

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 5, 2008 at 7:37 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Giordano presiding and the following members present: Ms. Arroyo, Mr. Bernardini, Mr. Fanucci, Mr. Franceschini, Mrs. Gavigan, Mr. Snyder, and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Mr. Spinelli.

Also present: Mr. Ottinger, Superintendent, Dr. Figgs, Dr. Guccio, and Mr. Peters, 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 Dr. Keith Figgs to introduce the presenter for the first presentation.

Dr. Figgs said the code has changed and we are not only responsible for students out with medical issues but also for disciplinary issues. On the fifth day of a student's suspension we are now required by code to provide home instruction. We have been working very diligently and were fortunate to acquire the services of Alternatives Unlimited who have developed a home instruction program that is now in place. Dr. Figgs introduced Dr. Gerald Luongo the President of Alternatives Unlimited to present a brief overview about this home instruction program.

Dr. Luongo said this program is being implemented in school districts throughout the country that are not required under code to have the program but are finding it much easier to provide tutoring via the internet. He introduced Joel Berroa, Technician, Horrace Connor, III, State Coordinator, and Danielle Fennimore, Area Director.

Ms. Fennimore presented a power point presentation on the Alternatives Unlimited Program.

Ms. Arroyo asked Ms. Fennimore how you would work with students who do not have internet access at home. Ms. Fennimore said if they have a phone line we can help them. According to the contract if the student does not have a phone line they can not purchase one for them.

Ms. Arroyo asked what happens if a student is having difficulty with an assignment. Ms. Fennimore said there is a toolbar the student can access to speak with the tutor.

Mr. Ulrich asked what measures are in place to assure that the person on the other end of the computer is the student getting the guided curriculum that they need and how would the testing be conducted. Ms. Fennimore said passwords are created that only the student has. She said students are given a pre-test in a certain area and the computer sets them up in a program based on that core-curriculum content standard. Mr. Ulrich asked if the pre-test is done on-site with the family in the house. Ms. Fennimore said all the testing and everything through the program is done at the house. Mr. Ulrich said in some situations it is not beyond anybody to figure out a way around the system. He said if there is no home visit for an exit or pre-test he does not know how it can be validated that the person is getting that instruction. Dr. Luongo explained that Ms. Fennimore reviews the student's progress. She can see every key stroke a student makes and the amount of time it takes the student to answer a question. He said Ms. Fennimore can flag a student so the student can no longer go on line. Dr. Luongo said the bottom line is that the student is still required to take the HSPT and any other end of the school test that the school district requires.

Mrs. Gavigan asked how long would it take for Alternatives Unlimited to start the program after being contacted by the district. Ms. Rosolyn Williams, District Nursing Supervisor, said the district first tries to get live tutors. She said if they can not get live tutors then they contact Alternatives Unlimited. Mrs. Gavigan asked if this applies to the students who are out of school due to suspensions. Mrs. Williams responded yes.

Mr. Franceschini asked what the cost of this program is. Dr. Luongo said the district is billed 25 dollars per hour for the tutors. Mr. Franceschini asked if this is a yearly contract. Dr. Luongo responded yes.

Mr. Snyder asked who supplies the grades for the class. Ms. Fennimore said the students are programmed in to the state aligned program and modified on an as needed basis.

Mr. Ottinger introduced Ms. Shelly Cohen, from South Jersey Healthcare, to give a presentation on S.T.E.P.S. (Success Through Exercise, Physical Fitness and Sharing Information).

Dr. Figgs said Ms. Cohen is involved with a program being held at Landis School this evening and had to leave. He introduced Ms. Emily Turner, Administrative Director for Education, at South Jersey Healthcare.

Ms. Turner said the program tonight is on community strategy for reducing childhood obesity. She said the leading partners are South Jersey Healthcare, Cumberland Cape Atlantic YMCA, and the Vineland Public School system. She said that S.T.E.P.S. stands for Success Through Exercise, Physical Fitness and Sharing Information. Ms. Turner said we need this because for the first time in our nation's history, the life expectancy of our children is less than that of their parents. She introduced Lisa Scheetz, the Chief Operating Officer of the Cumberland Cape Atlantic YMCA.

