

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, October 1, 2008 at 7:02 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Giordano presiding and the following members present: Mr. Bernardini, Mr. Evans, Mr. Fanucci, Mr. Franceschini, Ms. Rios, Mr. Spinelli and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Mr. DeWinne.

Also present: Mr. Ottinger, Superintendent, Dr. Guccio, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Franchetta, Board Secretary, Mr. DeSanto, Board Solicitor, Mrs. Polof, Director of Special Education, Ms. Greenfield, Executive Director of Personnel, press and public. Absent: Dr. Figgs, Asst. Superintendent.

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:

Mr. Giordano asked for a moment of silence in memory of Thomas Thayer who was the business administrator for many years and Mary Polini a long time Vineland Public School District employee who past away.

Mr. DeWinne arrived at 7:04 p.m.

Mr. Giordano mentioned that forms do not to be filled out on issues that the public would like to address the board on at the work session. He said only at the regular meeting forms need to be filled out.

Special

Presentations: None.

Comments by

Board Solicitor:

Mr. DeSanto said the board has been discussing the issue concerning school photographs. He said as a result of that discussion he has met several times with Mr. Ottinger and Mr. Franchetta. Mr. DeSanto said they have come up with a reasonable process to handle this. He distributed to the board a draft policy that he prepared as a result of his research and discussion. Mr. DeSanto said the board may decide to refer this policy to the policy committee or waive the procedure and requirements to advance for full adoption. He said school photography should be bid on a district wide basis in the event that the school photographs are used solely for purposes of personal use. Mr. DeSanto said if it is in connection with a student publication such as a yearbook or a directory then it is an exception to the school bidding law, which allows you to permit this without the public bidding requirements.

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Mr. DeSanto said certain requirements would have to be met such as the photography would have to be part of the student publications with a faculty advisor that oversees the process. He said the principal, vice principal or faculty advisor could not approve a contract. Mr. DeSanto said there must be permission slips and permission to have the photo in a directory or yearbook. He said there will be insurance requirements and if the photographer is going to donate money to the school then it would need to be board approved. Mr. DeSanto said the elementary schools would be required to have a student activity fund account so there is an accountability of money. He said this is the terms we came up with on how best to address all the concerns in the interest of all involved.

Mr. Giordano asked if an elementary school does not have a student directory or yearbook then they can not pursue this. Mr. DeSanto said that is correct. He said it would have to be done by the PTO or some other arrangement.

Mr. Spinelli said the fact that the photographers will be carrying their own liability insurance will give us some meat to the policy. He feels this should be reviewed by the policy committee.

Mr. Franceschini said he would prefer that the policy committee reviews this.

Mr. DeSanto said the board could waive the first and second reading and refer this to the policy committee with the understanding that it will be discussed at the next work session. He said if this is ok the policy could be adopted at the November board meeting.

Mr. Fanucci said in the interest of the students this may be the best idea.

Items for Review:

A. Superintendent

1. **Personnel Items** – Mr. Spinelli asked if the qualifications for a cafeteria aide position are to have a high school diploma or GED. Ms. Greenfield said according to Civil Service regulations no. Mr. Spinelli asked if the district is requiring it. Ms. Greenfield said we are not. Mr. Spinelli said he is bringing this up because someone contacted him about this. She said we did repost the position because we initially had GED or high school diploma listed and we reviewed all the applications that were submitted. Mr. Spinelli asked if that person was told not to apply, did they lose out on a possible job. Ms. Greenfield said yes if they did not apply. She said that she would discuss this privately with Mr. Spinelli.

Mr. Giordano asked if there were any additions tonight. Ms. Greenfield responded no. Mr. Giordano asked if there will be any additions next week. Ms. Greenfield said of course there will be employment and some additional extra curricular. Mr. Giordano asked if the assistant principal position at the high school has been advertised. Ms. Greenfield said yes and the interviews are scheduled. Mr. Giordano asked how many applicants we have. Ms. Greenfield said about twelve that met the criteria. Mr. Giordano asked if we are advertising any other positions at the present time. Ms. Greenfield said yes math, science, payroll clerk and ESL position.

Mr. Spinelli said discussed at the finance committee meeting was the way we are posting separately. Ms. Greenfield said that was an oddity because we are not getting candidates in the areas of math and science so it was done separately. She said normally she does not advertise our teaching positions separately.

Mr. Ulrich asked if we advertise outside the district if no applicants for the math and science positions are received. Ms. Greenfield said we advertise outside and internally.

Mr. DeWinne asked if we are still short on science teachers. Ms. Greenfield said yes we have substitutes in those positions.

2. **Creation and Establishment of Fiscal Analyst Position** – Mr. Spinelli asked for an explanation on why this is being recommended. Mr. Franchetta said this was a result of a Civil Service job audit. It was an order by the Department of Civil Service to open this position and award it to an employee in our district.

Mr. DeWinne asked if this was a new position. Mr. Franchetta responded yes. Mr. DeWinne asked if we are being provided any additional funds for this position. Mr. Franchetta said the individual that they did the desk audit on will assume this position.

Mr. Franceschini asked what the salary is for this position. Ms. Greenfield said she needs to get her guide for that information. She said that she emailed Civil Service to see if one of our current titles can also be applicable.

