

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 6, 2010 at 6:32 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Franceschini presiding and the following members present: Mr. DeWinne, Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. English, Mr. Fanucci, Dr. Mounier, Mrs. Phillips, Ms. Rios, and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: none.

Also present: Dr. Banks, Superintendent, Dr. Gruccio and Mrs. Elliott, 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. Franceschini 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:

Dr. Banks introduced Mr. Don Robbins, Athletic Director.

Mr. Robbins said he along with the girls' tennis team are here tonight to congratulate the girls' tennis coach Harry Silverstein on his 400th Career Victory.

Mr. Silverstein thanked the board and spoke about his tennis career. He introduced each member of the girls' tennis team.

Mr. Franceschini recognized and presented Mr. Silverstein with a plaque.

Dr. Banks introduced Mr. Keith Nocco to present an update on the Sodexo transition.

Mr. Nocco said the transition is going well and everyone has been positive. He said that in November there will be some new equipment along with marketing, uniforms, safety training and breakfast in the classroom. Mr. Nocco said as long as communications are open we will have success. He said that Karla Holt has been phenomenal to work with and has mentored him through the process.

Mr. Franceschini asked Mr. Nocco what type of projects he has planned. Mr. Nocco said breakfast in the classrooms, a marketing program, new equipment, uniforms, and safety training.

Mr. English asked if our equipment is considered obsolete. Mr. Nocco said we want to make the cafeterias like a food court, which would require new equipment.

Mr. Franceschini said we are excited with our connection to Sodexo and have heard a lot of positive things.

Mr. Ulrich said part of any transition is the people who will be interacting with the district. We are very fortunate that Sodexo has brought Mr. Nocco in to this project because he has ties to our community.

Dr. Banks introduced John & Denise Procopio to give a presentation on the 2010-2011 Schools to Community Event.

Mr. Procopio said the 2010-2011 School Family Community Partnership is a joint effort of educators and local businesses to establish a stronger bond with schools, families and community. He said last year a Holiday Tree Project was done on Landis Avenue. Mr. Procopio said this year a Scarecrow Event will be held. He said the scarecrows will be done at the schools and on October 14th they will be delivered to the downtown businesses. Mr. Procopio said the Vineland Downtown Improvement District (VDID) will award \$250 for the best display. He said another event they would like to work on, that was held last year at one of the schools, was the Parent Outreach Dinner. Mr. Procopio said approximately 170 parents, students and staff attended the dinner and the food was donated by The Youth Alliance. He said also the football team will be doing volunteer hours with the VDID. Mr. Procopio said there are many benefits for students who work with the community. He said with frequent interactions among schools, families and communities more students will receive common messages from various people about the importance of school. Mr. Procopio said they are going to try to double the Christmas Tree Project this year to fifty trees to allow more student participation.

Comments by

Board Solicitor: None.

Items for Review:

A. Superintendent

1. **Personnel Items** – Ms. Greenfield apologized for an error on a date that should read 06/16/11 that will be corrected next week.

Mr. Ulrich presented an update on Mr. Cores who is being recommended for the Supervisor of World Language position. He said the Policy & Personnel Committee met with Mr. Cores this evening. Mr. Ulrich said Mr. Cores is very engaging, has quite a presence and was a former principal in Middle Township. He said Mr. Cores comes to the district with many qualifications and is a very good candidate who will be an asset to our district.

Dr. Mounier said he has come to the conclusion that our existing policy as it relates to nepotism needs to be revised. He said he is not making any accusations against anyone or any aspersions against the applicants or relatives. Dr. Mounier said the existing policy contains a loophole that is big enough to drive a school bus through. Dr. Mounier said there is no strict enforcement of impartiality. He said whoever wrote the policy either does not understand human nature or did not study Psych 101 or understands it well enough to create a situation where the reviewers do not really divorce themselves from the people that they work with who are the relatives of the respective employed. Dr. Mounier said he sent a very detailed memo to the board and Dr. Banks on this point. He thinks that there is a way to correct the policy so we can eliminate the actual lack of impartiality to the extent that it exists. Dr. Mounier said that is through making the interviewing and hiring practices blind in the same way medical research is done. He said we really need to consider changes so that once and for all so Vineland can get out from underneath the charge that we engage to a very large extent in staffing by nepotism.