Ms. Scheetz discussed the program strategy and design. She said we are encouraging children and families to live healthy and exercise together. Ms. Scheetz said this program is for twelve weeks and the age group is between eight and twelve years old.

Mr. Franceschini said this program is great but feels the BMI testing should be started earlier than eight years of age. He asked what is used for the fitness assessment. Ms. Scheetz said we do muscle strengths, flexibility, blood pressure, body mass index and endurance. Mr. Franceschini asked how you measure the aerobic endurance. Ms. Scheetz said they do a three minute step test. He asked if there is a pre-questionnaire done by the parents and child. Ms. Scheetz responded yes. Mr. Franceschini asked how the drop out rate is. Ms. Scheetz said we have an 80% retention rate.

Ms. Arroyo asked what the maximum amount of money is that a family could receive for this program. Ms. Scheetz said two hundred dollars.

Mrs. Gavigan asked if a family's medical insurance provides the tuition for this program. Ms. Scheetz responded yes.

Mr. Giordano asked if a pediatrician recommends for a parent to consult with a nutritionist because of their child's obesity problem, would this be a substitute. Ms. Scheetz said she does not believe that it will.

Mrs. Gavigan asked if this is something that we would like to start in September. Ms. Scheetz said we are currently doing the program.

Dr. Figgs said Mr. DeSanto has reviewed the Memorandum of Agreement and has made a couple of recommendations, which will be added to the revised Agreement.

Comments by

Board Solicitor: None.

Items for Review:

A. Superintendent

1. **Personnel** – Mr. Franceschini commented on the retirement of Beverly Smith and said she has been a great asset to the booster club.
2. **Placement of Special Education Students** – No discussion.
3. **Budgetary Transfers** – No discussion.
4. **Submission of Grants** – No discussion.
5. **Acceptance of Funds** – No discussion.
6. **Travel** – No discussion.
7. **Sheppard Bus Service Renewal 2006- 2007** – Mr. Ulrich questioned why there were a lot of notes and additions on the agreement. Mr. Franchetta said he will check into it.

Mr. Giordano asked why this is a 2006-2007 contract. Mr. Franchetta said for some reason this contract fell through the cracks and the county said if it gets board approval they would accept it.

8. **Second Amendment to Elwyn Lease** – Mrs. Gavigan asked if the Center City Learning Complex building is ready to accept staff and students. Mr. Ottinger responded yes.
9. **New Jersey SES Provider Application** – Mr. Fanucci asked what this was. Mr. Ottinger said it is after school tutoring through No Child Left Behind.
10. **S.T.E.P. S. Program** – No discussion.
11. **Approval of (4) Legal Attendance Days at the Middle School Level** – Mr. Giordano asked for an explanation on this item.

Ms. Arroyo requested for these days to be appropriately announced for parents to have enough time to make the necessary accommodations. Mr. Ottinger said we always do.

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Mr. Snyder asked why we are having these four professional development days. Dr. Gruccio explained that we have given this opportunity to the high school and the middle schools requested the same opportunity. She said the presenter, Stephen Barkley, will take one day per school and spend the entire afternoon with our faculty. Dr. Gruccio said for the other three days she along with Mr. Peters; Ms. Santagata and the other supervisors will be putting together presentations so there will be four different programs taking place. Mr. Snyder asked if we have other half day sessions for in-service. Dr. Gruccio said we use to have them during testing but this year due to the testing schedule by the state it would have required two full weeks of half days so we eliminated it this year. However; two of the four days are testing days. Mr. Snyder expressed his concern that instruction is lessened on legal attendance days.

Mrs. Gavigan said she does not see a problem with these days. She thinks that our middle school teachers really do need to prepare to be advisories because of the interacting with parents and children.