Mr. Ulrich asked if it would be feasible for the salary to stay the same for the person that got the desk audit. Ms. Greenfield said it is where we decide that position would fall but we are still waiting to hear back from Civil Service. She said this is on the agenda for the personal and policy committee to discuss next week. Mr. Ulrich said the board is not obligated to increase someone's salary because Civil Service said there is a title change. Ms. Greenfield responded no but when you look at the responsibilities that the position holds it is a strong possibility.

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Mr. Spinelli said then the individual is not doing the job that this position is stating. Ms. Greenfield said they are that is why Civil Service gave us that title. Mr. Ottinger said the audit has determined that this individual has been doing things all along that they should not have been doing and deserves to be moved up and paid for it.

3. **Special Education Students** – No discussion.
4. **Budgetary Transfers** – Mr. Spinelli asked if these are our normal monthly transfers. Mr. Ottinger responded yes.
5. **Submission of Grants** – Mr. Spinelli asked if we made sure that these grants are not costing the district any money. Mr. Ottinger said yes.
6. **Acceptance of Funding** – No discussion.
7. **Bids** – Mr. Franceschini asked who we used last year. Mr. Cox said the same vendor.

Mr. Fanucci asked if it was common for people not to bid on the majority of the items. Mr. Cox said they are hoping that we do not follow what the contract states and that we break up the bid.
8. **Travel** – No discussion.
9. **Federal Program Staff Salaries** – Mr. DeWinne asked if these positions are funded by the federal government. Mr. Franchetta said that is correct. Mr. DeWinne asked if these are all the salaries or one program. Mr. Franchetta said he thinks it is multiple programs. Mr. DeWinne asked if they fund salary and benefits. Mr. Franchetta said generally they do but it depends on the grant.
10. **Annual Maintenance Reserve Deposit Form M-1** – Mr. Giordano asked for an explanation on this. Mr. Franchetta said items #10 and #11 go hand in hand and are the projection for next years budget. He said #10 is the calculation that shows how much we are planning to spend on maintenance for each school and #11 is how those funds will be spent.
11. **Comprehensive Maintenance Plan Report** – No discussion.
12. **CCEC Joint Transportation Agreement** – Mr. Spinelli asked if this is for our students to attend Vo-Tech. Mr. Ottinger said this is for some of our special education students.

13. **SES Agreements** – Mr. Giordano asked if this tutoring is for those that request it. Mr. Franchetta explained that the No Child Left Behind Legislation requires that schools in need of improvement must offer Supplemental Education Services (SES) to students who want to be enrolled. He said there will be eleven providers including our district that will be offering the services.

Mr. DeWinne asked if the district pays for this not the parents. Mr. Franchetta said that is correct it is part of the No Child Left Behind funding.

14. **Addition of RTI to Textbook and Courses of Study List** – Mr. Giordano asked if this was a state mandate. Mr. Ottinger responded yes. Mr. Giordano asked if this was to screen students before they are recommended to a child study team. Mr. Ottinger said that is correct. Mr. Giordano asked if the students have to be tested. Dr. Guccio explained that RTI is a federal mandate response to intervention, which all students are given a universal screening.

Mr. Franceschini asked if there is a way to fast track this and go right to the child study team. Dr. Guccio said yes if there is a significant need or a problem that we feel is definitely in need of a referral versus this process. Mr. Franceschini asked what would happen if a parent has a private evaluation done on their child and it shows that there is an extreme need. Dr. Guccio said we would share the results with our child study team. Mr. Franceschini asked if the child study team would accept a private evaluation. Dr. Guccio said they review it.

Mr. Ulrich asked who completed this RTI power point presentation. Dr. Guccio said a group of people from the district. Mr. Ulrich noted that it was very well put together.

Mr. Giordano asked if the screening is the pre-testing. Dr. Guccio responded yes. Mr. Giordano asked if all of this had to be planned in the budget. Dr. Guccio said most of this is being funded through title money.

15. **GED Testing Program** – Mr. Giordano asked if this was approved already or was it a different time frame. Mr. Franchetta said it was for a different time frame.

Mr. DeWinne asked if an incorrect address was on the front of the contract. Mr. Franchetta said yes.

Mr. Franceschini asked where we are with the LPN Program at the college. Mr. Ottinger said the college took it over and it is operating efficiently in our rented facility on Elmer Road.

16. **Fall Season Athletic Schedule** – No discussion.

17. **Secret Service Band Contract** – Mr. Giordano mentioned that this was approved in the past because the individual involved is a staff member.
18. **Armed Forces Statuary Donation** – Mr. Giordano asked if this was one statue. Mr. Ottinger said he thinks it is six.

B. Board

1. Adoption of the following goals formulated at the Special Board Meeting on September 17, 2008 and direct the Superintendent to develop action plans for the implementation and achievement of these goals:

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| Goal #1 | Evaluate and provide periodic updates and report on the progress of the Secondary School Initiative (Small Learning Communities). |
| Goal #2 | Improve internal and external district relations by fostering positive interaction and improve interaction with community and district employees. |
| Goal #3 | Maintain consistency of policies and programs throughout the district to ensure there is articulation of curriculum throughout the district at all grade levels and schools. Furthermore, sustain consistency in district policies which include, but are not limited to, hiring practices, discipline policy, safety and security accountability. |

Review of Bills: Mr. Spinelli asked why we have a negative balance on the before and school enterprise funds. Mr. Franchetta said there are people who still owe the district money from last year.

Mr. DeWinne asked how we do on those collections. Mr. Franchetta said we send a couple notices out before we turn them over to Mr. Hoffman.