Mr. Ulrich said in June of this year the board readopted the Nepotism Policy and added some additional language in line with the State Accountability Act. He said if a person wants to be an employee here, regardless of what relative they may have in the district, we have a policy in force that should not prohibit them in any way from gaining a job in education in their city. Mr. Ulrich said if an employee is a long term substitute for the entire year and the principal knows that person then what is wrong with that person being the best candidate for the job.

Dr. Mounier said when the policy was reviewed in June he did not have the experience of seeing the offspring of two high ranking personnel considered for employment. He is not saying that they were or were not qualified because he does not know these individuals personally but it does not look good. Dr. Mounier thinks that it is merely a technical problem to revise our policy in such a way that the reviewers are blind to the relationships that exist between district employees and the candidates for employment. He said if we were to do something along this line then there would be no question that the hires were based upon qualifications and not based upon some other measure of the relationships between interviewers and existing personnel. Dr. Mounier said if there is a cordial relationship between the interviewers and the existing personnel then there would be favoritism whether it is recognized by the interviewers or not to favor the hire. He said if you had an antagonistic relationship between an employee and coworker it could lead to the rejection. Dr. Mounier said he is just suggesting making the process more honest and strictly impartial.

Ms. Greenfield apologized but said with all due respect as the Executive Director of Personnel for this district for the past four and a half years feels professionally and personally insulted by the comments made by Dr. Mounier. She said that she is responsible for the recruitment, selection and evaluation of all candidates and does a fair and consistent process.

Dr. Mounier said there is nothing personal in all this. He is not criticizing Ms. Greenfield but it is the policy that is at fault.

Mr. Ulrich said we can bring this issue to committee and have a full board vote whether or not we want to change the policy.

2. **Special Education Students** - No discussion.
3. **Budgetary Transfers** – No discussion.
4. **Revised Art Curriculum for Grades K-5** – No discussion.
5. **Revised Mathematics Grade 6 Curriculum** – No discussion.
6. **Western Governors University Agreement** – No discussion.
7. **Widener University Agreement** – No discussion.
8. **First Reading of Policy #7434-Smoking on School Grounds (Revised)** – Dr. Mounier said he sent a couple of editorial comments that he wanted to see incorporated. Dr. Banks said we have taken care of that.

Mr. Fanucci asked if policy revisions are sent out to the entire district. Dr. Banks said yes after board approval.
9. **Bids** – Mr. English asked if the Mobile Surveillance Cameras is something we can do in-house. Mr. Franchetta said the bid was just for the purchase of the items and the installation will be done by our staff. Mr. Ulrich asked if we rejected the prior bid. Mr. Franchetta said that is correct.
10. **Travel** – Dr. Mounier expressed his concern that the Success Program has requested eleven field trips as behavior modification rewards or student interaction programs. He said that comes to one or two field trips every month. Dr. Mounier mentioned that the teachers name does not appear on a single request form nor is the objective stated in 73% of the forms and an activity is not stated in 45% of the forms.

Dr. Mounier said in some schools the reward consists of an ice cream coupon, pencil or recognition as Student of the Month. The Success Program has the following eleven trips planned: Sea Isle City to watch dolphins, an outdoor center trip in Lumberton, a trip to the Naval Air Center Museum in Wildwood, Longwood Gardens, an arcade, National Liberty Museum in Philadelphia, Camden Aquarium, Deptford Skating & Fun Center, The Mutter Museum in Philadelphia, Cape May Zoo and Dolphin watching. Mr. Franceschini said we are talking about special need students, which is a little different. Dr. Mounier said in some places the special need students have their choice of a McDonalds or Burger King lunch. He said if these are rewards how do we know that we are going to have 20 students to reward on May 26th. Mrs. Polof said the students at Success are good children and students. She said they get rewarded for their behavior because the program is a behavioral disabled program. Mrs. Polof said the Success Program is a program for students to attend who have not been successful in the regular program in our schools. She said it is a program that was developed to help the students remain in the Vineland School System rather than become an out of district student that everyone forgot existed. Mrs. Polof said the program was developed and designed for students with severe disabilities. The program was written and approved by the State of New Jersey based on a behavioral management system which rewards students daily, weekly and monthly for increased accommodations for their behavior. Mrs. Polof said the purchase order lists a number of students going on the trips as a projection because we do not know who is going to make the monthly reward to go on a trip. Dr. Mounier said the rewards should be that the ability to return to conventional classroom setting where the student can actually learn something. He asked what happens when the student reaches an age that we no longer have care of them and there is nobody to give them a reward once, twice or three times a month. Mrs. Polof said our level system is not always based on rewards it is based on their behavior so they earn other things such as independence to be successful. Our goal is to teach them to be successful adults not to be successful because they earned an ice cream cone or trip. Mrs. Polof said the students are learning at Success, do have a curriculum and follow the district benchmarks. Dr. Mounier said his comments strictly deal with the abundance of field trips relative to students in other categories. He said it is lopsided and does not think it is the proper thing to do.

