & Ground Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 17, 2008. He said in regards to Middle School #2 change orders for re-design to Perkins and Will has been awarded by the New Jersey School Development Authority. Mr. Bernardini said the ground will be prepared this year and in 2011 the school will be operable. He said design work has been done on the Vineland High School North lab. Mr. Bernardini said Mr. Franchetta has informed us that we will be housing the Success Program in the trailers at Veterans Memorial School. He said the facilities department is working with both high schools on the proposed school stores.

Mr. Franceschini expressed his concern in regards to the Success Program being next to Veterans Memorial School. He asked if there was another property to relocate this program to. Mr. Ottinger said this would have to be discussed because we can not move the trailers. Mr. Franceschini asked if the students in the Success Program would eat lunch in the Memorial cafeteria. Mr. Ottinger said they would eat separate.

Mr. Bernardini asked how long the lease runs for the Delsea Drive & Oak Road building. Mr. Franchetta said one lease expires in October and the other expires is November.

Mr. Ottinger said we do have empty buildings such as Butler Avenue and East Vineland but provisions would have to be made.

Mr. Franceschini said discussed at this evening's Curriculum & Technology meeting was the transition from Early Childhood to pre-school/kindergarten. He said that Mr. Dantine attended the meeting and presented the District Technology Plan. Mr. Franceschini said Ms. Millie Ramos, Bilingual Supervisor, discussed ESL K through 5 textbooks for approval.

Mr. Franceschini said the next Curriculum & Technology meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 1, 2009.

Mr. Giordano said the board requested for Mr. Ottinger to do a thorough investigation of Landis Intermediate School regarding safety and security, which he provided a report. He asked Mr. Ottinger if he was prepared to discuss some highlights of the meeting he had with the staff. Mr. Ottinger said the meeting was long and they discussed how discipline was handled at the school in the past and present and how we can all get on the same page. He said teachers had concerns on various aspects. Mr. Ottinger said the concern of the majority of the staff was if we were implementing the discipline policy in the manner it was intended to be implemented. He said it is important to note that some teachers have spoken to him personally and the meetings went very well. Mr. Ottinger said he left the staff meeting with a commitment to make sure that we will do what ever we can to determine if the school is safe. He said he spoke to Mr. Kohaut, Landis School Principal, regarding the concerns.

Mr. Franceschini asked if there is an action plan for the concerns. Mr. Ottinger said the action plan has to be consistent in the manner in which it is implemented. He said Dr. Figgs had a meeting on February 24 with the middle school principals and assistants to review the present discipline guide. Mr. Ottinger said the goal was for there to be a belief among the staff that the students will be disciplined fairly and consistently. Mr. Franceschini asked if the discipline guide is a true policy. Mr. Ottinger said he does not think any of the discipline guides are policies. He said different administrators have different opinions in the manner in which they handle the students. Mr. Ottinger said as a high school principal he was pretty strict in regards to fighting and drugs but also tried his best to work with the students. He thinks both Mr. Kohaut and Mr. Panas try to work with the students. Mr. Ottinger said he would like to think district wide for serious offenses such as fights, drugs and weapons we come down hard on the students. He said that he was told by Mr. Barry, the previous high school principal, when a teacher sends a student to you never return him or her to class. Mr. Ottinger said he wants to rely on the administration because it is their job.

Mr. Giordano asked when the police department sends information on the latest gang developments or activities is it disseminated among the staff at the schools. Mr. Ottinger said he does not know but thinks if it could be a potential problem in the school it has to be shared among everyone.

Mr. Franceschini asked if there is a higher presence of gangs at Landis School versus other schools. Mr. Ulrich said there is a gang issue in cities and we are not immune. He said they do exist in our schools and there are meetings every month with high level administrators throughout the district to discuss these issues. Mr. Franceschini asked if these gangs are now recruiting through the grade schools. Mr. Ulrich said they are actively recruiting in the middle schools and some grade schools.

Mr. Giordano asked Mr. Ottinger what he interprets “students have social problems with other students” to mean as stated in the report. Mr. Ottinger explained that sometimes principals use this internal category instead of listing a more serious problem that would have to be reported.

Mr. Ulrich mentioned that the Rope Program, which is a program that discusses gangs and brings in convicts, will be at Sabater School from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. for anyone who would like to attend. He said that he will announce the date next week.

Mr. Fanucci asked how much staff development is done on gang awareness and activities. Mr. Ulrich said it is ongoing.

Mr. Giordano announced a Special Board Meeting will be held on March 17, 2009 to approve the budget and the Public Hearing is scheduled for the April 1, 2009 work session.

Mr. DeWinne complimented Mr. Weaver’s staff for the job they did clearing the parking lots during the snow storm. He congratulated the girls basketball team on their win. Mr. DeWinne wished the swim team good luck on the relays. He announced that the middle schools will be performing the play *Oliver* this weekend at Veterans Memorial School.

Mr. Ulrich announced that the Project Graduation fundraiser will be held this Friday at St. Anthony’s Greek Hall on Wheat Road.

Mr. Bernardini asked how many shuttle buses are there between the high schools. Mr. Ottinger said there are four buses.

Mr. Giordano thanked all the dedicated staff members who came in on the snow day.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business: None.

Adjournment: The Board adjourned to executive session 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J. Franchetta, CPA  
Board Secretary

KJF:df