Public Comments: Louis Russo, Teacher and VEA Representative
Mr. Russo said the implementation of the small learning communities has created some challenges and problems. He said we have at least six possible violations of our contract. Mr. Russo said one of them was mediated with Mr. Ottinger's help. He pointed out that in the summer of 2007 when the VEA met with the school board to negotiate the last labor agreement they tried to have a discussion with the board on the implementation of the small learning communities and its effects. Mr. Russo said they tried to negotiate the impact that this change would have in the high school and middle school. He said that discussion never took place. Mr. Russo said they anticipated all these problems and if we would have worked together in collective bargaining they could have avoided most of these concerns.

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Mr. Russo said the VEA reached out to the board last spring and wanted to present a very well presented presentation with the problems and concerns they identified with the implementation of the secondary education initiative before it took place. He said that presentation never took place. Mr. Russo said he emailed the board and superintendent a copy of that power point to review. He said it is out of concerns for our students and staff that we are here this evening and they feel that they have exhausted all other layers of communication. Mr. Russo said there are some serious problems this year that the implementation brought to students. He said they have moved three steps backwards this September instead of progressing forward. Mr. Russo said because of the movement and implementation we started school without the basics such as desks, chairs, textbooks, and technology equipment. He said all of these things were there last year but unfortunately this year he does not know what happened to most of those things. Mr. Russo said the district administration and maintenance staff has worked tirelessly to fix these and he commends them. He said the beginning of school would not have gone so smoothly if it was not for the staff that went above and beyond. Mr. Russo said the students now loose a tremendous amount of class time due to block scheduling. He said the anxiety that the staff is working under is at an all time high. Mr. Russo said staff resignations are very difficult to fill because of the anxiety in the classroom and school this year. He said they went from eight on-site administrators to fifteen.

Valorie Francisci, Parent

Ms. Francisci said her daughter is a freshman at Vineland High School in the arts small learning community. She said as a parent and taxpayer she is not happy with what she has seen thus far. Ms. Francisci said she is upset with the individuals whose responsibility was to effectively implement the small learning community concept. She said with responsibility should come accountability. Ms. Francisci learned at Back to School Night that her daughter has no classes in her arts community. She said her daughter has to go to the North building for her arts elective even though that community is held at the South building. Ms. Francisci said there are not enough desks, books or computers in many classes. She said many parents were told that the small learning communities are not working and will adversely effect student education. Ms. Franceschini said they were encouraged to complain and take action. She said professional retaliation was a reason given as to why some teachers fear speaking out. Ms. Franceschini said many parents were told it was impossible to gear lessons towards community themes because students from different communities are being thrown together in the classes.

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Ms. Francisci said she learned that roughly two to three hundred students move across campus each period with not enough shuttle buses to hold them. She said all of these things clearly show that small learning communities are not working at all. Ms. Francisci said what they are suppose to achieve in theory is the polar opposite of what is really occurring. Ms. Francisci said poor planning of this magnitude is unacceptable and inexcusable. She said it does not take a genius to see that the problems are serious and cover every aspect of the small learning communities. Ms. Francisci said to dismiss them as simply adjustments needing to made to be expected whenever change occurs is insulting and poor customer service. She makes mistakes and admits when she is wrong. Ms. Francisci said tonight she wants acknowledgement of the severity of the problems and dialogue as to what actions will be taken to fix them. Ms. Francisci said it does not help when the feed back given is excuses or blanket statements about giving it more time. She said honest communication with a clear view of what is really going on at the high school is essential in producing workable solutions. Ms. Francisci formally requested for the board to look into the truth of the matter in depth. She asked that they not just accept verbal assessments of the situation but be provided the facts with written data to back it up in order to find viable and immediate solutions. Ms. Francisci said she is certain that she is not alone with her concerns.

Rick Baruffi, Special Education Teacher

Mr. Baruffi expressed his concern in regards to why the Tournament Chess Program for special education was canceled. He said in the class they worked on creative thinking, problem solving and algebraic notation. Mr. Baruffi said the competition level amongst the students was intense but there were handshakes before and after the games. He said some students told him that because of this program chess was the only reason they would come to school.

Christine Schneider, Teacher

Ms. Schneider said she along with Steve DeCredico are here tonight to represent the former School Leadership Council an organization that was mandated by the former Abbott Regulations. She said this council was not just composed of teachers but also parents and students. Ms. Schneider said their goal was to enhance and support the educational opportunity and experience for all of our students. She said many of us were involved from the beginning in the implementation of small learning communities.

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Ms. Schneider said as a group last year, they had some concerns about the implementation and corresponded those concerns with the board and administration.

Steven DeCredico, Teacher

Mr. DeCredico commended all the people at the high school who care enough to be here and are working very hard to make a difficult situation work well. He said the School Leadership Council drafted letters to the board, Mr. Ottinger, Mr. Peters and administration. Mr. DeCredico said at that time they identified some overview concerns that implementation this fall would cause due process of confusion, teachers being out of place both physically and educationally, and situations with students that felt the system was not working for them. He said in the letters detailed concerns were outlined such as loss of positions, additional elective courses and fiscal concerns. Mr. DeCredico said it would appear that those concerns have been realized in effect by those teaching, administration, and the students and families most effected. He said to please be aware that they have addressed these concerns and did not represent the VEA, parents, administration or students. Mr. DeCredico said they were representation of all of those facets of the school district. He said it appears at this point in time that many of their concerns fell on deaf ears or was not considered high priority enough to have been addressed prior to tonight.