Mr. Ulrich asked how many students are at Success. Mrs. Polof said about 28 students. Mr. Ulrich asked if by law we have to educate those students. Mrs. Polof said yes somewhere. Mr. Ulrich asked if we did out of district placements the numbers would be 28 times 30 thousand dollars. Mrs. Polof said 40 thousand dollars.

Mr. Franceschini asked if the outside special schools have this kind of reward system. Mrs. Polof said they do.

Mr. English asked if he can set up an appointment to view the Success Program. Mrs. Polof said absolutely.

Mr. English asked if the Success trips are grant funded. Mrs. Polof said they are district funded and approved by the board yearly.

Dr. Mounier said if you were to curtail some or all of these field trips it would certainly not necessitate closing the school and the students can still receive an education within the district. Mrs. Polof said that she cannot make that prediction it is an IEP Team decision.

11. Acceptance of Funds – No discussion.

12. Submission of Grants – No discussion.

13. Appointment of QSAC Committee Members – Mr. Franceschini said he met with the County Superintendent to discuss QSAC and how the board was doing. The County Superintendent was pleased that we were improving our communications with the Superintendent and how we are following protocol.

14. Annual Maintenance Reserve Deposit Worksheet (form M-1) – Mr. DiGiorgio asked how the building replacement value figure is calculated. Mr. Franchetta said we have a company that evaluates all of our assets for our annual audit.

Mr. DeWinne questioned if we are under insured. Mr. Franchetta said he will discuss this with Mr. Biondi and get back to the board.

Mr. Fanucci requested a listing of the buildings from the master policy along with their coverage.

Mr. DeSanto said also the methodology and calculations should be made available and reviewed with Mr. Biondi.

Dr. Mounier asked if we have a procedure for divesting ourselves for some of the buildings that are not used and in bad shape. Mr. Franchetta said yes we are working on turning Fels and Butler Avenue Schools over to the city. Mr. Ulrich asked if Butler Avenue School is currently leased to the nurses. Mr. Franchetta responded yes the community nurses are using it. Dr. Mounier recommended that whenever one of the older schools is torn down that we find some willing architect to make a set of drawings and photographs for the historical record.

15. Comprehensive Maintenance Plan Report – No discussion.

16. September 2010 Bus Evacuation Drills – No discussion.

B. Board

1. None.

Review of Bills: None.

Public Comments: Robert Walker
Mr. Walker mentioned that he was at Success today and the students there are making great progress and it is a great program. Mr. Walker expressed his concern in regards to the discontinuation of the activity buses.

Committee Reports: Mr. Ulrich said discussed at tonight's Policy & Personnel Committee meeting was the World Language Supervisor. Also Mrs. Elliott has been reviewing pertinent policies to make sure that we are updated. She has updated the field trip form, which will be one concise form for the entire district that will be sent to Mr. DeSanto for his legal review. Mr. Ulrich said a number of policies on a variety of different topics have been given to the committee and they will have a full discussion on them in November. He said the last topic discussed was proceeding with an assistant principal position at Dane Barse School. Dane Barse is the only school that does not have an assistant principal. Mr. Ulrich said Dr. Banks has relayed to the committee that she wants to have an assistant principal at Barse School and is requesting from the full board to do a candidate search.

Mr. DeWinne asked when this was originally voted on and defeated. Mr. Franceschini said he thinks two years ago. Dr. Mounier asked why it was defeated. Mr. Ulrich said it was a split vote on the board. Mr. Franceschini said as you increase your student population the probability of issues that could hurt the district would increase, which would require more supervision. Dr. Mounier asked if we have the financial resources to support this position. Dr. Banks said we currently have the resources. Mrs. Phillips thinks that we should be fair in all of our elementary schools but feels we need to look at the entire picture before we do something like this.