12. **First Reading of Policies #4433.1, #5120, and #5530** – Mrs. Gavigan said she is glad to see that the Personnel & Policy Committee worked on the Assignment of Pupils policy. She said in the past she remembers receiving a notification that if she had a special request for the upcoming year, particularly baby sitting services, she had to make that special request in April. Mrs. Gavigan questioned why the request date on the policy is July 1. Dr. Figgs said the rollover determining who is going to be in what school is not done until June and registration does not officially begin until July.

Mr. Snyder said his issue is that sometimes staff members are reassigned. Dr. Figgs said we would have to look at those as an exception. Mr. Snyder feels Policy #5120 does not look any different then what we do already. He said that the policy should read that every effort will be given to every request and requests will be kept on file and will be honored, once space becomes available.

Mr. Bernardini said this is left up to Dr. Figgs who goes beyond the call of duty in trying to fill all requests. He said the Personnel & Policy Committee did not want to specifically but in the policy that every effort will be given to every request because they did not want to take the decision making away from Dr. Figgs.

Mr. Snyder said this does not read as a courtesy to staff members but puts it all in Dr. Figgs hands. He feels this is a little too much power for one person to determine where a student goes or does not go to school.

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Mrs. Gavigan said she would also like to see stronger language in this policy.

Mr. Franceschini said this can be revisited at next Wednesday's Personnel & Policy Committee meeting.

Mr. Ottinger said the board has the authority to say "you will do this" but it would be contrary to what administration wants to do. He said we do everything that we can already to see if we can implement that without any change in policy.

Mr. Fanucci said we are very fortunate to have the people with the level of integrity that we do have in these positions now and understand the needs of the district. He said there is going to come a time where that will not be the case.

Mr. Ulrich said he does not see where the board has to mettle in student placement.

Mrs. Gavigan said if you knew well in advance of July 1st what teachers had a special request, those students could be placed first and then you could start equalizing the rest of the student body.

Mr. Giordano asked how many staff requests were denied. Dr. Figgs said most of the time we have been able to honor these requests. Mr. Ottinger asked if it is not safe to say that normally they are accommodated. Dr. Figgs responded yes. Mr. Snyder said he disagrees because that is not what he is hearing from the community. Dr. Figgs said we try to do as best as possible but because of enrollments we can not honor one hundred percent of the requests.

Mr. Ulrich said what we have to realize is that there are a couple schools that are at capacity. He feels it would create a problem and a parent has a legitimate gripe if a child in the neighborhood gets turned away from a school because we allow a staff member to bring their child to that school. Mr. Snyder said that happens because we are fortunate to have multiple schools in our district that are all within proximities of neighborhoods.

Mr. DeSanto said he suggested to Mr. Franchetta a couple of revisions to the revised policy concerning vacation days. He said what the board will see next week will be reflective of a Department of Personnel decision. Mr. DeSanto said both ten and twelve month employees are entitled to vacation days. The Local #2327 filed an action before the Commissioner of the Department of Personnel requesting all of their vacation days credited at the beginning of the year. Mr. DeSanto said we opposed that and the Commissioner rendered a decision saying the board had the option of giving it to them the beginning of the year or one day a month.

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Mr. DeSanto wanted to make sure that this policy is consistent with the option the board wants and that is the change that he made. Mr. Giordano said this will not be voted on next week. Mr. DeSanto responded no.

Mrs. Gavigan asked if the employees will have to earn their time first. Mr. DeSanto said if a ten month employee starts work September 1 the request that they made was they would receive all their days on September 1. He said the decision of the Department of Personnel was that the board could give them their days one month at a time. Mrs. Gavigan asked how many days they could carry. Mr. DeSanto said five.

B. Board

1. None.

Review of Bills: No discussion.

Committee Reports: Mr. Giordano said a Finance Committee will be scheduled in April.

Mr. Franceschini said a grievance will be heard next Wednesday, March 12, 2008 at 5:30 p.m. by the Personnel & Policy Committee and a few policies will be reviewed.

Ms. Arroyo said the Curriculum Committee meeting will be held Monday, March 10, 2008 at 5:00 p.m.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business: None.

Adjournment: The Board adjourned to executive session at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J. Franchetta, CPA
Board Secretary

KJF:df