Gina Russo, Teacher

Ms. Russo expressed her concern for the college prep science program at the high school. She said this year students educational experience in college prep chemistry, physics and biology courses are greatly short changed. Ms. Russo said a decision was made to reconfigure the science courses into a block scheduling format while the majority of other courses continued as year long courses. She said the most alarming problem with block scheduling is time reduction. Ms. Russo said overall time in college prep chemistry and physics will be greatly reduced from approximately 180 instructional hours per year to approximately 127 instructional hours per year. She said instead of a year long schedule running 80 minutes on day A and 40 minutes on day B the class will run 80 minutes each day for only two marking periods. Ms. Russo said curriculum will be reduced to account for the time reductions along with lab work. Students in the college prep chemistry, physics, and biology classes will have their science class for only half a year. She said to fit the curriculum into a blocked course the pacing will be faster, which will make it easier for students to fall behind in their work.

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Ms. Russo said since this is the only blocked course the students have the overall work load will be greater due to the larger number of courses. Students who take the blocked courses will have large gaps of time in between levels of courses. Ms. Russo said this reduction in time creates a reduction in the number of credits students receive for the course. She said students will now only receive 5 credits instead of 7.5 credits. Ms. Russo said most colleges do not recognize a 5 credit science course as a lab course. She said college prep chemistry and physics should be returned to its former format or a new format needs to replace the current format. Ms. Russo said these concerns have been brought to the attention of the administration over the past two years. She now asks the board to consider this issue.

Marlene Casazza, Special Education Teacher

Ms. Casazza said she is concerned about the future implementation of small learning communities based on what is currently happening on the campus of Vineland High School. She said three years ago when the ground work for small learning communities was developed in Vineland she played an active role in this change. Ms. Casazza said since the school year has started she has watched our students, administrators and teachers work very hard to correct problems. She said all are completely overwhelmed because the issues are countless. Ms. Casazza said scheduling for teachers and students has been a disaster this year. She said many students started the school year with no schedules for over a week and have had their schedules changed over and over again. Ms. Casazza said some schedules were just changed last week. She said hundreds of students are traveling back and forth between both buildings. Ms. Casazza said many teachers do not have the necessary books or teaching manuals to teach courses. She said only thirteen percent of her math students are in her small learning community. Ms. Casazza said many special education classes are not in number compliance with state regulations, which means they exceed the number of students in a classroom. This is a violation of federal law. Ms. Casazza said some special education classes are suppose to be a single subject course and have two subjects being taught at the same time by the same teacher, again another violation. This means that a student in this environment gets one half of the instructional time that they should. Ms. Casazza said the special education student needs advocacy the most and they seem to be receiving the most abuse under the small learning communities program.

Eileen Bosco, Music Teacher

Ms. Bosco said the small learning community concept is a sound one. She said that she has been involved in the planning process since the beginning.

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Ms. Bosco said when she returned to the start of the school year she had hopes that our students would see positive changes and a renewed enthusiasm for their educational experience at Vineland High School. She said since her return the challenges for the staff and students have been overwhelming. Ms. Bosco said she is a union representative and has been involved in all the discussions. She said some of the items that have been mentioned do not fall in the confines of the contract or the law. Ms. Bosco said just because something is not contractual or illegal is it in the best interest of our students. She said it is our students education that suffers when we do not have the proper things for them. Ms. Bosco said it is her hope that we can come together to provide the students at Vineland High School with an education experience that they truly deserve.

Denae Clarke, Senior at Vineland High School

Ms. Clarke said she never expected her senior year to be like this. She said the school is currently in complete chaos. Ms. Clarke said she is in the Business and Leadership Community and has only one class in that community. She said that she does not understand what purpose the small learning communities were supposed to serve. Ms. Clarke said that she was a part of the student leadership council team and has asked many questions, which have not been answered. She said teachers are not their guidance counselors and how are they expected to go to a teacher they only see eighteen times per year. Ms. Clarke said she would go to a teacher that she sees every day and is very comfortable with. She said the advocacy classes are a waste of valuable time, which leaves her behind once every other week. Ms. Clarke said she feels sorry for students who are taking college courses that were originally in general classes because they are falling behind. She said she is voicing her concerns and representing all of the students.

Andrea Handy, Senior at Vineland High School

Ms. Handy expressed her concern regarding the placement of special education students who have been mandated to learn in an inadequate environment. She said both high and low level students are forced to grasp what would be a general course subject of pre-algebra, algebra or geometry. Ms. Handy said they can not grasp these concepts and should be educated on the subject of consumer and life skills. She said the subject of consumer and life skills is important and a key to their lives because not all of them can handle college. Ms. Handy said she is in college classes and there are students who are usually in general classes struggling, which brings them down.

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Ms. Handy said the honor students are also struggling because they do not have books. She said they are missing twenty classes out of the school year due to these advocacy programs. Ms. Handy said teachers are not trained for this type of position and that is what guidance counselors are for. She said there is only one bus for the North building and one for the South building to transport the students and they are packed. Ms. Handy said there are students traveling between the two buildings every other period. She said students also have to deal with having only one class in their small learning community. Ms. Handy said she is here to speak for all students and hopes the board will take into consideration what they are here to speak about.

Chasity Palmer, Senior Class President

Ms. Palmer said she plans on attending an Ivy League school and needs to have two lab sciences. She said the science classes are reduced to 120 hours and wants to know what can be done. Ms. Palmer said students must walk back and forth from the North and South campus. She said she fell trying to get on a bus before in pulled away. Ms. Palmer said another concern is the advocacy class and feels this is a waste of time being she is a senior. She is missing some of her books and hopes that these problems will not continue for others.