Mr. Fanucci said at the Finance Committee meeting held this week a variety of issues were addressed and they will be reconvening again on October 18 to finish the agenda.

Dr. Mounier requested a report on the Finance Committee meeting after they have met.

Unfinished Business: Dr. Mounier said he understands that we are engaged in a survey regarding how students, parents and others feel about how the Small Learning Communities Program is working. He asked if this survey is due to be implemented this month. Dr. Gruccio said the survey responses are all due by October 29. Dr. Mounier asked who does the analysis of the surveys. Dr. Gruccio said Mr. Dantine. Dr. Mounier said we need to decide quickly what we are going to do with this program. He recommends that an up or down vote be scheduled on Small Learning Communities as soon as possible. Dr. Banks said Dr. Gruccio is taking a staff team to visit Ocean City High School where they have academies. We are investigating a different model and ways to incorporate a portion of a model that we currently have. Dr. Banks said we are in the third year of Small Learning Communities and each year we are better at working out the kinks. She believes that we hope to find out in the survey that a lot of the criticisms that we had up front are not there anymore. Dr. Banks said she would like to complete the survey study and continue her meetings at the high school with the staff and students. She said there is a lot we are doing by way of investigation and analysis of what we currently have. Dr. Banks said she is not sure that any recommendation she would have to bring forward would be ready in November. Dr. Mounier said it seems to him that after three years we should know reasonably well whether or not it works.

Mr. English asked if we can establish a deadline as to when this would be presented to the board. Mr. Franceschini said if we vote for no more Small Learning Communities then what will we be doing.

Mr. DeWinne said Dr. Mounier raises a good point on the Small Learning Communities. He said if we are going to make a change we really need to make it sooner rather than later. Mr. DeWinne said he has personally heard very few positive comments on the Small Learning Communities. Dr. Banks said she needs to have the time to collect the data, visit and meet with the students/administration.

Mr. Franceschini asked if going from the Small Learning Communities to the Academy would be a smoother transition. Dr. Banks said we are looking at possibly implementing a hybrid. Mr. Franceschini asked if the Small Learning Communities in the middle schools are running successful. Dr. Banks said absolutely. Dr. Banks said we implemented the middle school model at the high school, which might be part of the problem.

Mr. DiGiorgio said we all look forward to the data collection results.

New Business: None.

Mr. DeWinne said Dr. Mounier comes to the meetings very prepared and he is entitled to comment uninterrupted on his points. He was offended by a comment made by an employee at the podium in regards to comments made by Dr. Mounier.

Dr. Banks said that she wanted to address Mr. Walker's concern about the activity buses. She said we are looking at ways to coordinate the clubs and activities so that we could decide what days we have the highest rate of attendance to hopefully return the buses for a few days a week. Dr. Banks feels after school activities and programs are as important as what is happening instructionally in the classroom. She said we are looking at ways to reinstate the activity buses this year. Dr. Banks said this is not just a matter of returning some of our own buses to those runs because Sheppard Bus Company was also involved. She said when we released Sheppard from this obligation it is now difficult to get them back. Dr. Banks announced that she will be holding a Town Hall meeting on Monday, October 18, 2010 at Sabater Elementary School. She said we have invited the Hispanic community to attend and Ms. Rios will be there to translate for her as she gives a presentation on the goals and objectives of the Vineland School District. She said there will be other Town Hall meetings scheduled. Dr. Banks said she will be sending a notice to parents/guardians in regards to an important change in our fire drill statute, which takes place on November 1. She said each building principal is required to hold one fire and one security drill per month. Dr. Banks reported that we were awarded 4.5 million dollars for the purpose of using funds to bring back employees who were rified. She said that she will be presenting a recommendation to the board for this year to return all of the cafeteria and bus aides along with hiring two RTI tutors and a math coach. Dr. Banks said we will carryover a portion of that money in to the next year to ensure that we can sustain these individuals for the next school year.

Adjournment: The Board adjourned to executive session 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J. Franchetta, CPA
Board Secretary

KJF:df