Christine Lewis Baker, Teacher

Ms. Baker said she along with other teachers can not do this job any longer to the best of their ability. She said impossible expectations have been placed on them. Ms. Baker said they are obligated to complete their lesson plans and grades online but have never received proper training. She said the technology for the lesson plans does not function properly. Ms. Baker said they are given one forty minute prep period a day in which to make copies, grade papers, type lesson plans, check voice and email, consult with guidance counselors and administration concerning students, call parents, fill guidance requests and if they have enough time actually prepare for their classes. She said these impossible standards have your best teachers running to other districts and retiring in record numbers. Ms. Baker said because of the poor organization and lack of real planning they are unprepared to teach daily. She said there are teachers who still do not have enough desks and seats. Ms. Baker said folding chairs and tables are not a satisfactory answer. She said they do not have enough textbooks and therefore the teachers are forced to spend countless hours photocopying as well as wasting thousands of tax dollars on paper. Ms. Baker said scheduling is a disaster.

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Ms. Baker said some students did not have required classes scheduled while some still have double periods of the same subject. She said teachers have had their schedule changed multiple times and some as late as this week. Ms. Baker said because of scheduling some teachers only have to write lesson plans for two different classes a day while others have to write plans for twenty different classes a day. She said some teachers have to teach multiple grade levels simultaneously. Ms. Baker asked how can we possibly expect our students to learn anything under these conditions. She said legal issues are also present and companies have copy write infringement laws protecting their work. Ms. Baker said some teachers must photocopy their textbook because they do not have one book per student. She said they are also violating students IEP's and 504's and their in-class support. Ms. Baker said it is a law that there must be two certified teachers in each class and some teachers are teaching these classes alone. This leaves the school district wide open to lawsuits. She said they also have self-contained special education teachers teaching four different grades of the same subject at the same time. Ms. Baker said she did not fight against small learning communities but supported them whole heartedly. She said while the dream was fantastic the daily reality in their school is appalling. Ms. Baker said students change buildings four to seven times a day instead of staying in their small learning community. She said students were sitting in the wrong classes for weeks before someone catches the mistake and changes their entire schedule. Ms. Baker said this is not the plan that she signed up for or the best that can be done for our students and the future of this community.

Hillary Scull, Teacher

Ms. Scull said with the implementation of small learning communities questions have been raised regarding changes happening to the choral program that is included in the school of the arts community. She asked who has ultimate control over the design of the program? Who decides the need for curriculum re-writing? Who should be responsible for curriculum supervision? Who should a teacher turn to with their concerns when the curriculum supervisor, building level administration, board members and superintendent are either unwilling or unable to meet with the current choir directors? Ms. Scull said the choral program at Vineland High School is facing dramatic changes as part of the small learning community initiative. The program currently in existence had been developed over thirty years ago by Dr. Luongo and has been extremely successful. Ms. Scull said the choral programs have been completely redesigned and some changes did not have to be made.

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Ms. Scull asked who has the final say in how this program will be changed or if it needs to be changed at all. She said we now have fifteen administrators, four central administrators as well as the curriculum supervisor. Ms. Scull said where does the buck stop and who can they turn to with their concerns when their building level administration can not or will not meet with them. She said they do not have the proper facilities for successful implementation of small learning communities to the degree that it has been put into place. Ms. Scull said the original plans states that each community will be housed together within one of the two buildings. She said unfortunately there is not enough space for four choirs to exist in one building when you take into account the music library, instruments, rehearsal schedules, uniforms and other music classes. Ms. Scull said the choir director who currently teaches concert choir was told that she and her choirs will remain in the North building along with another music teacher. How does this meet the small learning community master design? The new version of the choir curriculum arbitrarily limits student involvement simply because of the school they are assigned to. Ms. Scull said this contradicts everything that the then assistant superintendent in charge of small learning communities has said. She said this flawed design limits the number of students who could be in the music program. Ms. Scull said we are down by fifty or more students in the vocal music program and this has had a devastating effect. She said if these changes were made to the choral program why were they not implemented for the instrumental music program. Ms. Scull said if it is not broke do not fix it. She said the main point is the choirs were available to every student not limited to a particular community.

Michael Curtis, Vineland Graduate

Mr. Curtis spoke in support of the Chess Tournament class and asked if there is any way it could be brought back.

Kathy Heather, Special Education Teacher

Ms. Heather commented on a presentation on C Span last year in regards to three cities that have done small learning communities. She said the presentation was done for people to learn from their mistakes. Ms. Heather said the suggestions made are online for any one who is interested.

Lois Genovese, Teacher

Ms. Genovese said she is here to address the issue of the elimination of academic departments and academic chairs.

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Ms. Genovese said many if not most of these problems were processed at one time either by the department heads or with at least some assistance by the department chairs. She said that she considered herself a liaison between the people in her department and the building principal. Ms. Genovese said they kept complete inventory of textbooks, technology equipment, supplies, supplemental materials and emergency plans. She expressed her concerns to many of the administrators for over a year in both formal and informal settings. Ms. Genovese said they were not asked for any assistance on this and most of them were more than willing to sit down and discuss the logistics on how this could be worked out. She said they surveyed their departments for not only their wants but also their needs. Ms. Genovese said currently there is absolutely no accountability and no one knows where things are. She is teaching an advanced placement class and has lost a third of her textbooks at \$99.00 each. Ms. Genovese said they were told last year that the small learning community administrative assistants would take over all responsibilities along with complete approval concerning every aspect of the small learning communities. She said they were told that each small learning community would function independently, which has not happened. Ms. Genovese said you do not know who do go to for answers to questions or to find out where things are. She said we are in the fifth week of school and very little has changed. Ms. Genovese said we are still awaiting desks and she is short eight in her classroom. She said they were told that a plan was in place and the word used was it was flawless. Ms. Genovese said they have nothing in place. She said in her applied technology community she only teaches about 10 of 127 students in math. The curriculum changes, to her knowledge, have not been met to accommodate the theme and there is not one place in the South building where she can take the entire class to use computers. Ms. Genovese asked if the board of education can assure them that what they witnessed this year will not occur again and those responsible for the many short comings will be held accountable.

Evan Cortez, Vineland Graduate

Mr. Cortez spoke in support of Mr. Baruffi's Chess class and asked the board to please reconsider this class.

Sal Emburgia, VEA President

Mr. Emburgia said everyone that came before the board tonight has a lot of concerns. He said this is the first year, in the five years that he has been the Vineland Education Association President, that he has received the most teacher phone calls from pre-school through twelfth grades. Mr. Emburgia said the association will listen and try to help resolve this.

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Thomas McCann, Vineland High School South Principal

Dr. McCann said he along with Ms. Meyers have worked diligently everyday with the major transformation that we have gone through. He commends the Board of Education for taking the risk they have taken to make a decision to do what they have done. Dr. McCann said with any transition there are major complications. He said in two weeks the problems are shorter and less complicated. Dr. McCann said the desk shortage is a real problem and very serious. He said on October 10th the desks will be delivered. Dr. McCann said students that go back and forth between campuses is a serious problem and we are working on it one student at a time. Dr. McCann commended the teachers, students and graduates that spoke tonight. He said compared to where we were a month ago it is going well.

Susanne Morello, Vineland Resident

Ms. Morello said the responsibility for what is happening in our district lies on the shoulder of all the people sitting on the board. The ultimate responsibility is the superintendent of schools. Ms. Morello said she personally would like to hear or see published a detailed action plan of what will happen to correct these problems. She said somewhere there is a lack of communication. Ms. Morello said she knows of one person whose responsibility it was to see to the implementation and that person should not be the only individual to bear the brunt of what is going on. She said nothing happens in the district that does not ultimately end up at the top of the food chain. Ms. Morello applauds the students who came out tonight. She said Boards of Education are supposed to be about providing for students. Ms. Morello said it is time to step up and admit that this is not going well. Make a plan, clean it up and move on. She said start from scratch, do the best you can and move on. Ms. Morello said if this is your best it is pretty sad.

Theodore Peters, Vineland High School Executive Principal

Mr. Peters said all along it was said that we were going to do some massive changes unlike anybody has seen in Vineland in the past half century. We said that we were going to do away with a 9/10 and 11/12 concept something that he thinks everybody in the community was supportive of. Mr. Peters said that we were going to create small learning communities and they were going to be thematically based. We said that we were going to do an academic rigor component and a family/student advocacy program because many of our students are falling through the cracks of getting that kind of support at home or in school.

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Mr. Peters said that we were going to try to provide common planning time for our teachers of different small learning communities. We said that we were going to try to do a modified block schedule that would include 80 and 40 minute classes for our students. Mr. Peters said we implemented that and some were to a great degree and others less. Mr. Peters said we have academic rigor and it is the biggest challenge of all the movements that are part of the secondary initiative. Mr. Peters said we have small learning communities, which created a nine through twelve setting in both the North and South campus. The block schedule, as everyone knows, created much difficulty for a lot of reasons. Mr. Peters said the block schedule had major issues with the number of students going back and forth. He said going to a nine through twelve setting created more issues than the small learning communities. Mr. Peters said our current senior class has 615 students compared to our current ninth grade class of 778. He said the desks will be delivered on October 10. Mr. Peters said he has told the staff that we have taken everyone out of their comfort zone. He said that the staff is doing a great job in the classrooms. Mr. Peters said if you go in and watch the classes being taught that active learning is taking place. He wished that he could tell everyone that it is 100% successful but with the major transition that was done we do have issues. Mr. Peters said we will work through them.

Bill McDevitt, Administrative Assistant/Music Teacher

Mr. McDevitt said the way the choral program was redesigned was based on the nine through twelve mandate that came from the state for the small learning communities. It was also based on the idea that the initial block schedule only had one period a day for students outside of their communities to take electives. Mr. McDevitt said in order to allow the opportunity for the most students to participate we put in an arts and non-arts choir. He said the design and curriculum was decided on by all of the music teachers at the high school. Mr. McDevitt said the curriculum was written by one of the vocal music teachers, presented to the curriculum committee and approved by the school board.

Committee Reports: Mr. Spinelli reported that Mr. Biondi and Mr. Castellini from Biondi Insurance attended the Finance Committee meeting to discuss our liability insurance and what it covers. He said there was a situation with the compressor in the pool area which resulted in about \$60,000 of repairs up to this point of which the insurance paid \$8,000.

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Mr. Spinelli said we are concerned that the insurance company was just settling many of the insurance issues going through court rather than fighting. He said there was also a discussion about using cleaning dispensers and mixtures to save the district money. Mr. Spinelli said there are a couple court cost issues that we are still battling. In the future, New Jersey School Boards will have a staff attorney available for guidance at no charge to help us in some of the future situations. Mr. Spinelli said they discussed the teachers volley ball league and use of the gym. It was stated that the volley ball league was covered under our liability insurance and the teachers would not have to carry the insurance. Mr. Spinelli said the athletic account was discussed. He said money was transferred out of that account to cover irrigation for one of the track fields. Mr. Rochetti clarified that even though it was budgeted in miscellaneous it was slated to be taken out of the athletic account to be properly done. Mr. Spinelli said the money came from the signs at Gittone Stadium. The software issue for payroll is being dealt with and the upgrades have been started. Mr. Spinelli said there were some issues with 403 b withdrawals and Mr. Franchetta spoke about using a third party management company at no cost. He said they also discussed adding a Roth IRA account broker, which should be dealt with during the negotiations process. Mr. Spinelli said Mr. Franchetta explained some check issues and what they were actually for. The committee asked if there was a way to be more descriptive on the billing and were told the program does not allow for it. Mr. Spinelli said the superintendent was reminded about next year's budget timeline.

Mr. Franceschini said discussed at the Curriculum & Technology meeting was the Supplemental Educational Services (SES), which is designed for the middle schools. He said our goal is to implement more district tutoring services versus the vendors that we currently have. Mr. Franceschini said Don Robbins, Athletic Director, presented an update on physical education. He said the goal is to have all the programs on the same page. Mr. Franceschini said the Personnel & Policy Committee will meet again next Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Bernardini reported that discussed at the Buildings & Grounds Committee meeting was the re-surfacing of the running track. He said the loose rubber sections were removed and a sealer was applied. The public should not be on the track at this time and security will be increased. Mr. Bernardini said the girls' softball field will be moved to the new field, which is an excellent field

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Mr. Bernardini said the North campus swimming pool bleachers have been cleaned, scraped and re-painted with red epoxy paint. The new Trek seating is scheduled for installation within the next month. Mr. Bernardini said there has been some discussion in regards to Middle School #2. A meeting was held in Trenton with representatives from the Department of Education and NJ School Construction Corporation along with Mr. Ottinger, Mr. Franchetta, Mr. Weaver and Mr. Farinaccio. He said the project is in the final contract document stage and is ready for bidding. Mr. Bernardini said the Department of Education and NJ School Construction Corporation are required under the new guidelines to conduct a final construction and educational feasibility review. He said this was done about six months ago. Mr. Bernardini said the Department of Education is reviewing this school with the possibility to start all over again. He said that he is absolutely appalled by this. Mr. Bernardini said we submitted health and safety projects to the state. All the projects that were submitted were denied because the state felt that they were not of a real important nature. He said that Mr. Weaver has hired an engineering company, which will do a complete study of the boilers and pipe system to show how they are worn down to a dangerous level. Mr. Bernardini said the committee suggested that each year we put into the budget a couple of science labs for the North campus.

Mr. Franceschini asked when the track will be ready. Mr. Bernardini said in two weeks if the weather holds up.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business: Mr. Giordano asked Mr. DeSanto to explain the board's role in the advertising of positions.

Mr. DeSanto explained that the role of the board in personnel matters is to create positions, establish salaries and terms/conditions of the position. He said that is done in conjunction with the administration. Mr. DeSanto said the board could have pre-approval of a job description before it is posted.

Board Member

Comments:

Mr. Spinelli said what he has heard tonight is that there is a lack of communication. He said being a teacher is the most frustrating thing in the world. Mr. Spinelli asked the administrators to be very diligent in attempting to help everyone get through a very difficult time.

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Mr. Spinelli said to correct Mrs. Morello, copyright laws on textbooks do not have anything to do with anything. You can photocopy any textbook that you want. Mr. Spinelli said his concern is that technology is not working properly and there are not enough computers. He said that we should get another bus to go back and forth. Mr. Spinelli said he is really concerned about the violation of IEP's and 504's. He requested for Mr. Peters to look into this. Mr. Spinelli said there is a lot of tweaking to be done. He said while walking around the high school he noticed a lot of clutter in some of the administrative assistants offices. Mr. Spinelli said we have to start putting some of these bigger issues to bed so we can start working on the smaller ones. He said that he has faith in our administrators that they will be very diligent in making sure that it happens.

Mr. DeWinne thanked the parents, students and staff for speaking tonight. He said there seems to be a major disconnect between the staff and administration. Mr. DeWinne he is concerned about the class president who spoke and wanted to attend Princeton but may not be able to meet the requirements. He does not understand why we can not restore the chess program, which seems like a great program. Mr. DeWinne said he echoes Mr. Spinelli concerns about the violations that were mentioned. He is also concerned about the students traveling back and forth. Mr. DeWinne said as a board we will do what we can to work together to address the issues.

Mr. Ulrich said it takes a lot of courage for employees and students to come before the board and immediate supervisors bringing to light things that are not working right. He said a lot of teachers are afraid of retaliation or an unfavorable response. Mr. Ulrich thinks that a lot of the complaints are due to additional duties the teachers are asked to do. He said the online lesson plan is fine for the person who came up in the technology age and is familiar with computers. Mr. Ulrich bets that the majority of our teachers do not have that type of ability, which would come second nature. He said during the first day of school when the sessions were given for the online lesson plan system it was not functional. Mr. Ulrich said there is an issue of training and the teachers were expected to put these lesson plans in and have them available so their principals can access them online. He said what we have to realize is there is a learning curve and without the support systems in place some things are going to fail. Mr. Ulrich said environmental stress such as the tables, room temperatures and conditions can be addressed because they are physical in nature. He takes offense to what Mrs. Morello said because in a sense she was blaming the board. Mr. Ulrich said the board had no further information then what the public had.

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Mr. Ulrich said this plan was adopted and put in place over a year and a half ago. He said there is going to be peaks and valleys. Mr. Ulrich said if the board can do anything to lessen the stress he will support it. He agrees with Mrs. Morello's statement that we need to move on past the situation. Mr. Ulrich said as a board we have to be vigilant provide the support systems and financial means. He said they are all valid concerns and it is unfair to characterize the board as making some bad decisions and not supporting the staff, which is not the case. Mr. Ulrich said we all need to compromise and work through the issues because we will not know for a while whether this will be a successful program. He said if we can not get the staff on board this will not be successful.

Mr. Franceschini said when small learning communities came to the board he really thought it was a good idea. He said it seemed like our school system did really well with the top 20% of students and we have an excellent special education program. Mr. Franceschini said in the middle we needed improvement and he thought that the small learning communities could help us out. He really likes the idea that both buildings are nine through 12 and the behaviors have improved since last year. Mr. Franceschini said we have a lot of things to fix and we are all in this together. He said a board goal was established to oversee the process of the small learning communities.

Mr. Bernardini thanked everyone who expressed their concerns tonight. He knows that we have four buses that transfer students back and forth. Mr. Bernardini said his first thought was what is going to happen when it gets cold. He said that he spoke to several students who stated they prefer to walk. Mr. Bernardini said Mr. Callavini told him that if four busses are not enough they will have another bus. He asked if we could look at possibly bringing the chess course back. Mr. Bernardini said not having the general courses was a concern of the board and is a serious matter. He said the board knew that small learning communities was going to be a big undertaking and would not be perfect. Mr. Bernardini said the faculty has to support this. He said when Mr. Peters originally presented this he said that this will take three to four years to become a firm working program.

Mr. Fanucci said he is glad that the concerns were brought to everyone's attention. He said he has a lot of faith in the teachers and staff in this district. Mr. Fanucci said champions are not born they are made and it is how we work together as a unit cohesively that we will get through this. Mr. Fanucci said the bottom line is that it is only about the children.

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Mr. Fanucci said he hopes that we can now move forward to make the rest of this school year better for the children.

Ms. Rios thanked everyone for addressing the board with their concerns. She said many of the issues that were expressed tonight she was unaware of. Ms. Rios said she spoke with Mr. Russo and many of the concerns that he brought to her attention she brought to Mr. Ottinger's attention. She said we must work together as a team and have a positive outlook on what is taking place. Ms. Rios said she attended several back to school nights and was glad to see a lot of parent participation and helpful polite staff members.

Mr. Evans feels it is ironic that the small learning communities are missing textbooks and desks. These are things that can be overcome and we are going to work diligently to overcome those feasible solutions. Mr. Evans said he heard everything that was said tonight. He urged anyone in the district to contact him personally with any issue and he will do anything in his power to help. Mr. Evans said our main goal is for the students in our district to get the best education. He said that we want to provide the staff and faculty with the best tools to provide the education. Mr. Evans said we are all going to work as hard as possible to see that happens.

Mr. Ottinger said the responsibility for everything rests with him. He takes full responsibility for anything and everything that has occurred. Mr. Ottinger said it is his responsibility to make sure things are put in place so they can be implemented fully, which they were not. He said that he was told every classroom has a set of textbooks and he is disappointed to hear that was not true. Mr. Ottinger said the bottom line to the discussion is when things did not go as planned for the opening it creates problems for everyone. He said obviously we were not prepared and there were things that should have been taken care of that were not. Mr. Ottinger said he should have known about the shortage of desks and textbooks. He is not afraid to admit when we have a problem or if there is a responsibility. Mr. Ottinger said he has not lost his faith in this program and is convinced that the reorganization of the high school was the best thing to do. He said it was a mandate from the State of New Jersey to implement small learning communities. When he received that mandate he did a lot of research to inform himself as to whether or not this would be good for our students. Mr. Ottinger said he believed then and believes now, that it is good for our students. He thinks we are capable of having an excellent small learning community program.

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Mr. Ottinger said he understands that not everyone agrees with that and many people have not agreed with it from the very beginning. He said that our administration is aware of these issues and on top of them. Mr. Ottinger said the bottom line is that there would be no further discussion on who is responsible because he is responsible. He promises that we will absolutely get these issues straightened out. Mr. Ottinger said it is hard for him to believe that the people who spoke tonight said they went to their administrators and no one in either building would help them. He said if that is the truth he is the most disappointed guy in the whole world. Mr. Ottinger said he has no intention to answer every critic. He answers to the Board of Education.

Mr. Giordano commends and applauds everyone who spoke tonight. He said they were all legitimate issues discussed. Mr. Giordano said Goal #1 of the board is to evaluate and provided specific updates and report on the progress of the secondary school initiative (small learning communities). He said that we need to make sure that these things are being addressed. Mr. Giordano said we are concerned and this was very revealing tonight. He said the desks and books are easy to fix. Mr. Giordano said we give our word that we need to do something and pay attention to detail.

Adjournment: The Board adjourned the meeting by voice vote at 10:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J. Franchetta, CPA
Board Secretary

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